




Speech By
Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 7 September 2017

MOTION: CATEGORY H FIREARMS

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (6.22 pm): I rise to oppose the motion before the House tonight. Back in April 1996 when I was a young fellow I remember hearing the news of a developing situation at Port Arthur in Tasmania. It was news of a mass shooting and I listened in disbelief. It was a massacre. Sadly, 35 people were murdered and 23 wounded on that day. This led then Prime Minister John Howard to overhaul weapon ownership and licensing nationwide in Australia. This courageous move resulted in the National Firearms Agreement, and the new laws which came into effect were passed by the states only 12 days after that massacre. Since then as a nation we again watched in disbelief as a siege which was motivated by terrorism occurred at Martin Place in Sydney. Following that Martin Place siege the Commonwealth, states and territories agreed through COAG to update the National Firearms Agreement. It was acknowledged there had been significant technological advancements and departures from the agreement since 1996 which should be addressed in that review. This has resulted in the 2017 National Firearms Agreement.

Under the Palaszczuk government, Queensland will always remain part of John Howard's National Firearms Agreement. We are proud to say that as a state government under Annastacia Palaszczuk. Although Queensland generally follows the National Firearms Agreement framework, there are some differences in recognition of the fact that Queensland is a geographically large state and there are historical variations in the Queensland legislation. The 2017 National Firearms Agreement specifically precludes the use of category H firearms for primary production purposes. Queensland currently issues category H weapons to primary producers—and will continue to—on a case-by-case basis, as they have done previously for many years. Historically, these types of licences have been issued to primary producers for use on large properties to destroy sick and injured animals and to prevent prolonged suffering of an animal if an owner has to return to their residence to obtain a long arm weapon.

Members in the House know that I have a twin brother who is a policeman in my electorate, and when I talk to him about category H firearms he explains to me that category H firearms are the most concealable weapon and the biggest threat to police in this state. Those weapons are a huge threat to those who protect us and a huge concern to everyone. There have been many arrests as recently as the last few weeks of individuals who have the capacity to cause serious injury or death with these weapons. I understand that a number of these licences have recently been refused by QPS weapons licensing on the basis that applicants do not meet the 'genuine reason' requirement for the issue of a concealable firearm for a variety of reasons, including failing to meet occupational requirements.

I commend the QPS for their thorough scrutiny of applications for these types of weapons. Any application to possess a category H firearm undergoes vigorous scrutiny and a thorough vetting of the applicant by QPS weapons licensing. Applicants must demonstrate a genuine reason, which must be supported by documentation, to use a particular class of firearms. This includes handguns that are to be used for sport target shooting at an approved pistol club or for occupational purposes including training, security guard employment and occupational rural purposes. This side of the House supports

access to firearms for primary producers. This side of the House also supports the use of handguns by primary producers; however, this is—and must be—assessed independently by QPS weapons licensing on a case-by-case basis.

The Palaszczuk government listens. That is why Minister Ryan has set up the Firearms Advisory Forum. This forum has representatives from peak bodies, including AgForce and victims' organisations, to ensure that we consult widely on this. Most of all, we receive and take advice from weapons licensing. They are the experts. It is for these reasons that I do not support the motion of the member for Mount Isa tonight.