




Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Ryan**

**MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD**

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Record of Proceedings, 7 September 2017

**MOTION: CATEGORY H FIREARMS**

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (6.12 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate. From the outset I would like to reaffirm the Palaszczuk government's commitment to the safety and security of all Queenslanders. That means having a robust, safe, secure weapons regime here in Queensland.

It is important to note from the outset that the vast majority of firearm owners in our state are responsible individuals, and that very much includes our primary producers and farmers living right across Queensland. It is also important to note that there has been no change to the weapons regulation in respect of category H and there have always been conditions on the ownership, possession and use of firearms. Those conditions are in place for very good reasons, and that is for the safety of Queenslanders, the safety of all people.

The firearms policy set out in the 2017 National Firearms Agreement is crafted to achieve the best balance between the needs of people, such as sporting shooters and primary producers, to have genuine access to firearms and the interests of safety. We must always remember that as part of living in a safe community, we have to ensure that the rights that we enjoy are qualified to some extent, and we see that encapsulated in the weapons regulation. There are always conditions on the ownership of firearms for the safety of our community, the safety of Queenslanders. In fact, the recent review of the National Firearms Agreement arose from a very important recommendation of the Martin Place siege review, which was undertaken by the federal and New South Wales governments, again for community safety reasons—to ensure people are safe. Much of the public discussion around the 2017 National Firearms Agreement has been around the decision of COAG to reclassify the lever action shotgun, a decision that Queensland supports and a decision that Queensland will be implementing in due course.

Our government continues to engage and consult widely with all stakeholders and community to carefully balance the interests of those with a genuine need to access firearms with the safety and security of our community. Fundamentally, Queensland follows the national firearms framework, but there are some historic variations. One of those historic variations is the ownership of category H handguns for primary producers on a genuine needs basis. Historically in Queensland, handgun licences have been issued to primary producers on the basis of genuine reasons criteria for use on large properties to destroy sick or injured animals to prevent prolonged suffering for the animal if the owner was to return to their residence to gain access to a long arm.

Under our legislative safeguards and protections, there are currently over 2,100 concealable firearms licences in Queensland and over 2,500 concealable firearms issued for occupational rural purposes. Under Queensland legislation, applicants who wish to hold a category H firearm for occupational rural purposes must demonstrate a genuine reason for holding that weapon. That has to be supported by documentation to possess and use that particular class of firearm. This is particularly relevant because of the nature of handguns: they are concealable. That, of course, is accompanied by an additional awareness around safety of Queenslanders. This includes handguns that may be used for sports target shooting at approved pistol clubs or for occupational purposes including training, security guard employment and occupational rural purposes.

I must say—and it is important for us to note this—our government accepts and takes the expert advice on community safety from the Queensland Police Service. The Queensland Police Service is a professional and well informed service that is sworn to protect life. What do they say? The weapons regulations around category H are right because they are designed to protect community safety. There is a real test here today for those opposite. Are they going to support the fundamental basis of John Howard's 20-year bipartisan legacy around the National Firearms Agreement, which is about sensible gun control, or are they going to risk placing more concealable handguns out there in our community, which is a threat to the security of our community, a threat to safety? Those opposite have a decision. Are they going to support more concealable handguns out there in our community in Queensland, or are they going to stick to the bipartisan legacy of John Howard's National Firearms Agreement? We will always put the safety of Queenslanders front and centre, and the current weapons regulations around category H do just that.

*(Time expired)*