



Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

Record of Proceedings, 11 October 2017

MOTION

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (7.45 pm): I move—

That the Weapons Legislation (Lever Action Shotguns) Amendment Regulation 2017, subordinate legislation No. 212 of 2017, tabled in the House on 10 October 2017, be disallowed.

I expect in the debate on this motion tonight that there will be some mudslinging. What is paramount in this debate tonight and what Queenslanders expect when this House deals with the issue of firearms is that the outcomes are significant and genuinely contribute to community safety around firearms. It is paramount that whatever we do here contributes significantly to community safety and is not window-dressing, is not a political stunt and is evidence based.

Secondly, the debate cannot be emotionally driven. These are very serious issues and there are very serious expectations around this in the community. We need to keep to the facts and evidence based data. That is very important in the context of this debate. I believe that firearm owners are very much demonised in the mainstream media, particularly in metropolitan areas where there is not as much interaction and use of firearms. It is quite easy to judge and misunderstand the culture that surrounds these firearms and the people who use them when people are not used to them and do not interact with them.

The issue and reason we are debating this motion tonight is pretty simple. There has been a lot of media hype and obscure media hype around lever action shotguns. The Labor government has decided to attack licensed firearm owners by directing this at lever action shotguns. We have been aware for a long time that this was coming. We gave notice of the disallowance motion last night so that we could debate this tonight. We believe the regulation should be stopped.

I firmly believe that the KAP and other crossbenchers could stand beside antifirearm people in a debate on firearms and agree on a lot more than they disagree on. If people really want to address community safety and firearms then there are some meaningful things we could do. This is not one of them. This is rubbish.

I would like to go back to where this started. There was a YouTube clip of an imported lever action shotgun. I remind members in the House that it is misleading and quite frankly a lie for people to say that this is new technology. I could have acquired one of these legally in Queensland over the last 30 years.

Some politicians down south got hold of the YouTube clip. In the context of the National Firearms Agreement people were looking for something to make an issue out of. The National Firearms Agreement is a very meaningful document which has been worked on for 20 years. People were looking for some meaningful outcomes to address safety issues. This was the firearm plucked out by Minister Keenan. He decided to make a stand on this firearm.

Most firearm owners, particularly in western and regional areas where lever action shotguns are predominantly used, are quite bemused about this. It is such an obscure category of firearm to pick on. Everyone is quite confused about why it has attracted all the attention.

The heart of the issue is that too many people who do not know what they are talking about have jumped on the bandwagon in terms of this issue and made a political football out of it. That is why we are here tonight debating this. The real issue here is that we are failing to recognise where the real effort should be put in and instead changing a category of shotgun.

The National Firearms Agreement is a very meaningful document. The antigun lobby could come together with others and do something meaningful. Let me go through some of the things that could be done. Unfortunately these things are a bit difficult for government and costly so they have been sidelined in this debate. Instead we are talking about one obscure reference in one particular category.

The things we could be doing include the following. We could have a permanent amnesty on firearms. We just finished an amnesty. That was a great idea. I am totally in favour of it. It should be permanent.

The next thing we could do is have an instant licence verification system. At the moment we are still using an antiquated paper based system. I could have a gun licence and I could be radicalised or could have a domestic violence order against me and I would not be found out for six months. It is an antiquated paper based system that does not catch up with people. That should be digitalised so that we have an instant licence verification system. That is real safety. That is what we should be debating tonight. Unfortunately, we have a political football on our hands. There will be an illusion of public safety for the people of Queensland, which is a lie.

The next thing we should be doing is lobbying the federal government for customs to have more resources to track what is coming into the country in the post. I am sure that members who are going to engage in the debate tonight will have educated themselves by watching the *Four Corners* program a few months ago. It did not focus on licensed shooters or an Adler. It looked at all of the guns that come in illegally. That is where the problem is. People are bringing Glock pistols into the country by mail order. Customs are not checking 75 per cent of our mail coming into the country; only 25 per cent is being checked. I can log onto the internet tonight and order a Glock pistol to come in the post and I have a 75 per cent chance of getting it. We are told, 'That is not a problem. We will not put any resources into that. We will not be lobbying for that. What we are going to talk about is a lever action rifle that a small fraction of shooters use. That is the big problem. That is going to contribute to community safety.' That is rubbish.

The next thing I would like to talk about is the way this is being used. This goes to the heart of how lever action weapons are used. When politicians were scrambling for some meaningful evidence as to why this gun should be recategorised, they said it has a similar action to a pump action. I challenge you to go and talk to someone who uses firearms—I do not use them a lot—and say that to them and they will laugh at you. It is silly. The police in New South Wales finally came up with this idea to tell politicians that. This did not come from a study of weapons, analytically looking at what is a risk and what is not, looking at crimes and where the big risks are and pulling those firearms out. This came from media hype, from politicians trying to grandstand on the issue of firearms. It is sad that we have lowered the level of debate once again in this country. We have lowered the expectations of Queenslanders by using this as a political football and grandstanding on these issues, pretending that we are making them safer. If we want to have an argument about making Queensland safer, I am all for it—let us have it. Let us have a proper debate on meaningful action, but do not bring this rubbish into the House and say that this is going to solve the problem because it will not.

Anyone who has spent any time looking at the evidence and the data would know that the problems do not come from the licensing part of the industry. That is not where the problems come from. The problems do not predominantly come from stolen weapons or licensed gun owners. They come from criminals acquiring weapons. When it comes to the tragedy in Martin Place, that shotgun was never registered in Australia and it was used by a deranged person. The licensing regime has no impact on those sorts of tragedies. If there is a reference to the tragic event in the United States tonight, if you try to pull that into this debate, shame on you because it has nothing to do with this. If you are talking about bringing into parliament changes to the categorisation of a lever action shotgun as a response to that tragedy, that is poor government at best. We should be talking about making meaningful changes to our laws that will provide a safer environment for the community. We have a lot of common ground there with the antigun people.

Like I said, the main priorities of the firearms industry include having a permanent amnesty for people to hand in their firearms. That is what the firearms industry want. They want permanent amnesty. They also want an instant verification system. This is top of the pile of priorities for them. It is not about

expanding the use of guns or including more guns in the easier-to-acquire categories. These are the priorities. The other priority is lobbying the federal government for more scrutiny by customs of items coming through the post. That is where the real change can happen.

Once again, it is very easy in parliament to pick on the licensed firearm owners. Changing the licensing regime seems like a good idea. If you follow through with this regulation tonight, it is cynical at best and misleading to say the least to the Queensland public. I think there are some really good things we can do in the Queensland parliament to increase community safety around firearm legislation. There are some good things we can work together on. If you want to throw in changes to the licensing of lever action firearms, you are going to inflame people, you are not going to make any difference and it is not evidence based. If there is a tragedy or if there are crimes linked with this type of weapon or if there is new technology being brought in, fair enough. Let the umpire decide. Do not create a story once you have decided that this is going to be used as a political football. I think that is the reason why people lose faith in politicians. They want to know that there is substance behind what we do in this House.

The issue of community safety around firearms is very serious. I think there is a lot of common ground in this House on that issue, despite our different ideologies around that. There are a lot of good things that we can do. This is not one of them. This is a smokescreen. This is low-hanging fruit. I think the timing of this is appalling. It is very much reflective of the continued attitude towards licensed firearm owners in this state, trying to make out that they are the problem. They never have been. All the evidence backs that up. All of the effort that goes into licensing and increasing the licensing regime is tearing up police resources. They should be chasing criminals. I plead with the House tonight to consider the way it is going to vote. Please consider the community safety issues that should be pursued. This will not make a difference there.

I want to make one other point before I finish—that is, the grandfather clause that is offered in this regulation is inoperable. If you dig down through the detail, there have been changes made to the definition of modifications of firearms. Modifications are commonplace in the industry—people will change a stock on a rifle and do a lot of things themselves. Changing the definition of modifications has the ability to make every modified licensed firearm out there unlicensed. It has the potential to make everyone who has modified a rifle a criminal—which would be a very big proportion of firearm owners. This regulation has been poorly put together and put together with a political agenda. Members better think very carefully about how they vote on this tonight. This regulation will have some unintended consequences that will not reflect well on this parliament if it gets through.