



Speech By  
**Tim Mander**


**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 21 March 2017

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Category H Weapons**

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (12.18 pm): At a time when many of our hardworking farmers are suffering through enduring drought it seems that the Weapons Licensing branch within the Queensland Police Service continues to apply their own interpretation to the legislation in relation to category H weapons for primary producers. What is of great concern to me is the way in which this government is treating law-abiding firearm users like they are criminals. I want to give honourable members an example of a man who has come to see me on a number of occasions who is very distressed by the whole situation. His name is John Geary and he is a lifelong resident of Taroom. He has lived at the same address for 47 years.

He is a grazier who does a bit of diesel fitting and truck driving on the side during the quieter times, and there have been a lot of quieter times during the drought. He is a law-abiding citizen who in my opinion is being treated unfairly by this Labor government. Mr Geary told me that he has held a category H firearm licence for around 20 years. Under the Weapons Act, primary producers are permitted to have weapons such as handguns for very good reasons. They obviously need to manage their property, they need to look after pests and feral animals, and they need to do that in a way which is safe and secure. There are OH&S issues because primary producers do not want to ride horses and motorbikes with rifles strapped across their handlebars or over their shoulders. Mr Geary was advised by the local police that his licence had expired. He claims that he was given no notice, so of course he immediately went about remedying the situation.

Weapons Licensing has been at best unhelpful. After holding his licence for around 20 years, he waited for three months to see what was going to happen with his reapplication. He then started making countless phone calls to Weapons Licensing. Six months passed and finally, after almost 12 months since reapplying, he had his application rejected. Mr Geary alleges that one of the officers in Weapons Licensing told him that in his opinion he and many other farmers should have never been issued with a category H licence. He allegedly called Mr Geary a Clayton's farmer. They are now referring to a CSIRO report that is 30 years old. It has always been there, but it has never been referred to in the past. They also claim that these farmers should not get category H licences because other states do not allow it either. Mr Geary is just one of hundreds of law-abiding primary producers who are having their category H weapon licence renewals rejected. I am calling on the minister to take responsibility for this injustice and intervene—not to abrogate his responsibility and say that this is an operational matter—because this is a matter that affects the livelihoods of many of our rural people. Law-abiding primary producers are being victimised and treated very poorly. Weapons Licensing should be focused on those who do the wrong thing, not those who do the right thing.

Today I was quite alarmed when I received a reply to a question on notice that I submitted earlier this year. I asked the minister to advise how many weapons licence holders had their licences either cancelled or suspended for committing a crime. How many people with a weapons licence committed a crime and had the licence suspended or taken away from them? The answer I received back is that it is impossible to give this information because they would have to go through every cancellation one by one. I think there are at least 76 full-time-equivalent staff in Weapons Licensing, and by that response they are telling me that their focus is more on making it difficult for law-abiding citizens to get a tool of their trade rather than those people who are breaking the law by illegally possessing firearms. The balance is well out here, and I ask the minister to intervene and stop the rot that is happening.