




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

Record of Proceedings, 15 March 2022

**POLICE LEGISLATION (EFFICIENCIES AND EFFECTIVENESS) AMENDMENT
BILL**

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (4.06 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Police Legislation (Efficiencies and Effectiveness) Amendment Bill 2021. In the most part, there seem to be some constructive amendments and efforts by the government to tidy up some areas. I would like to focus on the one I am most familiar with—that is, weapons licensing.

Firstly, I wanted to make mention of the fact that a lot of this is about the efficiencies of police services. Not to be forgotten, or perhaps it is an omission, is police accommodation. It is never as much of an issue in places such as Townsville or on the coast—not that it is not an issue in those places, but it is a really big issue in places such as Mount Isa, where they have old, decrepit accommodation. We can still force the first-year connies to go to Mount Isa to make up the numbers in our district, but when they are shoved in an old building in Mount Isa in their first year it is not the best way to attract more people to go out there and stay out there. We need to think more broadly about the issue of policing. Mount Isa is an anomaly. As I understand, a lot of the housing is done privately and QPS officers have their own housing on the coast. Mount Isa has a large station that relies on its own police housing. That is a big issue.

I wanted to focus on weapons licensing. I do not want to be critical of the minister here. I do not think that the minister has been forcing too much of the problem in weapons licensing, but there is a problem in weapons licensing. There is no question about that. When you talk to anyone in the regions, there is an embedded ideology that licensed firearm owners are a problem and that they are an inherent risk. That is a reflection and I would go so far as to say an ignorant attitude of people not familiar with the use of firearms and licensed firearm owners. It is an attitude born out of ignorance. I know this because I know people who own firearms and I have friends who do.

Most people in the city do not interact with firearms. I do not blame them for having that view. They take a one-dimensional look at this issue and they think it is a problem, so it seems to be modus operandi to get rid of as many firearms as we can and that will make things safer. Unfortunately, that is wrong. It does not make things safer. The evidence is there. There is a tonne of empirical data to decisively instruct people otherwise that that does not enhance safety.

Putting effort and energy into licensed firearm owners does not improve community safety. Until you get past that, we are always going to be short-changed in efficiencies dealing with weapons licensing. There is a lot of effort put into chasing up the likes of Rob Katter or the farmer out at Boulia or Birdsville, 'Have you done your licence yet?' We have 8,000 licences sitting there in Weapons Licensing because they are running after people in rural areas. They are never the problem; they never have been. There is an in-built prejudice. 'We don't know them very well. We don't deal with them, so let's just make it really hard.' We went through all the rigmarole with category H, which has only been won back through the courts and QCAT. We are winning back ground.

If you want to see the hypocrisy and contradictions in relation to weapons licensing, it is easier to own and operate a pistol if you live in Brisbane than Birdsville. It is much easier to belong to a pistol club in Brisbane than it is in Birdsville—there is no pistol club in Birdsville—but that is a legitimate use

of a pistol. It is much easier for me to move to Brisbane to buy a pistol so I can go to a shooting range once a week or once a month to keep current. In Birdsville you would not bother, so you are much more likely to have people using pistols in the city, where I presume you do not want them, than you do in western areas. You multiply that by a matter of degrees as you go to more remote cattle stations. They do not go out to join pistol clubs or get weapons licenses. Primary producers do not think that is a good use. We just do not think that. It is a subjective call. They do not find it difficult. So you are taking guns off them, but it is still just as easy in the city. There is a contradiction in these efforts.

Many people saw the *Four Corners* program years ago where Glocks came in in containers from overseas. That is your problem. It is the criminals who are getting this stuff. That is where you want the police effort—not chasing Nick Dametto or Rob Katter who are licensed firearm owners who shoot at the range or only approved places and who lock up their firearms every day. That is not the problem. You are still getting bits of that here. You say that dealers cannot take category R machine guns. I am not comfortable with seeing machine guns around the place either, but saying a dealer cannot hold onto that because that is unsafe, well, let's break that down. I am not saying is it the worst thing in the bill, but what you are saying is that 'Outback' Dave in Mount Isa with his big lockable safe that has never been broken into—and is never likely to be broken into—is unsafe. Let's get the guy who has tried to do the right thing. He thinks, 'What do I do with this? I'll go into the gun shop to work this out, and hopefully I can just give it to him and get rid of it.' He goes in there and says, 'Mate, take it home with you.' What is the sense in that? 'Take it home with you and we'll try and work it out.'

I applaud the efforts of Paul Taylor with regard to this. He is trying to get sensible solutions for us. As I understand it, now the police officer will go to that person's place, pick it up and take possession of that. That is not a bad outcome, but let's stand back and just look at it. What is the aggregated risk of that happening for the limited number of times it is going to a dealer? Just let them deal with it with the dealer's weapons license. But again that prejudice, 'this is all so dangerous, we're so risk-averse', keeps coming up. I am not so sure that is the most efficient outcome, but it is better than it was.

We are talking about lengthening the term that you have licences, and that is good. It responds to the acute problem but it really does ignore the greater problem, which is why there is this big backlog. Rodger Jefferis is out at Elrose Station, and they are doing topographical studies on his cattle station to see if it really is legitimate that he uses a pistol when he is out checking fences on his horse. This is serious. They had a four- or 10-page document going into all this detail on Rodger Jefferis, but he is not the risk. That is not the sort of thing you worry about. Someone has gone to all this trouble and wasted all of that time and resources. That is why you have 8,000 cases there—because you are spending too much effort in the wrong place. It is making us unsafe when we do have criminals getting handguns. That is where we want the effort. That is where the real efficiencies come into play. That is the low-hanging fruit. We can track down that person. We have an address. We have a safety check. Let's just do all that. But that is never where your problems are coming from. The effort needs to be where the criminals are.

I think the government really needs to get beyond that ideology. I know there are a lot of people in this House who would like to see firearms out of the whole atmosphere and not accessible to anyone in the public, and that is fine. You are entitled to that view. But understand and educate yourself on the real risks and empirical data. Everything needs to be evidence based. Do not rely on this subjective stuff out of Weapons Licensing, because there is an embedded bias against licensed firearm owners. That is why you have 8,000 licences there. I think the minister is trying to do his bit to tidy this up. I think Paul Taylor is trying to tidy it up in Weapons Licensing, but there are big problems there and they need big solutions.

We are a long way off optimising community safety. I think we can all agree that we want community safety around firearms. I have a very strong view, in fact, that the supporters of licensed firearm owners would actually have a lot more in common with anti-firearm people in terms of community safety. We all want community safety around licensed firearm owners. We would love to work together on all of these initiatives, and the permanent amnesty is a product of that. The licensed firearm association said, 'Good idea! We know we're not the problem. We've got nothing to hide.' That was a good example of where we can work together on things that actually do contribute to community safety. But when everyone is holding in their trenches and saying that licensed firearm owners are the enemy, there is this embedded prejudice that is highly prevalent in so many instances and dealings. Our offices—and I am sure any of the regional MPs who are not in government—are full of complaints relating to weapons licensing issues. So many of these people are just decent, hardworking people who use them as tools. You are talking about mums on stations taking a pistol when they are going to check the bores or fences when their husbands are away driving a truck. That is what you are talking about.