



Police Federation of Australia

The National Voice of Policing

SUBMISSION to the

The Attorney General's Department
National Firearms Registry

via – firearms.policy@ag.gov.au

National Firearms Registry

Thank you for providing us the opportunity to make a submission to this important initiative.

The Police Federation of Australia (PFA) is the national body representing the professional and industrial interests of Australia's more than 66,000 police officers, across all state, territory, and the federal police jurisdictions.

Membership as at: 31 December 2021	
Police Association of South Australia	4,774
Western Australia Police Union of Workers	7,100
Queensland Police Union of Employees	12,190
The Police Association (Victoria)	17,791
Police Association of NSW	17,174
Police Association of Tasmania	1,419
Northern Territory Police Association	1,616
Australian Federal Police Association	3,965
Police Federation of Australia	66,029

The PFA, particularly through its President and the President of the Queensland Police Union, Ian Leavers and President of the Australian Federal Police Association, Alex Caruana have been strong advocates for the establishment of a National Firearms Register. Whilst the PFA has argued for such

a registry for many years, it was the murders of Queensland Constables Matthew and Rachel McCrow and Mr Alan Dare in Wieambilla in December last year, that again brought the issue to national attention.

Following the National Cabinet Meeting on Friday 3 February 2023, the PFA wrote to the Attorney General offering its strong support for the establishment of a National Firearms Register.

We advised the AG in our correspondence that in 2012 the PFA called for a greater collaboration in intelligence sharing across all police jurisdictions. In submissions to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement we proposed a series of complimentary, systemic steps that can be taken to collectively assist all police services in dealing with the risks and offences from terrorism, other serious and organised crime and the capacity for greater intelligence sharing. This included a proposed upgrade of the then Australian Criminal Intelligence Database and the Australian Law Enforcement Intelligence Network via a new National Criminal Intelligence System (NCIS) as a pivotal step in providing better national security.

In 2012, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement's Inquiry into the Gathering and Use of Criminal Intelligence (May 2013 report) recommended:

"...the establishment of a national repository for criminal intelligence..."

The NCIS, which has been being developed since that time, in our view should be the vehicle for delivering the National Firearms Register.

We note in your consultation paper, you indicate that the options being considered for the Register would include its ability to -

- Operate in near real-time
- Provide details of licence holders
- Provide a single firearm record (technical details, identity and history)
- Be interoperable between jurisdictions
- Link firearms and individuals
- Leverage existing systems, including intelligence data where possible, and
- Provide notification of cross-jurisdictional movement of firearms

We likewise support the consultation paper's stated primary objective for the Register is "preserving community and police safety, by ensuring police have timely and accurate information required to accurately assess the firearms risk posed by an individual and protect the community from harm".

In response to the questions contained in the Consultation Paper, we make the following comments:

Question 1: What capabilities should a National Firearms Register provide to government regulators and law enforcement?

- Identify each individual who has a firearms' license and any conditions that may apply to that license
- Whether they own a firearm, how many they own and the type
- Where their firearms are stored and a record of checks carried out on that storage
- In particular for law enforcement purposes, any firearms license holders' information should be linked to criminal and intelligence history of the individual eg links to Sovereign Citizen posts, police haters etc, which would provide the capability of inter jurisdictional information including alerts around rejected, suspended or cancelled licenses

Question 2: Should a National Firearms Register trace more than firearms, for example firearms accessories, magazines, parts and ammunition?

- In our February correspondence with the AG, the PFA queried why licensed firearm holders are able to purchase ammunition for firearms that they don't hold a license for and that a cap should be considered on the amount of ammunition that can be purchased. We argued that consideration should be given to entering ammunition purchases onto a register that is accessible via the NCIS
- Where practicable, we would support the purchases of firearms accessories, magazines and parts should all be recorded into the system

Question 3: Do you have any comments on the benefits a National Firearms Register will offer to law enforcement and community safety, including any broader benefits that should be explored?

- It will provide real time information for front line officers attending incidents, in particular incidents where a firearm may be available to an offender

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- It will also allow for longer term data analysis of information sought from and contained in the Register

Question 4: What other capabilities could a National Firearms Register have that would be of benefit to the community, including to lawful firearms owners?

- It will provide immediate transparency from the registers' standpoint as to who the firearm owner was (where it was recovered post lost/stolen) and hence the higher likelihood of the return of the missing firearm to the lawful owner. It would also help contribute to a safer Australia as it would provide an immediate one stop shop from a Police Inquiry standpoint as a single source of truth when compared to the standalone individual checks that are currently needing to be completed. All be it in real time vs the current time delays when serial number searches are conducted on POIs and interstate vehicle checks.

Question 5: Do you have any comments on the creation of a verification service to support licensing and permit systems?

- Yes, this would help further empower the industry by helping ensure that only those that should have access to firearms for their employment (farmers, pest controllers, rangers, etc.) should have firearms and that those that shouldn't (DVO, mental health concerns, etc.) do not.

Question 6: Do you think trusted entities should be able to electronically communicate with firearms registries, if so, what capabilities should be available to trusted entities such as firearms dealers?

- Consideration should be given for other relevant agencies (eg RSPCA Inspectors, State Wildlife Rangers, etc) to be given not only access to relevant information on the Register but also allow a capacity for them to input relevant intelligence into the system

Question 7: Do you have any comments on the information proposed to be held by a National Firearms Register?

- The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) have created a simple, yet very effective firearm licensing identification software reference table known as the Firearms Reference Table (FRT). It is designed to help ensure that firearms being licensed or that are recovered for any reason (lost/stolen/seized/surrendered, etc.) are correctly identified from a Make, Model, Calibre & Serial Number location and format/style to help ensure police records of both licensing and seized weapons, utilise common naming conventions (good data in is good data out). The Australian NFR should explore what options there are to license this software from the RCMP for this purpose noting that it works very effectively in Canada.
- It also needs to be mandated that any firearm (complete or incomplete) recovered / surrendered for any reason where the serial number cannot be identified, as a result of it being erased, obliterated or the like is 'forensically restored' and this simple yet effective process would help to formally identify the 1,000's of reported lost/stolen firearms that are actually recovered by police. Doing so would also help provide significant Intelligence leads from both an interstate firearms' trafficking standpoint but also from a data set of stolen and recovered 'altered' standpoint.

I would be happy to provide any further information the Department might consider appropriate to expand on any aspects of this submission.

Sincerely yours



Scott Weber APM
Chief Executive Officer

25 April 2023