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AMA TASMANIA OPPOSES ANY WEAKENING OF FIREARMS LAWS IN TASMANIA

The Tasmanian Government has proposed various changes to firearms laws in Tasmania and these proposals are set to be examined by the Tasmanian Parliament. If passed into law, the recommendations appear to represent a weakening of firearms laws in Tasmania and may breach the National Firearms Agreement that all jurisdictions signed up to in the wake of the 1996 Port Arthur shootings.

AMA Tasmania is concerned that the Tasmanian Government proposal represents a weakening of firearms laws at a time when legislation must be strengthened in all jurisdictions to account for technological changes and also to remove the prevailing patchwork provisions governing firearm ownership and use around the country. Many of our members have seen firsthand the impact of death and serious injury resulting from firearms. We believe that the proposed reforms will place Tasmanian lives at risk and constitute a breach of the National Firearms Agreement (NFA) that was established following the tragedy of the Port Arthur massacre in 1996. The NFA has seen a halving of firearms-related deaths in the two decades since its inception with this action saving thousands of lives.

AMA Tasmania supports a strengthening of current firearms legislation that prohibits high-powered semi-automatic weapons and pump or lever action rifles so that they can no longer be circumvented by new or adapted models. Any proposals to weaken laws in this area must be rejected.

AMA Tasmania acknowledges a legitimate role for firearms in agriculture, regulated sport, and for the military and police.

AMA Tasmania notes that the proposed changes include the establishment of the Tasmanian Firearms Owners Council to advise the Tasmanian Government on all matters relating to the regulation and use of firearms in the state. The former Minister's media release refers to the TFOC as a "truly representative peak body" and AMA Tasmania believes that the medical profession and other firearm safety stakeholders must be represented if the TFOC is established. AMA Tasmania will strongly resist any action by the TFOC to weaken firearms laws.

AMA Tasmania is unaware of any compelling evidence supporting a proposal for license periods to be doubled from five years to 10 years and from one year to two years, depending on the category of the firearm. AMA Tasmania also opposes automatic renewal of licences.

AMA Tasmania supports the principle of a "genuine need" to acquire, possess or own a firearm that is enshrined in the NFA. We oppose any steps to water this concept down such as introducing a "tool of the trade" category.



AMA Tasmania believes that the proposed changes to infringement notices for minor storage offences warrant further investigation as there may be grounds for such crimes to attract a civil rather than criminal penalty, for example, if the owner is a farmer.

AMA Tasmania will be concerned if any proposed amendments to the NFA (scheduled to be referred to the Council of Police Ministers) have the effect of weakening the NFA in any way. Any dilution of Tasmania's strong firearm laws will not only unnecessarily increase the risk of firearm-related injury and death in Tasmania but will also set an awful national precedent. AMA Tasmania and AMA Federal are strong supporters of the National Firearms Agreement and a commitment to a consistent legislative approach across all jurisdictions. However, inconsistent regulations across States and Territories, combined with intense lobbying from firearm bodies to weaken firearm laws, and a rise in numbers of illegal and stolen firearms, all constitute a threat to the continued successful operation of the National Firearms Agreement.

The AMA Firearms position can be read at: <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/firearms-2017>

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