

FIREARMS AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR G. BAKER (South Perth) [3.07 pm]: I rise to speak about the Firearms Amendment Bill 2021. I will start by talking a bit about my childhood. I grew up in a family that owned a firearm. From time to time, we would go shooting in the bush, often around Bridgetown. We hunted. I can safely say that no rabbits were ever harmed, but, yes, we did go shooting from time to time with dad's .22. Dad taught us safe gun use. He taught us to respect the danger of the weapon. What he taught us was safe for that time—it was considered to be a responsible way to teach children about guns in the 1970s. But this meant that he stored the gun in the back of a cupboard, with the bolt stored separately on a different shelf and the ammunition kept in a different cupboard in the house. Keeping these things separate within the house was considered safe and responsible back then. That .22 is still in the family. It is now securely stored and properly and legally used on a country farm.

I understand the point of view of a legal, responsible gun owner who has never done anything wrong and respects the law. I get that, and I get it from my dad quite a bit! But attitudes towards guns have changed, especially since the Port Arthur massacre in 1996. Since then, Australians have consistently turned away from the horror of gun violence and sought greater protection from firearms. Stricter gun laws and the elimination of semiautomatic rifles were the best things that John Howard ever did. Never have so many Labor members of Parliament sung the praises of John Howard as they have done in the last day or two! Gun control laws have had the greatest effect in reducing the incidence of mass shootings, which have been completely eliminated from our culture since 1996. That is an extraordinary result, to the point that the Australian who committed the Christchurch massacre had moved from Australia to New Zealand because of its lax gun laws.

Gun control laws have also severely hampered organised crime and produced good outcomes in reducing the incidence of domestic violence. WA Labor has a proud record on gun control. We have supported or moved successive waves of legislation to restrict the availability of firearms while at the same time protecting the needs of legitimate firearm owners. In 2003, the Gallop government introduced the Firearms Amendment Bill, in which the then Minister for Police, Michelle Roberts, proposed a new penalty of 14 years' jail for carrying an unlicensed gun in combination with drugs or money. This was clearly targeted at combating organised crime. In 2017, early in our first term of government, we had a three-month gun amnesty, which returned 1 200 guns to WA police. Just last year, we introduced the anti-consorting laws, which further clamped down on organised crime.

Do gun laws work? Absolutely, yes; there is no doubt about that. Yesterday, when the member for North West Central asked what percentage of legitimate firearm owners had committed crimes, he was asking for the wrong statistic. He should have asked for the statistic on homicide rates. Let us compare homicide rates in Australia with those in the United States. Currently, Australia has a homicide rate of 0.888 cases per 100 000 population. For every 100 000 people, we have fewer than one homicide. This number has halved since 1996, when the rate was 1.62 per 100 000 population. After John Howard's crackdown, the homicide rate fell. Much of that fall was in firearm-related homicides. Let us compare the statistics in the USA with those in Australia. For the USA, the same figure is 5.1 homicides per 100 000 people. When we compare 5.1 with 0.888, it is five times higher. But four out of those five homicides are gun-related. The United States has an extraordinarily greater number of gun-related homicides than Australia. Further, in the USA, the proportion of gun-related homicides compared with total homicides is getting worse—it is rising. It is going in the wrong direction and in the opposite direction to Australia. Worse still, gun-related suicides in the US occur at a greater rate than the homicide rate and at a far greater rate than in Australia. The USA has a massive problem to fix within its culture, and it is finding it very difficult to do that. If WA had the same homicide rate as the United States of America, there would be at least 100 homicides in Western Australia every year. These are just some of the many, many stats that demonstrate that gun laws work to save lives in Western Australia. Yesterday, I also listened to the member for Swan Hills talk about the role of guns in exacerbating domestic violence. She gave a very sobering account.

With each wave of legislation we have introduced, we need to take some time to see what effect it has had, how criminal elements are adapting and what needs to be done next. This brings us to the issues identified in the review of the Firearms Act. I congratulate the Minister for Police on bringing these reforms to Parliament. Our legislation builds on the anti-consorting laws that we introduced and passed last year. This legislation will clamp down on access to firearms by organised crime with the firearms prohibition order scheme; clamp down on illicit manufacturing of firearms and anticipate changing technologies; increase penalties for manufacturers and suppliers of illicit firearms; and introduce a permanent gun amnesty, because we want to encourage people to do the right thing.

The firearms prohibition order scheme is a welcome reform in the fight against organised crime. The McGowan government has a great record of tackling organised crime. I mentioned the anti-consorting laws earlier. In 2017, we had a raft of campaign commitments targeting organised crime. One of these was the Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce, which put about 100 extra officers and 20 staff especially onto cracking down on meth. This rapidly

evolved within police into a number of serious organised crime squads, because at the heart of the drug trade is organised crime. The result of this was a drop in meth consumption. I think we would all remember the horrible mess under the Barnett government that was our meth problem. Backyard labs and all sorts of things were going on all over the place. Meth consumption has dropped by half since the Barnett government was in power. That has been done through the crackdown on crime. We have also seen a massive increase in drug seizures by police. That is an extraordinary result against organised crime.

When we tackle organised crime and drug crime, guns are a huge danger to the police officers performing those duties. Thankfully, Western Australia is not the United States or it would be even more dangerous for serving police officers.

Another great reform of this government is the provision of personally fitted ballistic vests to each police officer. We introduced that in 2019. It is hard to believe that the Barnett government had ignored that issue for many years. Each officer has been given their own personally fitted ballistic vest. I witnessed a demonstration of the effectiveness of these vests with the Minister for Police and the Commissioner of Police. It involved a .44 Magnum pistol being fired at point-blank range into the vest. I examined the vest afterwards, and it is extraordinary that those thin fibres are able to stop a weapon of such energy. I even got to hold the bullet in my hand afterwards; it was still hot. The introduction of these personally fitted ballistic vests was a great improvement to the safety of police officers and a great achievement of the McGowan government at the time. Better than just putting ballistic vests on every police officer, let us do everything we can to get rid of guns in the hands of organised crime in the first place. The firearms prohibition order scheme further extends the McGowan government's campaign against organised crime by reducing their access to firearms.

The second aspect of the reforms, illegal manufacture and repair of firearms, dealing in firearms and firearms technology offences, comes in two parts, in division 3 and division 4 of the bill. Division 3 offences relate to the manufacture, repair and dealing in firearms and other things. Division 4 offences relate to firearms technology. This bill grasps the massive change underway in the quality of the technology that people can get into their home and backyard shed. Between things like 3D printers, laser cutters, new polymers and digital metal lathes, people can build a much wider range of things in a properly equipped backyard shed, and for tens of thousands of dollars people can get home production that is nearly up to the standard of the highest quality manufacturers. This changes the way that firearms can be produced and distributed. Although home production is not a big challenge to the established legal manufacturers, it does make the enforcement of firearm laws harder. Our current laws against the home manufacture of firearms do not properly cover all the new production methods and criminal activities being generated by these backyard operations. This new legislation will cover the possession of parts of firearms. This new legislation will cover 3D printers, weapon plans, software and other digital technology if they are being used to produce firearms. This legislation will also cover the dealing and selling of these privately produced firearms and gun parts. We will also require manufacturers of ammunition to have a licence. We will increase the penalties to up to 14 years' jail, in line with the majority of Australian jurisdictions. There is nothing particularly revolutionary about this. It is a standard that we are moving to across Australia. These laws will give the Western Australia Police Force the ability to combat these new technologies.

A third aspect of the legislation is the permanent firearms amnesty. Amnesties are a great way to remove firearms from the community that might otherwise fall into the hands of criminals. Putting this amnesty into legislation gives WA police certainty and it gives members of the public the opportunity to do the right thing without fear of prosecution. Firearm amnesties have been extremely successful. We have had one recently, since 1 July 2021. As the minister indicated during question time, we had over 900 firearms handed in as a result of that amnesty, which is an excellent result.

By introducing this legislation and this collection of measures—firearms prohibition orders, tackling illegal manufacture, repair and dealing in firearms and firearms' technology offences, increased penalties, and a permanent gun amnesty—we will ensure that firearms are rare, difficult to procure and hard to justify owning. This legislation will make it harder for organised crime to do business, and it is tightly focused on thwarting organised crime. It will have little effect on legitimate responsible gun owners.

This bill builds on many years of Labor reforms on gun control. We have found ways that organised crime has been evading or undermining the existing laws and we are cracking down. I would like to congratulate the Minister for Police on bringing this bill to the house.

MS C.M. ROWE (Belmont) [3.22 pm]: I rise today to also make a contribution on the Firearms Amendment Bill 2021. I would like to begin by acknowledging the Minister for Police for bringing this very important bill to the house. This is an important piece of legislation that aims to crack down on serious and organised crime, while improving community safety by limiting the access that criminals and dangerous people have to firearms. This bill will provide powers to the police to ban anyone they reasonably suspect poses a threat to the community from holding a gun licence.

I would like to state my absolute support of this legislation and, in fact, any legislation that seeks to strengthen our gun laws here in Western Australia. All too often we have very tragic reminders of the dangers of inadequate gun laws, as seen in the United States of America. The US has a gun culture that we absolutely do not want to replicate here in Australia. Its lack of gun control laws has shocking repercussions in the number of gun-related deaths it experiences every year.

There is no uniform agreement in the US on the definition of the term “mass shooting” in terms of the number of deaths or victims. However, if we define a mass shooting as four or more people killed, the year 2020 saw 513 people die in mass shootings in the US, according to the Gun Violence Archive. Devastatingly, however, I was really shocked to learn that that constitutes a very small percentage of the total number of gun-related homicides that occur each year in the US. In that same year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a staggering 19 384 people were killed in the US from gun-related injuries. That is an enormous number of people who lost their lives. Contrastingly, here in Australia we have some of the strongest laws around gun ownership in the world. Many other members have already talked about the catalyst for that, but I would like to take the opportunity to put on the record how this came about and why it is important to reflect on this, because it made an indelible imprint on our political landscape of the time in terms of our approach to gun laws. We swiftly brought about changes to gun controls, and the effect was immediate in terms of the reduction in gun violence incidents in our country.

Back in 1996, the Howard government outlawed automatic and semiautomatic rifles and pump action shotguns. It also instigated a firearms amnesty—a buyback. I found two different numbers, but 640 000 firearms were handed back to authorities. However, I also read in an ABC article that was part of the terrible 25-year anniversary of the Port Arthur massacre that nearly a million firearms over a period were included in that buyback. I am not a fan of much that was done in that era under John Howard, to say the least, but this was a very swift, almost immediate, government reaction to the country’s most horrific mass shooting, which occurred in Port Arthur. I think it was within 12 days of the shooting that the government came out and announced that it was going to do the buyback and outlaw semiautomatic rifles.

It was 26 years ago that Martin Bryant, a 28-year-old man, decided go on a killing spree, murdering 35 people in Tasmania in broad daylight. I will never forget it. I was at high school at the time, and I remember coming home from school and seeing it on the news. It was like something out of a movie. I will show the chamber the picture that I found as part of my research when going back over the details surrounding that mass shooting. I went and had a look at some of the archival footage. I remember seeing this as a 16-year-old. It is a photograph of Martin Bryant being interviewed by police, and he is laughing. That was in the aftermath of the carnage when he had killed 35 people.

He started his rampage in the Broad Arrow Cafe, where he had previously worked, and had been sacked for an alleged stealing incident. He actually sat down and ate lunch at the cafe before he opened fire in the kitchen. He used an AR-15 assault rifle. I do not know anything about rifles, but it fired 17 shots in 15 seconds. He continued shooting as he went into the gift shop and then the car park. He chased victims onto buses before he shot them. One of the witnesses described it in an NBC’s Today article from 1996. I quote —

“There were people everywhere—bodies,” witness Lynne Beavis told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. “It’s just so indescribable what had happened in there.”

She added: “I thought at the time, being a nurse, ‘I’ve seen dead people, I’ve seen blood, I’ve seen things like this.’ But what I saw in there, nobody but perhaps a soldier would know what it was like.”

One thing that really struck me and that I would like to share with the chamber is an article from 7NEWS on 23 May last year. The article retells some of the stories of some of the victims here. This story is absolutely appalling. It reads —

Nanette Mikac was one of many fleeing up a roadway with her daughters.

In her arms was three-year-old Madeleine, while 6-year-old Alannah ran ahead.

When a yellow Volvo pulled up beside them, they thought someone had stopped to help.

Realising it was, in fact, the very killer she was fleeing from, Nanette pleaded for her life and the life of her children.

Instead, Bryant shot and killed both Nanette and Madeleine right there on the road.

He then chased little Alannah behind a tree and shot her as well.

Bryant returned to the car and continued his killing spree ...

It is horrific. I want to take the time to reflect on the horrors of the Port Arthur massacre, because it really speaks to the need for strict gun controls. Since 1996, we have not seen another mass shooting in this country, thank God, so it speaks to not only the necessity, but also the effectiveness of such laws. This bill before us today will further strengthen our already strong gun laws.

In particular, when talking about the bill before us, I highlight the introduction of the firearms prohibition order scheme, which is I think the most significant reform contained in the bill. An FPO will give police the power to remove access to firearms from those people who, quite simply, should not have them in the first place. That might be because they are a threat to others, or a threat to property, or they might not be a fit and proper person to have a firearm because it is not in the public interest. Someone served with an FPO will be prevented from having access to a firearm or related items; that is, they will have to surrender all firearms and ammunition, their licences and permits will be revoked, and they will be unable to enter or reside in places where firearms are present or associate with people in possession of a firearm.

As the minister has outlined to the house, the bill includes safeguards. I do not think anyone in this government is going to apologise for being tough on crime, because these are fairly strict and tough measures, but as government members I think we certainly welcome them here. I think that the community expects that appropriate checks and balances are in place when it comes to firearms legislation and the ownership of firearms. This legislation will make it harder for outlaw motorcycle gang members and members of other organised crime groups to access firearms. Importantly, our reforms will also impact others who should not have firearms, namely terrorist suspects and family violence offenders.

As members well know, Western Australia has unacceptable levels of family and domestic violence incidents in our community. It is something that I have spoken about in the house many times, and I am really pleased that our government is going to extraordinary lengths to do everything that we can to rid our community of domestic violence.

Domestic violence impacts women of all walks of life, all backgrounds, all postcodes and all ages, and the impacts are very far reaching, can be long term, and, of course, can be fatal. We know that it continues to be one of those very pervasive issues that we need to work harder and harder to stamp out. The statistics remain absolutely alarming, with one woman every week still dying at the hands of an intimate partner. In Australia, 1.6 million women have experienced some form of family and domestic violence. WA has the second highest rate in the country of reported physical and sexual violence perpetrated against women. Those are pretty sobering facts.

Firearm-related violence has not been extensively studied in Australia, particularly the relationship between people injured by a firearm and the firearm's user. However, a 2002 to 2016 study undertaken in New South Wales into gun violence in Australia found that the risk that domestic partner violence will escalate to homicide is 11 times as high in households with access to firearms. I think that is a really troubling number. According to the Women's Legal Service in Queensland, women whose abusers use or threaten to use a weapon are 20 times more likely to be killed, and violent intimate partners who have access to firearms engage in more severe domestic violence than those who do not.

Firearms can also be used as threats to keep women and their children trapped in dangerous situations. The Australian Institute of Family Studies reports that victims of family and domestic violence describe living with constant fear and feelings of powerlessness, knowing that their abuser has a gun. Survivors have described how firearms have been used to stop women from leaving abusive relationships, often by partners threatening harm to women, their children or themselves. I know that the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence is continually working on this issue. She is busy delivering our \$60 million package of election commitments to provide a comprehensive response to family and domestic violence here in WA and I congratulate her for her continued work in this area.

We have a real obligation to challenge factors that contribute to violence in our community, and taking firearms out of the hands of domestic violence perpetrators is the obvious thing to do. It is common sense. A firearm in the wrong hands is obviously a recipe for disaster and the consequences can clearly be deadly. New South Wales, the Northern Territory, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria all have FPO schemes in place. This bill will enable FPOs issued in other states to be enforced here in WA. It will also look to disrupt illegal manufacture, repair and dealings in firearms, parts, accessories and ammunition. It also deals with technology and new ways in which illegal firearms can be manufactured, such as with the use of 3D printers, as we have heard other members in this place talk about. It is shocking to think that the WA Police Force finds incidents of illegal manufacturing of firearms on almost a weekly basis, and we saw that today in *The West Australian*.

This bill will provide greater scope for charges and enforcement action. Penalties for gun crime are set to double. These offences are serious and the consequences should be just as severe. Importantly, the bill will introduce a permanent firearms amnesty. That is a really critical element to this bill and I congratulate the minister for including that.

As a government, we should be really proud of this bill. Again, I would like to recognise the Minister for Police for his efforts to disrupt the activities of bikies and organised crime syndicates. The broader suite of legislative reforms we are bringing in aims to disrupt and dismantle outlaw motorcycle gangs and organised crime in Western Australia and make it the most hostile jurisdiction for those groups to pursue their criminal activities. This

bill targets those who should not have a firearm because they are a threat to community safety and will send a very clear message that there is no place for violence here in WA.

I would like to commend the minister on the important work he is doing to keep our community safe. Last year, we saw him introduce a funding increase of nearly \$57 million to boost policing, as well as the historic police compensation scheme, making sure we protect those who spend their days protecting us. The bill before us today is an extension of the work the minister and our government has been doing to keep our community safe. It is about reducing the risk for Western Australians and making our community safer by taking firearms out of the hands of those who should not have access to them. I commend the bill to the house.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Police) [3.38 pm] — in reply: I thank the member for Belmont for her contribution and extend my thanks to all members who participated in the debate. There was a large number of contributions. The vast majority of them were quality and reflected individual experiences and I think a largely agreed or unified view that legislation that seeks to prevent firearms from falling into the hands of criminals or remove firearms from the hands of criminals is a good thing, and that is great to see. It is a wonderful reflection of the responsibility of the vast majority of members of Parliament.

A key element of this bill is it will introduce four measures focused primarily on restricting criminals' access to firearms. They include the creation of firearms prohibition orders; a focus on illegal firearms, including firearms technology offences; increased penalties for certain firearms offences relating to the theft of firearms and firing a gun in public in a way that causes fear; and, of course, a permanent firearms amnesty that will also potentially serve to remove firearms from the clutches of criminals. If unused or uncared for firearms are lying around in the community, they are vulnerable to being stolen. All these measures focus on criminals. If members are looking for a lead on what type of criminal we are focused on, it is not very difficult, because we have stated who might receive a firearms prohibition order—that is, a member of an outlaw motorcycle gang, a terrorist and a family and domestic violence offender. I think they are quite legitimate foci for us and targets for the execution of this legislation.

During the course of their contributions, some members, particularly opposition members, reflected upon the concerns of licensed firearms owners in the community about the nature of this legislation and whether there had been suitable consultation. I will reflect upon the genesis of the legislation. It came from a Law Reform Commission report on a review commissioned by the then Attorney General in August 2014. He tasked the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia to conduct a review into firearms legislation in WA. The Law Reform Commission review of the Firearms Act 1973 was tabled in Parliament on 22 November 2016. The Law Reform Commission in the compilation of that report conducted extensive consultation. By the close of the public consultation period, the commission had received 1 244 written submissions. That was the largest number submitted to any Law Reform Commission review in history. There is no question that there was widespread consultation.

The final report, which was tabled in Parliament in November 2016, made 143 recommendations. Not all of the recommendations in the Law Reform Commission of WA report require legislative reform and not all of them will be accommodated in this bill. In fact, this bill focuses on 13 recommendations from the review that were selected for immediate legislative change for a reason. As members will be aware, this government, at the behest of the Western Australia Police Force, in March last year undertook to focus on disrupting, dismantling and removing outlaw motorcycle gang activity from Western Australia. A key element of that response, requested by the Western Australia Police Force, was the passage through this place of the anti-consorting legislation, which has already been successfully employed. I ask members whether they have seen an outlaw motorcycle gang member wearing their colours in public since Christmas, when this legislation came into effect. I suggest no-one has. If members do, I urge them to ring 131 444 and report it to police. The gang response team will be onto it. We have a 24/7 response, and those individuals will be served with dispersal notices and subject to the effect of the law passed last year. It is proving very effective. Police sought this legislation to complement that legislation, to add to the powers to focus on the leadership in particular of outlaw motorcycle gangs and disrupt their activities.

A number of members of the opposition questioned whether representative bodies like the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia had been consulted. They have been. Of course they were part of the extensive, massive, record consultation undertaken by the Law Reform Commission that resulted in the 2016 report. They have also been consulted at multiple points during the development of the bill, extending back to the Firearms Reforms Ministerial Working Group that was established in 2018 by my predecessor Hon Michelle Roberts. The working group was asked to consider the recommendations in the Law Reform Commission's report and prioritise recommendations for legislative change. The working group's role was not to be an ongoing stakeholder body but instead review the recommendations from the Law Reform Commission and prioritise recommendations for legislative change. The working group consisted of members from the Western Australia Police Force, the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia, the Western Australian Firearms Traders Association, the office of then member of the Legislative Council Rick Mazza of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and the office of the Minister for Police. The top recommendation in the working group's final report was to legislate for firearms prohibition orders. That is what this bill will achieve. Several other recommendations have been actioned by the

bill, such as amending the definitions of “firearm” and “possession”, and increasing the penalty of the drive-by shooting events at section 23(9)(a) of the act.

The Western Australia Police Force and my office have also recently met with the Sporting Shooters’ Association of Australia and the Western Australian Firearms Traders Association specifically to discuss this bill and address the concerns raised by members of both bodies. I made the point to representatives from both those groups that I understand they may be harbouring some concern about the focus of this legislation. I reassured them that the focus of this legislation is outlaw motorcycle gangs, terrorists and family and domestic violence offenders. I urge members opposite not to be on the side of those people for whom this legislation represents a threat. Do not engender concern amongst legitimate, responsible licensed gun owners about this legislation. If they think this legislation is something else, it is not. This legislation is focused on those people I just referred to—terrorists, family and domestic violence offenders and outlaw motorcycle gang members. I do not think members opposite want to be defending them.

The member for Vasse was the lead speaker for the opposition. I have to say that she was responsible in her contribution. She attended the briefing from my office and the Western Australia Police Force and made a reasonable request that, having already been comforted by the responses she received in the briefing, she would appreciate it if we repeated some of those assurances in the house. I will do that both in this speech and later in consideration in detail. I have to say, though, that the member for North West Central’s contribution was appalling. He was contradictory. He undermined the lead speaker for the opposition, his own leader and his deputy leader. It was an extraordinary, worrying, concerning contribution. I will come to that later.

With respect to the request from the member for Vasse and others to repeat some of what was said during the briefing, there was some concern about the lack of distinction between repairs and maintenance, and that owners will now be required through the approval process with the Commissioner of Police to somehow address that distinction. Section 19(4) of the existing act outlines the offence for unlawfully repairing or manufacturing a firearm or ammunition. This offence has a penalty of imprisonment for five years. The bill will delete section 19(4) from the act and replace it with new section 23AD, “Unauthorised repair of firearms and other things”, which has a penalty of imprisonment for 14 years. The introduction of new section 23AD will not change the concept of repair. The increased penalty reflects the seriousness of repairing a firearm or major firearm part without a licence, as this can have significant safety implications for users of the firearm in the broader community. There is only one jurisdiction in Australia that has attempted to define the difference between maintenance and repair. South Australia has defined “repair” as not including work performed by a person on their own licensed firearm if that work is not likely to affect the safe operation of the firearm. The Western Australia Police Force has an ongoing policy position of allowing licensed firearm owners to undertake the care and maintenance of their firearms in line with the manufacturer’s guidelines as long as it does not impact the safe operation of their firearms. Any work to be carried out on a firearm to fix that firearm is a repair and should always be carried out by a suitably qualified and licensed repairer. Licence holders should always err on the side of caution in referring work that is not maintenance under the manufacturing guidelines to a licensed repairer.

The Western Australia Police Force has already provided the information I am about to convey to the Sporting Shooters’ Association of Australia to reassure firearms owners of what they can do to their firearms. They can strip and assemble. It is considered part of the normal cleaning and maintenance of a firearm when done in accordance with the manufacturer’s guidelines or instructions. They can make minor adjustments. Changing the alignment of sights, accessory rails and similar attachments to a firearm does not require a repairer’s licence. They can change grips. The like-for-like replacement of grips on a firearm does not require a licence. Any changing of grips that will alter the function of a firearm from when it was originally licensed should be checked with the regulator to determine whether an approval or licence is required. Finally, they can adjust a factory adjustable trigger assembly. Changing or adjusting the operation of a trigger assembly is an action that requires a repairer’s licence. The Western Australia Police Force recognises that licensed firearm owners may want more clarity on what maintenance activities they are able to do on their own firearms without it constituting a repair under the legislation. The Western Australia Police Force will be updating information on the Western Australia Police Force website to provide guidance to licensed firearm owners when this bill is passed. A range of FAQs will go into detail about the sorts of activities that I understand licensed firearms owners may have questions about.

I will reiterate at this point that the idea of increasing these penalties and focusing on licensed repairers and manufacturers, which I will talk a little bit about, is all about preventing criminals from having that capacity. The intent is not to focus on responsible, legitimate, licensed firearm owners. Some members raised concerns that there would be an added onus on owners by requiring them to see a repairer for routine works. They asked whether this would particularly impact those in regional Western Australia, where there is potentially a paucity of licensed repairers and they may be far apart. I am informed that over 50 per cent of licensed repairers and manufacturers are located in regional Western Australia. There are 65 repairers in total and 37 of them are in regional Western Australia. There are 42 manufacturers in total and 22 are in regional Western Australia. In addition to repairers and manufacturers,

there are 213 licensed dealers across the state. Dealers can accept firearms for repair on behalf of repairers and arrange for the repair. The aim of the bill—I am going to keep repeating this—is to target serious and organised crime groups, including outlaw motorcycle gangs, by restricting their access to firearms and related items. The activity of repairing and manufacturing firearms and major firearms parts should always be dealt with by licensed, suitably qualified professionals. This will ensure the safety of the firearm owner and anyone else who may have approval to use the firearm.

When it comes to firearms, community safety is the most important factor to be considered. It is the driving imperative behind this bill. It is the driving motivation for the government in introducing this bill. The act does allow for regulation-making powers under section 34. This could be drawn upon should there be any hitherto unforeseen negative impact on licence holders in regional Western Australia. I suspect there will not be, but in the event that it becomes apparent once the bill passes that concerns need to be addressed for legitimate licensed firearms owners, we will have the capacity to regulate to accommodate any concerns.

There were some questions seeking clarity on whether it will be an offence for someone to reload their own ammunition. I have received emails and letters about this, and I know all members in this place would have reasonable concerns. They were based on a misinterpretation of the intent of the bill. That aside, we are conveying this information now, and, if necessary, we will do more during the consideration in detail stage. I am advised that the existing legislation allows for the reloading of ammunition and equipment to undertake this activity for firearms listed on a person's licence and to do so for personal use only. I am further advised that this will continue to be allowed under the bill. What was allowed is allowed. It is and always has been the position of the act, and of the Western Australia Police Force, that people should not be reloading ammunition on behalf of other people. That is not a change. It was the assumption before and it has been the position of the act and the police before now. There are safety risks associated with people reloading ammunition that they are not familiar with, and people should either stick to reloading their own ammunition or go to a supplier if they want someone else to do it. The intent of the bill is that people who manufacture ammunition for the provision, supply or sale to others must have a manufacturer's licence to do so.

The member for Moore raised a concern about the definition of “firearms technology” being defined to include everyday machinery such as a lathe, and that it will also include the diagrams and plans in the firearm owner's manuals, which all firearm owners will possess. Only technology that has been programmed or configured to carry out a step in the manufacture or repair process is counted as firearms technology. This is outlined in proposed section 23AG(1)(a). This means that devices such as 3D printers, milling devices and moulding devices being used for legitimate, non-firearms-related purposes will not be captured in the firearms technology offences.

Another concern aired by the member for Roe, and I think the member for Swan Hills, was about how the firearms technology offences could be applied to people in possession of manuals and plans for the purposes of owning and maintaining their firearms. Possession of a manual for a firearm by that individual is considered part of responsible firearm ownership and is therefore not an offence. If a person has a series of manuals for research purposes and not for firearms that they are licensed to own, they will be able to apply for approval from the commissioner. The intention of the technology offences is to target those who are accessing blueprints and designs with the intention to build an unlicensed firearm. Let me assure members that that has happened and is happening right now in Western Australia. This is a much-needed provision in the bill.

I think most of the concerns that have been raised by members have been addressed. Any desire for further information can be addressed during the consideration in detail stage, if we go there.

I responded in question time but I want to respond again to the contribution made by the member for North West Central. It was concerning, disturbing and dangerous. He is seeking to conflate this legislation, which focuses entirely on criminal behaviour and efforts to constrain that behaviour, with some sort of mythical attack on legitimate licensed firearms owners. That is not the case. He should not be doing that because it undermines the effects of the legislation and also the Western Australia Police Force. He actively sought to accuse the Western Australia Police Force licensing division of some form of corruption, which I find bizarre and pretty offensive. He also suggested that the police in his own electorate are incompetent because they would not know what to do with a firearm were it handed in during the amnesty. Neither of those suggestions are true. It was an inappropriate and completely shameful contribution from the member. He posed a question—I agree with the member for South Perth that it was the wrong question—about the percentage of licensed firearm owners who commit crimes. That is not the question. That is not the focus of this legislation. The Western Australia Police Force does not have that readily to hand but what I can tell members is the worst mass shooting since Port Arthur recently happened here in Western Australia at Osmington near Margaret River. The perpetrator who murdered his wife, his daughter, and his grandchildren and then killed himself, was a licensed firearm owner in possession of three firearms, as I understand it. That is only a recent example.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.