

FIREARMS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

501. Mrs M.H. ROBERTS to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the Auditor General's report of June 2013, "Firearms Management System—Western Australia Police" and the finding that —

... one property owner had provided property letters —

That is, for permission to shoot on the property —

to over 270 applicants over the past 17 months. We noted that these firearms had all been purchased from the same firearms dealers. Similarly we found another case where over 80 property letters had been provided by the same property owner for firearms purchased from a single dealer.

- (1) What action has the minister taken to stop the abuse of property permission letters?
- (2) What action has the minister taken to address the failings in the firearms management system highlighted in the Auditor General's 2013 report?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Midland for the question.

- (1)–(2) With respect to the Auditor General's report, a number of actions have been taken by the government. We have talked at great length in this place about a review into the Firearms Act 1973 and looking at that legislative instrument. Indeed, one of the aspects of the review for which we have requested community consultation and input is the relevance in 2015 of the requirement for a shooter to have a letter from a pastoral property owner to basically give them authority or a useful purpose for them to own a firearm. That review is still in train. Once we get the Firearms Act review findings, we will obviously be guided by them. We will look at a new legislative instrument to be brought to this place to be debated. With respect to the particular property owner that the member for Midland was referring to, my understanding is that the firearms branch has been dealing with him, but I would need to seek the advice of the commissioner on where that is up to. Obviously I am not involved in the operational management of the Firearms Act, but I have discussions regularly with the commissioner when circumstances are brought to my attention.

The other aspect of the Auditor General's report that we have been addressing were some failings in the information technology system—the computer management system—that we use to manage the firearms registrations and licensing system. We are currently in the process of tendering, as I understand it, for a new IT system for the management of the firearms registration process. It is not a simple process. The system needs to interact with the transport executive and licensing information system and the other systems that police have. That process is still under review and I am yet to be advised by police where the tender process is up to, but once again it is a work in progress. Of course, one thing that needs to be considered as part of the new IT system is making sure that that system will have the ability to be amended with respect to the new firearms act. Obviously, the new act will have an accompanying new set of regulations and potentially some different offences, so we need to ensure that, under new system firearms registration and licensing will be contemporary into the future and fit in with some of the prospective amendments that may occur out of the firearms legislation review.