

FIREARMS REFORM

74. Mr Y. MUBARAKAI to the Minister for Police:

I have a much more concerning question. I refer to the Cook Labor government's historic reforms to Western Australia's outdated firearm laws.

- (1) Can the minister advise the house what these important reforms will mean for Western Australians?
- (2) Can the minister outline to the house how these reforms will prioritise and improve public safety?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for his question. Today, we introduced to Parliament the biggest gun law reforms since John Howard's reforms. It is a fact that the Howard era and the national firearms agreement established a principle that is still relevant today. That is, firearms possession and use in Australia is a privilege, and that privilege is entirely conditional on affording public safety. That principle will now become part of the law in Western Australia. It is not currently the law. The current law does not do that. This will make public safety paramount among all considerations across the entire legislation. That is quite reasonable. I think—I actually know—that most Western Australians agree with the concept. Beyond that, the government will implement a range of measures that will ensure that these are the toughest laws in the country and they afford a greater level of public safety than any other jurisdiction. We are doing things and introducing reform, such as a complete renewal of the property letter system, which has been completely corrupted. We will introduce more onerous training obligations and health checks. We will do things that, for the first time anywhere in the country, limit the number of firearms that someone can own. This is probably the most critical point.

This legislation is a very thick volume. It is a complete rewrite of a 50-year-old act, as recommended by the Law Reform Commission in 2016, following two years of consideration and consultation. Subsequently, in the first term of our time in government, a working group was established by the now Speaker. In more recent times, we have undertaken an entirely new consultation period informed by those other periods of consultation, and we continue to consult and consider submissions regarding the legislation.

The primary change—the crux of the matter if we are talking about what we are doing that is new and different and might be debated—lies in the application of a limit on how many firearms people can own. There are a small number of people, a gun lobby, who advocate for an American-style gun culture in Australia. They believe that there should be unlimited guns for a licence holder. We do not agree with that and neither do most Western Australians. When it comes to this debate, as it is being considered, and when people in this place and elsewhere are afforded the opportunity to be briefed about the legislation, they should focus their minds on that one question because that is the question that will be posed to people who get to vote on the legislation in this and the other place.

The question is whether they believe it is okay for people to have unlimited guns or whether there should be a limit. It is a very simple question. Members do not have to be briefed on the legislation or consider a lot of other contributions in order to arrive at an answer to that question. That is the fundamental reason for this small gun lobby opposing the legislation. No matter what we do in response to its submissions and no matter how much consultation we undertake, it will never concede that there should be a limit to how many guns somebody can own. We do not think that is right; we are doing the right thing.