

The Chair

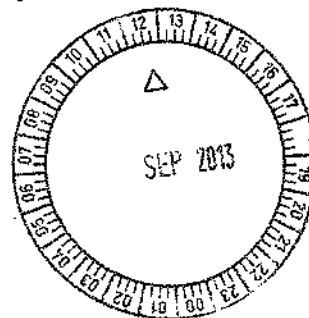
3rd September 2013

Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation

PO Box A11

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WA



Dear Sir/ Madam

I am writing to your committee to express my most sincere objection to the recent fee increases for firearms licensing, which are not only exorbitantly high compared to the same service in other states, but also indicative of the pathetic level of service standards provided to the West Australian shooting public over many years.

How can a fee of \$169.20 be justified to process a Firearm Addition? This equates to 5 or more man hours per application? There is simply no explanation for a fee that is 5.5 times that charged in NSW, and 17 times the charge in Victoria!. I might add that in Western Australia, each firearm application also requires a Safety Certificate, issued by a Licensed Firearms Dealer, which can add a further \$50 per firearm to these calculations. Inexplicably, we must also process these applications through Australia Post, which I assume attracts a portion of this fee, that then passes on to the Federal Government?

Processing times for Additions in NSW are 10 working days, and Victoria process theirs on the same day. West Australian's however currently have to wait an average of 60 working days! I have in the past, missed competing in important events and Championships in my chosen sport of Clay Target Shooting, waiting for my permit to arrive..

I draw attention to the fact that **all** other Australian states provide a far more streamline, efficient and cost effective solution to Firearm licensing, without any increased risk to public safety. No law abiding recreational firearm owner wants to see public safety compromised what so ever, however we must have common sense laws that are effective, rather than just being restrictive red tape. I have for many years listened to the rhetoric of the WA Police, boasting of having the toughest gun laws in Australia, yet my research fails to detect any preferred outcomes in terms of lower incident of gun related misuse or crime by **licensed firearm owners**? As a point in fact, if **unlicensed firearm** crime or misuse was deducted from current statistics, the rates of incident per capita is similarly extremely low, and in some states, actually lower than Western Australia.. I therefore challenge the notion that our firearms licensing division needs to be manned by fully trained police officers, who it could be well argued, might be put to better use in other more critical tasks? Several other states utilise Public Servants to process firearm license applications and additions, which, from an administration perspective, are no different to Drivers Licenses. The difference here of course is the totally unnecessary over regulation when it comes to establishing Genuine Need or Reason to purchase. All other states license the Applicant, who is authorised to purchase firearms within a particular class or category. They firstly establish a genuine use, be it hunting or target shooting etc, via similar mechanisms to those used here (Property letter or Proof of Club Membership etc) then do not attempt to micro manage (or discourage) individual additions within those categories. In Western Australia, the police require a property letter for each and every application, which I'm assuming they then verify with the author? They then often ring the applicant

wanting to know why they need X calibre, when they already own Y calibre? This is akin to a licensed Driver needing to complete a full driving test every time he purchases a new vehicle. Adoption of a category license system, currently in use in other states would significantly lower the administration required for licensing and additions, and take away the need for Police Officers to run the department. Surely the reallocation of up to 20 Police Officers to front line duty would be in the best interests of the public, AND significantly lower the cost of running the department?

The solution to most, if not all the issues relating to the Firearms Department lie very close at hand. They are not far fetched, they are not risky and they are not expensive. In fact, I'm quite sure there are savings possible, not to mention the ability to free up extremely valuable Police resources? The adoption of successful models in other states is way overdue, and the announcement of these recent increases signals the complete breakdown of functionality of the existing WA Police Service model. There has never been an open review of this process in Western Australia, and successive West Australian Governments have always looked to the WA Police to legislate and manage firearm ownership with out challenge. I would urge this committee to objectively test the current performance of the WA Firearms Branch against all other Australian States before ruling to approve these totally unjustified increases?

Yours Sincerely

Andrew Charleson