



11 September 2013

The Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation
GPO Box A 11
Perth WA, 6837

Dear Sir,

I am a member of the SSAA and a member of a local club. I have followed the correspondence regarding the changes to the costing increases with great interest. I also had the opportunity to attend the public enquiry held on the 11th September.

The grossly inappropriate increases proposed did not make any sense based on the information provided. I requested, through Mr Peter Abetz MLA, further clarification on how these numbers were determined. I have been provided a response, through Mr Abetz, from Minister Liza Harvey MLA, Minister for Police; Tourism; Road Safety and Women's Interests.

The basis for the increases would appear to be cost recovery. Further, the current state of the compliance with licencing procedures under the Firearms Act 1973 requires improvement, as recommended by the Auditor General of Western Australian Police licencing systems.

The stated intent is to improve the consistency and timely processing of applications with improved compliance with the Act. None of these objectives is considered to be unreasonable.

The facts would tend to indicate that there is consistent lack of alignment within the current department to these goals. This results in inappropriate use of resources, independent interpretation of the Act resulting in additional costs, and cross subsidising over licence categories.

In regards to the public enquiry, some points need to be raised. There was a consistent lack of clear detail provided in the basis of the costing when questioned. Reference was made to an external consultant review that included a time and motion study. The consistent response was that this formed the basis of applying a "weighted average" to the licence categories when calculating the time and subsequent cost.

- The study should have the detail of average processing time for each category, which can be reviewed. Alternatively, the exact methodology applied will be stated.
- The study should highlight the type, percentage and additional effort required to process non-standard applications. These are the ones that would take up the most time. The application of a weighted average effectively hides these costs in the broader categories.
- The inclusion of amortisation and general overheads could result in some unexpected outcomes. If no new licences are processed this year, fees would increase dramatically next year to cover the shortfall on projected revenues. If there is only one licence holder in 3 years' time, would they be expected to pay \$6 million on a cost recovery basis to maintain their licence?

- The current interpretation and application of the Act results in disproportionately high effort applied to cases that do not fit exactly into this current interpretation. This is evidenced by the statement that someone with 120+ current licences is still assessed as to their suitability to be granted a firearm. I have briefly reviewed the Act to try and understand the intent. I do not claim to be qualified to understand the legal terms, but do believe that the Act provides sufficiently clear intention as to what outcomes are intended. It would be advantageous to obtain and to communicate, the legal interpretation of the Act and how it conforms to current practice, as requested at the meeting. This will provide the clear guidelines to those who are expected to execute the Act.
- The current forms of identification and proof of licence are disjointed and inconsistent with other comparable systems. This refers to the paper Form 9D (1) required for purchasing ammunition, and the firearms identification card – Firearms Act Extract of Licenses – Sect.22A Firearms Act, 1973. The Act would appear to provide for details of the licence to be captured on the Firearms Act Extract card. Without these details, officers and suppliers of ammunition cannot be satisfied with sufficient information to make any assessment of the holder's current status regarding licencing. This requires that the paper form be produced, with the receipt attached. These paper forms degrade with every handling and the receipt fades over time. This would appear to be another cost born by the licence holders that does not meet the basic intent of the Act and is of no value to the process.
- There is a separate fee payable to the Post Office for this service, which is from memory around \$50. This cost did not show on the costing provided at the public meeting.
- The issue of firearms has become a very emotive one in recent times. There are too many individuals and organisations that are anti any forms of private firearm ownership while being ignorant of the facts. These individuals and groups have a clear agenda that ignores any rights that a law abiding citizen may have. The case of the Port Arthur massacre, which was mentioned in the hearing, is a case in point where the due process of law was subjugated on a wave of public and politically driven sentiment. There is evidence of exactly this within current WA firearms approvals system. Statements to the effect that "If I had my way, no one would get a firearm licence" coming from a public servant are unacceptable. If there is to be a cooperative and sustainable outcome over the long term, this cannot be allowed to happen. I would expect that any such individual would be severely censured and removed from such a position of influence.
- It would appear that some of the officers who are charged with administering the Act have not been adequately trained or exposed to firearms. It may be unreasonable to expect a consistent outcome from the process if this is in fact correct.
- There are too few sports remaining where people, young and old, male or female, can be engaged and taught discipline, respect for others and self-control. These are attributes that we all wish to see in our adult population, which at times seem to be severely lacking.
- Most sports are provided with government support and even subsidies. Why is this sport being targeted with inappropriate fee increases of up to 130%?

I would suggest that the inefficiencies, lack of legal direction and personal agendas of the internal workings of the department are the primary cause of the high costs. These need to be addressed before arbitrarily passing on the costs. I would suggest that until the department has got its house in order, and a fair evaluation of the real costs can be established, this increase be held back, or at least be aligned with the CPI Index.

Yours respectfully,

Frederick J Glisson