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Your ref: Petition No. 130

14 November 2019

Hon. Matthew Swinbourn MLC  
Chair, Standing Committee on Environment & Public Affairs  
By email: [Matthew.Swinbourn.MLC@mp.wa.gov.au](mailto:Matthew.Swinbourn.MLC@mp.wa.gov.au)

Dear Mr ~~Sw~~ Swinbourn, *Matthew*,

Petition No. 130 – Airsoft

Thank you, and by extension your Committee, for inviting me to make a written submission in support of Petition No. 130, which encourages the legalisation of the sport of Airsoft here in Western Australia.

Please find my submission attached.

I look forward to following the petition's progress, and to the outcome of the Committee's deliberations in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Aaron Stonehouse MLC  
Leader, Liberal Democrats WA  
Member for South Metropolitan Region

## **Airsoft: the Case for Legalisation**

Australia is one of very few nations across the world in which airsoft is illegal. Indeed, the only nations other than Australia to ban rather than regulate the sport are: China, North Korea, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Honduras, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea.<sup>1</sup>

Airsoft enjoys a significant and dedicated patronage in nations and regions such as the Great Britain, Hong Kong SAR, Japan, Canada and New Zealand, where light regulatory systems are favoured. The regulatory regime in New Zealand and Great Britain for example consists of restrictions on public display, and a requirement that purchasers to be 18. No licensing system exists for airsoft markers in these two examples. The regulatory system in Japan has no prohibitions on the age of purchasers and private use, or for display at festivals where they are commonly issued as prizes.

Most airsoft markers used worldwide have an effective range of 43 – 67 meters, depending on the intended role of the marker. Nearly all jurisdictions have limits and parameters on acceptable kinetic energy output, ranging from 0.8 – 3.0 joules in most cases.<sup>2</sup>

### **Potential for Economic Activity**

Should Western Australia pursue the legalisation of airsoft, it would be the first jurisdiction in Australia to permit their legal use in skirmish games. This in turn would give rise to a number of opportunities for economic activity in both metropolitan and rural WA.

Airsoft has the potential to bring enthusiasts from interstate and overseas to Western Australia to participate in competitions. New employment opportunities would almost certainly be created in the airsoft industry, alongside increased expenditure in the accommodation and hospitality industries as a result of increased visits by interstate and overseas competitors.

Being the first state to legalise airsoft, all associated services and industries would adhere to WA, as well as any associated economic benefits. These include (but are by no means limited to) the retail of Airsoft markers and gear, the manufacturing of airsoft markers and equipment, and the repair and modification of airsoft markers.

### **Accessibility Benefits over Existing Skirmish Games**

Playing airsoft is safer, less painful and more affordable than playing paintball, a sport which is already legal and widely enjoyed in Western Australia.

Airsoft pellets are much smaller and lighter than paintball pellets, meaning less energy and pain on impact than already legal paintball.

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<sup>1</sup> Briefing Note on the Sport of Airsoft, WA Airsoft Club, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> <http://mackila.com/airsoft/atp/04-a-01.htm>

At today's market value, the cost of 5000 airsoft pellets would be approximately \$20AUD, while an equivalent amount of paintball pellets would cost around \$280 domestically.

Airsoft clubs around the world require all players to use a minimum level of protective equipment to reduce the risk of eye and face injuries, such as eye wear and face masks.

### **Encouragement of Physical Activity**

Much like other sports, airsoft is a fun outdoor activity which attracts both social and competitive participants. Airsoft is also an active, fast-paced activity and a team based sport, which provides opportunities to reduce the well-known, adverse health effects of inactivity, while allowing players to socialise and connect with like-minded individuals.

### **Recommendations from the Law Reform Commission 2016**

The Law Reform Commission completed a review of the *Firearms Act 1972 (WA)* in 2016. Recommendation set 73 of that review stated that, subject to necessary public safety regulations, airsoft should be made legal, and that the necessary legislative changes required to permit Airsoft clubs, and Airsoft venues to operate alongside the sale, possession and licenced use of airsoft markers, should be considered.<sup>3</sup>

The Commission considered the necessary legislative changes and regulatory regimes in place in New Zealand and Great Britain before making its recommendations.

### **In Conclusion**

The petitioners make a good case for the legalisation of a sport which is, as they rightly point out, cheaper, safer and more convenient than others which are currently legal here in Western Australia. I commend the petition and its overall intent to the Committee.



**Hon. Aaron Stonehouse MLC**  
Leader, Liberal Democrats WA  
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<sup>3</sup> Review of the Firearms Act 1973 (WA), Law Reform Commission of Western Australia, 2016