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THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON FIREARMS LEGISLATION MET AT HENTY HOUSE, LAUNCESTON, ON MONDAY 3 DECEMBER 2018

Mr ALISTAIR SHEPHARD, PRESIDENT, SHOOTERS UNION TASMANIA, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Shelton) - Welcome, Alistair. This is a public hearing and is being broadcast through the parliamentary website. I would like to reiterate some of the important aspects of the guide sent to you by the committee secretary. A committee hearing is a procedure of parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place outside of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of this parliamentary proceeding.

This is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present, and this means that your evidence may be reported. It is important that if you wish some or all of your evidence to be heard in private, you make that request and explain your reasons prior to giving that evidence. Do you understand?

Mr SHEPHARD - Absolutely.

CHAIR - Thank you. Today you are representing Shooters Union Tasmania, which put a submission to the inquiry. We would like to hear from you and no doubt there will be some questions from the members as well. Do you have an opening statement?

Mr SHEPHARD - I do, and hopefully I will not take too long. My name is Alistair Shephard and I have been a law-abiding firearm owner for over 10 years. I am also a recreational hunter in and around Tasmania. I feel that these qualifications give me some ability to make comment on our firearms legislation in Tasmania. I also happen to be the president of the Shooters Union of Tasmania.

For some background, Shooters Union Australia and the Tasmanian branch is a lobby group that works on behalf of essentially anyone who owns a firearms licence. We aim to ensure that people are treated fairly and that we have legislation that is based on facts and not emotional fear campaigning. Shooters Union was formed in Queensland in 2004 and has since then expanded to Tasmania as one area this year and other state branches thereof. Shooters Union takes the fight for shooters' rights very seriously and we have seen some solid gains in the political sphere of the firearms legislation. Our membership base is growing fast and we are recognised by other shooting organisations and many government officials as a force to be reckoned with when it comes to legislation that affects all firearm owners.

We at Shooters Union Tasmania recognise that some legislation is required around firearm ownership and use but we find that in Tasmania and, more broadly in Australia, our laws tend to go way beyond what you call reasonable legislation.

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We support licensing of fit and proper persons to hold a firearms licence and support safe storage of firearms. Once a person has proved they are a fit and proper person and that they can safely store their firearms, they should be free to go ahead and purchase whatever they have the funds to purchase. The further restriction of what firearms we can own is just onerous and a waste of time. Many countries that have a similar culture to Australia seem to trust its citizens with firearms, including semiautomatic firearms and suppressors, and they do not seem to have the apparent problems that the anti-gun crowd will tell you will happen in Australia if we did have access to them. New Zealand is a great example I would turn to.

Restrictions on the types of firearms in Tasmania is only hurting our agricultural communities. My day job is working with dairy farmers across the state for Lion Dairy and Drinks, so I am in contact with farmers that are up against pest populations every day. Semiautomatic firearms are merely a tool of trade for primary producers and their restriction has made huge populations of pest animals that cause massive cost to our agriculture. Primary producers and their agents, recreational shooters, should have access to the correct tools for the job at hand that can effectively control populations of pest animals that cause significant crop damage and cost to our farmers that they simply can no longer continue to afford.

The above two points of licensing and storage, in our opinion, is where the legislation should stop. In Australia we have some of the most poorly constructed and draconian laws in the world. The National Firearms Agreement is not held up as the envy of firearms legislation in the world; rather, it tends to be more of a laughing stock. It unfairly treats and vilifies firearms owners of their choice of sport or recreation. The NFA was brought in based on fear and using the untimely death of innocent people at the hands of a criminal and has only restricted those who choose to follow the law. Criminals run free with whatever weapons they choose.

The NFA has never been and never will be a binding document for each state to follow. We at Shooters Union Tasmania think Tasmania should take a stand and reject the NFA, move to make our own legislation that suits our state and say no to being told by our federal government what is best for our state.

At Shooters Union, we believe that the firearms registry is a total waste of taxpayer money and serves absolutely no purpose other than to provide a mechanism for governments to reach into its private citizens' lives and the most law-abiding citizens lives and take their property. The firearms registry has not been effectively used to solve any major crime, and the taxpayer money spent to maintain it could be far better utilised elsewhere - for example, education, health, and the list can go on.

There are also concerns with the security of the database. With our firearms registry in Tasmania looking to go to a more online system, which we support, the security of firearm owners' details - my details - are potentially a target for criminals looking for a shopping list of firearms. With the number of incidences of hacking of databases we see worldwide, I don't think it should be a database we should have. Many people have registered their concerns around the My Health Record and we have extensions on the opt-out period for that. The concerns were around the security of the details held therein. We think a list or a database online of firearm owners is something that would be worse for the general public and a greater risk, not only for the general public but for those individuals who own the firearms.

We at Shooters Union were heartened earlier this year when the Tasmanian Liberals took the proposals that were developed in consultation with a wide variety of interest groups, of which I was

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a member, and that came to us before the state election in March. We were disappointed, but not surprised, that it was then met with the usual round of emotional and non-factual rubbish from the media and other groups. We were again heartened that a full-scale Legislative Council inquiry was to be held, as at least then our voices had a chance to be heard as a voice of reason. Again we were disappointed, yet not surprised, by the Liberal Government back-peddalling on their proposals once again, once they had gained power. It seems that firearms owners, the legislation and red tape we are constantly forced to work through are a political football and we are kind of getting sick of it.

I remember hearing a quote from Kerry Packer when he was being grilled by a Senate inquiry in the early 1990s. He had a suggestion for the government of the day where he said, 'If you want to pass a new law, why don't you only do it when you have repealed an old one?'. I think we could take a leaf out of his book and look at it as we look at our firearms legislation.

In closing my opening remarks before this committee, I would like to state that Shooters Union Tasmania is pleased to be able to present our side of the story and the story of millions of law-abiding firearm owners Australia-wide.

I will state as a firearm owner, I always have an underlying fear with an inquiry like this, while it enables us to have our voices heard, it will inevitably result in further burdens and legislation placed on us. Typically, it seems the only voices heard are the ones with the most emotion and fear-inducing sentiment.

Firearm owners are sick and tired of being treated as criminals-in-waiting, for choosing to engage in a legitimate and perfectly acceptable hobby. For those who find that statement a little hard to understand, I simply ask you one question: if firearm owners are not treated like criminals-in-waiting, then why, when we obtain a firearms licence, do all our details go into the CrimTrac database? I will leave it there.

CHAIR - Thank you very much.

Dr BROAD - As a way of background, the Shooter's Union of Tasmania was established last year?

Mr SHEPHARD - No, this year.

Dr BROAD - Were you involved in starting it?

Mr SHEPHARD - I have been involved from the start, yes.

Dr BROAD - You say in the written submission, the Shooter's Union supports personal protection as a genuine reason to obtain a firearms licence, including a handgun. What are you basing this on? If you are supporting, I imagine, predominantly recreational shooting, then why is that in there?

Mr SHEPHARD - In Australia we tend to have a victim mentality. We are not given, generally speaking, the ability to effectively defend ourselves, if that is the case. Thankfully, in Tasmania we do not particularly often have that circumstance. But if there are those who see the need or have fear for their lives, why should we deny them a simple tool? Studies in places like America, where they do have the ability to protect themselves, even just the presence of a firearm can diffuse a situation, you do not actually have to use it. We support it absolutely.

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Dr BROAD - If that is the case, would not it open up firearm ownership to everybody?

Mr SHEPHARD - Why not, yes if they are proved a fit and proper person to hold a licence. I do not think it needs to be compromised.

Dr BROAD - This comes back to the whole issue of the National Firearms Agreement, where it was hashed out that people needed a genuine reason. Personal protection was not seen as a genuine reason. Should that be all turned upside down?

Mr SHEPHARD - Yes, I believe so. Under current Australian legislation, we cannot have something, anything, ready and waiting for personal defence. We have to, in essence, use what we have available. Some people have more fear in their lives than other people and having something that provides you comfort could diffuse a situation, whether it is a firearm or anything else in preparation, we would support for a said situation.

Dr BROAD - How would you be thinking a personal protection firearm should be stored?

Mr SHEPHARD - The availability of quickly available, safe storage is certainly available worldwide. With fingerprint or handprint access, pin code access you can store it beside your bed or wherever you would want to store it and it would avail you easy access.

Firearms should also be able to be stored loaded, rather than a separation of the two like we currently have.

Dr BROAD - Does that not also bring in issues, like we see in the US where there are a number of toddlers accidentally shooting themselves and so on from poorly secured firearms.

Mr SHEPHARD - Not stored in a safe, only accessible by the licence holder.

Dr BROAD - Yes, but then the weapon is also loaded and is also a big change in the way we store them.

Mr SHEPHARD - They cannot get into it though.

Dr BROAD - Obviously that increases the risk of handling error, if the firearm is loaded and stored loaded. Then obviously, you do not have to go through a number of steps such as taking out the firearm and getting -

Mr SHEPHARD - In a situation where your life is in danger you do not have the time to unlock this, unlock that, do this, do that.

Dr BROAD - That gets back to your own admission that in Tasmania needing a firearm to protect yourself is something generally -

Mr SHEPHARD - Thankfully not, but if my life was in danger I would like to have the ability to protect myself and my family.

Dr WOODRUFF - You do not think you could that with something else?

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Mr SHEPHARD -I am not allowed to. I am not allowed to have something in waiting for that, am I?

CHAIR - You are talking about any sort of firearm?

Dr WOODRUFF - Oh, he could have lots of other things.

Mr SHEPHARD - I cannot have that sitting there waiting for that instance, because that is being pre-prepared and is against the law.

Dr WOODRUFF - I have a dog. I am making the point that you are attached to the idea of having to have a firearm -

Mr SHEPHARD - No, I am not.

Dr WOODRUFF - as the only viable means -

Mr SHEPHARD - Obviously, I am a supporter of firearms. That is why I am here. I support firearm use. But, I do find typically, we are not allowed to sit beside the front door with a baseball bat, in case somebody comes through it.

Dr BROAD - I do not think there is a law against it. You also say protection of oneself is enshrined in law and is our number one human right and there is no law that prevents a licensed shooter using a firearm for protection, if appropriate. That is in your submission.

Mr SHEPHARD - Right. Can you give me an appropriate situation where you would see that I would not be held accountable?

Dr BROAD - I am reading your submission, that is all. I am asking you to extrapolate on that. Where is the protection of oneself enshrined in law as a number one human right?

Mr SHEPHARD - It is just a basic human right that I should stay alive.

CHAIR - As I understand under the law - I could be corrected on this - you are allowed to use equal and opposite force to anybody who is attacking you. So, Dr Broad, if someone was coming at you with a firearm, then you could use a firearm to protect yourself. What we have done through this committee has opened it up for people to express their views and we are hearing those views from the Shooters Union.

I would like to go now to put together both your working life and you representing the Shooters, dairy farm, and so on, and as a rural guy and owning a couple of hundreds of acres on the issue and control of wildlife. I believe this should be connected to what we are discussing in firearms. Would you give me your views on the amount of wildlife and the difficulties farmers are having in controlling it?

Mr SHEPHARD -I would title it 'booming populations', specifically wallabies and the like. I understand they are a native population in Tasmania, but the other side of it is we are seeing a huge population growth. Wallabies breed to feed availability; you only have to look at a dairy farm and go 'well there is a smorgasbord of feed available', so they will keep breeding. What I find amongst the farmers who I deal with, is they have neither the energy nor time to be able to consistently

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control populations. The fencing can go so far, but we are seeing an increased cost burden on farmers, there is a real squeeze on the cost and the margins. Excess money to spend on things like fencing falls off the radar pretty quickly when you have to feed animals. Therefore, it generally falls to recreational shooters like myself and those others who do it to provide the service to farmers.

Consistently, when we go out we would be getting sometimes getting anywhere near a couple of hundred a night, and it is a case of generally running out of ammunition before you go home. We would see probably twice as many as we are able to shoot with the current firearms we have. While not so much suppressors in Tasmania but semi-automatic firearms are available to farmers, if you jump through a thousand hoops.

CHAIR - What is your regime?

Mr SHEPHARD - Generally, I am going out a couple nights a month. I could go out every night but the family would not let me; they would disown me. On a night we would be out 3-4 hours. We have permits and the proper crop protective permits on the farms and it never seems to be any less, is the way I see it.

We try to use the best available equipment we can and what is currently available. Our effectiveness rate I feel would definitely go up with the ability to use suppressors and semiautomatic firearms.

CHAIR - There has been evidence to the committee that when someone is out spotlighting and you have a dozen wallaby sitting in front of you and what is available to you is a bolt-action - can you explain to the committee the difference between being able to shoot, keeping your eye through the scope, with a semiautomatic versus having to take off the scope, bolt the thing in, aim and do it?

Mr SHEPHARD - Typically it is the case of breaking your sight picture. Generally with a bolt-action firearm you have a bolt protruding back out the end of the barrel, but if you leave your face there it could collect you in the eye and that would be rather uncomfortable. Basically what that means is you have to break your sight picture with the targets in front of you. That gives them a chance to move on because obviously after the first report of the rifle, they are aware you are there. That then means that some of them that are a little more nervous - which is probably a good thing from their point of view - will move on. Unless they stop you won't get a chance to shoot them.

I currently have a five-round magazine in my firearm so I have five chances to hit. If you're moving fast sometimes you won't be as effective, but as soon as you start shooting in the area the others that are there know. So, you don't have that chance to get them all. If you're presented with 10 targets and you had 10 rounds, if you're good you might get seven but five is probably the maximum because they notice the ones dropping around them and the others move on.

The way I see it, if a semiautomatic firearm with 10 rounds was available to you with a suppressor, they don't hear the firearm report as much so they won't know that things are going on, you are then able to maintain the sight picture and move from target to target to target. It's a more effective solution and certainly something we at Shooters Union support and think should be available through the current sphere.

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The thing I come across mostly with the farms I shoot on is that they want me to come every night I can so that they get as much pasture available for their cows, et cetera. They simply don't have the energy or the time to get out and do it themselves.

Dr WOODRUFF - You said that you might go out and shoot a couple of hundred wallabies a night.

Mr SHEPHARD - At times, yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - As it is at the moment, you are able to shoot wallabies in large numbers -

Mr SHEPHARD - No question.

Dr WOODRUFF - some of them always get away. So you have a solution that is effective but you want one that is more effective?

Mr SHEPHARD - In a nutshell, yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - It does work at the moment?

Mr SHEPHARD - To a certain degree yes, but again, we're not getting ahead of the population.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can you talk to us a bit about the recreational shooters? You said the farmers would like you to come every night but you can't do it. Are you saying there is a shortage of recreational shooters in Tasmania?

Mr SHEPHARD - I couldn't give you a number of how many there are, how many would class themselves as that, because obviously we're getting licences for a range of genuine reasons, and I don't have a record of who stated what genuine reason. There are some who would shoot at a range and not see a farm. I would say there is not a great connection between the recreational shooters and farmers. Purely because it is my day job, I talk to farmers every day, and trust is an awfully large thing when you bring firearms into the equation, especially on a dairy farm where your stock is worth a bit. A number of the farms I shoot on are studs and you don't want to be having a reckless shooter shooting your expensive cows, so trust is a thing that comes into the mix.

Dr WOODRUFF - Are you saying there might be some space for a better matching up between farmers and recreational shooters?

Mr SHEPHARD - Potentially, yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - Maybe that could help facilitate some farmers who do not have access to people who can't come as often as they want them to. They might not have needed them before, they might have done it themselves their whole working life, but they're getting to an age where for whatever reason it is harder for them to do that, but they wouldn't know who to ask. Would you imagine that things could be improved if we had some mechanism for them to sort of work that out?

Mr SHEPHARD - Potentially, yes. There have been systems in the past with other organisations trying to make that connection. The farmer needs to be in contact with that organisation as well as to make it meet and at times I think there has been a bit of a disconnect. I don't think there's a single silver bullet.

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Dr WOODRUFF - Is that a TFGA responsibility, or an opportunity for the TFGA to make that connection between your organisation and their farmers, so that if people are in that situation they could be able to choose from a list of people and make those contacts and develop that trust?

Mr SHEPARD - Potentially. I can't really answer for the TFGA, I'm not part of them. But I guess from their point of view, it depends what the size of their member base is. I know that not all the farmers I deal with are in the TFGA. I don't disagree that some sort of connection to be made would be a bad thing.

Dr WOODRUFF - You said that one of the problems is that it breaks the sight line because of the bolt action and also there is potential for somebody to hit themselves in the eye or the ear. Would that happen with someone skilled?

Mr SHEPHERD - No. If you were to smack yourself in the face with your bolt, yes, but you have to remove your head out of the way of the bolt, so you do break your sight picture from your scope.

Dr WOODRUFF - Is that a problem? What is the problem with having to do that?

Mr SHEPHERD - Well, you're not aiming at your target then.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, so there is a split second where you keep moving. That is part of the skill, isn't it?

Mr SHEPHERD - It is a skill development, no question, and the more you do it the better you get, but there is a time involved. Each person would have a different time involved in regaining their sight picture through their scope. Any time in an instance when an animal decides to move or stay, time is your enemy at some point.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you.

CHAIR - So it is more about efficiency rather than anything else. Particularly if you've wounded one and for a moment it is stationary, it is more humane as well to have another bullet there you could do the job with.

Mr SHEPHERD - Absolutely, no question.

Dr BROAD - What are you shooting wallabies with?

Mr SHEPHERD - Mostly rimfires and centrefires. Depending on the night and where we are. Being cognisant of other people in the area determines what you end up shooting with.

Dr BROAD - You say in your submission that the Shooters Union supports retaining genuine reason provisions in the current legislation, bearing in mind that you also want to add personal protection, but you do not support ongoing requirements to show a genuine need. Therefore you qualify once and then that's it. Is that what you want for a licence?

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Mr SHEPHERD - It then behoves you as the individual that if your situation changes you make a change to your licence requirements. It is the same with any licence we have - car licence, et cetera. If your situation changes it behoves you as the individual to call that situation change out.

Dr BROAD - I got a firearm for my sixteenth birthday and then all the gun laws came in and I never registered. Then I moved off the farm and haven't picked up a firearm since.

CHAIR - You were never licensed or registered?

Dr BROAD - I was never licensed.

CHAIR - I just want to make sure that a committee member doesn't have an illegal firearm that's not registered. We are talking about your personal licence.

Dr BROAD - In the change between not requiring a licence to requiring a licence, I never did any of it.

CHAIR - There wasn't a firearm that was left there that you got for your birthday?

Dr BROAD - No, that was handed in as part of the amnesty.

CHAIR - Yes. We have cleared that up.

Dr BROAD - That was handed in as part of the amnesty. That would have meant I would have qualified as having a genuine reason when I lived on the farm. I could have a licence now, although I have not lived on the farm for 20 years. Would there be other people in that circumstance? Or you are saying it would be up to the individual to update.

Mr SHEPARD - I do not think I am suggesting lifetime licences per se. There still needs to be a period of time. The proposals that were put forward earlier on were looking at extending from five to 10 years. We support that as a proposal. You come back to proving you are a fit and proper person, at intervals.

Dr BROAD - With a 10-year licence range, are you arguing you need to prove you have a genuine reason every 10 years, or just the once?

Mr SHEPARD - If your situation changes. For example, your situation change: you were on the farm and that became your genuine reason. You leave the farm, well, if you want to maintain a licence the current provisions are if you maintain a genuine reason. A genuine reason for not living on a farm could be target shooting. You can still do recreational hunting as a genuine reason to justify owning a firearms licence. That is in the current provisions.

Dr BROAD - If we had a 10-year licence period are you comfortable with every time the 10 years is up you have to show a reason?

Mr SHEPARD - We do currently.

Dr BROAD - Would you be suggesting that be maintained, or as you put in your submission, you 'do not support any requirements to show genuine need once a person has been deemed appropriate to hold a shooter's licence'. That is what I am trying understand.

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Mr SHEPHARD - I see where you are coming from. Sorry, I misinterpreted. As an example of how the current system works, this past year I had to reapply for my licence. In the current sphere what we saw happen was that there was a whole swathe of firearm licence owners in Tasmania who had to reapply. So we did have to provide our genuine reason. I had to again obtain a letter from a farmer saying I allow this person to recreational shoot on my property. The result was all this put everything in the firearms registry behind. Individually I spent three months, without a valid firearms licence in my wallet. The amount of time and paperwork the registry had to then work through, along with registering firearms and keeping up permits to acquire, meant it all got out of hand.

Obviously, somewhere in the stacking of the system we have an awful lot of people coming in at once. If you went to 10-year licences I can see how you would want to see a reapplication rather than a renew. For shorter licence periods, where things do not particularly change much, a renewal versus a reapplication is quite arguably the decent thing to do. Let us face it, a lot can change in 10 years, but it does behove the licence holder to call out changes in their situation. It is the same with any other licence you gain in Australia. I had a high-risk fork lift licence which at one point in its lifetime, was a lifetime licence.

CHAIR - This is probably more of a question for Firearm Services, but in your view, if you have an employee on the farm with a licence and because of the changing nature of employment they leave but are always involved there and that is their genuine reason, with the five-year licence are they required to hand it in when their circumstances change or do they still keep their licence until the next five-year period?

Mr SHEPHARD - I have never really thought about that.

Dr WOODRUFF - If they have only got it by virtue -

CHAIR - If they are on the farm and the farmer has signed their form and now they are put off and work a labourer's job as a brickie, for instance, they have their firearm's licence for five years, so presumably they keep it for five years until there is a reapplication.

Mr SHEPHARD - Yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - They could take it to a shooting range and use their firearm there.

Mr SHEPHARD - Typically, from a practical standpoint, in that situation a farm worker who has gained a firearm's licence because they work on a farm, if the farm worker has gained Category C access, if they leave the farm, that then negates the 'primary producer' in the current provisions.

CHAIR - They would lose their current licence.

Mr SHEPHARD - Yes, they would lose that in the current provisions. If there is a case for having a Category A or B recreational hunters for a genuine reason, assuming they maintain contact with either the farm they are working on or other farms and have permission to shoot on those farms, their genuine reason is maintained.

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CHAIR - For instance, if they have not and do not, their genuine reason is maintained if it happens half-way through. For two and a half years, they are actually working as a brickie's labourer, without that genuine reason.

Mr SHEPHARD - They could still maintain the genuine reason of a recreational hunter.

CHAIR - If they had not. My point is there are some people who no longer have the genuine reason and they have firearms. It is not causing anybody any harm.

Mr SHEPHARD - Again, it would be the same with any licence. There are some people who would say, well my situation has changed so I need to conform to the appropriate authorities and there are some people that will not.

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you charge farmers to go onto their property and shoot pests.

Mr SHEPHARD - Personally, at times there is an exchange of sometimes ammunition and sometimes money, but typically no. I recognise I can fund my own hobby sometimes.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, so it is sport, but there is a cost.

Mr SHEPHARD - Absolutely there is a cost, no question, ask my wife. For the farmers I am happy to provide them a service. They sometimes will pay for ammunition, but typically I personally operate under a pay-my-own system.

CHAIR - You have mentioned shooters a couple of times that there are professional shooters.

Mr SHEPHARD - There would not be many. There are some, but I do not think there is a large amount. As I said, the cost structures on farmers are always increasing, finding a little more extra cash on the side to pay a contract shooter might not always be there.

Dr WOODRUFF - We have established there are opportunities for recreational shooters to develop a relationship with farmers -

Mr SHEPHARD - Absolutely.

Dr WOODRUFF - It does provide an access, as you say, to your hobby and an opportunity to practice your skill.

Mr SHEPHARD - That is the reason I do not particularly charge.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can I ask you another question about 'fit and proper'. In your submission you are calling for basically abandoning the National Firearms Agreement and allowing people to be able to carry hand-guns and so forth. In your submission you say 'if a person is deemed fit and proper to possess, store, transport and use a firearm for a legal purpose', so there is a condition of being fit and proper. How do you think this should be determined? The current the way it is? Can we talk about that?

Mr SHEPHARD - I do not particularly have a great issue with the current way. Mental health is a concern about any form of licensing. I have not particularly delved into what hoops we have

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to jump through, to be a fit and proper person. I do not have a particular issue with the current way it has been laid out.

Dr WOODRUFF - What was the proposal made about this problem with the firearm's licences all currently being renewed at the same time -

Mr SHEPHARD - Renewal.

Dr WOODRUFF - and that slows things down. A proposal has been made by another person who made a submission of a one-off staggered process for licence renewals to dispatch that problem for all time. Various proposals included randomly allocating every single licence holder in Tasmania to a four, five, six renewal starting on a certain date.

Mr SHEPHARD - For four to six years?

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes. So everyone comes due on 2006, 2016, or 2021, and instead of 2021 there would be a random allocation made whether it be 2020, 2021 or 2022, or three, four and five years for the first - once only. What would your view of that be?

Mr SHEPHARD - In principle I would support it to try to spread things out. As I said, my experience this year was that I was delayed in the process quite considerably. In that instance I basically locked my guns up for three months until I got my new licence because I didn't want to go out there and have someone say, 'Can I see your firearms licence?'. You put that over and say, 'I've put my renewal in, you've got to just trust me'.

Dr WOODRUFF - Did it take longer than you thought it would?

Mr SHEPHARD - Absolutely. It was a period of time and it was well known because it was a lot. I would support that proposal in principle. I am assuming there will be an extra cost for a six-year licence versus a four-year or a three-year one, so if somebody is in a position where they're told, 'Right, you're on a six', but they can't afford a six, that would be my only concern.

Dr WOODRUFF - Go for four.

Mr SHEPHARD - But if it was randomly chosen for you.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, okay, but in principle. I am just saying someone else has proposed this.

Mr SHEPHARD - I don't see it as an issue.

Dr WOODRUFF - One idea was four, five and six years, another one was three, four and five. That is obviously details but in principle the idea was about once-off dealing with this hump issue.

Mr SHEPHARD - I don't disagree. I think it is probably a good idea.

CHAIR - Just for the record, you could go up to five, six or seven years, so nobody is disadvantaged in the time they had. If those years were given to you anyway they could say, 'Okay, your licence now isn't coming due at the five-year mark, you've got an extra 12 months', and then

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you do your renewal next year, and some other people might be lucky enough to get on the seven-year cycle but from that point on they are all going back to five years.

Mr SHEPHARD - Because it staggers it out.

CHAIR - They are the thoughts of some people's submissions.

Dr WOODRUFF - It would be in breach of the National Firearms Agreement if we did that.

CHAIR - So would the six years.

Dr WOODRUFF - Anyway, it is just an idea.

CHAIR - It would have to be stipulated that it is a one-off situation.

The work on the alternative to 1080 policy was done 15 years ago. Farmers are reluctant to use 1080 because of the social pressures on them. I would like you to clarify this. For dairy farmers it is expensive if you are going to use wallaby-proof fencing and therefore shooting is really the only alternative. What are your thoughts on those three areas, and what have you seen or what have you experienced?

Mr SHEPHARD - I don't like 1080 personally because I think it's a pretty nasty way for the animal to pass. Shooting from a skilled shooters point of view is instant. You'll get the odd one that at times needs to be put down with a second shot, but if you are practiced at what you're doing and you do it properly you won't have that issue.

Expanding the ability for recreational hunters to access the right tools is going to allow more effectiveness. Then we shouldn't need to push for extra fencing or push down the road of baiting for 1080. What I don't like about 1080 is the off-target impacts. It's not only the target species that you want to die, there are other things that find it like the Tassie devils and quolls that then eat the dead thing.

CHAIR - An inquiry into alternatives to 1080 came down to fencing and shooting, so either you fence them off their feed and starve them in the bush, or some people do not like the idea of culling but in reality, that's what you're doing.

Mr SHEPHARD - The culling of animal populations is something that has gone on in Australia since basically day dot. It is effective if you have enough skilled people doing it. Fencing is great, don't get me wrong. The company I work for owns two farms elsewhere and we have put considerable work into fencing, but you have to maintain it and that's the problem. You can put it in but that fence line has to be consistently maintained, and that means time, effort and money.

CHAIR - Then there is the actual principle of fencing an animal away from its food to manage the population that way so literally you are causing them to die of starvation.

Mr SHEPHARD - To a certain extent you're also just moving the problem elsewhere. If there is one problem here and we fence this, then they are over on that property. Everyone has to do it. It's all in, or don't bother.

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Dr BROAD - The best practice with fencing is that you have to reduce the numbers at the same time, one way or another.

Dr WOODRUFF - The evidence with the ACT with the culling is that the population rise is dependent on the food source, so if you fence them out they just don't reproduce at the same rate. It's simple maths. It is not a continual hardship on the animals outside the fence.

CHAIR - Outside the first generation.

Dr WOODRUFF - That's right, and kangaroos and wallabies can reproduce quite frequently. I have one last question. In your submission you said protection of oneself is enshrined in law and is our number one human right. We talked about the law issue. In Australia it is not enshrined as a human right -

Mr SHEPHARD - Not in law, no.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is very much in the United States Constitution, the right to bear arms, but we do not have that in Australia. It seems that some of the things you were saying in your opening statement were quite in line with the National Rifle Association in the United States. I think you mentioned worldwide at one point and then changed to Australia-wide - millions of people. The National Firearms Agreement, as it was struck, focuses on public safety. It says that 'firearms possession is privilege', not a right, and is conditional on ensuring public safety occurs. Do you not believe in that position? It is a different position to the one you presented.

Mr SHEPHARD - I certainly am all for public safety. I just don't think that firearm owners are the risk to public safety they are presented as.

Dr WOODRUFF - That could be true or not, but you do not agree with the statement that whether you have a firearm is conditional on ensuring that the laws put public safety first, not convenience. There are definitely inconveniences in the rules around licences for firearms and where they're stored and how they're moved around. We have laws around seat belts and wearing motorbike helmets which are really inconvenient, especially if you're a mother getting small kids out of the back of the car. You are signalling to another issue which is about rights.

Mr SHEPHARD - To a certain degree, I guess. We are cognisant that we live in Australia and our culture is very different from that of the United States. If there was an example of firearms legislation I would look to, it would be something like what New Zealand has in place.

New Zealand has a very similar culture to Australia. It isn't exactly the same, but they have no firearms registry. They have a lot more freedom, once they have proved they are a fit and proper person to hold a licence, as to what types of firearms they can have. At some point in their political past they have looked at firearms registration and scrapped the idea as an overt cost. I don't believe they have enshrined it in their constitution, or whatever, that it is a right. I still think that a lot of the things we have in life that people would take as rights are privileges: owning a car, having a car driver's licence, it is not a right that is a privilege.

Whether or not we are ever going to find ourselves on a road down the constitutional path like the United States that does enshrine rights, who knows. Time will tell on that one. As far as firearm ownership is concerned, I don't think it is as big a public safety risk as it is made out to be. Public

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safety is required, do not get me wrong; hence the reason only 'fit and proper' people can have a firearm licence.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is hard to hear that statement after having watched the news in the United States for the last year. I spoke to someone who travelled here from southern United States last week. She said the mass shootings are so constant, every single week, children, adults, outside, inside. It is hard to reconcile how a particular firearms agreement has had no effect on that culture.

Mr SHEPHARD - What I would say as a counter to that would be it is not the firearm that has been doing it. Something has changed in the culture of the United States in the last 30, 40, 50 years, which has seen - it would seem to me and the way I would title it - the value of life and the value of somebody else's life has disintegrated or really taken a tumble. I think there would be a number of things and we do not have the time here to go through them all -

CHAIR - Philosophical views.

Mr SHEPHARD - but why does somebody do that?

CHAIR - A good question. One last question from me. You mentioned sound suppressors from the shooter's point of view, less noise and wallaby scare, and that sort of thing. A number of submissions have raised it as an occupational health and safety issue as well. I am wondering whether the Shooters Union is on that? Do you have any comments?

Mr SHEPHARD - Sound suppressors to me, I would have said, are a must. There are other parts of the world that have them, that if you go to a range or if you are shooting without them -

CHAIR - In a shooting sense, as in vermin control or wildlife control, some people from the city might argue, 'Put some ear plugs in or ear muffs on', that's the same thing. You do not hear this and you do not hear that and something else. Can you explain to the committee your views on that?

Mr SHEPHARD - Two parts with sound suppressors. There is the occupational health and safety of the shooter from a very loud noise. If you have shot firearms, especially centrefires, for any length of time without hearing protection, it is not comfortable. At the same time wearing hearing protection can become extremely uncomfortable as well. Don't get me wrong. I wear a set of ear muffs that have the sound cut, so that it cuts the crack out of it. I can still to a certain degree hear but it is not as good as being able to hear normally. It is not the same and you miss a lot of things.

CHAIR - Particularly when you are hunting and you do not hear that thump, thump. If it a deer shooter, you do not hear that crack of a twig or something like that.

Dr WOODRUFF - But you do manage to kill a couple of hundred of wallabies a night with ear muffs on.

Mr SHEPHARD - That is occupational health and safety.

The second part of it is animals. I am not only talking about the target species. You are talking about people who have horses, cattle, the crack disturbs them. I heard an example of some people who went shooting on a property just recently. They got a bit close to where there was some stock. The farmer had to go out and rescue them out of the bush, which took half a day. They were not

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aware that the stock was there. Had they had sound suppressors those stock would hardly even have known they were there

Dr WOODRUFF - Isn't that a bit irresponsible to go shooting without checking with the farmer where the stock is? I would have thought that was the first question to ask. I wouldn't want somebody on my property without asking me.

Mr SHEPHARD - You ring up and you ask. If they have moved the stock - absolutely it is fair and reasonable to ask. If you do not get the answer. You try to do what you can.

CHAIR - You can have a situation where one property has thoroughbred horses, for instance.

Mr SHEPHARD - If you are not shooting on the property that has got the stock -

Dr BROAD - I have more a comment than a question about the use of semi-automatic weapons, et cetera, like the US. You would have to agree that it would be virtually impossible to kill 30 people with a five-shot magazine and a bolt action.

Mr SHEPHERD - Not virtually impossible; just a lot slower.

Dr BROAD - I imagine that there would be people coming for you to stop you. Whereas with a semi-automatic, we heard evidence that in Port Arthur within the first 90 seconds there were 25 people killed, or something along those lines.

Mr SHEPHERD - Again, what I would point out, that is a criminal. That is not a law-abiding firearm owner who is following the law.

Dr BROAD - I suppose this is about the potential for damage as well.

Mr SHEPHERD - If they are locked up in a safe, then they are not -

Dr BROAD - In the US there are licensed firearm owners actually perpetrating mass shootings, so it is not just a criminal element that is perpetrating-

Mr SHEPHERD - I think you will find that most of those who are perpetrating it are not licensed firearm owners any more. They have pushed themselves onto the wrong side of the law, so they are criminals.

Dr WOODRUFF - You only need one person.

CHAIR - That is right. In the submissions that I have been reading through, has anybody asked to go to increase the magazine size from 10?

Dr BROAD - No, it is access to semi-automatics across the board.

CHAIR - Okay. It is 11 o'clock. Before you leave us there is a statement I need to read to you. As I advised you at the commencement of your evidence, what you have said to us today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table you need to be aware that privilege does not attach to comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you have said within the committee. Do you understand this?

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Mr SHEPHERD - I do.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Mr Shepherd, for your evidence. It is much appreciated you coming again and spending the time on your submission and representing the people who you represent.

Mr SHEPHERD - My pleasure. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you very much.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

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Mr CRAIG MOORE, TASMANIAN PISTOL ASSOCIATION, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - A committee hearing is a procedure of parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection, that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court of place out of parliament. It applies to ensure parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware, this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings. This is a public hearing, members of the public and journalists may be present and this means your evidence may be reported. It is important if you should wish all or part of your evidence to be heard in private, you must make this request and give an explanation prior to giving the relevant evidence. Do you understand this?

Mr MOORE - Yes.

CHAIR - I do also need to inform you we are being recorded and going live over the internet on the parliamentary server.

If you would like to go through an introductory statement, if you have one to read.

Mr MOORE - No, I do not have one in print. Basically, what I would like to say is I represent the Tasmanian Pistol Association, which has a membership of seven clubs. The membership of those clubs is in the vicinity, I have been advised, of about 600. They have given me a number of points that affect the administration and management of such clubs. I have been involved in the sport since 1980. I have represented Tasmania and Australia within pistol shooting. I was the President of the Van Diemen Pistol, the largest club in Tasmania, for 16 years. Thankfully, I have been able to hand that mantle on. They are my credentials.

I have been involved with the Firearms Consultative Committee and performing with input to the legislation since 1996 when the then manager of the Firearms Services, Julie Shadbolt, initiated the first firearms consultative group.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. We do have a submission each from Tasmanian Pistol & Rifle Club Incorporated and Van Diemen's Pistol Club.

Thank you for coming and presenting to the committee the issues. Would you like to raise any other issues, before we ask our questions?

Mr MOORE - Yes, I would. With the submission we have given this committee - there are a few other points raised by certain committee members of other organisations within the TPA. They have asked why, once a person has gone through the process of obtaining a category H licence, they then have to wait a further six months before they can obtain their first category H firearm? It is very rigorous, as you are probably aware, to obtain a category H firearm. The police vet you and we believe it goes further than that within the vetting process. Once you are actually endorsed with a category H, you cannot purchase a said firearm for the next six months. The second six months of the licence you are only allowed to purchase a maximum of two - one of which would have to be an air pistol which you use to shoot that discipline.

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As in my submission, we find new members come, they want to shoot certain disciplines and they cannot buy the firearm they want for that discipline, even after the first six months, so they buy a lesser firearm. Once their six months is up, they apply for the firearm more suited to that discipline, thus doubling and in some cases tripling that one firearm for that discipline.

We all understand this legislation is paramount to community safety, but we cannot see how this is enhancing community safety, when we are actually forcing people into purchasing more firearms than they want. What usually happens, if they want to sell it to try to recoup some funds, the firearm comes up at usually a lesser price than a new one, therefore quite easy to move on. We are seeing a lot of firearms not actually wanted, because they cannot get the firearm they desire for the match they want to shoot in the first instance of getting a licence. That was one of the big things.

The only other thing is the attendance card, which we agree with and as you can see by the submission, was always agreed and understood by all of the clubs and licence holders you were duty bound to attend, once you owned a minimum of one firearm. As it went up, the attendances grew. It seems now the registry has taken a stance with no consultation to any stakeholder that, if you own a Category H licence, you must do a minimum of six participations a year. Very hard when you do not own a firearm.

We have judges, coaches, officials who have to have a Category H to officiate, so they can take control of a firearm on the line when they are governing competitions. Their shooting days are over. They are usually elderly and all they want to do is keep participation in the sport. They do not mind being a member of the club but now it seems to keep their licence, they are going to have to buy a firearm. It seems to us around the wrong way.

We had a junior who showed great potential. When he came to us he was 12 years old. He has since represented Australia in Europe and has done very well. He is now an adult and can hold his own firearms, but for six years his mother had to be a member of our club and hold a Category H and she never once fired a firearm. This was the only way Bailey could get his firearms to competitions. They had a safe and everything. But, because he was a minor, under the act he cannot legally own a firearm. Like most parents, they do the hard yards for their children in any sport, but in her case, she held that licence for six years. We were hoping to keep her as a member but she said, 'it does not interest me' so she let her membership and licence lapse. For six years, she had to have the licence so he could participate in the sport.

Under this, we have a couple of other parents, we believe they are going to have to start shooting which does not worry us as far a club with what we offer. but we find it does not sit right, they have to participate in something to keep a licence.

They were the only two things raised over and above that submission.

CHAIR - Those issues are in the submission somewhere.

Dr BROAD - In Van Diemen's submission.

Dr WOODRUFF - Submission 58, Van Diemen's. Is it in that one?

Mr MOORE - Yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is our numbering from the Legislative Council submission you made.

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Mr MOORE - Yes, that is right.

CHAIR - We have a lot of paperwork around us at the moment. It is in the paperwork somewhere. I have read those arguments somewhere.

Dr BROAD - To be clear, to maintain a Category H licence, you have to own the pistol?

Mr MOORE - No, you have to participate. As in the submission, what happened is when the laws were being structured, we had a meeting at Cimitiere Street police headquarters. The then deputy commissioner Jack Johnston was there representing the commissioner and we asked that very question - why can't get in these participations and they go up with the number and the category of firearms that you own? We understand that and can live with that. He made it quite clear that they do not intend to put this on to licence holders that do not own a firearm. The idea was that it would reduce and keep to a minimum the number of firearms in the community.

That is how it has always been until probably the last six months when we got a newsletter from the registry, with no consultation with any stakeholder, and they said, 'You will have to participate in the minimum of six to keep your licence'. We're not suggesting at all that you should not have to participate if you have a firearm registered in your name under your category H licence. Our club was formed in 1955 and we have quite a few members now who do not own a firearm but they want to patronise the club and we hardly ever see them but they come out socially now and again, and to keep their licence they're going to have to come back.

Dr BROAD - Are suggesting that it should be to keep your category H pistol, you should have to participate rather than you should participate to maintain your category H?

Mr MOORE - If we look at that clause in the act, if they left the clause but added on the end of it something along the lines of 'for the first and subsequent firearms', because everything else is in there where it goes from six to 10 to 14. With the number of firearms I own for the number of disciplines that I shoot, I have a minimum attendance of 14 times per annum. That's easy for somebody like me because it is my main sport. I've been shooting virtually all my life. But where you don't actually have a firearm registered in your name but you want to keep your cat H, I've got people who just want to have a shot so we have club guns that can't be registered to the club but the club owns them. Under the act they have to be registered to a licence holder and we use those for new members. But we don't want to have people using those firearms and not supplying their own equipment, plus the fact they're all just .22s so they're not centrefire and in some matches you have to have centrefire to participate for your score to count under the rules.

What we are suggesting is that if you have a cat H you still have to be a member of a recognised shooting organisation, that is not at issue, but if you do not have a firearm registered in your name the attendance, the minimum participation of six should not apply. That is what we're asking for in that one.

CHAIR - You said a while ago that you may have members getting on in years who don't want to participate that often on the range, but in competition when other clubs come to you, you rely on your members to perform that role because presumably most of your prominent shooters are all in the competition and therefore not judges, and those people are at the stage where they've got out of shooting and got rid of their firearms from home because they don't want them around anymore. They are still members of the club but once they sell their firearm and do not participate, they can't

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hold their licence, but if you're a judge on the range you have to handle a firearm. So you no longer can become a judge -

Mr MOORE - Under the legislation, the only way you can handle a firearm when you do not hold a cat H licence is to have a commissioner's exemption and that will only last for six months and you will only get one in a lifetime unless you can prove to the registry that in that six months something virtually catastrophic happened in your life where you couldn't participate in that six months and get your cat H licence, and it is only for new licence holders. What you're saying is exactly right. We've got an international judge and if he lost his licence he wouldn't be allowed to judge.

CHAIR - Someone might argue why don't they just turn up six times a year and shoot in order to keep their licence, but the reality is that is not what they want to do. They want to get rid of their firearms so there are no safety issues around home and that sort of thing, but they still like participating in the sport, so why can't we allow them to do that? That is your argument.

Mr MOORE - Yes. It has been that way up until the last three to four months ago when we got the newsletter. My son was working away in north-west Western Australia. He couldn't participate so I transferred two of his firearms into my name and that was fine. He was fly-in fly-out, but he kept his licence and when he came back he was back into the sport. It is this inflexibility that is really making it hard to administer the clubs. We can't see that there is any safety issue in having people who hold a cat H but don't own a firearm, but they have to own a firearm to actually use a cat H if they ever choose to or wish to or need to in their duties as a range officer, a judge or a coach.

Dr WOODRUFF - I don't understand the history. Why do you think that was brought into the National Firearms Agreement in the first place if it has to be that situation?

Mr MOORE - The attendance, the participation?

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, that you can't have a category H licence without owning a firearm or handgun.

Mr MOORE - My understanding is that it doesn't actually say that in the NFA. It was something that was drafted in Tasmanian legislation. When we were told by the administrators, Tasmania Police, that if we didn't own a firearm we were not going to be required to have this participation we didn't have any concerns. The concern has arisen at this point in time where this -

CHAIR - Has it been explained to you by Firearm Services why this -

Mr MOORE - Only in the newsletter they gave us. Basically it just said that you will be required to participate six times; they did not say how you would participate six times. Going back to the original participation, it was agreed with us that committee meetings of office holders would count as participation because you need to have committees of management to run these organisations. In our situation we have a committee meeting once a month and we've never used that but it was always there. It now seems that you have to participate in -

CHAIR - Under the National Firearms Agreement, the argument I presume in the early days was that you can have a licence without owning a firearm because you want to come into the club, you want to try the club's firearms, work out where you want to go and what sort of firearm you

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want to buy, and that sort of thing. Is this just bureaucracy where they have read and said, 'Well the National Firearms Agreement says you've got six months to make up your mind and then after that you have to have a firearm', or is it just our interpretation?

Mr MOORE - I believe that they have looked at the passage in the act and said that to own a cat H you have to participate. But in the same act it says that you can't own a firearm for the first six months of obtaining your licence, and then you've got another six months when you could only own a maximum of two, one of which would have to be an air pistol and the other one could be a .22 rimfire or up to .38 calibre centrefire.

Going back to my original point, if you run that gauntlet and then decide to take up metallic silhouette, and greater than .38s are the norm for field pistols, you can't buy one for the next six months. So you've had your licence for 12 months. After six months you've bought a .38 just so you can participate, but it doesn't actually get you into the competition on a level footing, and then you go, 'Right, now my next six months is up and now I am going to apply and get a firearm over .38 calibre so whether I am D grade or Master grade, I am on a level footing with everybody else that is shooting this match.'

We have the same problem with IPSC, which is probably the biggest pistol competition discipline in the world. Under the international rules we can use up to .45 calibre in standard and classic divisions. Overnight, we lost that. We were a bit disappointed because it was said to us that no sporting shooter will be disadvantaged by the firearm laws. Overnight, we lost the ability to compete on the world stage. We can't practise with those firearms here but we can use those same firearms in metallic silhouette in a different discipline but we cannot use them at IPSC. What happens when I go overseas to compete is that I take my gun, which is a calibre of 9mm here. The gun has the ability to change the barrel. When I go overseas I can shoot 40 calibre. I am competing on a level footing then. The reason that the footing is level is because the 9mm in what they call 357 Sig is a high-pressure round. You need to retain a certain power factor to get a certain score and you cannot do that with a 38 super or a 9mm so you have to use a 357 Sig. If you use the 40 calibre it is a low pressure round but it is a lot less punishing on the gun and the body.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is very much about the demonstration of genuine need. Anything after 12 months there has to be a demonstration of genuine need; that is the international firearms agreement for getting subsequent firearms. I assume that is done by demonstrating to Firearms Services that you are in a form of competition. How do you demonstrate that need?

Mr MOORE - What happens is to get your Cat H licence you have to be a financial member of a recognised shooting organisation. Then that shooting organisation has to offer certain competitions. All Tasmanian pistol clubs offer all the disciplines that are available throughout the world. Once you are a member of the Van Diemen Pistol Club and you choose to shoot air pistol, then you are going to need that firearm to participate in that sanctioned match. If you choose to shoot a centrefire, then you would need a different type of firearm. If you chose a service pistol or a 1500-match IPSC silver metallic silhouette - they all use different firearms because the rules are different. Some matches are single-shot five-shot; some matches are semi-autos; some matches are revolver. When a member applies to the registry for a permit to acquire, they will put, 'I need this said gun to participate in the match of whatever it is.'

Dr WOODRUFF - Going back to the elderly judges and people who are finding it hard to participate six times, did you say that has only just come in three months ago?

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Mr MOORE - It has only been enforced.

Dr WOODRUFF - How long has it been a requirement?

Mr MOORE - If you read the act verbatim, and I am not a lawyer, I suppose it was since its inception.

Dr WOODRUFF - It just hasn't been enforced.

Mr MOORE - We have never pushed it because it was always agreed that if you do not have a firearm registered in your name, then they were not going pursue you to participate because you did not have a firearm to participate with. You had a Cat H licence for different reasons - parent, guardian, judge, coach, whatever.

Dr WOODRUFF - Leaving parents aside, how many people do you think realistically are in the category of elderly judges who do not want to go in and use -

Mr MOORE - I can only speak for our club.

Dr WOODRUFF - Surely, there must have been not that many.

Mr MOORE - No, there would probably be, maybe a dozen to 15.

Dr WOODRUFF - Who are finding it hard to participate six times a year?

Mr SHEPHARD - Who do not wish to participate six times. They do not find it hard at all; they don't wish to. What is being forced on them is to go back and buy a firearm and then put their security back in - a safe and so on - just so that they can become a judge or a scorer or a coach.

Dr WOODRUFF - For international -

Mr SHEPHARD - No, from the grassroots, from the club. If they pursue this participation, one of two things will happen. They will buy firearms and put more firearms in the community; or they will leave the sport and we will lose their expertise.

We are having a huge influx of applications for new members. It is good for us as a club. We try to offer a quality, safe environment. These people are paramount to get those new people on the track we need them to be on. As you can appreciate, the last thing we want is an accident or an incident. We are under the microscope and we understand that. Our safety record and record from non-criminal use is exemplary. We want to keep it that way.

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you think it is about trying to enforce the intention of the act? That is to make sure that there are not people who get the category H licence, are attached to a club, and then just stop participating at a club and might go off. They are just trying to rein in the number of people who have access to Category H who are not attached to a club.

Mr MOORE -They do not have a firearm; they do not have access.

Dr WOODRUFF - If you have a category H firearm and you are not going to a club, what happens to you?

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Mr MOORE - You are given a letter after you don't furbish your participation card early in the new year. You will be given 14 days via notification to either explain why. It might be that you have been ill, or you have been away overseas working, or something like that. If you cannot come up with a valid reason why you have not, then within that 14 days you will have to hand that firearm in to a dealer.

Dr WOODRUFF - Your licence and the firearm would be removed?

Mr MOORE - You will have to hand the firearm in. If you do not, then the police will come and knock on your door. Then you will have a fight on your hands as to why you should keep your licence.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you for clarifying. It might be the case that somebody who does not have a firearm, but they still keep their Cat H licence. If they are not connected to a club, as before when you were talking about judges, within five years their circumstances change and they are legally able to walk into a gun dealer and purchase a category H firearm. Theoretically, they could have not been attached to a club for years.

Mr MOORE - They would have to be a financial member. When you say, 'not attached', do you mean not participating in the club activity?

Dr WOODRUFF - So they still have to be a financial member -

Mr MOORE - Yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - and if they were not, then their licence would be revoked after 14 days?

Mr MOORE - Then their licence is revoked.

Every year we hand in a list about 30 days after we finalise our accounts for our membership year. Our physical year and membership year are different. We give the registry a full list of members and people that have not rejoined. From then it is nothing to do with us because they are not a member because they haven't paid. Then the registry gets in touch with those people and say, 'Are you a member of another organisation?' They might have joined another club, if they have not received their returns. They do the due process. Once they find that a person is not a financial member of a very recognised organisation, then they will send them a letter and say, 'You have "x" firearms registered in your name, you have 14 days to hand them in'.

Dr BROAD - What constitutes 'participation'? Is it just going to the range and having a shot, or is actually participating in competition?

Mr MOORE - It is participation in a competition. These are the cards that they give us. On it you have the date, the match that was shot, the signature of the range officer and the club it was shot at. Once they have filled out, if you have one and have done six, you can send it down anytime during the year. We have not had any instance range officers are going to sign it, where people have not participated.

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When we say participate, we mean some of those people will only range officers. They will not shoot, but without a range officer we cannot have a match, so they will have a card and now we have to sign that. At the moment it is saying you have to participate, as in use a firearm.

Dr BROAD - How many competitions would there be in a year?

Mr MOORE - We shoot every weekend and every Monday night. It is like a round robin of the competitions. With RSSF, there is six disciplines and then metallics and the work IPSC, the air pistol, in service matches 1500 match. It is Saturday and Sunday, and Monday nights for air pistol. They are indoor range. Most clubs are the same. You can go there and look at their rosters on the website and it is virtually every weekend and reasonably easy to participate to get your attendances up.

For the people passionate about the sport like myself, I do not have a problem. I shoot probably every second Wednesday night and every second Sunday, third Sunday and probably most interstate competitions. Then there are other people with young families and jobs and have to manage their free time.

Dr WOODRUFF - Such is the life, people being involved in sports. If only we could do it all day every day. It is always juggling.

Mr MOORE - Or be like me and retire.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, retire.

Mr MOORE - That is pretty good. It is a big ask. We think it is a good thing the people who have the licences participate when they have the firearms. But to say attend when you do not have a licence, will hurt the clubs and some more than others.

CHAIR - When you do not have the firearm?

Mr MOORE - Yes, if you do not have the firearm.

CHAIR - You just said licence and will just get it around the right way.

Mr MOORE - Sorry.

CHAIR - If you do not have a firearm and you have a Cat H licence and have to fill in this documentation.

Mr MOORE - Now, you not only have to fill it in you have to participate and what they have suggested is the participation is a match.

Dr WOODRUFF - You have your licence, you have your attachment to a club, and you do not have a firearm.

Mr MOORE - Yes. I fought tooth and nail when these laws came in, because I asked the question will you recognise training as a participation and straight away they said, no. I said, well I am going to take this to task. Why is it when you call this a sport, then all of a sudden it is the only sport you do not recognise training as a participation. A friend of my sons is a short distance

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runner - 100 and 200 metre and a very good runner. He trains three or four times a week, but he participates three or four times a year. So, to be good at your sport there is a lot of training. In the end, they agreed if you were training they would count it as participation, but we have not had a ruling on this under the new regime from Firearm Services.

Dr WOODRUFF - You said you had been on the Firearms Consultative Council for some years? Who is that? Is that to the Police minister?

Mr MOORE - Yes, it was set up by the then manager of Firearm Services, Julie Shadbolt; she has since retired from service. It was held in Launceston at police headquarters once every three months. It died a bit of a death with the change of government. Then it was brought back under the previous minister. In the consultative committee, if we had issues like we are discussing now, we could air them at the level where they could be looked at and hopefully something done. Where issues have come to the minister or Firearm Services from outside the sport, sometimes they were being told things that were not correct and we could have the chance to clarify exactly what it was.

On the buy-back with the hand-guns, I was asked by Julie Shadbolt to advise her on paying out public funds when they were buying back certain stuff -

Dr WOODRUFF - Was in 1997?

Mr MOORE - No, 1996. Monash. We had a discussion amongst our sport and the one thing we said is no matter what the answer was we were asked by the then manager, even if it was detrimental to our cause, we would always tell the truth. As you can appreciate, you have only had to say the wrong thing once and your credibility goes out the door.

There were a lot of times she would ring me and say 'I have these items and this person is asking for this much', and I would turn around and say, 'No, because they can be used in the sport still, even though they have got rid of the firearm'. Good on the licence holder if he is trying to recoup his outlay. At other times, it was, 'Yep, it is superfluous because of the change in the laws'.

Dr WOODRUFF - So the Firearms Owners' Council proposal, have you been contacted to be part of that body?

Mr MOORE - I received a phone call once the current government was re-elected, by one of the minister's minders. Since then I have not had any contact with the minister's office, but I do not know if was because of what was happening with the Legislative Council and then in relation to this subcommittee. I have not been bashing on the door and asking to be a member, or if my expertise would assist?

Dr WOODRUFF - What did the person tell you when they rang you after the election?

Mr MOORE - Asked if I would be willing to serve on the Firearms Council. I said yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - Did they talk about a time frame for getting started?

Mr MOORE - No, not to my recollection.

Dr WOODRUFF - So you have not had a meeting?

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Mr MOORE - I have phoned the minister's office once and his adviser looking after that and it was a lady and cannot remember her name, but I was told she was not in. I left my contact details but have not had contact. I do not know where it stands.

Dr WOODRUFF - Was that some months ago?

Mr MOORE - Yes. That would have been only just after the election.

CHAIR - The committee you served on previously was not only to advise on changes you wanted, it was a conduit for information exchange between Firearm Services. If they made a decision then you had the opportunity to give feedback to that?

Mr MOORE - Yes.

CHAIR - Do you believe there is a need for the firearms' fraternity to have some input into what is happening in this sphere?

Mr MOORE - It is advantageous to all parties. The reason is because the firearm industry changes so much and international rules change. We have had some changes in our rules. As an IPSC shooter, I have always been an advocate for putting over-38 calibres back into one of the prescribed matches, not only western action and metallic silhouette, but IPSC. It is the same as the shotgunners were asking for semi-automatic shotguns for the skeet and trapshooting, especially for women and juniors because of less recoil. I just don't understand how we can participate in the sport but not on the same level as everybody else in the world. It's like saying to a 100-metre runner that he has to run 110 metres because he is Australian, and that's basically what's coming up.

I don't believe it creates a bad environment in community safety. The last thing we want to see happen as an organisation or as a group is a firearm misused, because it hurts us. The perception is that this is what we're all about, whereas it is a legitimate and very safe sport. If you look at some of the statistics, especially on pistol shooting, it is phenomenal. If we had the statistics of football, especially on an opening weekend in junior football - my daughter is a nurse - we'd be shut down just like that.

I'm not saying that there isn't misuse of firearms but that is by people outside of the law and they don't care what the law is, as we know. It is the law-abiding firearm owners who seem to, at the end of the day, bear the brunt when somebody does something wrong. If it is a licensed firearm owner who does something wrong, throw the book at him because he has hurt my sport. Everybody in the administration of every club would say the same thing because we understand we're under the microscope, and rightly so, but as long as it is fair microscope we can live with it.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is a good point you make that there is a lot of technical details you have that Firearms Advisory Service from time to time would obviously need your advice on. It sounds more like you have technical advice from time to time that is needed that is useful to the FAS. I am wondering why we should consider creating a firearms owners council. Do you still feel comfortable with the term 'firearms owners council'? We don't have a car owners council or a quad bike owners council. We have a road safety taskforce to look at public safety and make laws around that. Necessarily, they must engage with the RACT and give technical advice about engineering requirements and all that stuff.

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Given what you said about public safety and your concern for your club to be totally squeaky clean, can you see how some people would feel that there is a disconnect with the idea of having a firearm owners council rather than -

Mr MOORE - I can see there could be a perception of that. The reason I think that a firearm owners council is good for the whole community is like you have just said, the people who have always been appointed to that council - and I am not blowing my own trumpet here - have been very knowledgeable, understand the technical side, understand the workings in pistols, in hunting, in rifle shooting and everything like that. To use the analogy of the road safety council, it is like putting somebody on there who is an equestrian rider - they ride on the roads and cars are part of their problem, but they don't understand the bigger picture. The problem if you put somebody on there who is against firearm ownership in any way, shape or form, is that they would go in - in my experience - with a preconceived idea.

Some of the things that have been said, even in the public hearings for the Legislative Council, that I refuted - luckily I was on after a certain person - beggars belief. Some of the things that are told to the people who will make the laws that we have to abide by is not full, true information.

Dr WOODRUFF - We have heard testimony from the Alannah and Madeline Foundation and from doctors. None of them are against firearm ownership at all. My question is whether this is about the technical details. If there is a firearm owners council there is gap in information about where are the doctors, where are the women's shelters, where is the domestic violence expertise, where are the mental health professionals? Can you see how it would frame a different sort of advice?

Mr MOORE - Yes, I can. The problem I see with that is all of their concerns, which are undoubtedly valid when you look at the news reports, seem to be based on a criminal element nature. We know they are of a criminal nature but a criminal element nature. The statistics that we see in relation to the misuse of firearms are way above people that are outside of the firearm laws anyway. I do not think it is a firearm owners committee; it was always talked about as a firearms consultative group. That means you have people representing all different parts of the firearms industry - the doctors who invariably end up treating people; the police are on it and they are probably the first port of call when a firearm is misused. They have their say and have been instrumental on backing us on some of our proposals. It does work, but does it make the outcome workable?

Dr WOODRUFF - It is a different structure to what the Liberal policy before the election was proposing. It was not a consultative council, it was an owner's council, so that was a change.

Mr MOORE - I suppose it is the same model as the TFGA with their primary industry council. You try to get all the parties that have an interest in it and take what they have to say and then look at what the issues are.

CHAIR - You mentioned statistics a while ago and handguns and what is coming out of America and this and that. Have you got any idea of statistics for Tasmania or even Australia?

Mr MOORE - I can tell you that since 1934, handguns in Tasmania have been required to be registered and you need a licence. So if you had a handgun back then you had to have it registered. In 1932 it was voluntary. Since 1934, we've had two instances to my knowledge where a legal firearm owned by a licensed shooter has been used in a serious crime.

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CHAIR - Since 1934? Two?

Mr MOORE - These microphones are staring me in the face and I say I believe that to be true and correct. One of them I read the case study on and it was in Launceston, and if it hadn't been a firearm it would have been a weapon of some other sort.

CHAIR - My next question is around having handguns in the community and that sort of thing. They are registered for people within clubs at the moment; that is legitimate. Then there is the storage side of things. We could ask the police this, but what about stolen handguns? Are there any rates of theft of handguns, or anything you could inform the committee about as far as handguns go?

Mr MOORE - As you can appreciate, in the pistol community, we talk; the clubs talk, the executives talk. I've been involved with the Van Diemen Pistol Club since 1980 and in that time we have had three thefts of firearms. One of the thefts was of multiple firearms. To my knowledge they have all been recovered. I liaise with the police because we have a contract with the police. They use our facilities to train, and I talk with the area commander and inspectors a fair bit. They say handguns are better than cash in the criminal world. If you have \$1000 for knocking off an ATM it is \$1000. If you have a \$1000 handgun, then they can get more for it. As far as we are concerned, the penalties need to be increased. They really do. It is a frustration for the police and getting into another area of police courts and such, which I do not want to go to, but to have the deterrent. I have never personally had a problem with storage, as long as it is practical and actually-

CHAIR - You have mentioned there has only been three incidents since 1980 with handguns.

Mr MOORE - That I am aware of, yes. I am talking major clubs, which is the North West Pistol Club, the Tasmanian Pistol Revolver Club in Hobart and the Van Diemen Pistol Club in Launceston.

CHAIR - That is 1980 which is a fair span. Most people are talking pre-1996, pre-Port Arthur, post-Port Arthur, and that sort of thing and the requirements come in past then. Those three, were they 1980 to 1996? We would like to have hard evidence.

Mr MOORE - I think two were prior and one was after. It seems to us the legislation increasing the security of firearms across the board, all categories, has negated most of the stealing of the firearms.

Dr WOODRUFF - Although that is only maybe the case for handguns, because of the way people are, but actually Tasmanian firearms thefts have averaged 270 every year for last five years, on average. In the last five years there has been over 1000 firearms stolen in Tasmania. We have a much higher rate of firearm theft in Tasmania than other states per head of population. That may be because we have more firearms per head of population than most other states, except the Northern Territory. It sounds as though there is something different happening in the handgun area but that is not reflected across other firearms.

Mr MOORE - The other thing is our rate of firearm licences is higher in Tasmania as I understand it, than other states.

Dr WOODRUFF - How would that affect theft?

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Mr MOORE - There are more places guns are kept.

Dr WOODRUFF - More not kept very well. Is this a storage problem?

Mr MOORE - I do not think so. I know of long guns being stolen at Prossers Forest Road on the way to the back road to Nunamara, which is through Rocherlea. The safe there was bolted down with six bolts into solid concrete and they used crow bars. They reckon it must have taken them all day to steal the whole safe. They did not get the guns, they just stole the whole safe. They ripped the wall and the floor out. How far do you go? The security I have cost me but that is the price you pay. The last thing I want is for any of my firearms - I have long guns as well as handguns - to fall into the wrong hands.

If a firearm owner does not understand this we are on a hiding to nothing. I believe the laws governing storage are good. It is like buying a new car - criminals cannot steal it, yes, they can. It is just they have to have the technical know-how of a brand-new vehicle and now they can get it on the internet.

Under the act, if I have more than two or three unregistered firearms, then I can be charged with firearms trafficking. Maximum penalty is 14 years under the act. Somebody could come and steal all my firearms and I would be surprised if they received years. Single figures. This is the balance -

Dr WOODRUFF - So the balance between what -

Mr MOORE - Is wrong.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, okay. So what you would get is a maximum of 14 years.

Mr MOORE - I think it is a maximum, actually can I defer to somebody. It is about 14 years.

Dr WOODRUFF - Fourteen years.

Mr MOORE - Maximum - if I had three or more unregistered firearms.

Dr WOODRUFF - And nothing else? No history of anything?

Mr MOORE - If I had all the firearms I have.

CHAIR - You are saying as an individual. If I had not been through the process of registering and say I am not going to register them, I am going to keep them at home -

Mr MOORE - No, no. As a licence holder all my firearms are registered. I collect certain types of rifles, so I have a few of those. I also have quite a few handguns, because I participate in nearly every match. But if I had three rifles that were not kosher in my back shed behind a storage box and they were found, under the act I could be charged with firearms trafficking and the maximum penalty is 14 years, let alone I would lose in excess of \$200 000 in my own firearms.

CHAIR - If a person stole six or eight or 10 firearms and was caught by the police, what would you suggest they would receive in the courts?

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Mr MOORE - I remember one in Hobart, where they stole one safe which had eight guns and they received 18 months, six months suspended.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is not a fair comparison because if the police came and found you had three firearms, you might not get anything for that. It is not actually fair to look at what goes through the courts, because a person could be charged but the maximum is 14 years but they may get nothing or six months or three months.

Mr MOORE - And that is the way the justice system works.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is right, but what is the maximum someone could get if they steal three firearms? That is the comparison we are looking for?

Mr MOORE - I do not know, but the last was something like three years.

Dr WOODRUFF - The maximum sentence?

Mr MOORE - If you swapped that around, it would be maybe fair. The thing is, the person who had the unregistered firearm would forfeit his licence, any sport and any legal firearms they owned. There is a big penalty.

Dr WOODRUFF - I think it is worthwhile looking at that.

Mr MOORE - Yes. I do not have a problem as long as it is the same for everybody, but there again like you said, what happens when it gets to court.

Dr WOODRUFF - You might be charged by the police and get to court for having three firearms and the magistrate would so say, no nothing or the magistrate might say 10 years. It would depend on the circumstances.

CHAIR - Thank you, Mr Moore. Is there anything else? We have covered a fair range. If there is nothing else you wish to inform the committee.

Mr MOORE - I suppose my parting shot, for want of a better word, is that I would really appreciate it if this subcommittee could look at letting prohibited calibres into all matches that have rules that comply with them. At the moment, we have to apply to a commissioner for a permit to have a prohibited gun, which is over .38 and we can only have that for metallic silhouette Western action, and what we are basically asking for is to include IPSC into that as well.

Dr WOODRUFF - What is IPSC?

Mr MOORE - International Practical Shooting Confederation, IPSC for short. It is a match - there is a list originally of the disciplines you could use as a genuine reason for owning a firearm. For whatever reason, this was left off the list. We do not see the reason why you have to apply for a commissioner's exemption to own what they call an 'over-calibre' firearm when there is a match with international rules.

CHAIR - And that is also in your submission. Thank you very much for that. The time is 12 noon. As I advised you at the commencement of the evidence, what you have said to us today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that, that

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privilege does not attach to comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you have said to us here today. Do you understand this?

Mr MOORE - I do.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

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Mr JOHN GREEN, PRESIDENT, AND **Mr ANDREW HARVEY**, SECRETARY, ARMS COLLECTORS GUILD OF TASMANIA, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome, gentlemen. Let us get straight into it. No doubt you have an opening statement.

Mr GREEN - First, I thank the committee for convening in the north. It has always been a long drive and hard to park coming south. Thank you very much for that, we do appreciate it.

As a quick background, the Arms Collectors Guild of Tasmania was formed in 1972. Its objective is to promote the preservation of colonial and antique military history. I have been president for the last six years. From a small beginning we now have about 300 members statewide and several involved in the mainland states as well.

I have been involved in the firearm's legislation process since 1992, when the first Tasmanian Gun Licence was introduced; that licence being a lifetime licence being renewable each 10 years. This 1992 legislation licence was to be for a fit and proper person, not the firearm. It was for the person, not the firearm. That is the actual original licence there, if anyone would like to look at it. That is a 1992 one.

Just about ourselves, Andrew is the secretary of the Arms Collectors Guild. He has had 35 years' service in the Australian Navy and has been involved in committees and all that down the track since 1996. I had three years in the Australian Army and we have both been involved for over 20 years each in the firearms retail industry in Launceston in various shops.

Collectors, unlike museums, consider they are the custodians of historical items which will be passed on to future collectors. There is a little statement there of the aims and objectives of our organisation as a collecting organisation, if anyone would like to look at that at some time in the future.

CHAIR - We can table that and put it into evidence if you wish.

Mr GREEN - I have been involved since 1996 with the legislation with the consultative committees that were originally started by Julie Shadbolt and then continued later on up until the election this year with Rene Hidding. We've been pretty much involved with everything going on.

Dr BROAD - In your submission you said the guild believes that the current single provider for firearms safety training should be expanded to organisations that fulfil the criteria of an approved training provider. Could you extrapolate on the reasons behind that?

Mr HARVEY - The biggest problem seems to be the difficulty of getting onto the course. You apply for your licence and then it takes quite some time to get a course because there are so many people going through it and it has become very expensive. It was quite a lot cheaper when it first started. If you have more than one provider hopefully that competition will make the price go down because there would be more than one group providing courses and more positions to get people through better. As far as I understand that is the position for competition in the Australian situation; they are encouraging competition even in government-provided -

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CHAIR - Mainland states.

Mr HARVEY - Mainland states. In New South Wales, for example, you could go to a gun club and if they have been approved as a provider you could do your course at the gun club. There are multiple providers on the mainland.

Mr GREEN - One of the other things is that the course as such in Tasmania is holistic so it covers all categories, A B and H, and people who want to do just category H shooting at the Van Diemen Pistol Club have to do the whole course and fire long guns. When very fine ladies fire a shotgun, the recoil is very severe on them. With another provider a pistol club just does the component they want on their licence. They might not want A and B, just H, and it was very detrimental to their outlook on things by having to go through the whole process just to get H on their licence to do the A and B component as well.

We also had another situation with category C firearms. If you already had a licence with endorsement for A and B and you went to go for the C category they make you do the course again. There was no C component to the course. You still just shot with your A and B firearms. The course in that way did not seem sensible. You ended up paying hundreds of dollars again to do the course for your C endorsement.

Dr WOODRUFF - Don't you shoot with a shotgun in -

Mr HARVEY - Rifle and shotgun.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, but not a pump-action shotgun.

Mr HARVEY - No.

Dr WOODRUFF - For A and B you shoot with a shotgun.

Mr HARVEY - No. If you wanted to get a C, either a pump-action shotgun, a semiautomatic shotgun, or a semiautomatic .22 rimfire, they sent you off to do another A and B course because there was no component.

Dr WOODRUFF - Is that still the case?

Mr HARVEY - As far as I know. It just doesn't make sense.

Dr WOODRUFF - You have a proposal to introduce category E, which is a new licence category.

Mr HARVEY - The minister in his election announcement talked about a category E. We have a shooting side and a collecting side to our club. With the collecting side, if you want to have anything outside of A, B, C, D and H, you have to get an exemption so you end up with numbers of exemptions. I think I've got four. In other states they have other categories. Queensland has R and M for these other items. For some time we have put to have a category for these other items and if you are a collector and able to have them, you apply for that category. When you are applying for that particular item, whatever it is, with a permit to apply, because you've got the category you can get the item. At this stage, you get a commissioner's exemption which is not always easy. Some

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of my people have been waiting 18 months for an exemption from the commissioner. It is a clunky process.

Dr WOODRUFF - In your submission you said they had been waiting 12 months.

Mr HARVEY - I have one fellow who has been waiting 18 months now for an exemption.

Dr BROAD - What sort of firearms do you have exemptions for?

Mr HARVEY - I have exemptions for high-capacity magazines under Part 1(6) of Schedule 1 which is prohibited firearms, and Part 1(6) is an item that looks like a Schedule 1 item which is a machine gun or something like that. If you have a display or a re-enactment and you have an imitation machine gun, you need an exemption. It never used to be the case; that was changed about 10 years ago, that reinterpretation.

Dr BROAD - What other sorts of things are people seeking exemptions for? Is it mainly those sorts of -

Mr GREEN - Ammunition. If you want to collect ammunition you need a commissioner's exemption. Crossbows became prohibited, even some collectible ones. One of our members had a fifteenth-century crossbow and had to get an exemption to hold it because it was a crossbow.

Dr WOODRUFF - You have had four exemptions so it is entirely possible to get them. How long did it take you to get them?

Mr HARVEY - Those came in quite quickly because it was a reinterpretation. It hit people with these items when they reinterpreted the act, and they actually charged one of our people. I discussed it with the manager at the time, Ms Martin, and said, 'What the rest of us are going to do because we've got this stuff and you are now saying it is now illegal and you are going to charge us?'. She said to apply for an exemption, which we did. That is what our people have been doing in that particular area at the moment.

Dr WOODRUFF - You're arguing for convenience but you have actually been able to get what you wanted?

Mr HARVEY - Yes, we've got the exemption but it has been a clunky process getting it. In the act, and in a category for collectors, then there is a process there and we will just put -

Mr GREEN - You could have it on your licence. Instead of having to have all of these exemptions, it could be just noted on your licence.

Dr WOODRUFF - One of the issues is that that breaches the National Firearms Agreement, which is quite specific. Those issues were discussed at the time when they struck the agreement. There were these discussions -

Mr HARVEY - It sounded like different states did things with different categories.

Dr WOODRUFF - All states of Australia came to the agreement.

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Mr HARVEY - But in the end those state parliaments enacted different things. Our parliament enacted different things than what the agreement said. Every state has differences in categories and what actually went in because in the end it was parliament that decided.

Dr WOODRUFF - That's right, but we get to decide whether parliament breaches the agreement or complies with it. I guess the question would be, how severe is the inconvenience to members to want to breach the National Firearms Agreement? I am hearing that there is a time issue. What do you think would be reasonable to have some sort of proper checks on a firearm for something like that?

Mr GREEN - For a person who is already licensed and has several categories on their licence as a collector - I have A, B C and H on my licence, with collector as number seven. Therefore, I am fairly well approved to the police. I have proved that I am a member of a club and I am doing all the right things and everything so it should not be very hard. An exemption for something else - like rocket launchers and that sort of thing -

Mr HARVEY - I have that exemption too. Ones that are inactive.

Mr GREEN - They are not loaded or anything like that.

CHAIR - How do you prove you are fit and proper person to be a collector?

Mr GREEN - You have to be a member of a club and continue to be a member of that club. It can be any club. It doesn't have to be the Arms Collectors Guild, it can be another collecting organisation. There are four in Tasmania.

Mr HARVEY - All recognised and approved collecting clubs.

Mr GREEN - You have to remain a member of a club. If you cease to be a member, then it is a bit like Craig with the handguns. Firearm Services are notified and they take the appropriate action.

CHAIR - What some people might argue is that in order to get a machine gun, for instance, someone might become a member of the club.

Mr HARVEY - You can't get a machine gun. We are talking about imitations for display or re-enactment. We ran an event called the Midlands Military Meet at Campbell Town. We have run it about four times. We have had people coming from the mainland. They brought blank-firing machine guns for re-enactment. We cannot do that in Tasmania but we can have deactivated or imitation versions for display. People who come over have to get a commissioner's exemption to bring those over. They have different rules in Victoria.

CHAIR - So, to be a fit and proper person you have to be a member of a club, participating in that club. If you drop your financial membership, it's same as the pistol clubs -

Mr GREEN - They are obliged to notify Firearm Services of anyone who does not renew their membership.

CHAIR - What would happen if we have some historic firearms that belong to a collector in Tasmania and he was not with us anymore? What happens to those firearms if they are significant?

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Is this commissioner's exemption a way of getting around that? I am worried about losing antiquities from Tasmania. Some mainlander might buy them because they are capable of doing it and we are not.

Mr GREEN - It is kind of two different areas. Antique firearms are fairly well established and catered for. It is only more modern stuff.

Mr HARVEY - Post-1900.

Mr GREEN - Post-1900 stuff. We cannot have machine guns from the First World War. Some of the mainland ones can have them on a particular category on their licence. We can have replicas but we need an exemption. Antique firearms are not a problem. They are usually sold within the groups or they go to auction like Roly Martin's auction in Melbourne. They are shifted on to other collectors that way.

Mr HARVEY - There is a process when someone passes away and you get a situation with a registered firearm they go to a dealer, the police or an approved holder of firearms until the will is done.

There are issues in some areas because if it is an exemption or a prohibited firearm they might not have an approval, in which case it would have to go to a dealer or to the police. It cannot go to a person who obviously does not have an exemption.

Mr GREEN - Unless they have the categories on their licence?

Mr HARVEY - And yes some firearms do go to the mainland in that situation. We have seen that.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can you clarify: if someone comes to Tasmania and they had something like a deactivated machine gun that they would have to get the commissioner's exemption?

Mr HARVEY - Yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - Is that a process which is usually achieved in a timely fashion.

Mr HARVEY - It takes a very long time. First of all, you have to join the club. Then you have to get a licence in Tasmania. Obviously, once you have a licence you have to get an exemption so, yes, it is 12 months possibly.

Mr GREEN - It can take three months just to change a Victorian licence over to a Tasmanian one.

Mr HARVEY - They do not recognise all the other states' licences.

Mr GREEN - No, they do not recognise New South Wales and Western Australia.

Mr HARVEY - You could come to Tasmania with a licence, with firearms. Then you have to put your firearms in to a dealer and do a course, which could take three to six months.

Dr WOODRUFF - Do they recognise our licence?

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Mr GREEN - Everyone, except Western Australia.

Mr HARVEY - Western Australia does not recognise anything from anybody.

Mr GREEN - Unfortunately, they are always two hours behind the rest of us.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay.

Dr BROAD - Out of interest, old shotguns that are muzzle-loading, are they exempt?

Mr HARVEY - They are exempt, unless you want to fire them, in which case you have to register them.

Dr BROAD - Are they exempt from needing a licence?

Mr GREEN - That is right. Or registration.

Mr HARVEY - The definition is 'pre-1900 no commercial ammunition available'. If you had a pre-1900 12 gauge for black powder, you would probably need to register it. You would have to in other states because you can fit modern ammunition into it. It might kill you, but you can do it. In other states, they have a list of exempt calibres. We have tried to bring that in in Tasmania, and they do not want to do it. There is a Victorian, New South Wales and Queensland list of exemptions.

Mr GREEN - They have a nominated list of obsolete calibres.

Mr HARVEY - We have problems over that in Tasmania as to pre-1900, is it available? We have regular discussions on those sorts of issues. We are having one at the moment.

CHAIR - Another question and it goes to history, John. You mentioned that you have been around this game for a fair while on advisory committees and that sort of thing. You mentioned the advisory committee under Rene Hidding. Presumably prior to that you were on advisory committees to the previous Labor government and Labor-Greens government. So, it is not outside the realms of history that governments have had advisory committees from the firearms community from very early on.

Mr HARVEY - There has been an advisory committee almost continuously in some way or another.

Mr GREEN - Julie Shadbolt was the first manager of Firearms Services from 1996 and a terrific lady, God rest her soul.

Mr HARVEY - She passed away recently.

Mr GREEN - She was very open. She would ring me or others like Andrew and say, 'I have just written this letter.', and she would read it out. You know how some public servants write a letter that a normal person reads it and they go, 'They really giving me a hard time about this.' I would say, 'Change a few words, Julie, it sounds very confronting.' She was very open to those sorts of things. I could drive to Hobart, go to police headquarters and up to the 5th floor to Firearm Services. Julie would say, 'Come in and sit in the office. I will make you a coffee'. We had a really

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good working relationship but it went downhill once Julie went. We were just building up with Rene. We were going really well with him.

We are not all against all the legislation and that sort of thing. We just want a few things played better.

Mr HARVEY - When they are looking at legislation they often do not think of the collectors' area. There are so many different things in the collecting area, as John said, such as crossbows. They brought crossbow legislation in not thinking that you could have a 13th or 14th century crossbow. They did not make a collectors' side to that, so we all ended up getting a collectors' exemption.

Dr WOODRUFF - Are you talking about when regulations were being made around that?

Mr HARVEY - Yes, when regulations came in for the crossbows. They just didn't think about it.

Dr WOODRUFF - I am wondering why you think there needs to be a special advisory council. In other sectors, for example when there are changes to health or other specialist areas, there is not usually - I suppose there is a question about the construction of such a council. The Liberals' policy before the election was for a firearm owners' council, which is quite a different frame to what you were talking about with a consultative council.

Mr HARVEY - They asked Roland Browne if he wants to be on it and he declined. We have always been quite prepared to have somebody else on the committee.

Mr GREEN - At one of the meetings we had a woman from the women's shelter, abused women and that sort of thing. We are certainly not against that sort of thing, because we are all in the same boat.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is all about public safety. That is what the firearms agreement is about and that is why we have done so well in Tasmania. As you say, there are these technical issues to manage.

Mr HARVEY - We are the people actually doing it. The people trying to administer it do not necessarily have any experience in the area. Even though they can call on ballistics, they might not have any experience outside their area either.

Mr GREEN - It is like you are interviewing us to find out different things and we are different to a lot of the other clubs. Everybody does not know everything, so you have to take advice from people who know what they are talking about.

Mr HARVEY - Even though we have provided advice, that has not meant it necessarily has gone through. I would say almost the opposite. In the end a submission is put together by government and put out there for public consultation, which we obviously do as well, and then it goes to parliament. We are still only providing advice from our speciality areas.

Dr WOODRUFF - You talked about a computerised internet system.

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Mr HARVEY - That was brought up by Rene Hidding. He was hoping to have a computerised system where you could many of these things online and get away from mailing information out that is going missing or getting into the wrong hands. It is obviously done in other states. I have been to a gun show in Victoria. If you were a Victorian licence holder, you could do your transaction right there on the day with a computer system. Western Australia is the same. I guess this is where it will go in the end. It will cost and so on to set it up, but we were quite supportive of that.

Mr GREEN - One of the things is if I want to buy a new firearm, which I am at the moment, I have to fill out a form and come into Service Tasmania and pay my money. That then goes to Hobart. There is no other alternative; you cannot do it online or other options. We have always had a problem with the more people who see my name and address and details on a piece of paper, the more chance there is of that information getting into the wrong hands. We have had problems with this some years ago with Australia Post.

Dr WOODRUFF - Could you talk a bit more about that?

Mr GREEN - Several years ago, letters were sent through Australia Post from Firearm Services in Hobart. It was then box 1400 and they have now reverted back to 308. Those licence renewal letters were found to have been taken out of the system. People were not receiving them. Somebody was taking them and all the stuff coming from the police department and putting them through a shredder.

Mr HARVEY - I have had a similar situation with one of my members.

Dr WOODRUFF - Was it identified by the police?

Mr GREEN - Yes, that person was -

Dr WOODRUFF - Someone was charged?

Mr GREEN - I do not know whether they were charged or not but they certainly got shifted.

Dr WOODRUFF - Alright, but that was not at your letter box?

Mr GREEN - No, this was internally within Australia Post.

Dr WOODRUFF - They could have not sent you an electronic reminder or something I suppose.

Mr HARVEY - We are having an issue with this at the moment, people are not receiving advice for their licence renewals. When their licence has expired they have 14 days. If you are outside of the period -

CHAIR - There is no flexibility.

Mr HARVEY - There is no flexibility at all. If you have not done the course before, like all of us pre-1996, then you have to do the course again, even though you have had 20 years of licence. There is no flexibility.

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CHAIR - What has happened in that case where licence holders have argued that it is not their fault? I have come across one situation where a person informed me of this, but you have more experience in people coming to you.

Mr HARVEY - No one I know has won that.

Mr GREEN - They have not beaten Firearms Services. They have had to do the course and complete the renewal of their licence.

Mr HARVEY - That is new. It did not necessarily happen this way in the past. This is another new interpretation.

CHAIR - Which leads me to the issue you raised in your submission of the revolving managers of Firearms Services and therefore each manager having their own interpretation of what this means and changes.

Mr HARVEY - And not always telling us until someone gets charged. That has been a real problem. I have been a witness in various court cases in that situation.

CHAIR - Okay, that has happened a fair bit over the time?

Mr GREEN - Yes. A strange one was a case only recently. I helped a guy who was broken into. He had three firearms, one of which was a pre-1900, exempt from registration. The police charged him with having a firearm stolen which he did not steal himself. This is one of the problems, if someone steals my firearms while I am talking to you here today, I get charged because I failed to keep my firearms secure. We do end up getting charged in that situation.

They charged him for having an 1876 Martini Henry and three times we went to court. In the finish the police prosecutor withdrew the charges, because they knew they were going to lose because it was pre-1900 and did not have to be registered. They charged him with having an unregistered firearm.

CHAIR - How did it get to three court cases before the police prosecutor decided to withdraw? Surely these people are lawyers.

Mr HARVEY - They seem to have a pro-prosecution process. I have looked at statistics from the Australian Institute of Criminology about firearm thefts from about 2006 and there were 35 or 40 firearm thefts that year and every single person was charged. I sent that to the commissioner for an explanation as surely, if they were complying with the act, they would not be charged. I did not get a response, but every single person in that year was charged.

CHAIR - Charged with not securing their firearms, even though they could have been and we won't say they were, even though they may have been compliant with all the legislation and the regulations you have to go through, still get charged.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is the law.

Mr HARVEY - That is right, yes.

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Dr WOODRUFF - That is the thing, isn't it? You are granted access to a licence and to a firearm as a privilege and need to take all reasonable precautions.

CHAIR - To take all reasonable precautions, yes.

Mr HARVEY - If you take the reasonable precautions, you should not be charged.

Dr WOODRUFF - That would be up to the magistrate to decide whether there should be a sentence or a conviction as a result of that charge.

Mr HARVEY - It is up to police initially as to whether they lay charges.

Dr WOODRUFF - Police have to uphold the law.

Mr HARVEY - They have discretion. They do not have to charge and we have had people who have not been charged under this discretion.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can I ask a question about the Category C. Your club is wanting to expand Category C to semi-automatic shotguns in competition and the National Firearms' Agreement was crystal clear it would only be approved to clay target shooters. Is that correct?

Mr HARVEY - Yes. We are clay target shooters. They initially said no C Class. Then they opened it up to one organisation to shoot clay pigeon shooting for people that have a medical condition. There is only one organisation approved at the moment -

Dr WOODRUFF - The Australian Clay Target Association.

Mr HARVEY - I have members who are also members of them who have semi-automatic shotguns. They cannot come and shoot with us, because we are not an approved organisation. I have people who might be able to shoot, because there are all sorts of advantages with low recoil with a C class for people of small stature. We could get some of those if they wanted to shoot with us in our clay target competition, but we are not an approved organisation. There is only one organisation that is.

Dr WOODRUFF - I am a bit naïve in these areas. Are you saying there is not an Australian Clay Target Association, Tasmania branch?

Mr GREEN - There is, yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - So there is one in Tasmania?

Mr GREEN - Yes there is. There are several affiliated.

Dr WOODRUFF - So there are places for people to shoot.

Mr HARVEY - Yes, but because we are not approved, they cannot come and shoot with our club. They can shoot there, but they cannot shoot with us.

Dr WOODRUFF - There are special conditions regarding -

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Mr HARVEY - You have to have a doctor's approval

Dr WOODRUFF - For the Australian Clay Target Association Tasmania branch, are there particular conditions about how they maintain their premises which would be different from your club?

Mr HARVEY - No, same as any other club.

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you think they are identical?

Mr HARVEY - No. Same as any other club. Every range approval is slightly different but there would not be anything different because of C Class. We can actually shoot C Class on our range. We are approved to do that, so you can come along three times in a six-month period to zero your firearm. You could bring along your .22 rimfire semi-automatic rifle and zero it at our range. We are approved.

CHAIR - You are saying there are people out there who have their C Class firearm, an old SKB five-shot automatic, who are affiliated with the Australian whatever one you said, and they can shoot at a range that is associated with that in Tasmania, but they can't come to your range. Why? If the argument is public safety, they've already got their firearm and registered it appropriately, so where is the disadvantage to public safety in not allowing them to come to your range?

Mr HARVEY - None. I can't see any reason.

Dr WOODRUFF - It was identified under the National Firearms Agreement. You were functioning in 1972 and other organisations were functioning in 1996.

Mr HARVEY - This was after that, I think.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, 1996 was when the agreement was struck.

Mr HARVEY - Yes, but there have been firearm agreement changes since then.

Dr WOODRUFF - So this was not put in place in the National Firearms Agreement?

Dr BROAD - No, that exemption came afterwards. It seems like there was only one group who successfully lobbied and restricted the change just to their organisation and not the broader organisations. It is almost like they've got a monopoly on that.

Mr GREEN - In 1996 when C Class firearms were prohibited, all the clay target shooters had to hand them in because they were prohibited. Then some time later the clay target shooters and farmers found out that they could have kept them had everything gone according to plan, but it did not. The problem was that the ACTA, as the Australian umbrella for clay target shooting, got the guernsey, so you had to become a member of the ACTA to get a C Class shotgun to shoot. It has changed since then and a lot more clubs shoot clay targets and everything, but we can't allow them to come to our club because we can't get approval.

Dr WOODRUFF - And it is only if they have a medical need that they can get that or a sufficient lack of strength or dexterity.

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Mr HARVEY - At the moment, yes. That is what I am proposing. If you don't have sufficient strength or size to be able to shoot a 12-gauge shotgun in competition, a C Class shotgun absorbs recoil easier and would enable you to compete where you can't probably at the moment. That is my proposal. If you restrict a semiautomatic shotgun to either two or three rounds, which happens in Britain, you have two and three-round shotguns now so there wouldn't be any difference in safety between a semiautomatic two or three-round shotgun and a two or three-round shotgun that is presently available.

Dr BROAD - What is the configuration of a three-round shotgun? Is it double-barrelled?

Mr HARVEY - They stop the magazine - there are four-round shotguns as well in collecting areas.

Mr GREEN - Lancaster made them at the turn of the last century.

Mr HARVEY - And larger, but they're really rare.

Dr WOODRUFF - Shoot four at once.

Mr GREEN - You wouldn't want to shoot four at once.

Dr WOODRUFF - But you could?

Mr HARVEY - No, you can't. Pull the trigger and it will go once. There was a nine-shot naval weapon from 1800 that went off in one go.

Dr WOODRUFF - Like a cannon.

Mr GREEN - Up in the mast to shoot out on to the decks of the opposing ship.

Mr HARVEY - But that's extremely rare and worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

CHAIR - One of the issues that has been put to me with this issue of Class C in shooting competitions is that anybody with a Class C licence who can't shoot - and with this we are talking medical; you are talking about people of small stature and that.

Mr HARVEY - Which would still be a medical approval - you would have to go to a doctor.

CHAIR - Even if it is an older gentleman who has been shooting a very long time, he could go to Class C. But the reality is if you have a farmer out there who has access to a Class C he can't use that on your range anyway.

Mr HARVEY - No, not a shotgun. A rifle he can, but a shotgun he can't.

CHAIR - All I am saying is as far as firearms in the community is concerned, the stupidity of this whole thing is that that person then goes out and buys a second firearm because he can't use the first one, so you have two firearms in the community instead of one.

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If there are no further questions? Is there anything we have missed that you wish to inform the committee on?

Mr HARVEY - We had a lot in our first submission. There are two submissions.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, I have the first one. I think we have covered the compliance with the National Firearms Agreement and the changes you wanted to make there.

Mr GREEN - The main thing I would like to say is that as collectors we seem to be left out of legislation changes and that sort of thinking. It mainly revolves around the actual use of the firearms more than anything else. As collectors, I have old guns at home that I would never take out and fire in a million years because they're old and reasonably valuable. But I have my rifles that I take to the range to shoot and I have my collectibles. We get shoved off to one side a bit and some of the legislation is double-edged. It comes in and looks nice for someone who owns a centrefire rifle to shoot on the range but it can also hurt someone with a collectible firearm.

Dr WOODRUFF - Hurt in what way? Do you mean inconvenience?

Mr GREEN - Yes, inconvenience and changing the way you're allowed to have things and that sort of thing.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is a question of whether legislation can or ought to distinguish between a collector and a person who is not collecting, because public safety has to be first and foremost.

Mr GREEN - We have no disagreement about that.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is always about trying to make sure -

Mr HARVEY - There is a balance there, though, between public safety and risk, so is there a risk? We all know that a worst-case scenario is horrendous but the chance of that happening might be very remote.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is not the way the National Firearms Agreement is written. It is not about balancing risk. It is making sure that the regulations are conditional on ensuring that public safety could be at risk.

Mr HARVEY - Which is a risk assessment.

Dr WOODRUFF - You are right. There has to be something in there.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, gentlemen, for coming in.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

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Dr PAUL MONAGHAN, AND Mr MARK WALTERS, TASMANIAN RIFLE ASSOCIATION INC, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome, gentlemen. Before we start, I would like to reiterate some of the important aspects of the guide sent to you by the committee secretary. A committee hearing is a proceeding of parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place outside of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of this parliamentary proceeding.

This is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present, and this means that your evidence may be reported. It is important that if you wish some or all of your evidence to be heard in private, you make that request and explain your reasons prior to giving that evidence.

Would you like to make an opening statement?

Dr MONAGHAN - Perhaps we should introduce ourselves briefly so you understand our backgrounds in terms of the relevance to this committee. I am a retired CSIRO scientist. I have been target-shooting for about 30 years, mostly in the UK but more recently here in Australia. I am currently the chairman of the Australian Match Rifle Association and the captain of the Australian match rifle team which will be travelling to Great Britain in 2019 to compete against the Great Britain team.

CHAIR - Congratulations.

Dr MONAGHAN - Thank you. I am a council member of the Tasmanian Rifle Association and that is my primary reason for being here today.

Mr WALTERS - I have been shooting for 45 years and am fourth generation at it at the moment. I am the deputy chairman of the TRA and am also travelling to Great Britain next year as part of the Australian match rifle team. I am also the chief range officer for the rifle association. I might have some questions on how that works later on. That is my role here.

Dr WOODRUFF - Are you on the team?

Mr WALTERS - Yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - Congratulations.

Dr MONAGHAN - There are four Tasmanians out of 18 on the team so we've done very well.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is good.

Dr MONAGHAN - Let us move on to our introductory points. It is important to say at this point that the TRA supports the National Firearms Agreement both in its intent and its operation and we would not support legislative changes that reduce public safety. We needed to state that.

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Formal target-shooting in Australia is overseen by the National Rifle Association of Australia, the NRAA, and is administered through state rifle associations. The Tasmanian Rifle Association fulfils that function in Tasmania. It was formed in 1883 so is one of the oldest sporting associations, if not the oldest in Tasmania.

Through membership of the TRA, Tasmanian target sportsmen and women are eligible to shoot at state, national and international level, and it is this international connection that has brought a number of international teams to compete at the Campbell Town range. The TRA is managed by an elected council and supports its affiliated clubs. It is these clubs that organise the majority of the shooting practices and also the competitions throughout Tasmania.

The target shooting underneath the Tasmanian Rifle Association encompasses category A firearms at 20 metres through to category B firearms at up to 1300 metres. The disciplines we shoot are recognised internationally and are defined by internationally agreed standards. In Australia these shooting disciplines are governed by a comprehensive set of standard shooting rules, or SSRs. There is a strong emphasis on safe shooting practices as well as carefully defined rules to ensure safe conduct on the range and fair competition between competitors. NRAA competition rifles are single-shot bolt-action rifles.

Our main range is at Campbell Town. We have a diverse membership and our sport is somewhat unusual in that men and women from the late teens through to their 80s can compete on a level playing field, and indeed they do. We are obviously fully aware of the need to provide accessibility for all for target shooting.

Of relevance to this inquiry or committee, whilst the TRA would not support any move to change the law that would impact public safety, we are keen to see changes that will clarify and simplify the position of legitimate target sportsmen and women and their interactions with the licensing authorities.

That is the background we would like to get over so you understand a little about the TRA and what we do.

Dr BROAD - You have just highlighted that you would like to see some changes. Do you want to outline what they are?

Dr MONAGHAN - Indeed. The first one would perhaps be the formation of a firearms ownership council.

Mr WALTERS - I think a council would help. In my interactions with say the firearms services it is quite obvious some of the police force have a limited ability to understand what target shooting is. They are mainly driven by the hunting fraternity and other groups. Rarely have they seen a target rifle and what it means. It is a very specialised piece of equipment.

Other issues are things like licence renewal, formalising what is a storage and carriage of firearms. They are all reasonably straightforward things but they are running under a set of regulations that may not be appropriate to every group. Every time I have had the police look at my set up it has usually been a bit of a show-and-tell essay. They haven't really known what we are doing until you have shown them. It would be nice if they had a better background. Competition rifle shooting is a particular form. It would be nice to see more of that.

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We have some issues with competitors coming from or moving from interstate. Tasmania does tend to be a bit of a retirement capital at the moment. So, we are getting people who are experienced having to then gain a Tasmanian licence and finding that all of their experience and training and accreditation from interstate is simply put to one side. They have to do the entire firearms course again. It is difficult to simply transfer across. It is not impossible but it takes time. I think it is up to about five to six months to wait for a course and get through the whole process. For somebody who is used to competing every two weeks or so or every month, it can be a big hole in their competitive background. When you come to the state you are meant to have your licence transferred within three months. It is difficult if it takes you six months to get one back.

Dr WOODRUFF - Is that because people cannot access a course?

Mr WALTERS - The access to the course, yes. The course has gradually shrunk down to only one provider and they run it in Hobart. I think Paul had to travel to Hobart to do his course.

Dr MONAGHAN - It took me several months and it is not cheap either. I have been looking at the various safety courses in the different states and they are all different. Tasmania seems to be probably one of the more expensive. Most of the other states have multiple providers. As we are on this subject, we would like to think that the firearms owners committee might like to look at ways in which the safety course could be provided in a better way. Multiple providers would probably be a good way to go. We as the TRA would be very willing to be involved in both.

CHAIR - You have said it was gradually shrunk down to one provider. Hasn't there only ever been one provider in Tasmania? Can you enlighten me on that? TAFE was the original provider. Were there any private ones started up?

Mr WALTERS - I have no idea. When I came from Victoria in 1996, I found myself in a course within a few weeks. The interesting thing about target shooting is that we went around to the old 1903 Defence Act. We had a national registration that allowed us to shoot a target rifle on a rifle range - nowhere else - and to own it, and that was national. We all had to learn the state methodology, which was useful. Then come into the state, which is fine. When I did my course, I think there was a course about every four weeks, because everybody was doing it. Everybody had to do it at that point. I am not sure who arranged it.

CHAIR - In the submissions that have been put to us, another party for licensing has been mentioned a number of times. Do you see a role there for your association?

Mr WALTERS - We already do. I am the chief range officer for the state for rifle shooting. That means I administer tests for people to become a range officer. In the TRA, under its association rules, every rifle range has to have at least one range officer present when any shooting is occurring. His role is safety and competition. I accredit probably a dozen people per year. Accreditation lasts for two years. That allows them to be the range officer; they do a safety test and understanding of the rules - the SSRs. So, we already do that for our particular field. It would not be extremely hard to take that on to other people, if necessary, particularly in similar roles.

Dr MONAGHAN - I think this is a case, as I mentioned, of the committee having a sub-committee set up to look at what other states do and then look at best practice and work out whether merely getting someone new to give more courses, or perhaps the safety course needs a look at as to whether it is the best to deliver safety, which is its job, compared to what other states

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do. They all seem to be different. I looked at them and there is a lot going on. I think there is a case for looking at it.

Dr WOODRUFF - Or to see whether the current provider should do more of it in different areas.

Dr MONAGHAN - That is a possibility but they are awfully expensive.

Dr WOODRUFF - Maybe that is because it is recouping the real cost.

Dr MONAGHAN - It may well be but it is a lot cheaper in Queensland - \$130 against over \$300 here.

Dr WOODRUFF - I could imagine if you were providing it you might have to recoup the costs. That sounds like a rather low amount to me for the amount of training required under law. It needs to be investigated.

Dr MONAGHAN - It needs looking at.

CHAIR - It was put to us this morning that there should be an ability not to go through the whole safety course for categories A, B, C, D - all of them. Rather, in the handgun case, it should be specific to that licence that was being asked for.

Mr WALTERS - It would work that way quite happily but the licensing categories in some cases are quite broad. For instance, my licence would be for A and B. When you consider that the number of firearms that go under A and B, I can see handguns being separated very easily because it is a very limited licence. But if you were to consider, say, shotguns with centrefire rifles, you then have a very different skill set for both. That makes it a little bit harder.

Dr BROAD - You mentioned restrictions on carriage of ammunition across Bass Strait. Can you outline the issues that you are referring to? Is it in terms of quantity or just general hassles?

Dr MONAGHAN - Quantity is one issue; the other issue is the question as to whether it is factory or reloaded ammunition.

Mr WALTERS - With most competitive long-range rifle shooting, the ammunition is not available to be bought anywhere. It is something that you make yourself - you reload.

A few years ago, the *Spirit of Tasmania* had a bit of an issue with somebody arriving with a trailer load of shotgun ammunition to trek down to Hobart for a gun meet. They were forced to review their entire policy. They came up with up with the idea of a 5 kg limit to start with, or 250 rounds. That is not enough. When we are shooting large target rifle ammunition, 5 kg gets us about 180 rounds, whereas the state competition requires more like about 300 rounds. So, we get about half there. That was one thing.

The next one was that they looked at it very carefully and they said, 'We cannot allow you to bring reloaded ammunition on board because we cannot guarantee that it is an inert projectile', which is the meaning of S3, safe conduct. There are standards for shipping ammunition around the world in the Maritime Act and one of those is that it is inert ammunition. The view from the *Spirit*

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of Tasmania's lawyer was that you cannot guarantee it is not complying with that, therefore that is banned. That makes it quite difficult to come across on the *Spirit of Tasmania*.

The airlines don't have the same issue. The only other way around it is to go to a dangerous goods shipper, which is what most people are now doing.

Dr MONAGHAN - It makes it difficult for people coming into the state as well. For our main competition, the Queen's Prize, we get quite a few people from interstate and it is becoming a question as to -

Mr WALTERS - We are gradually learning a work around.

Dr WOODRUFF - In your submission you talked about supporting the principle of proportionate response to minor transgressions. You were pleased to see the Liberal's policy proposal to review responses to minor infringements. How would you define 'minor'? As you would appreciate, it does breach the National Firearms Agreement because the principle is public safety and everything else is conditional on ensuring that. I am interested to find out what you would call minor.

Dr MONAGHAN - That is something we have discussed and do not have a solution for. I think this is something that perhaps the firearms owners committee should look at and consider.

Mr WALTERS - Target shooters generally shoot a rather large amount of ammunition in any given year. That means we are replacing the barrel of the rifle to retain accuracy every few years. You buy a barrel and the barrel arrives and you then store it and dispose of the old barrel -

Dr WOODRUFF - So you buy a barrel of ammunition?

Mr WALTERS - No, an actual rifle barrel.

Dr WOODRUFF - Sorry.

Mr WALTERS - That is considered to be a component of the rifle so it needs to be stored securely. The other things you need to store securely are things like the trigger. The trigger you can buy over the internet. It is a component that has to be fitted to the rifle; on its own it is useless. That is considered to be a component of the rifle as well, even though it is not something you have to have registered or anything else like that. If you have a box of spare parts you need to put that in the safe as well. Again, it seems to be an overstep to consider everything as part of the rifle when the thing you need to be registered is the bolt and breech. That is the thing that has the serial number on it that has to be registered. All the other things are components that are inert on their own.

Dr WOODRUFF - There are two things I would ask about that. If you had a whole range of those things and there was an accumulation of them, individually they might look small but together they could be substantial.

Mr WALTERS - It is the breech and the bolt that in a target rifle are the two things.

Dr WOODRUFF - I understand that. What is hard about locking them up? Why is that a hard thing to do?

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Mr WALTERS - It becomes a volume thing. If you're working on a trigger and it's in bits on your desk and you have an inspection, are you in breach? Is it a major breach? Is somebody at risk?

Dr WOODRUFF - If it is on your person and you're working on it, it is with you.

Mr WALTERS - Yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - If you take your gun out of the safe and it is on you -

Dr MONAGHAN - You might have a spare trigger is what Mark is saying.

Dr WOODRUFF - Other people have suggested a certain number of rounds of ammunition and I asked how you decide if it is one, 10, 50 or 100, and then someone suggested a packet that could be 100 or 250. It comes down to drawing a line. Tell me why it is too hard, given it is a privilege to have a firearm -

Mr WALTERS - If you purchase a trigger, it is usually mailed to you. The supplier will send you the trigger. It is not a restricted item in its own right until it arrives at your door, and then it is.

Dr WOODRUFF - Would you distinguish between a trigger and ammunition?

Mr WALTERS - Oh yes, definitely.

Dr WOODRUFF - You would say things like 'minor' as other people have argued around ammunition.

Mr WALTERS - I would not argue about ammunition. That is quite clearly a dangerous thing in its own right. But the components of a rifle, which are inert and cannot be used and don't need to be registered in its own right, are probably not. That is the sort of thing that a committee might sit there and say, 'Okay, here are the things that can form a rifle. Which are the bits that -

Dr WOODRUFF - Ammunition does have to be registered.

Mr WALTERS - Yes. You have to have a licence.

Dr MONAGHAN - It needs to be locked away is the important thing.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes. Maybe you're suggesting a line which would be about things that don't have to be licensed.

Mr WALTERS - Correct. You don't need to have a firearms licence to purchase. I certainly share the fear of people being able to assemble something out of bits that they can buy, bit by bit.

CHAIR - Nevertheless, I guess if the argument against anything like that is public safety, you have to ask yourself where is the public risk in having an old trigger that has been discarded lying on your work bench where you have been working on your rifle. What do you do with an old trigger? Do you put it back in the safe and lock it away? I guess if it is on your property you would have to until it is disposed of and thrown on the tip.

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Mr WALTERS - Yes. As I say, you dispose of it at the tip and smash it with a hammer if you had to, I suppose. It goes to the tip usually. I certainly have a plastic bag full of bits left over from old rifles that sits in the safe at the moment because I might be able to recover something from it sooner or later.

CHAIR - It has been put to the committee about ammunition and the fact that people who reload their own in these minor breaches and when you are dealing with several thousand rounds that you are working on one day and then pack them all up and put them away, if inadvertently a cap or something falls under the bench and for whatever reason that was picked up, that would be considered, at this stage, a breach.

Mr WALTERS - Yes, and the police would be of the view that they have no other alternative other than to confiscate everything and you would then be sorting it out in court. The police have no graduation in there at all. The few cases that go to court might set some general guidelines but that's what it has to be.

Dr WOODRUFF - It really puts it on people to be very careful about something which is potentially very dangerous.

Dr BROAD - Are you aware of any cases where a very minor breach has resulted in confiscation?

Mr WALTERS - No, I haven't. There might be an urban myth going around about somebody losing their firearm because a primer being left on the floor. The police did a casual inspection of one of our colleagues and found a spare rifle stock that was stacked in one corner. A rifle stock is a piece of wood. The police officer's response was to say, 'I may have to seize all your rifles because you have left that out of the safe'. He went away and checked and I think he rang Firearm Services or something like that and they said it is not a usual component of the rifle so there is no point. He got a phone call back a few hours later, but he was obviously a bit traumatised for a couple of hours. I probably have two or three stocks lying around that are obsolete or not required anymore but are still sitting in the garage somewhere. I probably should throw them away if that is going to frighten a police officer.

Dr BROAD - You talked very strongly in support of a Tasmanian firearms owners' council. What would you think if we put together a broad-based consultative group that included people whose primary concern is public safety as opposed to the use of firearms?

Mr WALTERS - We would have no problems with that. As I say, we are generally - not generally - we are specifically for safety and it would be very useful to have everybody involved, well-informed about what is the standard practice.

Dr MONAGHAN - It would be a valuable communication link, both from them to us, but also from us to them, so they would actually be better able to understand the situations from the firearms owners as well. I have written down such a committee would actually improve communication between all stakeholders.

CHAIR - You mentioned in your submission, and it has already been talked about, the revolving door of managers at -

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Mr WALTERS - No, that wasn't us. Firearms Services do have transition people and they all have slightly different takes on the same view, but usually when I talk to them, they have been fine. They have asked simple questions and I have gotten along very well with them. Once you understand what they are worrying about, it is fine.

Dr BROAD - Out of interest, when you shoot competition, do you just use sights, you do not use scopes?

Dr MONAGHAN - It depends on the competition. We use both.

Mr WALTERS - If it is small bore, which is a 22, it is open sights, which is a peep sight at the other end. Formal target shooting, which is the traditional sport, is shot with open sights. There is also scope shooting which originally started off as a way of allowing older shooters to keep competing and has now become a sport in its own right.

Dr BROAD - So even the shooting at 1100 metres would be with open sights?

Mr WALTERS - Yes, you could.

Dr MONAGHAN - You would be struggling.

Mr WALTERS - I compete out to a 1000-yards with open sights and we are shooting at a one-minute target and I can generally hit it.

Dr BROAD - A one minute target, you have one minute between -

Mr WALTERS - A one-minute angle.

Dr MONAGHAN - But at 1000-yards, it is 10 inches across to the centre bulls' eye.

Mr WALTERS - About 250 millimetres is what you are aiming for.

Dr MONAGHAN - I am showing my age.

Mr WALTERS - It is a very specific sport and has been around for a long time. It is like nothing else you would see. You have to be very controlled both physically and mentally. You cannot afford to get emotional or anything like that. You cannot afford to get too excited or too depressed about what you have just done on target. You have to think about the next shot. Unlike hunting, we are not trying to hit the target once, we are trying to hit it 10 or 15 times in a row. It is a precision sport.

Dr BROAD - And you have to consider wind, et cetera?

Mr WALTERS - Wind; the barrel heating up; you heating up. The fact that you could possibly win it and you need to hold your nerve.

Dr WOODRUFF - And don't get ahead of yourself.

Dr MONAGHAN - I was being hassled last year and I lost the national championships.

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Dr BROAD - You were sledged?

Dr MONAGHAN - The issue does not matter, but, yes, I lost my focus and fired on the wrong target, so I lost the championships.

Mr WALTERS - We all make silly mistakes but, as I say, when it works, it is brilliant.

Dr MONAGHAN - But I won it this year.

Mr WALTERS - I did manage to sledge a member in a .22 competition, mainly because I shoot much quicker and he was halfway through his 20 shots and he looked across and I had a big smile on my face and I just shot a 200 out of 200, which about unheard of. He said, 'What is so funny?' and I said, 'I just shot 200'. He looked at my shot target and he went blah and then he dropped the next seven shots. He could not get back on his own target. I felt so guilty, I did not mean to do it. I was very proud of myself.

Dr WOODRUFF - One of the proposals in the policy released before the election, or that came out before the election was for extending the licensing period from five years to 10 years. What is your association's view on that?

Mr WALTERS - Most of our competitors are there for the long haul. Our demographic is, unfortunately, ageing, but we have people there who have obviously been in the same club for 30-plus years. Five years works, it is not a great inconvenience; 10 years would be nicer because we are not a particularly mobile group, but it is neither here nor there. Either one works for us.

Dr MONAGHAN - What we would like to see though is streamlining of the renewal process then that would, if you like, take any pressure towards trying to extend it.

Dr WOODRUFF - Is this the time element it takes? What has been discussed elsewhere is the fact there is this hump with the five-year renewal because everyone came online at the same time. Lots of people came online at the same time, and a proposal to have a one-off staggered. So, a random selection of all licence holders.

Mr WALTERS - We were all September 1997 or something like that, when it all had to be done.

Dr WOODRUFF - Having a year either side or something like that, so a one-off would forever even it out. Do you think something like that - or is it mostly them all coming together that is the problem?

Dr MONAGHAN - You would have to ask Firearm Services.

Mr WALTERS - I think it is an administrative thing. The only issue I have had was my licence expires in September next year and I will be in England in June/July. It was suggested that we might want to placate the British firearms group by having a licence extending past that time. Like with your passport where you have at least six months validity when you turn up. I will have about three months on my firearms licence, plus I want to stay on in England for a little while longer. The Firearms Service said we cannot give you a licence outside of the time, but we can give you a letter saying we will give you a licence when you get back. That was the best they could do, which was fine. I said I am happy to apply for my licence right now to make sure I have to a

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five-year licence. They said we cannot bring it forward, but we can give an explanation. Again, it is a bureaucracy and they have their own rules.

CHAIR - It is the 14 days. Once your licence expires you have 14 days. Outside of this, they can throw the book at you.

Mr WALTERS - They cannot deal with that. They have not got program, but they were prepared to say we will give you a letter saying we have no issue about issuing you with a new licence when the time falls due, which is understandable and okay.

Dr WOODRUFF - The administrative issues about getting your licence is something obviously for discussion with Firearm Services. That is an ongoing thing.

Mr WALTERS - They are a pretty good group, but, also are a bureaucracy and need to have some flexibility. It would be nice to see it anyhow.

CHAIR - Talking about the renewal process, and where it says a fit and proper person to own a firearm and the legitimate reasons, so all the members of the club, and I understand the five-year term is in the National Firearms Agreement, but in reality is there anybody in your club who has not been able to renew their licence?

Mr WALTERS - Not that I know of. I think we have one domestic violence issue that has occurred in Hobart, which is outside of that.

CHAIR - That would be a requirement for the police to notify Firearm Services and go through that process.

Mr WALTERS - That is already happening.

Dr MONAGHAN - But within our club, no.

Mr WALTERS - Not in our club.

CHAIR - The actual five-year term is a rolling five-year term, provided you go through the process.

Mr WALTERS - Yes.

CHAIR - It is red tape in an actual sense that you are complying with the five-year regulation, because in the shooting fraternity not much changes over 20 years, 25 years or 30 years. As you have both mentioned, being involved in it for decades, it is a requirement so there is that to go through but you do not see that,

Mr WALTERS - It is basically getting a new photo taken, turning up here for it and then waiting.

Dr MONAGHAN - If I might summarise. On our list of things that we would like to see, this is not right at the top.

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Dr WOODRUFF - The shooting fraternity is not different from any other fraternity in terms of domestic violence, and prone to any of the other issues that come under 'fit and proper'. I am not saying you and I are more or less probably different from the rest of the population, in those respects.

Mr WALTERS - I think it is rarer thing, mainly because most people are going out and competing once a week. You have a social interaction all the time, so perhaps do not get the lone gunman scenario you sometimes hear about. It is very difficult for that to ever be sustained.

Dr WOODRUFF - How many members are there?

Mr HARVEY - Not many. About 140 or thereabouts in the full-bore rifle shooting fraternity.

Dr WOODRUFF - You mentioned in your submission something about military appearance of firearms. You said -

... proposals for the firearms council to review the carriage of firearms and ammunition across the Bass Strait and the question of military appearance as applied to firearms. [TBC]

I wondered what you meant.

Dr MONAGHAN - That was a discussion we wanted to have. It has now calmed down, but there was a proposal when there was a wish by the Firearms Services to look at the appearance of firearms to try to make it easier for them to say, 'That looks like a military automatic rifle; we don't like it' They came up with a set of rules that would have affected many of our target rifles.

Mr WALTERS - I had a chat to them at the time. I think it was based on some American rules about having things like an exposed magazine, an exposed barrel, pistol grip and skeleton eye stock. I sent back a fairly decent review to the officer at the Firearms Service and showed him some photos of competitive Olympic class rifles which have a pistol stock. They have a four-inch shroud to put your hand on. They don't have a magazine but they might have a skeleton eye stock. So, three out of the four that they were talking as being items were appearing on reasonable, normal competition rifles. There was absolutely no way they could ever be compared to a military rifle.

Dr MONAGHAN - This would be exactly why the TFOC would be an ideal place for discussions about these things before they got to the point whereby it caused a great deal of angst when the proposal came out. It would appear that almost all of our target rifles would have to be inspected and tested to see whether they passed the test of looking like military rifles. It was a difficult period and it would have been prevented by discussions at a group like the TFOC.

Mr WALTERS - What started it was a number of firearms are available in the United States which are semi-automatic or can be made single shot. They are based on a RA-15 footprint so they look very much like a military rifle even though they are only single shot. You can buy replica AK-47s, which run on a 22 base. They are semi-automatic 22s. They are for people who like to play games and dress up and so forth. Again, not anything like we are interested in shooting. Nevertheless, they are available. I think the Firearms Service were exploring ways of trying to keep those out of the market.

CHAIR - I have a question about sound suppressers. At a firing range most people wear ear protection. I imagine suppressers are not an issue on a target range.

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Mr WALTERS - They are banned under our SRRs so we would not use them. Sound suppressers don't work when you are running supersonic ammunition.

CHAIR - They won't work with your style of ammunition?

Mr WALTERS - No, they will not work on that at all. We are trying to maintain velocity at very long range so that is the last thing we would put on the front of the rifle.

CHAIR - There is a loud crack when they go off?

Mr WALTERS - Yes.

Dr MONAGHAN - It is not something that we would have an opinion on.

Dr WOODRUFF - You started off talking about the *Spirit of Tasmania* and the firearms and ammunition across Bass Strait. You have more flagged the need to have a conversation about it, rather than any legislative change.

Mr WALTERS - I don't think the state legislation can affect what happens on the *Spirit of Tasmania*.

Dr MONAGHAN - It is a discussion.

Mr WALTERS - We have had a discussion with them before. As I say, there is a workaround at the moment, which is a bit clumsy but it is working. The *Spirit of Tasmania* have their own set of rules and have come to their own conclusions.

Dr WOODRUFF - Rules in relation to how they interpret the -

Mr WALTERS - How they interpret the Australian Maritime Act and so forth.

Dr WOODRUFF - So it is not about the Tasmanian legislation?

Mr WALTERS - Not at all. It is a very separate issue.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is more about the state brokering that conversation.

Dr MONAGHAN - That is exactly what we want.

Mr WALTERS - They have allowed us to take up to 10 kg for a national competition but the reloading ammunition is still a problem. It rules out a lot of competitors.

Dr WOODRUFF - Have you had that conversation? Has that conversation been had for you and you have got nowhere? Who took that conversation in Tasmania?

Mr WALTERS - Yes, it has been. The National Rifle Association and the TRA have had a chat with the *Spirit of Tasmania*. It is coming from their general manager. I think they have had some very good legal advice, which has been very conservative. They have an issue, I think,

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because the ferry also has a physical limit to how many kilos of explosive they can have on the boat at any one time. They consider loaded ammunition as being one of those.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is not something that the police service here has been involved in, or the state government has been involved in?

Mr WALTERS - We keep quietly niggling with them and we are not getting anywhere.

Dr WOODRUFF - It has been that way for a long time.

Mr WALTERS - About three years now.

Dr WOODRUFF - There was a change that happened three years ago?

Mr WALTERS - Yes, about three years ago when they suddenly cracked down on the amount of ammunition you can bring on board a boat and, subsequent to that, what sort of ammunition.

CHAIR - That is when the dealer tried to bring on board a pallet of shotgun ammunition?

Dr WOODRUFF - And they cracked down, so to speak? What happened?

Mr WALTERS - They stored the ammunition in a little locked cart, or that is how they used to do it. This guy turned up towing up a box trailer with a tarpaulin over it, with a full pallet. He was going to sell it to the big shotgun shoot in Hobart. When they said, 'Where's your ammunition?', he said, 'It's the trailer. You can imagine the fit they threw in Melbourne. There were no rules at that point about it.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is pretty incredible that someone would do that.

Mr WALTERS - They had to write the rules at that point.

Dr WOODRUFF - That scotched it for everybody else.

CHAIR - The issue of the volume their ammunition takes up still arises for people shooting shotguns going to the mainland. When you have 8, 10 or 15 people going to the mainland for a shoot and they all end up on the boat at the one stage, they all want to carry on a couple cartons of ammunition each which they have reloaded. Of course, you stack it all together -

Dr WOODRUFF - How would that happen on a plane?

Mr WALTERS - It runs under the same rules. On a plane you are allowed to have 5 kg in your checked baggage per licensed shooter. You have to be registered. That is still not enough for a major competition. When I have gone to Brisbane, my wife is with me and she is also a licensed shooter. Between us we have just enough to be able to shoot at a national competition. There have been a couple of times where I have said, 'Do you want to go to Brisbane next year?' and Cecilia says, 'You need the ammunition. I am only coming for my ammo allotment; I am going to the Gold Coast.'

Dr WOODRUFF - There are workarounds that happen on airlines so the issue is how to look at the situation on the *Spirit*?

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Mr WALTERS - It would be nice to have the same rules. There is a new ferry turning up and that may change things a little, but that is probably a year or two away. It is something I know the state government has a limited amount of ability to deal with.

CHAIR - Thank you very much gentlemen. Before, as I advised you at the commencement of the evidence and before you leave, what you have said to us said here today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that the privilege does not attach to comments that you make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you have said to the committee. Do you understand this?

Messrs MONAGHAN and WALTERS - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you very much gentlemen for your time and your submissions. It is much appreciated. Congratulations for making the Australian team and all the very best.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

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Mr ANDREW WINWOOD, CHARLTON HUNTERS CLUB, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome, Andrew. I would like to reiterate some of the important aspects of the guide sent to you by the committee secretary. A committee hearing is a procedure of parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place outside of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of this parliamentary proceeding.

This is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present, and this means that your evidence may be reported. It is important that if you wish some or all of your evidence to be heard in private, you make that request and explain your reasons prior to giving that evidence.

You now have the opportunity to give an opening statement if you wish and to make a few comments.

Mr WINWOOD - My name is Andrew Winwood. I am the president of the Charlton Hunters Club. We manage the hunting on Charlton Estate at Ross which is some 20 000 acres of privately-owned land. In our club, we manage the hunters and the shooting on that property. We control entry and exits for all of our hunters. We collect data from all the hunters on what they are doing, when they are doing it and so on. The idea of us submitting a submission to the hearing was about making sure that our members thoughts and everything was heard.

Dr BROAD - How many members do you have?

Mr WINWOOD - We have 86 members.

Dr BROAD - How often would those members be on the property shooting?

Mr WINWOOD - We have some hours in our figures there. Our members spend about 4720 hours annually. If you break that up amongst the 86 members, some participate more and some participate less. Some of our members bring family members in and also visitors, so some of those hours would go to that as well.

Dr BROAD - Do people pay for the membership, pay to go shooting, or get paid by the property owner?

Mr WINWOOD - We run the Charlton Hunters Club similar to an RSL club. We have a base of members who pay a membership of about \$480 per year and that gains them access to the property. With that money we have renovated houses on the farm and built a shack on the farm for our hunters and their families to use for school holidays, weekends and the like, so during the course of them hunting or fishing on the farm they can use that. That is a one-off payment that they make for hunting. In exchange, we provide the farmer with controlling browsing wildlife and other hunting and stuff around the farm.

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CHAIR - Your submission goes a lot into the reasons why 1080 was needed and the cost to primary producers if it does not happen. I do not know where we go as far as getting a lot of that onto the record of *Hansard* but is a fair submission. Whoever put it together should be congratulated.

Mr WINWOOD - The cover couple of pages about the Charlton Hunters Club was put together by members from our hunting group. The other information comes from information available on websites from the government around the Alternatives to 1080 Program that was put together. A lot of what we do works hand in hand with the Alternatives to 1080 Program because we've got a property at Ross that is 21 000 acres of land with river and lake frontage, so it has a high abundance of water. With a high abundance of water and open farmland you have a high abundance of wallabies, possum, deer and the like that need controlling. In exchange for access we provide, for the want of a proper word, protection for the farmer on crop loss and the like.

CHAIR - I notice in some of your statistics you have the number of Bennetts wallabies and rufus wallabies and that sort of thing, and feral cats make the list as well. Congratulations for doing that for the community. There is no argument that you should be out there doing that. Can you give me a rundown of your interpretation of the amount of wildlife that is out there and what would happen if you were not doing what you are?

Mr WINWOOD - At the moment our property doesn't use 1080 poisoning and they haven't in the 20 years we have been a club on the farm. The numbers of wallaby you have seen harvested there, and deer and the like, if we weren't a hunting club on that property they would have either other hunters or have to use 1080 poison. Some of the alternatives to 1080 poisoning include fencing and this property has an extensive fence that runs from east to west that splits the 21 000 hectares into 10 000 acres of open farmland and 11 000 acres of bush, which until a couple of years ago was kept for wool sheep. Now that they don't run as many wool sheep on the property they tend not to use the bush. Part of the agreement was that we control the bush area, and the open farmland they would fence off. We will still do the culling on the outside of the fence but that is more about the open-crop farming and fat lambs and that sort of stuff and beef cattle that they do now as opposed to 15 or 20 years ago when it was a wool farm predominantly.

CHAIR - Running wool wethers in the bush. Which side are you mainly shooting on.

Mr WINWOOD - At the moment because the fence is in poor repair we're shooting predominantly on the front country. Even though we seem to be getting a bit of rain at the moment, the bush country has already started to dry out. A lot of the higher points around the farm have already dried out where the deer and wallabies normally live and they're pushing forward onto the open, flatter river flats and open country on the property. A lot of our hunting and crop protection at the moment is done on the open country.

Dr BROAD - Are you doing that with dogs and shotguns?

Mr WINWOOD - We have a mixture. We have some hunting crews that predominantly use scent-trailing dogs and shotguns. Then we have others who prefer to spotlight from vehicles. We also have hunters who hunt solely stalking during the daylight hours.

Dr WOODRUFF - For deer?

PUBLIC

Mr WINWOOD - For deer or wallaby. Wallaby are also taken during daylight hours as well. Possums predominantly are taken at night.

Dr WOODRUFF - We have heard other people provide information about the culling they do in other places. You are doing that work now so why would you need to have sound suppressors to do that work?

Mr WINWOOD - If you read the information from the Alternative to 1080 Program, sound suppressors are not like a Hollywood movie where somebody could walk into the room and you would not know a shot has been fired. It is not like that.

A sound suppressor only reduces the emissions from the gun to a certain point. It does not make them silent like you see in the movies. If we were to fire a firearm in here with a silencer on it, you would need your fingers in your ears. It is still loud enough. What it allows you to do in a spotlighting scenario hunting wallaby is we will go onto the edge of a crop where the wallabies have put holes through the fences. They will go out on the crop and there might be 20, 30, 40 wallabies feeding. You will drive up with your spotlights on and might harvest one or two wallabies before they go back through the hole in the fence and then the opportunity has gone for that evening.

If you were to have sound suppressors, the take could be doubled or tripled, not knowing what the take could be, because we do not have sound suppressors at the moment. All the studies and the information we can gather indicate that the take will be much higher. If you look at the 4700 hours we spend because sound suppressors fall under Category C, you can only have one of those firearms licensed to you at any one time.

If a farmer owns a farm like Charlton with 21 000 hectares, he is allowed one Category C firearm. To have a sound suppressor on the Category C firearm, that farmer alone would have to spend 4700 hours to achieve what we achieve. At the moment, it is impractical because society would not get fed if a farmer had to spend 4700 hours a year protecting the food he intends to sell to make a living for his family.

Dr WOODRUFF - Why would he need a Category C firearm to shoot pademelons or wallabies? You don't, do you?

Mr WINWOOD - Well, you do not but what it does it also increases your ability to take larger numbers quickly. With a sound suppressor and a Category C on a small calibre like at .22 rifle you can take additional numbers quickly and then move on to another spot quickly before the wallabies move on.

Dr WOODRUFF - What evidence do you have? We have heard testimony from other people who have talked about shooting a couple of hundred wallabies a night. I asked the same question and he said, it would be a bit more effective but he did not seem to suggest it would be substantially more effective. We are talking about a big change that would breach the National Firearms Agreement.

Mr WINWOOD - Does it actually breach the National Firearms Agreement? You would be able to educate me because I am not right across the firearms agreement, but I do not know that sound suppressors are mentioned in the firearms agreement as such. Are they?

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - The words 'sound suppressor' are not included in the National Firearms Agreement but an interpretation is it would breach the spirit of the firearms agreement.

Mr WINWOOD - Yes, but it does not actually breach the National Firearms Agreement, does it?

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, the words are not there. That is not necessarily the same thing. There is the intention and there are the actual words.

CHAIR - In evidence given this morning, when using a firearm now, even though it does not have a sound suppressor on it, a semi-automatic has the advantage that you do not have to take the eye out of the scope and you can shoot at one, two or three in the light and in your scope. The difficulty is when you have your first one, the other three have already run off. I can only assume it would give an opportunity to somebody using a sound suppressor to actually be more efficient and where they only have one, then they might end up with two or three.

Mr WINWOOD - In that University of Tasmania information they gave, some of the information in there is contradictory to what I am telling you. It says recreational hunters have a very low impact on the culling ability, but at the moment the farmers either have recreational hunters or 1080 poison. That is their opportunity to control browsing wildlife on their farms.

Dr WOODRUFF - Or they do it themselves?

Mr WINWOOD - They do it themselves. Allan Cameron, who owns Charlton is close on 80 years old. He would not be able to cope with 4000 hours a year harvesting wallabies and possums on his farm. He would not be able to do it.

Dr WOODRUFF - I am sorry, I do not understand what is your argument about recreational shooters and farmers.

Mr WINWOOD - I did not know I had an argument.

Dr WOODRUFF - You mentioned recreational shooters.

Mr WINWOOD - Recreational hunters are what Allan Cameron employs to do the crop protection and culling on his farm.

Dr WOODRUFF - Right.

Mr WINWOOD - We are a group of recreational hunters that do the crop protection on his farm for him.

CHAIR - The issue regarding the agents of the landowner as far as Category C firearms, you are actually operating, in my interpretation, as an agent for the owner of the property?

Mr WINWOOD - Under the crop protection permits, we would become agents. We are agents now for Allan Cameron.

CHAIR - But you are not allowed to use Category C firearms?

PUBLIC

Mr WINWOOD - No.

Dr BROAD - In your submission, are you arguing that suppressors should be limited to Category C semi-automatic .22 firearms?

Mr WINWOOD - Again, I am not arguing. What I am suggesting is there would be an increased ability for farmers, or agents of farmers, having access to them to be able to utilise them to better control browsing wildlife on their farms. It is a more effective tool than what we currently have. Personally, I probably could not afford one and could not afford to use one, so I would stay with current methods. It does not mean they should not be available to people who can afford them to make what they do more effective and, in doing that, they can probably reduce the number of hours they use.

CHAIR - If the committee felt that we did not want to expand the Category C licences to incorporate agents of the farmer, do you still believe there is a case for sound suppressors? Because you only have access to bolt action, would a sound suppressor be an advantage in your shooting?

Mr WINWOOD - It possibly would, even with a bolt action rifle. A sound suppressor reducing the alarm for the other wildlife would give you a chance to harvest more, then a sound suppressor on a bolt action rifle during crop protection on your small calibre rifles definitely would increase the take.

I am not a mathematician or a scientist, so I think a good marksman could go into a group of wallaby or kangaroo and shoot two or three and probably double their take. Out of a group of wallabies, you might shoot two or three before they disperse, you might be able to double it. I do not know, I would be guessing.

CHAIR - As they are illegal in Tasmania, there is no evidence there to suggest otherwise.

Dr WOODRUFF - Is this from your personal experience or from talking to people?

Mr WINWOOD - Within our hunting group, most of the feelings would be the same. Most hunters doing this work now, would not be able to afford to buy either a Category C or a sound suppressor. Even if it was the committee's decision to expand the laws to take in agents, those agents still have to be able to afford to purchase them; to be able to afford to store them; and have to prove they are a fit and proper person to use them, the same as they do with every other firearm.

We have already proven every three to five years that we have somewhere private to hunt. We have proven we are fit and proper people to own firearms. All this will do is increase the take and the ability for us to do what we set out to do when it comes to crop protection.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can you say who the 'genuine employees' would be, because that is what you wrote in your submission. The suggestion was to expand the availability for 'genuine employees' to include contractors, or agents?

Mr WINWOOD - Yes. A genuine employee is somebody who has a genuine reason to own a firearm. In my mind, a genuine employee would be somebody who is solely employed or contracted by you to that farm. For instance, you are not employed by Charlton Estate, if you can't provide evidence that you are employed like a letter from your employer, or an agent that you are employed to do crop protection, or in our case, we are the controllers of all the hunting on Charlton,

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and the Charlton members also, because once we take a crop protection permit from Alan as such, for want of better wording, we are Alan's agent to enact those crop protection permits.

Dr WOODRUFF - Do they have to be a full-time employee, part-time employee, or temporary employee? You can see once you get to the definition of employee -

Mr WINWOOD - Yes. It is the same with the membership of the Charlton Hunters Club and a lot of hunting clubs like us. We have extensive records on all of our members. Whether the system expanded that to licensed clubs and associations that can provide proof they are the agents and are not going onto other land, or are using it for the purpose that it was given, similar with property owners or their employees, the regulations that would be set around that would be totally up to the people setting the laws.

Dr WOODRUFF - But that's not for wallabies or kangaroos. That's for a client, a category C? No? A category C firearm is not required to shoot wallabies and kangaroos?

Mr WINWOOD - No, it's not required.

Dr WOODRUFF - So we are talking for deer?

Mr WINWOOD - No, we're talking for crop protection - wallabies, possums, rabbits and that type of stuff.

Dr WOODRUFF - I don't understand why category A or B wouldn't be sufficient.

Mr WINWOOD - Category A and B would be.

Dr WOODRUFF - So why propose the extension to category C for employees?

Mr WINWOOD - Because the repetitive fire from a category C also allows you to quickly re-fire on other wallabies, rabbits or whatever you are proposing to take. A sound suppressor does not have to go onto a category C, but a category C and a silencer combined is much better than a bolt rifle to do your crop protection. Whether that silencer is on a bolt-action or a category C really doesn't make much difference.

CHAIR - Category C is about efficiency for the farmer or property owner.

Mr WINWOOD - Or the agent or the professional shooter.

Dr WOODRUFF - You also mentioned about conveying and carrying firearms and wanting to get some changes to the regulations about how that should happen. There is this argument that something that gets used all the time as a tool of the trade, so to speak, and that the regulation is about the movement across roads and those sorts of things need to be looked at.

Mr WINWOOD - The reason that was in there is because we do a lot of work for the farmers and we talk to the farmhands and the farm owners as a club. I am also tied up in some other groups where we have conversations with the TFGA and the like. A lot of their concern is around Symmons Plains, for instance, where you have the highway splitting a farm from another farm. We have the same on Charlton where the Tooms Lake Road splits Charlton. So, if a property worker has a firearm in his vehicle and he has to move a mob of sheep from this side of the road to the

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other side of the road, it is about having an understanding that he can do that in his working day without too much concern. There aren't too many laws set out around what is and isn't acceptable for a farm worker in that position where you have to cross a road. Does he have to stop and lock up his firearm?

Dr WOODRUFF - It is clear that if you cross the road, you would have to do that. That is my understanding of the law.

Mr WINWOOD - The reason that is there is around the conversations I have had with farmers about the inconvenience of some of that sort of stuff during their working day, and how they see firearms as tools of their trade and would like to see some changes around that.

Dr WOODRUFF - Putting it another way, looking at seat belt requirements, I don't know if you have ever put your kids in the back of the car at a Woolies carpark.

Mr WINWOOD - No.

Dr WOODRUFF - If you have kids or a baby bassinette and you stick it in the back of the car, you have to go through this laborious process to strap it up. Then if you want to drive a block to the chemist, you have to undo it and do it again. That is the law, despite the fact you might only have to move a vehicle less than half a block. I can see a sort of parallel.

My question would be what is the argument for needing to loosen up on something? It is inconvenient, no doubt about it and I hear what you're saying. But isn't the purpose of it to make us think about what we are doing and what our actions are?

Mr WINWOOD - I totally agree. In the seatbelt scenario, I don't sit in too many carparks and have conversations with too many wives about the annoying part of only driving one block and having the seatbelt on.

Dr WOODRUFF - I have.

Mr WINWOOD - In this scenario, in putting this together, I spoke to all the people and asked them what their concerns were and that we may have the opportunity to give evidence and what were some of the things frustrating the farming community around firearms and the conveying of firearms. This was one of the topics that was brought up with me.

Dr WOODRUFF - Has anyone you spoke to ever been charged for doing one of those actions?

Mr WINWOOD - Yes, one of the Charlton employees crossed a road from Charlton north to Charlton south, which is split by the Tooms Lake Road. He was pulled up as he was going through the gate. The police officer pulled in behind him as he was undoing the gate on the other side of the road. He had his firearms licence suspended and his firearm taken because he hadn't taken the bolt and that out of it; it was just in the front of the vehicle. That never proceeded to court for whatever reason. He was given his firearms licence back after some negotiation through the TFGA and a few members there. The outcome of it I don't know exactly, but that was one case that we know of.

Dr BROAD - In that instance, was the gate opposite so that he crossed the road directly?

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Mr WINWOOD - Yes, it was gate to gate.

Dr BROAD - Straight across the road?

Mr WINWOOD - Yes.

Dr BROAD - He wasn't going a kilometre up the road?

Mr WINDWOOD - No. He undid one gate, went straight across the road, parked his vehicle inside the paddock, went back and then shut the two gates and off he went, but as he was shutting the gates he was pulled up.

CHAIR - That issue no longer exists because it has been through parliament. I do not know if the regulation has changed but we have discussed that in parliament and that particular scenario of gate to gate shouldn't be an issue anymore, except if the police don't understand what the rules and regulations are.

Dr WOODRUFF - You can still be charged driving from the supermarket to the pharmacy 100 metres down the road. I know someone who was - with her seatbelt.

CHAIR - The question is - and has been repeated in our committee a number of times - public safety. I am aware that prior to seatbelts and car seats and that sort of thing coming in, a number of children were involved in accidents. Do you know of anybody carrying a firearm while they are out spotlighting or whatever and the firearm is in the vehicle that was involved in an accident?

Mr WINWOOD - No. I can't remember one, but I'm sure if you told me of one it might -

CHAIR - I do not know of any and therefore the public safety issue of that is minimal at best.

Mr WINWOOD - I don't know that there has ever been a recorded case. There might have been some prosecutions but they never seem to end up in court that we hear about. They usually go as far as the person being challenged by the police, they take their guns and their licence off them for a while. Then they don't worry about taking it through court.

Dr WOODRUFF - I wouldn't say not knowing about it is evidence that it doesn't happen.

Mr WINWOOD - No.

CHAIR - No, I am just asking. There is no evidence that has been presented to us that it has happened.

It is a fantastic effort for what your club does for Charlton and so on. For members of the committee and the community listening, it is important to understand the effort that goes into managing browsing wildlife. If you have two or three people going spotlighting, for instance, what is the typical evening and what time would you get back?

Mr WINWOOD - Depending on the time of the year, we older folk like the winter months because we can start spotlighting at 6.30 or 7 o'clock and then we can be in bed by 1 or 2 in the morning.

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We have a good set up at Charlton. We have a cool-room facility and a skinning washdown area. We have the ability to skin most of the game harvested on Charlton and refrigerate it straight away. To eliminate waste, we have the ability to take the game back, wash it down, hang it in the fridge while you go back to your camp overnight and then collect it when you go the next morning. It is nice to have that finished by about midnight so you can get some sleep before you get up in the morning.

When the summer months are starting to come on is when the crops really need protecting. A lot of the crops are coming through the ground and are immature. You would not get started till 10 o'clock. Some of our younger members will not come back until daybreak.

CHAIR - Where we are going to with category C and sound suppressors, the efficiency of this process is really important to people out there when you are talking about the numbers of game taken over a certain number of times. A lot of effort goes into it and the efficiency is important.

Mr WINWOOD - Yes. There are the hours. The graph that I gave you shows the number of hours for the take. We have data that we have been collecting for 20 years on Charlton. It would be a good test case for a number of sound suppressors to be used because we have data for 20 years. We could come back in five years and say, 'This is what happened when we allowed category C or sound suppressors to be used by recreational hunters in a managed controlled environment.'

It may be that half a dozen or 10 or so members undertake a trial so we can give some data. I searched the internet for data on the amount of takes and that program done by the University of Tasmania was about the only information that you could get that suggested that sound suppressors were an improvement on what we currently had.

CHAIR - I know it is only subjective but it comes from an experience I had only the other night when I went up to shift the irrigator at 10 o'clock at night. The number of wallabies and even three or four great roos running off the top end of our place back into the bush was unbelievable. We have not had crop protection. I am a bit older than you are and I have always said in recent times that the wallabies are not like when I was a teenager shooting. They are more like our teenagers - they do not come out till after midnight. That is typical of what is happening. Subjective I know. Your experience shooting down there over 20-odd years, is the population of wallaby increasing, decreasing?

Mr WINWOOD - It tends to come in peaks and troughs. If we have a good year with the rain you will find that the wallaby numbers increase really quickly. We have seen a massive increase over the last six or seven years with wallaby, possum and deer because of the demise of the Tasmanian devil. The Tasmanian devil is a major predator of young deer, wallabies and possums. A large number of Tasmanian devils used to live on Charlton; now very few live there. What we have found is as the Tasmanian devils decline, other wildlife has gone up. We are taking more deer on crop protection permits now than we ever have and the same with wallaby and possum. We had seen our numbers flatten out to about 1000 a year on wallaby. Now they have gone back up around about the 1500 to 1600 a year. This year I reckon our numbers will go close to 2000 for wallaby.

Dr WOODRUFF - Because of the rainfall?

Mr WINWOOD - Yes. We are getting low rainfall in the bush area so the bush is drying out. There are two major centre pivots on Charlton and they draw wildlife from just about everywhere.

Dr BROAD - What about deer in particular? It says here in 2008 you shot 14.

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Mr WINWOOD - That would be male deer, bucks. The female take that year would have been much higher, more than 10 times that amount.

Dr BROAD - What are the deer numbers like now?

Mr WINWOOD - Deer numbers now are very high on the open country. In our bush country where it is drying out, the deer numbers are very low. Deer that normally would live in our bush country have now moved to the only place where there is any feed left, which is on the open country on the front.

Dr BROAD - It is very hard to fence them out.

Mr WINWOOD - The owners of Charlton are now putting in a new 1.8-metre deer-proof fence from one side of their property to the other but that will only slow them down. Some deer will still go over it some deer will come around it. From the meetings we have had with the property owners, they still expect that there will be deer on both sides of their fence. They are trying to keep the majority of those deer and wallaby behind the fence, back in the bushland.

Dr BROAD - What structure would the 1.8-metre fence be? Would it be single strand wire, electric wire?

Mr WINWOOD - No, it is proper deer fencing that you would use on a deer farm. The fence would be close on 10 kilometres long. It is just a massive fence.

Dr BROAD - Wow.

CHAIR - That is how big a problem it is when they are willing to spend that much money.

Mr WINWOOD - On top of what we are shooting every year, they still need to spend that sort of money to protect two 300-acre centre pivots. If we could double our take through the use of sound suppressors - I don't know whether that is possible - then the cost reduction to farmers would be massive.

Dr BROAD - But you would not be shooting deer with a .22?

Mr WINWOOD - No. Wallaby mainly. Wallaby and possums. But you can also use sound suppressors on larger calibre rifles.

Dr WOODRUFF - You still do not have any sense of how much more effective it would be? It is likely to be more effective but -

Mr WINWOOD - It is likely to be more effective. All the evidence that we could find is pointing towards it being a more effective use of your time and energy. Being able to use sound suppressors would up your take.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for your submission. You represent 86 members of the Charlton Hunters Club. You have done that well today so thank you for that.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

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Mr MATTHEW ALLEN, CHAIRMAN, TASMANIAN DEER ADVISORY COMMITTEE INC. WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome, Matthew. You would have an opening statement or some comments to make initially.

Mr ALLEN - The Tasmanian Deer Advisory Committee is made up of about 20 of the big hunting properties, like Andrew from Charlton. I am the former chairman of the committee. I also run a 10 500 acre property for the farmer on hunting deer, wallaby and that sort of stuff. That is a bit of my background. We can go to the questions.

Dr BROAD - Are many of your associations/members' hunting clubs - set up in the same way as Charlton.

Mr ALLEN - Very much so.

Dr BROAD - For properties all around the state?

Mr ALLEN - Yes. Basically, predominantly in the Northern Midlands or the Midlands where most of the deer are. Most of the properties are in that vicinity.

Dr BROAD - Do you shoot other than deer?

Mr ALLEN - We all shoot kangaroo, possums and wallabies. Generally, it is part of the agreement to be able to go and hunt the deer. The deer are the main reason we all go hunting. We all want the trophies or the meat. Generally, it is the carrot to shoot the wallabies and possums for the property owners. I have an uncle who owns a farm at Scottsdale and in my 30 years I have probably shot it once. He does not have deer. I spend all my time where the deer are.

CHAIR - That's not to say you are not heading his way though.

Mr ALLEN - No, they are not there yet.

Dr BROAD - Do those properties have shacks set up like Charlton?

Mr ALLEN - Yes. We have four shacks on it. The one I use is basically a four-bedroom house. Toilet, shower, washing machine, stove, fridges, power. We have a container on it where the four-wheelers stay and the Polaris Rangers. Full access; 52 weeks of the year.

CHAIR - The larger properties have gone down this track and typically had on this run or that run a stockman that stayed there. Nowadays, with transport and that sort of thing, they run it more from a central point and those houses have become vacant and in a lot of cases have been restored by hunting clubs.

Mr ALLAN - Our is the old shearing quarters where the shearers used to stay. We do not have shearers stay on property any more, so we did it up. There are 12 of us who use it and it can sleep about 16 people all up, but there are other huts on the property that get used during the deer season, et cetera, when they want to be closer to where they are going hunting in the morning and of an evening.

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Dr BROAD - So this is a joint submission. You have been in touch with other members?

Mr ALLAN - Yes.

Dr BROAD - So what do you think out of the things you have suggested is the most significant issue you would like to see changed?

Mr ALLAN - We are going to go back over the same ground as what you have with Andrew, but the suppressors and the access to the Category C firearms is going to be the biggest help.

At the end of the day, most of my hunting is for wallabies and possums, to keep the farmer happy. The more wallabies and possums we can shoot, the more deer they will let us have. That is what it comes down to. If they go out and they see 50 deer, but they are not seeing wallabies as they are driving in and out of a night, then they will put up with them. If they see 50 deer on a kilometre of road, and they see another 50 wallabies, then the hunters are not doing their job. Either the deer or the wallaby go.

CHAIR - We have a deer advisory group; during the Legislative Council select committee on deer, the numbers said the deer population in Tasmania is hugely increasing. From your point of view, how could this increase be best managed?

Mr ALLAN - The reason we have a deer population increase is more to do with the Tasmanian devil, than with the deer themselves. The deer have their fawns and for the first two or three weeks they get hidden in logs, bracken fern, and do not spend the time with mum. That is when the devil would come in and take the fawn. One deer farm, set up back in the 1980s had 50 acres put into a pen. The first year they put 100 does in that pen and managed to keep five fawns, because they had a resident devil population inside of the pen. They removed the two devil populations and put them on the outside and they had a 95 per cent success rate the following year with the fawns. So we know the devils have a big impact on the fawns.

I am 42, and have been hunting there for 30-odd years with dad. We went from a case where we had plenty of devils, you could go and gut your kangaroo and the gut pile would be gone in two hours because the devils would come along and clean it up. You would never see a feral cat. Now, we have no devils, we now have feral cats, and our deer population grows quite substantially over a very short period of time.

I do not think suppressors should be tied to Category C. If you want a separate category, that is fine, or you have no category and A and B people can go and get them because it does not need to be tied to Category C. If you want Category C, you have to do another course, and then you have to be able to justify that licence every year for something that really does not require it. If I have to get a Category C licence, then I may as well go and buy a Category C firearm.

If you leave it for a separate category, call it 'F', I can buy a silencer or a suppressor. I do not need to do another course. If I can have a suppressor it is a whole lot simpler and you are not going to have a great heap of people suddenly buying Category C, because you have forced them to go and get that stipulation on their licence, so I may as well go and get one. That is my personal opinion.

CHAIR - Point taken.

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Mr ALLAN - A suppressor will help people take more wildlife. It may not be in the group that they are taking the first one from but it could be the extra 100 metres down the road where it is being reduced by that 30 per cent. All we are talking about is just quietening down the Hollywood notion that comes around using ammunition that is basically useless to us as recreational hunters. It is not effective. It is taking our normal high-velocity ammo and reducing the sound by about 30 per cent and reducing the felt recall in a category B firearm by about 25 to 30 per cent, which is very helpful to be able to target more animals when you are doing your job.

Dr BROAD - Where are you getting that info from, the percentages?

Mr ALLAN - That is from the United States and manufacturers. We still manufacture suppressors in Australia. In New Zealand and England they are mandatory. You have to remember a lot of the better ground is where the houses are built on these farms. We have rules that after 10.30 p.m. you can't go around this area because the kids are asleep or whatever; if we can reduce the noise we are helping the farmers again.

Dr WOODRUFF - You argued that it was a work health and safety issue.

Mr ALLAN - Yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - Why is that? Most people who cull animals would wear headgear, so why is it needed? Plenty of people do -

Mr ALLAN - In all honesty a lot of us don't because we can't hear what's going on around us. You have to remember when you're spotlighting out of a vehicle you have the driver in the front seat, so the rifle, depending on what sort of car it is, is either just in front of them or behind them. They need to hear us because when we're using the spotlight we need to be able to tap on the vehicle to make a sound to get the driver to stop. You're also talking between each other. Most people don't use it. It is far easier and safer to be able to hear everyone and talk to them. You don't have the time then to put a set of earmuffs on. When deer get hit with a spotlight they can be very flighty. Culling will take part at all different times of the day simply because they get used to one thing. If they get used to the spotlight you start shooting of a morning or an evening. Then after a period of time that does not work as well, so you go back to using a spotlight. All these scenarios come into play as to which is the best method to use at that time.

Dr WOODRUFF - A previous witness said that as a recreational hunter he will shoot a couple of hundred wallabies at night and he always uses headgear.

Mr ALLAN - I didn't hear Andrew say that.

Dr BROAD - No, it wasn't him.

Dr WOODRUFF - It was someone else.

CHAIR - When I asked about it, it was the riflemen on the range who said they use headgear.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, it was a conversation with a recreational shooter.

Mr ALLAN - If he is shooting by himself then it is quite possible, but if you are shooting in a group with a vehicle, driver, a spotlifter and a shooter on the back of a vehicle, you most often

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won't. Some of them will use the high-tech ones where they come in and out on the amount of decibels, but honestly I would think most wouldn't in that situation.

Dr WOODRUFF - This is obviously an issue in terms of work health and safety on building and construction sites where people are using really loud tools but also having to be aware of their circumstances and what is happening around them and communicate with other people. There is protection which enables people to, as you say, hear certain sounds and not other sounds. I mean, it is a convenience but I am just trying to find out why you think it is a necessity.

Mr ALLAN - After 20 years in the building game as a carpenter and joiner, I can assure you most carpenters will use them at different times and will not put them on as well. What it comes down to is that people get lazy and complacent. With the idea of a suppressor, we are talking about a reduction to an acceptable level from a high-powered firearm. It is not going to make it silent. There is no real reason that the reduction can't work and cause any great animosity in the public environment.

Dr WOODRUFF - What we are talking about is enabling some form of a silencer on a rapid-fire firearm which is a complete change from the situation we have had. It is interesting that the National Firearms Agreement does not specify silencers, or sound suppressors as you call them. From my understanding that is because they never even imagined or considered the need to do that. I guess what I am saying is they are widely considered to be an extreme threat to public safety.

Mr ALLEN - Which is really funny, because at the time South Australia was the one state where sound suppressors were legal. You were still allowed under New South Wales laws to put in for a permit to apply for suppressors, whereas the rest of the states don't have that. The National Firearms Agreement is, at best, a set of guidelines. Let's be honest, every state has something different from the other one. They might say that you can only have a licence for five years but Queensland and the Northern Territory give you 10 years. Then another state says one. It is a guideline; it is not set in stone by any means.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is an agreement that Tasmania signed up to. As lawmakers it is our job to make decisions -

Mr ALLEN - So did Queensland.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, well that is their jurisdiction, I suppose.

Mr ALLEN - Victoria did. It's the same.

CHAIR - Matthew, when you're out with a culling permit and have shot at a deer, on the very rare occasion when you didn't down it on the first time because you are such an excellent shot, if you had earmuffs on and the deer disappeared, would you be able to hear the rustling in the bush, or would you then have taken your muffs off to try to work out where it has gone?

Mr ALLEN - I can honestly tell you that I have never worn earmuffs while I hunt. I find them distracting. When you're talking about a rifle for deer, you're talking about a high-powered rifle with a lot of recoil, upwards of 50 pounds of recoil against your shoulder, which with a set of earmuffs on jams everything up underneath each other. Earplugs, I find with a rifle, will generally make the noise worse because you have a hard time getting them to seal in your ear. You're moving about and doing a lot of things, so if the earplug moves a little bit you then end up with a bigger

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echo in your ear. I honestly have very rarely worn them. I don't do a lot of range shooting so I don't go to a range, but my experience has been that it is at ranges that you're forced to wear them.

Dr BROAD - When you go at night to shoot wallaby or possum, for example, evidence given earlier today was that shooters typically run out of ammunition before running out of things to shoot. Is that your case too? Is the amount of vermin in excess of your ability to shoot them?

Mr ALLEN - Not on the property I am on. The property I'm on is 10 500 acres, of which about 5000 acres of that is plantation, so about 50:50 pine and 50:50 gum. In the pine trees you are hunting the laneways and all that sort of stuff. Literally you will see one and shoot it and then you carry on until you can find another one. We don't have crops at all. We have a bit of grass country around the farm where they run a few sheep and that sort of thing but it is not intensive cropping. That would be the big difference. We still have plenty of kangaroos. A lot of our kangaroos would be shot of an evening, without a spotlight, on a four-wheel motorbike. That is when I do most of mine and have the most success. With the deer, we shoot a few with the spotlight but a lot of ours are done first thing of a morning or in that evening period.

Dr BROAD - Sort of at twilight.

Mr ALLEN - Yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - What would you call 'minor' storage offences? You have talked about wanting to have an infringement notice for minor storage offences?

Mr ALLEN - Over the years, some of the safes people have bought have not been upgraded, or not met new rules, or never met them in the first place. People bought them from Bunnings and thought they were doing the right thing. That sort of stuff. For all intents and purposes, they thought they were doing the right thing and then they come along and get slapped with loss of firearms and have to go to court. They were still locked up but they did not meet the requirements for whatever reason, or did not realise the changes had occurred.

Dr WOODRUFF - Have you had examples of that happening?

Mr ALLEN - That has happened in the past, yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - Why is that?

Mr ALLEN - Literally, we have police officers going around and if they can put a 50-cent piece in the gap between the door, they will say the safe does not comply and give you 24 hours to change it or take the firearms. We have a big problem with the police not knowing the rules. In all honesty, they think they do, but they really do not. We have had them come to different places and remove firearms and then have to turn around and give them back, because they simply do not know their own rules. There is nowhere where it says you have to put in a 50-cent piece -

Dr WOODRUFF - I suppose they are trying to make sure you cannot put a crowbar in there.

Mr ALLEN - That is the idea. Depending on the way the safe is built, does not necessarily mean anything whether you can get a crowbar in there or not.

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Dr WOODRUFF - Isn't this the onus of the firearm owner to check with the police on it, the first time they get their firearm?

Mr ALLEN - These safes have been approved by the police over the years. You would literally get a different police officer and their opinion changes at that particular time to tell you whether your safe meets it or not.

Dr WOODRUFF - Have you had experience of someone who has had their safe checked as being compliant in the past -

Mr ALLEN - Yes, I can name you six people.

Dr WOODRUFF - and then a different person comes along and finds it not compliant? What has happened then? You said they have been given 24 hours.

Mr ALLEN - Some of them have been given 24 hours to change their safe. Some have had their firearms confiscated. It is really a range of different things. It depends on the police officer.

Dr WOODRUFF - There are, on average, over 207 firearms stolen every year in Tasmania in the last five years. We have had more than 1000 firearms stolen in the state, so you can see from the police point of view in terms of trying to make sure.

Mr ALLEN - When this was all set up, it was not so much about firearm theft. It was about the firearm in a safe storage position. It was in the cupboard, not out on the gun rack on the wall. When I was brought up, my father's firearms were on the gun rack in the lounge room. We could all go and see them and pick them up. It was about the kids not having access to firearms, not about theft. Theft has become prevalent because of drugs and other issues. Firearms happen to be a good source of income and you sell them easily.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay, I had not heard that before. I understood there were two reasons why that happened. It was about other people having access to them, but also stealing them.

Mr ALLEN - Theft was never the issue. When they first brought the stuff in, we could use a 20-ml hardwood box to lock your firearms up into. One swing with a good axe splits it apart and you have access. It was so kids and people could not access to them easily. Theft was never ever a thought process.

Dr WOODRUFF - Back in those days, everyone was going from nothing to something. There was probably a sense of a transition. We have learned over the years that theft is a serious public safety issue.

Mr ALLEN - I suppose criminals are the public safety issue. Whether they are stolen or not, most of the firearms used in hold-ups and the like are not actually stolen firearms. Most of them are brought in from other countries illegally in the first place.

Dr WOODRUFF - I do not know about that. I do not have any evidence for that.

Mr ALLEN - That is the evidence provided to a Senate Inquiry.

Dr WOODRUFF - About Tasmania?

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Mr ALLEN - About Australia on the whole.

Dr WOODRUFF - Tasmania might be different because we are an island.

Mr ALLEN - Makes no difference. They still come in. There are so many firearms never ever registered or licensed still out in the community. People knew they were not going to get a licence, they were not giving them up, so they went into the back shed or whatever. That is our biggest risk.

Dr WOODRUFF - We were talking about storage though. It is really a question of -

Mr ALLAN - There are a lot of things.

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you think 24-hour notice to fix it up is the sort of thing, depending on the situation, is a reasonable response for the police?

Mr ALLAN - Again, that is on the better side of things.

Dr WOODRUFF - I am not trying to put up a suggestion, rather trying to work out what you are looking for in terms of changes.

Mr ALLAN - It is about having some common sense about a minor infraction. We had a case of a bloke with two firearms with him, came home late one night. They were in safe travel thing. He went to bed, slid them underneath his bed, did not open the safe and put them in. The safe was in a separate garage knocked over during the night. The only two firearms not stolen were with him and he was charged, because they were not locked up with the others. It did not process at court, but at times these rules are so steadfast that simple things that actually make common sense at the time, get people into trouble.

We had another bloke living at Deloraine. He was going to his girlfriend's place for the night and go shooting the next morning. His car was rolled; the firearm was stolen. He had the bolt in his possession. The firearm was useless, but he was charged. Again, went to court and was thrown out.

It makes it very hard for people like us trying to do the right thing, when we keep getting our firearms taken off us and licences suspended over stuff that is not our fault. Firearms get stolen. We are trying to do the right thing.

Dr WOODRUFF - Another suggestion is to have standard operating procedures for storage inspections. I assume you do not mean giving people timing about when you are going to turn up to do a storage inspection, or do you?

Mr ALLAN - No, I do not, but to be honest everyone knows when you are being inspected. I have never been inspected out of the blue.

CHAIR - Under the legislation, they have to inform the firearm owner the police are coming. There is no such thing as a random firearm inspection. The police make an appointment.

Dr WOODRUFF - I have not heard that from the police I have spoken to. That is interesting.

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CHAIR - I have had four inspections on mine, because my sons store their firearms. One of the issues is if the police cannot make it because they are involved in something more important, the person required to be there at that time for the inspection is standing around waiting.

Dr BROAD - They must have the ability to do random inspection.

Dr WOODRUFF - They do. They have the option to do random inspections, because they do...

Dr BROAD - Because I have heard of random inspections with people losing firearms.

Dr WOODRUFF - Or you hear of people notified because their wife or someone else suddenly says I know where the keys are I will go and show you how. The indication being you are not keeping keys hidden.

Back to you, what sort of standard?

CHAIR - I do not believe that is right but I will stand corrected if I am.

Dr WOODRUFF - The standard operating procedures for storage inspections. What sort of things did you have in mind.

Mr ALLAN - A set thing the police are not just having their own opinion at the time, or their own understanding of the way it should meet. If it is secured to a plaster wall it should have x amount of bolts or whatever.

Dr WOODRUFF - I thought the regulations were quite specific.

Mr ALLAN - It is better now, but there is still a lot of people that would have it secured the original way when they put it in 20 years ago and have not realised now you only need one or the other or certain things. The way the safe locks, if you have a single lock like that on the front of the firearm safe, then it has to meet certain tolerances for use of a jimmy bar as you said before. If the lock operates deadbolts that spring out, then those requirements are no longer needed, because you cannot flex the thing out and move it. But the police do not understand the difference. A series of 'this meets this state standard', then that is what it needs to require, rather than police making up their own opinion. I believe they are going down that road at the moment.

Dr WOODRUFF - I believe that does exist in the regulations but maybe that is not forecast or provided to both parties.

Mr ALLAN - I believe some of us have seen the proposal of what the checklist will be but it has not been issued to the police. This submission is five months old so some things have changed along the way.

CHAIR - What are your views on the extended licence period, the ability to change some from five to 10 years?

Mr ALLAN - At the moment we have a major problem every five years when there is a huge backlog of getting licences back to people. The majority of the people who did it in the 1996 time

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frame were waiting up to three and four months to get their licences back. We have to improve that by giving people options to change it so that we get away from everyone being in this five years. It has got better but it needs to get even better so that licences can come back in reasonable time. To be honest, it was only the last time that the issue has been as bad as it was.

Dr WOODRUFF - Is that your only reason for wanting to extend the licence period?

Mr ALLAN - Yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - I think you had category C -

Mr ALLAN - Category C needs to go out to three to five years and get away from this 12-months that it is at the moment for farmers and, if we get it, the agents. It a fairly onerous task to go through every 12 months. Trust me, most of these properties with the requirement for category C do not get sold every 12 months so the requirement doesn't change.

The other thing I think we need to look at is going to an online system for it all, especially the buying and registration of firearms. We are the only state in Australia that charges to register a firearm for the first time. We have a local gun store that has over \$200 000 worth of firearms. Over two-thirds of that money is owing on those firearms, as they are waiting for them to be picked up, because they are either waiting for permits to acquire to come back, or they are waiting for the firearm to be registered for the first time. It is an onerous job. One of their staff spends a day a week filling out paperwork for the firearm registry.

It is literally a new firearm comes in; I have my permit to acquire back; I have ordered the firearm. It comes in but I will not be allowed to pick that firearm up for two to three weeks. The gun store has to fill out a piece of paper and send it to Firearm Services. They then have to send back the blue paperwork that registers it in the shop's name for them to fill out to sell to me and send it back before I can have that firearm. Even though my 28-day waiting period is done, they cannot sell it to me until it has been registered in Tasmania for the first time. The only way they can do that is via paperwork. Surely, we can get to the stage where the gun shop would basically do it for Firearm Services. They would fill out the online thing and it would go there. Yes, it is registered now, now you can sell it to the firearm owner, rather than wait two to three weeks for a blue piece of paperwork to come back.

CHAIR - Along those lines, 28 days reduced to 14 days for the purchase of a second firearm. There are differing views on that timeline. What are your views on that?

Mr ALLAN - I think we should be like Victoria.

CHAIR - And Victoria has?

Mr ALLAN - Same day. After you have owned the first firearm, if you want to buy another one you fill it out online. It comes back and you can pick it up that day if it is available. We own the firearms; things do not change because we decide to buy another one.

CHAIR - Suppose you went in and bought a 22 category A single shot, and then decide that 'Now I am doing a bit of shooting, I am in a club and I have a shoot coming up, and I need a 12 gauge'; even though you have only just been through the process a week ago and bought your

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first one, then you would have to wait this period even though the checks are exactly the same as you have just been through.

Mr ALLAN - Yes, whereas in Victoria you can buy it the same day.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is in breach of the National Firearms Agreement.

Mr ALLAN - And again, why I call the National Firearms Agreement a set of guidelines at best. It is not an agreement that everyone has stuck to. Why is a 14-year-old in Tasmania not allowed to go into the bush and hunt with their father when you can do it at 12 in Victoria, 10 in South Australia, and no age in Western Australia? Are our kids suddenly dumb because they in Tasmania and have to wait an extra two years? It is a set of guidelines at best.

Dr WOODRUFF - It has kept us very safe, I suspect.

Mr ALLAN - What difference has it made to the other states?

Dr WOODRUFF - I do not know; you tell me, I don't have the evidence in front of me.

Mr ALLAN - Because there is no evidence. It does not change. They are under supervision with a licensed firearm owner. They are the safest people to have firearms with because they have been taught the correct way; they are not kids who have not seen a firearm or don't know what a firearm is but find one in the back shed. They are the ones who end up in trouble. The ones who are taught from a young age how to handle a firearm properly are the safest people to have firearms. That is not an argument. It does not make anyone any safer. It makes us safer by teaching young kids to use firearms and respect firearms as early as you can.

Dr WOODRUFF - Another way of looking at it is it normalises the use of guns and puts us into a space of a normalised gun culture.

Mr ALLAN - Where is the problem with that when firearms are such prevalent usage in Tasmania? Most kids, when I grew up, knew what a firearm was and knew how to use one from a very early age. It was what we all did. What's the difference today? Now they sit on an iPad and will not go outside. I would much prefer my son to be outside, spending time with me learning how to hunt, learning how to use a firearm, than sitting inside playing Fortnite.

Dr WOODRUFF - We have a situation in Tasmania where we have an incredibly high number of firearms that are registered in the state. Yet because of our firearms laws we have an incredibly low level of gun violence; the two can be together.

Mr ALLAN - We had a low level of gun violence before Port Arthur. Port Arthur was a catalyst, in the middle of nowhere, that created a belief that we had a poor gun culture. We did not have a big problem beforehand; we don't have a problem afterwards. Port Arthur was a thing in the middle of nowhere that caused an issue that we are all now paying for.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is not the evidence that was presented to us at the last hearing, that we had three times the level of deaths each year from firearms than we did after the firearms agreement had been introduced.

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Mr ALLAN - I am sure that the next bloke who will come in will bring you the other set of figures that shows that it has decreased and suicides have decreased and were already decreasing before Port Arthur.

Dr WOODRUFF - We are waiting to see that evidence.

Mr ALLAN - It all depends on which set of figures you want to read. On any given day they will change.

Dr WOODRUFF - I am asking you to present a set of figures that shows the opposite. You are stating it but you do not have any figures to support your case.

Mr ALLAN - I was not bringing that to this committee.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is fair enough.

Mr ALLAN - If I knew I was going to require those figures, then I would have brought those figures. My submission had nothing to do with that.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, but you do not have counter figures to disagree with the material that we were presented with last week. That is all I am saying. Just saying it is not true it is not necessarily correct.

Mr ALLAN - I am saying that if you get the right people to bring those figures, you will get another set of figures. I do not have them with me. I could have provided those figures from other sources if I knew that that was the discussion we were going to have, but I honestly thought most of our discussion was going to be around suppressors and the changing of licences to 10 years, and the stuff the Liberal Party had put on the table at the election.

Dr BROAD - We certainly did have, for example, Carlo di Falco from the Shooters and Fishers present another point of view.

Dr WOODRUFF - There was no evidence to counter that view.

Dr BROAD - I didn't say 'evidence'; I said 'point of view'.

CHAIR - The evidence presented to us by Dr Vivian Wright indicated that the level of deaths from gun violence was irrespective of cause.

Dr BROAD - So it is mortality data - death from guns.

Mr ALLAN - Which includes suicide, et cetera.

CHAIR - It was certainly decreasing prior to Port Arthur.

Dr BROAD - There is no doubt it was decreasing but there was a step change after Port Arthur.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is a three-fold reduction.

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Mr ALLAN - Don't get me wrong, some of the firearm regulations that came in after Port Arthur - especially in Tasmania, which was very lax - are very commonsense, but to be honest, my problem is with Rosalie talking about the National Firearms Agreement when it is not a firearms agreement. It is a set of guidelines that states have chosen to opt in and out of depending on which set of rules they like and which set they do not. There is no blanket set of rules across every state that we can say everyone has agreed on and everyone is doing. Everything is different, whether it is the age in the bush, age on the range, the length of time, or the way you can get your first firearm or your second firearm.

One other thing I would like to mention is that we really need to look at the way the course is being dealt with. It is very slow to get into a course, especially if you want to do a local one. It really does need to be looked at to make some of these other associations that have the range and expertise to run the courses.

Dr WOODRUFF - What about TasTAFE?

Mr ALLAN - TasTAFE only uses association ranges when they can fit them in, or they go to Bracknell. If Bracknell isn't having a shoot, you can have that range for that day to run a course on. If they have a lot of shoots on for a month, the course can't be run.

Dr WOODRUFF - But at the moment TasTAFE is a provider, isn't it?

Mr ALLAN - They are a facilitator.

Dr WOODRUFF - What about TasTAFE facilitating it to happen twice or three times as often? Would that satisfy you? What you want is for more training to be available.

Mr ALLAN - Yes, especially seeing we moved the 14-year-olds in the bush and that was linked to them doing the course, it has really put a backlog on the courses, especially the local ones in Launceston. The last time I was talking to someone who was trying to do it they were in for a four-month wait to get one that suited them time-wise and in the area. They're the using Sporting Shooters Association of Australia range, they have the trainers and the range officers all there. It is a set of curricula, so surely they can facilitate the course the same as TAFE does.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for coming in today. As I advised you at the comments of your evidence, what you have said to us today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that the privilege does not attach to comments that you make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you have said to us today. Do you understand?

Mr ALLAN - Yes.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

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Mr WILLIAM JOHN WILCHER, AUSTRALIAN FIREARMS MANAGEMENT LOBBY, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STTUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome, Mr Wilcher. I would like to reiterate some of the important aspects of the guide sent to you by the committee secretary. A committee hearing is a procedure of parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place outside of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of this parliamentary proceeding.

This is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present, and this means that your evidence may be reported. It is important that if you wish some or all of your evidence to be heard in private, you make that request and explain your reasons prior to giving that evidence.

You now have an opportunity to make an opening statement and then we will head into questions.

Mr WILCHER - The opening statements are set out basically in the document that I have forwarded previously. I was under the impression that the terms of reference that led to the inquiry in the first place had been withdrawn and hence the inquiry into any changes of the Tasmanian firearms laws was not going to proceed. So it came as some surprise when I got the email last week or the week before that you required to see me.

CHAIR - The original inquiry was an upper House inquiry. The lower House has now taken that inquiry on board and has committed to using all the information submitted to the upper House inquiry as evidence in this inquiry. That is where we are at and we are affording people the opportunity to present before the committee along those lines. The terms of reference were changed and somewhat expanded for the lower House inquiry, but nevertheless all the issues of the upper House inquiry and their terms of reference are still there.

Mr WILCHER - I was unaware of all of those things. I'm not quite sure why you require me here for evidence. Everything that has been submitted on behalf of the clients of the lobby group I represent are set out in the document.

Dr BROAD - It is more an opportunity for you to get any additional material or explanations across.

Mr WILCHER - I understand, thank you.

CHAIR - And to reinforce any of the issues raised in the time that we have to highlight your priorities so that the committee is aware of the priorities you have expressed. As you have indicated, the submissions are there and we are wading through the mountain of paperwork we have in front of us. Nevertheless, we are very interested in what individuals have to say, particularly those who are representing organisations and whether they are for or against. I could say 'ambivalent' but there aren't too many of them.

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Mr WILCHER - It's a very polarising subject, unfortunately. Everyone has the opportunity to have their say. That is the society we live in and we welcome that.

Primarily, if you turn to my document and the last annexure, you will see there are 12 categories of prescribed matches with handguns that can be shot with a calibre rate of a .38 but no greater than .45 of an inch. Everywhere else in the Commonwealth - I haven't looked at the Northern Territory because they don't have lobbying rules - have the two prescribed events. Primarily we are seeking on behalf of the IPSC clients I am representing to have the IPSC divisions included in these approved matches.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is interesting because we had two other people present today who are either participants or trainers of people who will be in an Australian team that is going to an international competition. They mentioned other issues but they didn't mention anything about a problem with them competing to do with calibres.

Dr BROAD - Yes, they did.

Dr WOODRUFF - Did they?

Dr BROAD - Yes, they specifically referenced the IPSC category and that because they could not train they were at a significant disadvantage compared to the other international competitors. That was specifically mentioned.

Dr WOODRUFF - To not being able to be train in that category? Not being able to enter into the category or train beforehand?

Mr WILCHER - Train beforehand. They can't possess and use the equipment. That is basically the crux of the matter. We are at a disadvantage internationally. We are also at another disadvantage that in New Zealand they do not have the restrictions we have in the Australian jurisdictions. They can host these large, world class events, but we cannot host them in Australia.

Dr WOODRUFF - What can we participate in?

Mr WILCHER - We can participate in some of the IPSC matches, but we are limited in terms of two things. The larger calibres which is important for scoring, because you score at a different rate as set out in my submission at pages 4 and 5. That is what the game is about. It is about scoring more points. In most other jurisdictions outside of Australia they can use magazines with a higher capacity.

Dr WOODRUFF - Which parts of the competition can't we participate in?

Mr WILCHER - They can participate in the competition, but we are completely limited in terms of shooting what is called the major power factor.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can you just explain how that effects their scoring? Does this mean necessarily, anyone who competes for Australia is not going to be able to win?

Mr WILCHER - Yes. In some categories, yes. We are lucky because we do have the present world's women's champion in open division IPSC. Her name is Karla Blowers and she is from Queensland. She has won the world championship, a very gifted athlete. She shoots in the open

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division, but in the open division the calibre of choice is called the .38 super and can make major power factor, but we cannot the larger magazines in Australia. We can only use the 10 round magazines. When she goes overseas or the open shooters go overseas they have to use other magazines, but we can get around that. You have to do your round count a little bit differently and you can possess them here with the commissioner's permit.

Dr WOODRUFF - Which things can't we participate in?

Mr WILCHER - Quite easy. Standard division: we cannot compete in major with the 40 calibre. We can compete with the calibre called 357 Sig, which is one millimetre roughly difference in diameter of bullet. We cannot compete in major there. In the classic division, in everywhere else except for Victoria, they can use up to .45 calibre. We cannot do this in the other states, except for Victoria.

Dr BROAD - Can you explain this idea of power factor? Obviously if you hit the target right in the middle you get a certain number of points. What has the power got to do? Why is that relevant in scoring, rather than the accuracy?

Mr WILCHER - It is relevant because it effects recoil. The shots are slower with the higher calibre, because they are a little bit more powerful. Not much more, but a little bit more powerful and they have a slightly bigger hole. If you cut the line you have the better score.

Dr WOODRUFF - There is more skill in winning it with the smaller calibre - the other way round?

Mr WILCHER - No it is a different skill. It puts the other people at a massive advantage over the people who can only going to shoot the minor power factor.

Dr BROAD - When you have the full-sized bullet, your hole in the target is bigger, therefore you have more chance of being inside the line, and also the recoil. Is there a time limit you have to do clusters?

Mr WILCHER - No. It is quite a unique system and hard to explain. Simply put, it is points per second. They divide your points you have obtained through the course of the fire by your time to get a hit factor. They score it differently. Can I take you to page 4 of my submission please, committee members? You will see figure 3.5 is a depiction of the IPSC paper target. You can see there is an Alpha - which is middle, that is where you want to get. There is a Charlie, which is the second outer ring, and then there is a Delta. If you go over the next page you will see how the scoring works differently for major power factor and minor power factor.

Dr BROAD - So, if you are off target you get less points. If you put all on the Alpha zone, no matter what you are using -

Mr WILCHER - Yes, there is no difference and is what we aim to do, but in practice and in reality, it is very hard to achieve.

Dr BROAD - Getting back to your points per second, do you get more points with a more powerful firearm because you are at a disadvantage in terms of the recoil, so they give you more points?

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Mr WILCHER - They make an allowance. There is a slightly different recoil depending on what your load is, of course. It is a heavier and slower projectile, so it is the dynamics of the way the firearm handles are completely different. Of course, everyone wants to get everything in the Alpha zone, but it is like a perfect score in snooker for example. It is like having to get a perfect score all the time. So, our competitors are at a massive disadvantage. For example, in the standard division in the world championships the people who were shooting the .40 calibre - which is 1 mm bigger overall- had it all over our people, because they get it into that zone and was a major power factor.

It does not affect the open shooters as, because they all use the .38 super because they can get to major power factor with that in its an improved calibre. Hence Karla Blowers has been the world champion a number of times, which is quite extraordinary, but our other people are at a massive disadvantage.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is one competition? That is one category of the competition?

Mr WILCHER - There are six divisions now and there are going to be seven shortly, but there are six divisions, yes. It does not affect the production division, because they only shoot what is called the minor power factor, so the scoring only about -

Dr BROAD - Out of the seven, how many are we disadvantaged?

Dr WOODRUFF - Six divisions he said, not seven.

Dr BROAD - No, there are soon to be seven.

Mr WILCHER - Soon to be seven. We are disadvantaged in standard division and in classic division and revolver. Not many people shoot revolver, but standard and classic primarily.

Dr WOODRUFF - So, two divisions?

Mr WILCHER - Yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - What change are you seeking to have to the National Firearms Agreement?

Mr WILCHER - We are seeking parity with Victoria.

Dr WOODRUFF - Was that calibre something discussed in the National Firearms Agreement?

Mr WILCHER - The funny thing is Victoria departs from the National Firearms Agreement.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is another question, but in terms of the National Firearms Agreement?

Mr WILCHER - It is mentioned in 14(c) where it only talks about the two approved matches -

Dr WOODRUFF - No greater than .45.

Mr WILCHER - Yes. Greater than .38 but no greater than .45, yes. Those two matches. One is called the western action, where that, to use a pejorative, is a cowboy match where they dress in western garb and they use a single action, old western-type revolver.

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Dr WOODRUFF - What has changed since February 2017, where this one is really reconfirmed. That is only last year. These are the two accredited events, so what in your view has changed since last year?

Mr WILCHER - Nothing has changed, hence my presence here.

Dr WOODRUFF - Why do you think these were constrained to a maximum of .45 given this experience and you talked about these divisions standard and classic and being at a disadvantage. Surely all would have been weighed up when this went to COAG and all the seven jurisdictions came to an agreement about this.

Mr WILCHER - I think there was a lot of -

Dr WOODRUFF - Weighing up the balances.

Mr WILCHER - I do not think it is even that. But this is all hearsay; I was not there.

I do not think the point was agitated perhaps as full as it could have been when all these changes came into place.

Dr WOODRUFF - The Australian Firearms Lobby did not have anybody engaged in the lead up at all?

Mr WILCHER - No.

Dr WOODRUFF - February last year?

Mr WILCHER - No, but this is still the same iteration. That has not changed since the National Firearms Agreement was put in place. It has been repeated on and on.

Dr WOODRUFF - But this was reconfirmed in February 2017.

Mr WILCHER - Yes, but we were not invited to participate unfortunately.

Dr BROAD - Are you suggesting that what that should say is something along the lines of 'competing in three accredited events'. You would be saying 'metallic silhouette, single western action, and IPSC'. If it said 'IPSC' at the end, then that would cover it?

Mr WILCHER - Yes, exactly. You will see in my paper that we talk about those two approved matches. One of them is the metal silhouette match that you see there. I do not shoot the match. They are very skilful, but it is nothing I have practical experience in. However, they do use a firearm calibre called .44 Magnum, which is greater than .38 but less than .45. They use it to knock over little metal silhouettes at varying distances. That is shot most weekends in Tasmania. The .44 Magnum round is infinitely more powerful in terms of down-range energy than the maximum calibre that we would be seeking to use in IPSC being 45 ACP. It is suddenly double the down-range energy.

CHAIR - In your mind is there an explanation of why this is in the National Firearms Agreement? Who argued for it at the time? Have you got history that goes back to that?

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Mr WILCHER - No, I do not go back to that, unfortunately. I know that were tragic events in this state which prompted the federal government to intervene. I was still in the New South Wales Police Force back in those days; I was not in the legal profession then.

As I understand it, there was a lot of panic amongst the firearms-using community. There were some terribly inept statements made by and on behalf of some of the firearms community. I am not saying IPSC or any discipline in particular. I am not going across the whole broad range. I think it lost its legitimacy when there were people debating against the changes proposed by former prime minister, John Howard - some very strange fellow dressed up in Nazi regalia. Any argument that we had then for sense and sensibilities went out the window. He was not a person who was briefed or professional in terms of presenting things. He was trundled up. I think he was representing a rifle-shooting group or something.

For want of a better term, I think that the users shot themselves in the foot back then. That was back in the 1990s.

CHAIR - You have no doubt spoken to other jurisdictions?

Mr WILCHER - Yes.

CHAIR - Where are we at when we talk about the National Firearms Agreement, which is an agreement by all the states which has some variability in it? What are other states doing?

Mr WILCHER - It is quite curious. The response that I have from Queensland and from most other jurisdictions is that in order for them to change the state laws they need to change to the National Firearms Agreement. That is wrong constitutionally. The Commonwealth only has the enumerated powers, and the states and territories have the other powers. Senator Arthur Sinodinos has written to me and confirmed my view, as has Senator David Leyonhjelm from the federal parliament. At this point, the project to seek parity with Victoria is stuck in that limbo. It is a pretty hard row to plough.

CHAIR - The evidence that you have been able to gain is that the National Firearms Agreement can be varied by the states?

Mr WILCHER - It is evident in Victoria and it is evident in this state.

Dr WOODRUFF - What is evident, as the Professor Warner's review has done is that there has been non-compliance with the National Firearms Agreement by a number of states in the way they have made their state laws. It is not a 'can be changed'. States must make the legislation to fulfil the principles in the National Firearms Agreement. Some states are in breach of that agreement, including Tasmania in a number of areas.

Mr WILCHER - Yes, for example, the NFA does not provide for junior shooters. It does not provide for minors' licences and things like that.

Dr WOODRUFF - It does, actually, it says 18 is the age.

Mr WILCHER - There are juniors younger than 18. One of our world champions in Australia has won the world championship with his father and a family friend - a young fellow from South

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Australia who is a brilliant young athlete. That is one thing. In my respectful submission, the NFA did not look at aspect of up and coming people.

Dr WOODRUFF - Could you talk a little bit about the IPSC? It sounds like there are only two divisions of the seven that will be in the IPSC. If that change were to happen, it would give anyone with a category H licence who has a handgun for sport shooting an ability to access to a greater a greater calibre bullet. How many people do you think that would be? What are we talking about? They do not have to be people who are training to go overseas to international competitions; they can just be people who are at their local club wanting to fire a handgun.

The problem I have with the change you are proposing is that it is not linked to international competition. It can then become available to any person who is competing at their local club, not in an international competition. As I think we had explained to us before, in order to get a category H licence, you have to be a member of a club and you have to participate a minimum of six times a year in those club activities. But it does not say you have to go into international competitions.

Mr WILCHER - No, but also, with great respect, you are forgetting another layer of training that occurs before people can shoot IPSC. There is a holster course which is quite stringent with both practical and theoretical components. The supervision is different in IPSC than it is some of the other disciplines because it is always one on one. There is only one person competing at a time.

Dr WOODRUFF - What I am saying is, given that we are in Australia and these rules are Australian rules - actually, these are Tasmanian rules that we are talking about - no-one in Tasmania would be disadvantaged by virtue of being in Tasmania and competing in Tasmania with not having access to a greater than .45-inch calibre bullet. It is only if they were going to be one of a tiny proportion of people training to go to international-level competition that they would be disadvantaged in two of seven divisions in that space. What I am trying to flesh out is that this would actually open it up to anybody who has a category H handgun.

Mr WILCHER - No, I disagree.

Dr WOODRUFF - Could it be written so it was only just for those people who -

Mr WILCHER - Absolutely, as it is already because in New South Wales. I am sorry I have not researched the point in Tasmania. For New South Wales to get to shoot in those other two approved matches you have to have a commissioner's permit. So, there is another layer again of probity and supervision. We do not advocate any change to that; not for one second do we want that watered down.

Dr BROAD - Isn't it fair to say that at the moment people with a category H licence can actually possess and use a firearm with more power than an IPSC handgun?

Mr WILCHER - Absolutely.

Dr BROAD - So your argument about making more powerful weapons available -

Dr WOODRUFF - No, this is talking about the calibre of the bullets.

Dr BROAD - The western action silhouette class, you can actually already get a far more powerful handgun than what they are asking for.

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Mr WILCHER - And it is infinitely more.

Dr WOODRUFF - Why are we having this conversation then?

Dr BROAD - It seems to me, when the National Firearms Agreement was put together, the people who used the metallic silhouette and the single western action got an exclusion, whereas the IPSC did not.

Mr WILCHER - I can't explain why.

Dr BROAD - Nobody can explain why.

Dr WOODRUFF - These aren't only going to be at international events, so you are saying that the people who presented to us from -

Dr BROAD - Whoever was the National Firearms Agreement because there is no sense. The metallic silhouette and the western action can be up to .45 calibre whereas the IPSC is a less powerful round than what is already allowed.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is more than .38 calibre.

Dr BROAD - It is more than .38 but it is less than .45. The handguns with a calibre of greater than .38 but no greater than .45 are permitted only where shooters are competing in these two separate events.

Dr WOODRUFF - Correct.

Dr BROAD - There is another category that has a less powerful round but is not exempted. It seems like it is more an administrative issue rather than the power of the handgun because the handgun is indeed less powerful than the two that are already allowed.

Dr WOODRUFF - What was the calibre again?

Mr WILCHER - One was a .44 Magnum that they use for the metal silhouette. That is a very big round, useless for our purposes. We have no interest in that.

There is a broad misconception that the size of the calibre, the size of the round, equates to more power. That is a fallacy. May I hand this to you?

CHAIR - You can certainly table that and we can all have a look at it.

Dr BROAD - It is also to do with the amount of powder.

Mr WILCHER - I will explain this document. This firearm has been sold in Queensland. It has not been sold in New South Wales and I don't know if it is available in Tasmania. It is called the FN Five-Seven. It has been in service now in a number of police forces and armies overseas. It has a 5.7 millimetre round, yet I am fairly sure it has been banned. It is certainly not approved for IPSC, nor would we be interested in it. It is an evolution where they have now gone to a smaller calibre in terms of the size of the width of the projectile, but for goodness sake, it pierces body

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armour. Thankfully I am told that in New South Wales there are none registered and nor will there be. I think Australia has now stopped its importation, which is a good thing.

It is in service in over 300 law enforcement and military users worldwide, in Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Italy, Libya, Mexico, Nepal, Peru, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, Surinam, Thailand and the USA. In my respectful submission it puts paid to the assertion that the size or the width of the projectile equates to more power. It just does not. There are all sorts of variations in that.

CHAIR - Given the issue around this and the number of handguns to do this and that, if you put the public safety test over it, if you change the wording so that these firearms can be used, will it increase the number of firearms out there, or will a person shooting with this will just shoot with that? If it is only a modification of the word so that we can compete internationally and those people who would have firearms of that nature are basically already there anyway, or using something else because they can't get this, then there would not be any additional public safety risk.

Mr WILCHER - None whatsoever. To put it in motor mechanic terms, an engine is an engine but you can change a cam shaft or polish a port or things like that. In rotary engines -

CHAIR - It is good to see you know a bit about motor mechanics. I am a motor mechanic by trade.

Mr WILCHER - I started my life as a motor mechanic; that's why I used the analogy. It is still an engine but it is an evolution of the engine.

As to the public safety aspect, there is no difference because as demonstrated in my paper, every weekend people are competing at a club level with things as big as a .44 Magnum which is infinitely more powerful than anything that they want to use for IPSC. It is just too severe for us.

Dr WOODRUFF - You are saying that the calibre that would be required for IPSC which is - sorry, remind me again.

Mr WILCHER - From .38 to .45 ACP. It is a very old round, the .45 ACP, but anywhere in between.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is more powerful than a .44 Magnum?

Mr WILCHER - God, no. Doctor, you haven't read my paper, with respect. In 5.7 there is some further discussion on it. The amount of propellant in a .44 Magnum case is exponentially more than a .45 ACP.

Dr WOODRUFF - That's what I meant. I meant that it is the opposite to what you are saying. Yes, I understand that.

Mr WILCHER - The .44 Remington Magnum has a lot more down-range energy.

Dr WOODRUFF - Your rationale as to why IPSC was not included in the beginning was because of the person who made a bad case on behalf of the competition industry. You do not think there is any other reason why it was not included?

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Mr WILCHER - I do not know the answer to the question because I was not involved in it. It was a major shake-up and, in my respectful submission, some things were really needed. I wasn't there and I don't know who advocated on behalf of IPSC, if anyone. There is just no evidence as to what happened.

Dr WOODRUFF - How many people do you think this change would affect?

Mr WILCHER - It would make a great deal of difference to the IPSC community and some of the changes I have advocated means we can attract people from overseas. Last weekend in Rotorua there was the New Zealand titles. I was in a matter related to my normal work and I think 800 people from all over the world flooded into Rotorua.

Dr WOODRUFF - So you are saying this can happen in Victoria?

Mr WILCHER - In the classic, yes. Not in standard. Standard is not there.

Dr WOODRUFF - Not there yet. So there is only one at the moment?

Mr WILCHER - Yes, but only one state and only one category.

Dr WOODRUFF - So that international competition could happen in Victoria?

Mr WILCHER - No, because you might get some classic division shooters but you will not get the standard shooters or the open shooters because of the magazine capacity issues. In Australia we are limited to 10-round magazines.

Dr WOODRUFF - That would be the case in Tasmania as well?

Mr WILCHER - At the moment, yes, of course.

Dr WOODRUFF - So this change is not going to help getting international competitions here so to speak because there are other reasons why they would be -

Mr WILCHER - I disagree. I'm advocating for changes in the magazine capacity as well. There is just no correlation between any safety issues or perceived danger to the public by people having compliant magazines for a competition.

Dr BROAD - What is the advantage of a bigger magazine?

Mr WILCHER - Magazine changes take time. For example, in open division the magazine is done by length. It has to be a certain length otherwise it is not compliant. They may be able to only do one magazine change, which might save them a couple of a hundredths of a second or a couple of tenths of a second, which is an eternity in IPSC.

In production division, you can use 15 round magazines overseas; and in standard division, again, it is to what fits in the box.

Dr WOODRUFF - People do get given permission to use them overseas?

Mr WILCHER - Yes, a commission's permit is similar to the high calibre pistols, yes.

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Dr WOODRUFF - So it is not actually affecting our ability to compete in that way?

Mr WILCHER - Not overseas, but it is affecting our ability to attract a lot of tourism dollars. In Chateau Roux in 2017, I was lucky to get a spot to compete. We had to stay about 55 minutes away from Chateau Roux because you could not get a seat on a train, you could not get a car. There were around 1500 competitors and officials plus support people. I had to come back for work, but a lot of people stayed on for a month and toured around France. The next one is in Thailand. It was the Far East Asians in September and there were 1400 competitors at Pattaya. In New Zealand last week there were 800 people. Some of my friends from my Brazil and Argentina travelled to New Zealand to compete. There can be a big injection of tourist dollars with this.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is countering the case to loosen the gun laws to attract tourism dollars. It is a balance which I do not know that many of the community would feel is weighted in favour of trying to do that in order to attract tourism dollars. Given that we have a very good ability to attract tourists to Tasmania, some would say maybe more than we need.

Mr WILCHER - I respectfully disagree. What I saw in France and what I saw in Thailand only recently, the influx of the tourists and the money that the tourists bring was incredible. You could not get a seat in a restaurant in Chateau Roux. As I said, we stayed 45 or 50 minutes away from the place and even then, it was all booked out.

CHAIR - Getting back to magazines, as far as your argument goes about the issue around magazines and it has been limited because of the National Firearms Agreement, you are arguing that in order to compete at the highest level internationally, you need to practice at that level and even though our magazines are less in size, if they were larger at a range you can get used to shooting 15 rounds before you change your magazine. You have to understand individually the practicalities of being able to concentrate for that long and then change, et cetera. We cannot compete with smaller magazines if the others are using -

Mr WILCHER - Absolutely. IPSC is different from other disciplines where you might see the - have you seen the Olympic rapid fire discipline? It is the one where they go across a set of targets. It is always a known phenomenon. You go to the match and you know exactly what your course of fire is going to be. IPSC is completely different. You have never seen the course of fire before you go there. You are lucky to get a sketch of it a couple of weeks before or a week before in the match package, but you do not actually see what it is and the pitfalls and to be able to do it fast. You always have to walk out your stage and get three minutes to do it, walk out your stage and practice. It is quite bizarre when you look at it because everyone walks around like this, you can see them count and make funny noises, phew, phew, phew, mag, phew, phew, phew, because they are counting out the stages so they can remember it as a range of the course. With the higher capacity magazine, you save so much time. This is why the New Zealand people do not like to come to Australia, because they are limited to 10-round magazines and they do not deal with it very well. It changes the game completely.

Dr BROAD - You are not standing in one spot; you are moving around.

Mr WILCHER - No, absolutely moving around. It is one-on-one supervision and there are very strict rules of safety. Muzzle direction, finger discipline, and things like that. Sometimes a stage is decided by a fraction of a second. They might get the same points but the person who gets

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through it faster, say 100th of a second, will get the higher hit factor. Where the scoring becomes important, they can get more points with the major power factor round.

Dr WOODRUFF - You are part of a national lobby group, the Australian Firearms Lobby?

Mr WILCHER - Yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you donate money to political parties?

Mr WILCHER - Oh god, no.

Dr WOODRUFF - You do not make any donations to the Liberal or Labor Parties?

Mr WILCHER - No, we do no, absolutely not. It does not make any money anyway. I can put it on the record. My fee structure is \$11 per registration. I have the stunning figure of about 98 nationally, four which are in Tasmania. It costs me money. I do not have any bigger clients. It is more of a labour of love in some respects. All those things are disclosed if you ever look - every quarter I do a return to the Electoral Commission in Tasmania and it lists all my clients. That \$11 is with GST.

CHAIR - Must not forget GST.

Mr WILCHER - It has not been a money-making venture in any way, shape or form. Certainly not aligned with any political party and we cannot be in my view.

CHAIR - Thank you for coming along.

Mr WILCHER - Thank you very much for the invitation. It came out of the blue because I received an email that said the terms of reference had been withdrawn. I thought well, that is the end of it.

Dr BROAD - Basically, for your background, instead of having an inquiry that was based on approving an election policy, the parliament decided to have a wider ranging inquiry to look at issues to do with gun licensing and registrations and the National Firearms Agreement.

Mr WILCHER - There is that tension there, but as I have said, we do not advocate any watering down of the licensing. All the people I speak to and represent would be happy if the laws permitted in Tasmania to have the higher calibre, to have the commissioner's permit just as they do for the other disciplines. Every weekend people are out there competing with calibres that are much more powerful and frankly useless for IPSC, but every weekend they are out there.

CHAIR - Thank you, Mr Wilcher, for that.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.