

The Secretary
Select Committee on Firearms Legislation and Policy
House of Assembly
Parliament House
HOBART TAS 7000

Submission by Jonathan Scholes to
Select Committee on Firearms Legislation and Policy

Dear Mr Buttsworth and members of the Select Committee on Firearms Legislation and Policy.

I am a young (27) working Tasmanian who has looked at what now seems to be near weekly mass shootings in the USA and am concerned by any hint of changes to our gun laws. As an Australian who has travelled abroad one of the things about our country that has made me proud is our stance on gun control.

As someone who is engaged in local and national politics I am aghast that our government is considering making any minor or significant concessions to our gun laws. Access to guns – particularly ones which are able to fire high profile rounds in quick succession – is a primary factor in gun related crime around the world.

In Tasmania we experience the highest rate of teenage suicides in the country. For every tragedy, there are countless stories of people who have survived their darkest moments and have lived to share their stories of relief after realising that many dark moments are not permanent.

As industrious as we humans are, killing one's self is an extremely difficult thing to do in the moment. As someone who has suffered from mental health issues in the past and has teetered on the edge, access to an "tool" that can end a life so suddenly – perhaps even accidentally – terrifies me. Guns may not kill people, but access to guns certainly does.

Regardless of whether or not we do make changes to our current gun laws, I also have considerable concerns about the transparency around this issue as well as the companies that stand to profit from any changes made. These companies are no doubt doing their best to gain the ear of the members making decisions on this policy. Whilst I am sure all the members working on this policy work hard to be immune from such influence, when such lobbying is present, the onus is on the government to be overly transparent. As someone keenly watching this topic, the current efforts are complete failures. I refer you to the well-considered and referenced submission by Vivien Wright who better describes the issues of influence and transparency in the gun control debate:

<http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ctee/Council/Submissions/FLR/submissions/93%20AME%20NDED%20Dr%20Vivien%20Wright.pdf>

Our gun laws should stay as they are – a world class example of policy made to protect the people which enjoys the support of all our political factions. Any changes to the access of

guns or attempts to further increase the number of guns sold in Tasmania and Australia is a moral crime. Any members who stand behind this change in history will be remembered for the wrong things.

If there are workers within society who have practical issues which are currently being considered in relation to gun law changes, make those specific issues known to our community of innovators and makers. Let us take those problems and allow us to solve them without proliferating access to guns. Who knows, perhaps we'll be able to export our solutions to the world and be remembered as the generation who solved practical problems whilst reducing gun crime around the world.

I appeal to the members of the committee to think of the vulnerable. When the issue involves instant life and death – the safety of the few should always come first.

Jonathan Scholes,

