

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

Mr Todd Buttsworth
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Dear Secretary,

I read with growing concern during the election earlier this year that the Liberal Government was negotiating with gun clubs to allow Tasmanian residents access to semi automatic and automatic guns, silencers and police checks needed every ten years, twice the previous time. Mental health checks cannot wait for up to ten years. As a Year 7-12 teacher with over 40 years experience and with counseling qualifications, I see so much danger in these changes.

As a half owner of a small farm, I understand that there are times when an animal must be put down, or animal numbers grow to plague numbers that guns are needed on rural properties. However, automatic or semi automatic guns have no place in any of these scenarios.

With the suicide rate amongst males living in rural Tasmania being one of the highest in Australia, adding military style guns to the community cannot be justified. According to the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy (2016-2020) in 2013 there were 74 (52 male, 22 female) suicides in Tasmania at a rate of 14.0 per 100,000) which is higher than the 10.9 per 100,000 National average and is the second highest in Australia. In the report Tasmania's decentralised population was considered one of the reasons for this exceptionally high number. On page 15 the report notes that men's suicides are 4 times those of women. On page 17 of the same report the first action noted is to 'reduce access to means of suicide'. Yet according to research, ' the easy accessibility to firearms, lower socio-economic lifestyle and increased level of social isolation, all add to the higher rate of male suicide in rural Australia.'" (Alston, M 2012 and Qi, Xi 2012).

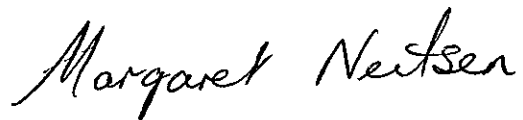
I sat in hospital beside a student who used drugs to make a serious attempt to end her life. She is now a gifted Assoc Professor of one of Australia's universities. If she had used a gun in her suicide I would not be celebrating her successful career with her.

In recent months multiple family murders have been in Australian news, but past family murders like the Hobart shooting of the four Shoobridge girls by their father and the terrible Port Arthur massacre are strong memories of many Tasmanians. Guns have no place in most Tasmanian homes.

When doctors, the people who have the task of trying to save/ mend the lives and capacities of victims of shooting, are so against changes, their voices need to be listened to.

The Members of the House of Assembly have not made a case to the public for the necessity for any change to the law. I therefore plead with Members of the House of Assembly to be wise, to be strong against lobbyists, to recognise that their actions in allowing changes, that in effect remove controls on guns, may have terrible unexpected outcomes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Neilsen". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Margaret Neilsen