

The Secretary  
House of Assembly Select Committee – Firearm Law Reforms  
25/10/2018

Submission by Katherine Bendall to

House of Assembly Select Committee on Firearms Legislation and Policy

Dear Mr Butterworth and the Members of the Select Committee in to Firearms Legislation and Policy

I am writing a submission to the Committee in my capacity as a Hobart GP as well as resident and parent. I am concerned about proposals that will contravene the National Firearms Agreement. The push seems to be to make guns more accessible and available. I believe it is essential to get our legislation right as it is likely to set a precedent for other states if Tasmania with our history approves regulation changes.

As a GP, my job is to provide whole person focussed health to my patients. I believe this risks being compromised with more guns on the scene leading to morbidity and mortality by accidental, and deliberate homicidal and suicidal deaths. Tasmania already has the highest rate of adolescent suicide (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-29/tasmanias-youth-hard-hit-by-suicide-bullying-health-issues/8397490>). Gun availability increases the risk of completing suicide – 85% of suicide attempts with firearms are lethal, higher than with any other means. (<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/risk/>)

We can pride ourselves in not having had repeated mass shootings in the style of America precisely because of our gun control. On the other hand, our health system is already very stretched and will only struggle further with increased gun wounds.

I am also highly concerned about the process through which this policy has been developed – from announcements on the eve of the election, to the significant impact the funding from the gun lobby groups is having. I hope to live in a state with a democracy as voted by the people not bought by those with an agenda to sell more guns. I hope you can maintain our world class gun safety laws and not bow to the pressure of money. A price can not be put on the lives of extra lives being lost, let alone the horrendous idea we would have another mass shooting.

There is no need for semiautomatic weapons, abolished licence waiting times, or extended licences in firearm ownership in Tasmania.