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Attorney-General's Department  
3/5 National Circuit  
Barton  
ACT 2600

Dear Attorney-General,

I am writing to offer a unique and qualified submission as part of the National Firearms Register public consultation.

I have sound knowledge of both federal and state & territory firearms regulations and legislation, having worked for the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA National) for five years. Serving as the National Media & Political Liaison, I regularly met with Ministers, politicians and bureaucrats to discuss issues affecting Australia's one million licensed firearm owners. I was a key part of the team involved in the 2014-15 inquiry in to gun-related violence, along with the National Firearms Agreement review in 2016-17.

I have also served as an Advisor to former NSW Senator David Leyonhjelm, who you will recall was a fierce advocate for shooters during his time in the Parliament.

As the Western Australian Lead Senate Candidate for Australia's libertarian party, I ran on a platform calling for politicians to 'Give Gun Owners A Fair Go'. I remain a public advocate for shooters using my 'Lady Liberty' platform to communicate with thousands of followers, most of which are shooters.

I am a proud participant in the shooting sports and understand the importance of firearms for conservation and pest control firsthand, being born and raised in country South Australia.

I respectfully request the federal government refrain from establishing a national firearms registry, particularly at a time when government debt is approaching \$1 trillion and gun crime involving registered firearms by licensed individuals is negligible.

Yours in liberty,

Kate Fantinel  
*Lady Liberty*

# Submission

*Question 1: What capabilities should a National Firearms Register provide to government regulators and law enforcement?*

None.

Given that the state and territory governments still retain the residual powers for firearms legislation and regulation, a national firearms register is an unnecessary and expensive duplication of current local-based registries.

The federal government should be reminded that the state and territory governments remain independently responsible for gun laws and have ultimate authority for the majority of firearm-related controls. The federal government is mainly responsible for importation and movement of firearms across the border.

With that in mind, a national firearms register infringes on the privacy of the individuals who obtained a license, purchased a firearm and registered it according to the law of the local jurisdiction. The federal government is not entitled to obtain or store this information, and politicians representing each jurisdiction should consult with affected constituents before handing over sensitive information relating to the ownership of private property.

*Question 2: Should a National Firearms Register trace more than firearms, for example firearms accessories, magazines, parts and ammunition?*

No.

Authorities can barely keep accurate records of actual firearms, let alone other items. Some state-based firearm registries are mostly paper-based, relying on manual data input by bureaucrats in police departments. This creates data inaccuracies and unreliable information: junk in and junk out is a common phrase heard when discussing registries.

In addition to this, the suggestion that ammunition should be registered or traced is absurd and shows a total disconnect with the real world. Requiring serial numbers to be printed on each individual bullet or cartridge is an obscene idea that will have no public safety benefit, drive up prices (including for police and military) and create regulatory issues for those who handload.

There is also an argument that the government shouldn't trace any individual's private property; however, given the current political climate and cultural attitude towards guns in Australia, licensing and registration will likely remain the bare minimum governments will require for private firearms ownership.

While this is the case, state and territories should remain responsible for these matters, and the federal government remain responsible for imports (as is currently the case). No other items should require to be registered, especially when there is no evidence to suggest tracing legally owned property by law-abiding individuals will result in any public safety benefit.

*Question 3: Do you have any comments on the benefits a National Firearms Register will offer to law enforcement and community safety, including any broader benefits that should be explored?*

There will be no benefits to community safety. The only benefit to law enforcement will be access to personal information about private citizens who own firearms that reside outside their jurisdictions.

The simplicity argument i.e. making the job of authorities to track lawful firearm owners “just in case”, is offensive and smacks of treating licensed firearm owners like criminals-in-waiting, simply because we own a firearm.

The whole idea that the ability to trace legally owned firearms by law-abiding citizens in a liberal democracy somehow makes the community safer remains unproven. It should be obvious that if a person wanted to obtain a firearm for criminal purposes, it could simply be obtained via the black and/or grey market (with the grey market being firearms not surrendered in the 1996 buyback).

*Question 4: What other capabilities could a National Firearms Register have that would be of benefit to the community, including to lawful firearms owners?*

None.

There are, however, a raft of other changes the federal government could make that would benefit lawful firearm owners. One example is to remove subjective appearance laws.

Appearance laws allow the Australian Federal Police (along with state and territory police) to essentially ban firearms based purely on how they look, without regulatory oversight. This has created an unfair system where a firearm that is deemed to too closely resemble a military firearm is placed in the strictest category possible (D) or even outright banned from importation.

Subjective appearance laws are the key reason why Australia has not legalised the skirmish sport of Airsoft, because the equipment (called markers) too closely resemble military firearms - even though functionally, they fire harmless plastic BB pellets.

Firearms should be classified based on their functionality, rather than their appearance.

Another step all governments and authorities could take that would benefit the community is to act on credible information relating to suspicious or potentially harmful activity quickly and more efficiently. The phrase “the perpetrator was known to authorities” (e.g the Lindt Cafe Sydney siege shooter Man Haron Morris) is all too common.

*Question 5: Do you have any comments on the creation of a verification service to support licensing and permit systems?*

An electronic verification service using personal and sensitive information stored in a government database that can be accessed by “trusted non-government entities” raises valid security and privacy concerns.

While some might make the argument that this might make life easier for authorities or gun dealers, this is not an acceptable reason for creating a central online hub containing sensitive information.

There are also legitimate questions surrounding whether or not governments are able to securely store and protect sensitive data.

*Question 6: Do you think trusted entities should be able to electronically communicate with firearms registries, if so, what capabilities should be available to trusted entities such as firearms dealers?*

No.

An individual's right to privacy should take precedence above all other considerations.

The Western Australian Government itself could not even be trusted to protect the information contained in the registry. In March 2022, a list of the home addresses of licensed firearm owners was directed to be extracted from the registry, allegedly by WA Police Minister Paul Papalia. This information was then given to the state's only newspaper, which used the information to publish a map on the front page showing where registered guns were located.

The map has since been reverse-engineered, allowing criminals to pinpoint the exact address where a licensed firearm owner lives. This created a security risk for the 88,000 individuals affected and increased the risk to public safety.

There has been no apology from the Police Minister or the current government.

If a State Government can doxx the licensed-firearm owning population without any penalties, there is no knowing what other entities will do if given access to such information.

*Question 7: Do you have any comments on the information proposed to be held by a National Firearms Register?*

Yes: tracking legally held firearms by law-abiding firearm owners will not stop criminals.

Criminals will not register their firearms and will continue to illegally import and use their illegal guns outside of the law. Meanwhile, law-abiding firearm owners who simply want to participate in a lawful activity continue to be scrutinised, over-regulated and treated like criminals-in-waiting by governments.

A national firearms register will do nothing to stop gun crime, infringes on individuals privacy, could be subjected to hacking and impinges on the residual powers of the state and territories.