



# Rapid Review of Victoria's Firearms Laws

FINAL REPORT

Ken Lay AO APM



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## 1. Foreword

Dear Minister,

I am pleased to present my Final Report on the Rapid Review of Victoria's firearms laws.

The 1996 Port Arthur massacre fundamentally changed how Australians understood the risks firearms pose to the community. In its aftermath, the nation reached a clear and enduring conclusion: effective firearms regulation is foundational to community safety.

Governments across Australia acted on that understanding.

The reforms that followed did more than change firearms laws; they reshaped what Australians now expect of their governments - that public safety will be prioritised, risks confronted early, and difficult decisions taken in the interests of the whole community.

In the years that followed, firearm-related harm fell markedly, establishing a public safety legacy that has endured for decades.

Fewer firearms and stronger laws correlate with fewer deaths, injuries and trauma.

And where strong regulatory frameworks operate alongside lower levels of firearms in the community, firearm-related harm is lower.

These considerations have informed the recommendations in this Report.

The tragic attack in Bondi in December 2025 served as a stark reminder that this legacy cannot be taken for granted, and that maintaining community safety requires ongoing vigilance and action.

This work was undertaken as a Rapid Review (Review), at the request of Government, and conducted in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

Those Terms require reforms that protect all Victorians, while recognising the legitimate need for some sectors of the community to possess, carry and use firearms.

The Review draws on input from thousands of Victorians through a public survey, written submissions and targeted engagement.

What emerged were, at times, deeply held and irreconcilable perspectives.

Many Victorians expressed concern about firearm-related harm and a strong expectation that Governments continue to act decisively to reduce risk and protect community safety.

We heard from people living with fear - particularly in the context of family violence - because of the presence of a firearm in the home.

We heard from victims, advocates and community members calling for stronger regulation to reduce harm and save lives.

And we heard from many Victorians who, in the wake of the Bondi attack, sought assurance that their government is doing everything reasonably possible to keep them safe.

We also heard from sporting shooters who described clubs as places of discipline, safety and community. We heard from farmers and primary producers who rely on firearms as essential tools for land and livestock management.

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We heard from hunters whose unpaid work contributes to pest control and environmental outcomes, and from elite athletes who require different firearms for different competitive disciplines.

Across these groups, licence holders consistently described themselves as law-abiding, safety-conscious and frustrated at being perceived as a source of risk, rather than part of a well-regulated system.

The distance between these perspectives – in understanding, assumptions and lived experience – is far wider than many people appreciate.

The gap in understanding was wider than I expected. That distance is reflected in a recurring tension throughout this Review.

Many people asked why anyone would need more than one firearm.

Others could not understand why that question needed asking.

This Review seeks to reflect those differing views with respect and rigour.

Where there is evidence, it is stated. Where the evidence requires strengthening over time, it is clearly identified.

The Review proceeds from a consistent starting point: no recreational pursuit, however valued, can take precedence over the safety of the whole community.

In conducting this work, the overarching intent of the *Firearms Act 1996 (Vic)* - to protect community safety and public peace - was the decisive frame.

The recommendations are intended to support Victoria's commitment to the National Firearms Agreement, and to contribute to the ongoing harmonisation of firearms laws across Australia.

It is my hope that this Report carries forward the lessons of Port Arthur and responds to the tragedy at Bondi by supporting firearms laws that are evidence-based, command public confidence, and keep Victorians safe now, and for decades to come.

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Ken D. Lay'.

**Ken D. Lay AO APM**

Chair, Rapid Review of Victoria's Firearms Laws  
March 2026

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### Context and considerations

This Rapid Review was undertaken at the request of Government, within a short timeframe following the tragic events at Bondi.

While engagement was broad, it did not capture the full range of perspectives that would be expected through a longer process.

Further engagement, including with regional and rural communities, could provide additional insight into social, environmental and economic impacts, particularly where firearms play a role in land management and pest control.

This Review was conducted in the context of significant national firearms reform activity being undertaken through National Cabinet, including the renegotiation of the National Firearms Agreement.

Alignment with national settings has informed a number of the recommendations.

As national reforms progress, some recommendations may need to be considered in the context of final national outcomes.

The recommendations outlined in this report are presented for the Government's consideration.

They present a coherent suite of options that may be considered in full or in part, having regard to Cabinet deliberations, implementation considerations and the timing of national reforms.

Where further analysis, consultation, or design work could not be undertaken within the Rapid Review timeframe, this is noted in the Report and identified as a matter for further consideration.

This Review did not include formal validation of recommendations with peak stakeholder bodies, including the Victorian Firearms Consultative Committee.

Further engagement following Cabinet consideration may assist Government, particularly in relation to implementation.

It is also noted that some funding decisions relating to Victoria Police may have been made while the Rapid Review was being completed.

I would like to acknowledge the many individuals and organisations who contributed to this Review, including community members, stakeholders and subject matter experts who shared their perspectives and experiences.

I also extend my thanks to the Review team within the Department of Justice and Community Safety for their support throughout the Review. I further acknowledge the assistance and engagement of Victoria Police during the process.

## 2. Recommendations

The following table presents the Review's high-level findings and recommendations. Detailed recommendations, analysis and supporting material are set out in the report.

<b>Terms of Reference Focus Area 1 – The number of firearms that can be held by an individual</b>
<p><u>The Review recommends Government consider:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Introducing a cap of up to four firearms (per individual category A &amp; B) licence holder.</b></li></ol>
<p><b>Key findings to support recommendation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The significant reduction in firearms following the 1996 amnesty and buyback saw a decrease in firearm-related harm and an increase in community confidence in firearm regulation.</li><li>• A nationally consistent approach supports consideration of firearm caps, while allowing Victoria to respond to its specific community safety, economic and environmental context.</li><li>• The average Victorian firearm owner holds four firearms, noting that many licence holders do not own any firearms.</li><li>• Existing limits on Categories C, D and E demonstrate an established approach to restricting firearm numbers based on risk and need.</li><li>• A review of the caps model should be undertaken in five years.</li></ul>
<b>Terms of Reference Focus Area 2 – Firearms categories</b>
<p><u>The Review recommends Government consider:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>2. Legislative change to the <i>Firearms Act 1996 (Vic)</i> to update existing firearm categories so that higher-risk firearms are appropriately classified, with sufficient flexibility to accommodate emerging technologies and future developments in firearms manufacture.</b></li><li><b>3. Further work to examine the scope of the <i>Firearms Act 1996 (Vic)</i> and related legislation.</b></li></ol>
<p><b>Key findings to support recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The firearm categorisation framework is broadly fit-for-purpose, but was developed prior to recent advances in manufacture, design and technologies.</li><li>• The Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police's powers to reclassify firearms are currently limited, restricting the ability to respond flexibly to changes in firearm design and reclassify appropriately in all circumstances.</li></ul>

### Terms of Reference Focus Area 3 – Licence scheme and citizenship

The Review recommends Government consider:

- 4. Limiting eligibility of firearm licences to Australian citizens, or New Zealand citizens with permanent residency in Australia who can demonstrate a genuine reason for holding a licence.**
- 5. Reviewing the Firearms Regulations 2018 to modernise permit fee arrangements.**

#### **Key findings to support recommendations:**

- Citizenship or residency-based eligibility requirements would align Victoria with the approach being considered through National Cabinet and adopted in some other jurisdictions.
- Victoria Police's background checking processes have limited access to international records, reducing their effectiveness for applicants with overseas histories.
- Current fee structures for firearms licences and permits have not been reviewed in recent years and operate well below the cost of administering the licensing system.

### Terms of Reference Focus Area 4 – Licence duration, strengthening assessments/renewals and ongoing monitoring during licence lifecycle

The Review recommends Government consider:

- 6. Retaining the existing overall duration of firearm licences.**
- 7. Strengthening oversight across the full licence lifecycle – including renewal requirements, fit and proper person assessments, genuine reason assessments, and training and ongoing monitoring.**

#### **Key findings to support recommendations:**

- The current duration of firearm licences in Victoria is appropriate. Focus should be placed on strengthening monitoring and intelligence throughout the life of a licence – not just at the start, or a point of renewal.
- Longarm requirements should be aligned with handgun requirements in the *Firearms Act 1996* (Vic). This should include setting minimum participation standards for specific genuine reasons to ensure ongoing competency and mandating live fire training.
- Introducing health assessments as part of the licensing application and renewal process may help identify changes in an individual's circumstances that could affect whether they remain a 'fit and proper person'.
- A mandatory health reporting pathway would strengthen ongoing assessments of licensing suitability and support more robust application of the 'fit and proper person' test.
- Applicants seeking a permit to acquire for Category A firearms should be required to demonstrate a genuine need to possess, carry or use such a firearm. This would align

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with the treatment of all other categories of firearms. There should be a formalised system introduced for individuals attending clubs to shoot without a permit.

- There is currently no minimum standard for firearms training in Victorian law. Introducing mandatory standards set by accredited providers would elevate the standard of firearm licence holders. Live-fire training should be a requirement.
- Victoria should consider how continuous monitoring at the Australian Government level (including AusCheck) could be built into Victoria's regulatory scheme. Victoria Police's information management systems must be enhanced to ensure integration and effective information sharing.

### Terms of Reference Focus Area 5 – Illicit firearms and emerging risks

The Review recommends Government consider:

- 8. Strengthening laws relating to the management of illicit firearms to address unlawful use, trafficking and transport risks.**

#### Key findings to support recommendation:

- Victoria's current firearms laws do not fully address all pathways through which firearms enter the illicit market, including theft, unlawful manufacture, and diversion or trafficking activities.
- Improved oversight of how firearms move through the supply chain would support efforts to disrupt criminal activity and prevent diversion of legal firearms into the illicit market.

### Terms of Reference Focus Area 6 – Imitation firearms and accessories

The Review recommends Government consider:

- 9. Strengthening the regulation of imitation firearms, firearm accessories and firearms-related items to ensure settings are risk-based, support public safety, and remain fit for purpose.**

#### Key findings to support recommendation:

- Imitation firearms and firearm accessories require clearer, modern regulation.
- While accessories are not firearms, some can modify how firearms operate. This creates public safety risks that justify tighter regulation.

### Terms of Reference focus area 7 – Use of criminal intelligence in decision making

The Review recommends Government consider strengthening:

- 10. The use of criminal intelligence in firearms licensing and prohibition decisions.**
- 11. How intelligence is protected and used in licensing reviews and appeals.**

#### Key findings to support recommendations:

- Victoria Police rely on fragmented internal systems and have limited real-time access to interstate intelligence, meaning decision-makers may not have a complete picture when assessing fitness to hold a licence. Commonwealth reforms enabling AusCheck,

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ASIO and ACIC assessments from 1 July 2026 provide a clear pathway to strengthen firearms licensing.

- Existing arrangements risk disclosing sensitive intelligence when it is used in firearms licensing decisions, limiting its practical use.
- Decisions relying on intelligence require independent oversight and clear safeguards to ensure fairness and compliance with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 Act (Vic)*.

### Terms of Reference Focus Area 8 – Information sharing arrangements

The Review recommends Government consider strengthening:

- 12. National information-sharing arrangements for firearms licensing and monitoring.**
- 13. State-based information-sharing and systems to support risk-based decision-making.**

#### Key findings to support recommendations:

- Current Victoria Police systems need updating to support a near-real-time national register and integration with state-based digital platforms.
- Victoria should explore mechanisms for health agencies to share firearms injury data with Victoria Police to better inform risk assessment and prevention.
- Victoria Police's existing systems cannot perform the essential information-sharing functions needed to achieve the objectives of the National Firearms Register.

### Terms of Reference Focus Area 9 – Promoting Public Safety

The Review recommends Government consider strengthening:

- 14. The evidence base for informing firearms policy.**
- 15. Advisory governance arrangements and representation.**
- 16. Community engagement and public communication.**

#### Key findings to support recommendations:

- Maintaining public confidence in the *Firearms Act 1996 (Vic)* is essential to reducing the risk of harm and ensuring that all Victorians feel safe. Strengthening the evidence base for firearms policy through evaluation and improved data collection will support well-informed policy decisions and clarify which regulatory settings are most effective.
- While current advisory arrangements provide valuable operational insight, they are weighted toward firearm industry and user perspectives, limiting the range of views shaping advice on community safety and the public interest.
- Community understanding of firearms regulation varies. Many Victorians have limited awareness of the strength of existing laws and the legitimate use of firearms, while others express concern about the number of firearms in the community.
- Evidence-based public communication is essential to building confidence in the regulatory framework and supporting informed public discussion.

### 3. Introduction

#### A national moment

Australia's approach to firearms regulation is built on a principle established after the 1996 Port Arthur massacre: that the possession and use of firearms is a privilege, not a right, and it is conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety.

That principle was given effect through the National Firearms Agreement and a national amnesty and buyback that removed hundreds of thousands of firearms from circulation.

Following this, stronger firearms controls and fewer firearms in the community were strongly correlated with fewer firearm-related deaths.

In the decades that followed, Australia saw a sustained decline in mass shootings and a significant reduction in firearms-related harm.

For nearly thirty years, that has been Australia's reality.

The absence of a mass casualty event gave the community a reasonable sense that the problem had been solved. Firearms regulation received limited public attention.

Licensing and registration systems operated largely in the background.

But the landscape was changing.

The number of registered firearms in Australia grew significantly – driven not by an increase in the number of people owning firearms, but by existing owners accumulating more.

Technologies changed. New risks emerged and are continuing to emerge, such as 3D printed firearms.

The regulatory frameworks drafted in the mid-1990s remained largely effective in Victoria and were considered among the strongest in the country. But they had not kept pace with current needs.

With close to 240,000 licensed firearms holders and almost 975,000 registered firearms, Victoria has a large and diverse firearms community.

The tragic attack in Bondi on 14 December 2025 prompted renewed scrutiny of Australia's firearms safety settings and assumptions.

The deaths of 15 innocent people – including four children – and the injury of 41 others, in a public place, carried out in part by a licensed firearms owner, prompted a renewed national focus on firearms regulation and risk.

The next day, National Cabinet agreed that Australia's firearms laws needed to be strengthened. New South Wales passed emergency legislation before Christmas.

The Australian Parliament passed the *Combating Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Firearms and Customs Laws) Act* in January 2026, introducing a new national background-checking framework through AusCheck and strengthening firearms importation controls.

Victoria is part of that national response.

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On 22 December 2025, the Victorian Premier announced this Rapid Review to ensure Victoria's firearms laws reflect the current risk environment and align with the reforms agreed by National Cabinet.

While firearms regulation is central to preventing mass casualty events, it is important to acknowledge that the Bondi terror attack was driven by extremist ideology.

Firearms can significantly amplify harm when accessed by individuals motivated to cause violence, regardless of the underlying driver of that motivation.

This Review focuses on firearms laws and improved regulation.

Other contributing factors, including radicalisation, antisemitism and broader societal issues, will be examined in the National Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion (Australia) and was out of scope for this Review.

### Victoria's approach

Following the events at Bondi, the Victorian Government asked this Review to undertake a public engagement process – including with legitimate firearms users – to inform its response.

Approaches in other jurisdictions varied, with some undertaking consultation prior to reforms (before the Bondi attack) and others moving directly to reform.

Over eight weeks between January and February 2026, the Review received 19,026 survey responses, more than 500 written submissions, and held 40 face-to-face consultation sessions, hearing from regional and metropolitan Victorians.

The scale of this engagement – in the short timeframes available – reflects the strength of feeling across the community on this issue.

That engagement surfaced views that are, in many respects, sharply divergent.

The survey attracted strong participation from licensed firearms users and their representative organisations.

Approximately 88 per cent of survey respondents identified as firearms users.

Licensed firearms users make up approximately four per cent of Victoria's population.

Their contributions were detailed, informed and deeply felt.

The Review heard from victims of firearms violence, community safety advocates, and members of the broader Victorian community.

The Review heard from Victoria Police, the agency responsible for regulating and enforcing Victoria's firearms laws

The fact that survey respondents skewed heavily toward licensed firearms users is not unusual in public consultations on specialised regulatory matters.

People with a direct personal stake in the outcome are more likely to participate, and organised groups are more effective at mobilising responses than the general public.

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The survey results are reported honestly in this report and treated as what they are: a valuable window into the views and experiences of Victoria's firearms community, rather than a representative sample of community opinion as a whole.

The findings and recommendations are grounded in what the Review heard, what the available evidence shows, and the decisions of National Cabinet that were asked to be considered as part of this work.

### How firearms are regulated in Victoria

Many Victorians have limited familiarity with how firearms are regulated in this state.

Under the *Firearms Act 1996* (Vic) (the *Firearms Act*), anyone who wants to own a firearm in Victoria must hold a licence issued by the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police.

To obtain a licence, a person must pass a firearms safety course, demonstrate a genuine reason for owning a firearm, satisfy background and criminal history checks, and be assessed as a 'fit and proper person.'

Each time a licence holder wants to acquire an additional firearm, they must apply separately for a permit to acquire. Handgun owners face additional requirements: mandatory membership of an approved club, fingerprinting, a six-month probationary period, minimum annual participation at the range, and licence renewal every three years.

This framework is broadly sound, and Victoria Police told this Review that the overwhelming majority of licensed firearms owners comply with it.

The system is designed to ensure that only suitable people have access to firearms, and that those firearms are stored and used safely.

### Why reform is needed

The Review found that emerging technologies and contemporary risks, including those influencing the illicit firearms market, require closer examination.

It also identified gaps and inconsistencies that have developed in the framework over three decades, some of which do not meet the community safety intent of the *Firearms Act*, or the threshold of community expectation.

Many of the strict requirements that apply to handgun owners – club membership, minimum participation, fingerprinting, three-year licence renewals – do not apply to owners of longarm firearms such as rifles and shotguns.

Category A and B longarm owners face no mandatory club membership, and no minimum usage requirements. There are limited storage requirements for longarms being transported, meaning a firearms owner travelling from Melbourne to a competition in Echuca can lawfully carry a rifle on the seat beside them in their car. This being said, the individual would still need to be able to demonstrate the firearm is secure, not dangerous and reasonable measures have been taken to ensure the firearm is not lost or stolen.

The *Firearms Act* treats handguns and Category A and B longarms very differently, based on the concealment risk posed by handguns.

Similarly, under current arrangements a person can walk into a firearms club, present their drivers' licence, and be given access to a firearm and instruction in how to fire it – without a

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firearms permit or licence, without a police background check, and without any screening beyond a self-declaration form.

These are the kinds of inconsistencies this Review was asked to examine – not to penalise responsible firearms owners, - but to bring the regulatory framework in line with what the Victorian community would reasonably expect of a system designed to keep people safe.

There is also a broader gap.

There is currently no limit in Victoria on the number of firearms a person may hold under a single licence.

### Firearms in Victoria

Victoria has 240,300 firearms licence holders and 974,550 registered firearms.

**Table 1: Victorian firearms and licensing statistics**

Victorian firearms and licensing statistics			
	Metropolitan	Regional/rural	Total
<b>Firearms</b>	317,300	657,250	974,550
<b>Licence holders</b>	74,140	166,170	240,310
<b>Licences</b>	89,000	193,100	283,100

*Note: an individual can hold more than one type of firearm licence.*

*Source: Victoria Police Licensing and Registration System (LARS) 21 January 2026*

Firearms serve a range of legitimate purposes in this state: sport and target shooting across dozens of disciplines; hunting and game management (more than 131,000 Victorians hold firearms for hunting purposes, and recreational hunters remove an estimated 167,600 deer from the Victorian environment each year<sup>1</sup>); primary production, where firearms are essential for pest control and animal welfare; and collecting, where historical and cultural value underpins lawful ownership.

A question that arose frequently during this Review, particularly from people without direct experience of firearms, was why a single person would need to own more than one firearm.

The answer is more straightforward than non-firearm owners might expect.

A deer hunter pursuing different species in different terrain will often use different calibre rifles, because using the wrong calibre can cause unnecessary suffering to the animal.

A primary producer may need a rifle for pest control at distance and a shotgun for vermin at close range.

A sport shooter competing across disciplines - target rifle and shotgun - needs the specific firearm each discipline requires.

The average Victorian firearms licence holder owns approximately four firearms.

Some hold fewer, and some hold many more than this number.

Depending on the type of licence and need for different firearms, some individuals currently hold large caches of between 68 (hunting) and 288 firearms (sports target shooting).

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For many, each one serves a distinct purpose.

Explaining this is important, because effective regulation depends on public understanding of both the legitimate users, and the genuine risks of increased numbers of firearms in the community.

A framework that fails to account for how firearms are actually used will be unworkable.

Equally, understanding why someone owns multiple firearms does not answer the question of how many the community should be expected to accept.

That is a policy judgement, and it is one this Review has been asked to make to ensure community safety and peace as the main intent of the Act.

### **The nature of firearms-related harm**

The data on firearms-related harm in Victoria tells a story that many Victorians may not expect.

In the ten years to December 2025, firearms suicides (342 deaths) outnumbered firearms assaults (104 deaths) by more than three to one (refer Table 10).

Firearms-related harm is concentrated in private and domestic settings, not public places.

It is more prevalent in regional Victoria than metropolitan Melbourne and disproportionately affects men and older people.

These patterns tell us that effective firearms regulation is as much about preventing self-harm and family violence as it is about preventing the kind of public mass casualty events that drive political and media attention.

The presence of a firearm in a home where there is family violence, mental illness or acute distress changes the calculus of risk in ways that are well documented.

Recommendations in this report address licensing, monitoring, storage and information-sharing alongside limits on the number of firearms.

Keeping the community safe requires a system that works across all the ways firearms-related harm occurs – not just the ways that make headlines after major events.

### **The evidence on firearms caps**

The question of whether to place a numerical limit on the number of firearms an individual may own – commonly referred to as a 'cap' – is the most prominent and contested issue addressed by this Review.

There is a strong and well-established correlation between lower levels of firearm availability in the community and reductions in firearm-related harm.

The post-Port Arthur massacre reforms were associated with significant declines in firearm deaths, both in total numbers and on a per capita basis. This relationship provides an important policy rationale for regulation aimed at reducing the overall number of firearms in the community.

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Per-person caps, however, are an emerging regulatory approach in Australia with limited international uptake of similar policies. No jurisdiction has had them in place long enough to measure their long-term effectiveness and the research specifically examining their independent impact remains limited.

There is no clear evidence that numerical caps on individual ownership, by themselves, reduce firearms-related harm.

Equally, there is no evidence that they are ineffective, or that they undermine broader public safety objectives when implemented as part of a wider regulatory framework.

This Review calls out these realities.

The recommendations on caps reflect the strong correlation between fewer firearms and reduced harm, in the decisions of National Cabinet, and in the need for national consistency.

They are accompanied by a recommendation that Government build the specific evidence base on caps, including through a formal review in Victoria within five years, so that future policy decisions can be informed by data and evidence of impact.

Victoria has an opportunity to lead that work.

### Purpose of this report

This report presents the findings and recommendations of this Review across the matters specified in the Terms of Reference.

It addresses 9 key areas including:

- limits on the number of firearms an individual may hold
- the classification of firearms
- the licensing scheme, including citizenship requirements
- licence duration and monitoring
- Illicit firearms and emerging risks
- imitation firearms and accessories
- the use of criminal intelligence in licensing decisions
- information-sharing arrangements between agencies
- other considerations for the promotion of public safety.

Each chapter follows a consistent structure: the national and interstate context; what the Review heard through consultation; what the evidence and available data show; and the resulting findings and recommendations.

This structure is deliberately designed to show how consultation, evidence and national alignment have each contributed to the recommendations, and to ensure that people who participated in this process can see where and how their views have been considered.

The recommendations are framed by the overriding purpose of the *Firearms Act*: to ensure that the possession, carriage, use, acquisition, disposal and storage of firearms is conditional on the need to ensure public safety and peace in the community.

## 4. Context

Following the events at Bondi on 22 December 2025, the Victorian Government announced a five-step strategy to prevent violent extremism, combat antisemitism and promote public safety. As part of this response, the Government commissioned this Rapid Review of Victoria's firearms laws, led by former Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Ken Lay AO APM.

The Review was asked to consider Victoria's existing firearms laws and recent reforms in New South Wales and consult with Victoria Police and community groups. Its purpose was to support a nationally consistent approach and ensure Victoria's firearms laws reflect current risks.

The Review will inform the Victorian Government's decisions on potential amendments to the *Firearms Act* and related legislation.

### 4.1 National context

#### 4.1.1 National Cabinet and Police Ministers' Council

At National Cabinet on 15 December 2025, First Ministers asked Police Ministers and Attorneys-General to develop options for nationally consistent firearms reform.

On 17 December 2025, the Police Ministers' Council established a Senior Officials Group to progress this work. Key areas under consideration include:

- accelerating establishment of the National Firearms Register
- expanding the use of criminal intelligence in firearms licensing decisions
- limiting the number of firearms held by individuals
- limiting open-ended licences and restricting certain firearm types and modifications
- introducing Australian citizenship as a requirement for holding a firearms licence.<sup>2</sup>

All Australian states and territories, as well as New Zealand, were represented in this work. These issues were incorporated into the Review's consultation with Victorian stakeholders and form the basis of its recommendations.

The National Firearms Register was a commitment of National Cabinet in 2023 following the shooting of two Queensland police officers and a civilian in Wieambilla in December 2022. The commitment was re-affirmed following the deaths of two Victorian police officers at Porepunkah in August 2025 and one Tasmanian police officer at North Motton in June 2025.

#### 4.1.2 National Firearms Register

The National Firearms Register will link firearms information held by Commonwealth, state and territory agencies into a single national data hub. Each jurisdiction will continue to operate its own firearms registry, which will feed information into the National Firearms Register.

The purpose of the National Firearms Register is to improve information sharing and law enforcement capability across Australia by providing near real-time access to accurate firearms information, including:

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- tracing registered firearms across state, territory and international borders
- sharing information on firearms licence holders and licences nationwide
- verifying licences for law enforcement and firearms dealers
- issuing alerts and notifications for high-risk information or events
- supporting national reporting and analysis of firearms trends.<sup>3</sup>

The National Firearms Register will also support more consistent and efficient firearms administration. As part of its implementation, many firearms management processes across jurisdictions will be digitised, including licence, permit and dealer systems.

### 4.1.3 National Firearms Agreement

This Review was undertaken alongside national work to renegotiate the National Firearms Agreement. This agreement sets minimum national standards for firearms regulation across Australia on issues such as:

- restrictions on certain firearms
- genuine reasons for holding a firearms licence and genuine need for acquiring, possessing or using a firearm
- categories of firearms
- licensing requirements (including age thresholds, proof of identity and training)
- permit to acquire (a separate application for acquisition of a new firearm)
- storage requirements
- records of firearm sales, and
- sale and transport of firearms.<sup>4</sup>

While responsibility for firearms policy is shared between the Commonwealth and the states and territories, each jurisdiction administers firearms under its own legislation.

Introduced in 1996 following the Port Arthur massacre, the National Firearms Agreement established key national controls, including firearm restrictions, licensing and registration requirements, genuine reason tests, storage standards and record-keeping for firearm sales.

In 2017, the National Firearms Agreement was updated to combine the original 1996 Agreement and the 2002 National Handgun Agreement. This update also led to the reclassification of lever-action shotguns across jurisdictions.

In 2021, a permanent National Firearms Amnesty was introduced, endorsed by national policing and firearms governance bodies.

All states and territories have implemented the National Firearms Agreement through their own laws, resulting in broadly consistent firearms controls. However, differences remain between jurisdictions due to variations in administrative settings such as licence duration, fees, waiting periods, evidence requirements and the use of police discretion.

The National Firearms Agreement sets minimum standards only. Jurisdictions may introduce additional or more restrictive controls. The Review has sought to ensure that any proposed

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changes to Victoria's firearms laws are consistent with the National Firearms Agreement while responding to Victoria's specific context and risks.

At the time of this Review, work at the national level to renegotiate the National Firearms Agreement was ongoing.

### 4.2 Reforms in other Australian jurisdictions

This Review was commissioned following New South Wales's announcement of proposed firearms reforms, and its Terms of Reference specifically require consideration of those reforms.

On 24 December 2025, the New South Wales Parliament passed the *Terrorism and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025*, enacting the reforms in direct response to the Bondi terrorist attack. The reforms included a package of measures aimed at strengthening community safety.<sup>5</sup>

Of particular relevance to this Review were changes to firearms laws, including:

- a cap of four firearms per licence holder, with exemptions for certain licence types such as primary producers and sports or target shooters
- restrictions on straight-pull, pump-action and button or lever-release firearms, reduced magazine capacity limits for Category A and B firearms, and a ban on belt-fed firearms
- mandatory gun club membership for most licence holders
- removal of the appeal pathway through the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal
- mandatory safe storage inspections before issuing firearms permits
- a requirement for gun clubs to use an online safety platform (GunSafe).<sup>6</sup>

While this Review was taking place, other jurisdictions, including Australian Capital Territory and Queensland, announced reforms to their firearms laws.<sup>7</sup>

Western Australia had previously made changes to their firearms laws which commenced on 31 March 2025.<sup>8</sup>

The approaches taken in other jurisdictions have also been considered by this Review.

Appendix F outlines reforms to firearms laws that have been recently announced, passed Parliament, or have commenced across Australian jurisdictions.

### 4.3 Victorian context

#### 4.3.1 The *Firearms Act 1996* (Vic)

Firearms are regulated in Victoria by the *Firearms Act*. Modelled on the resolutions of the National Firearms Agreement, The *Firearms Act* specifies that public safety and peace can be achieved in relation to firearms usage by:

- establishing a system of licensing and regulation for firearms and related items which does not allow for self-defence to be used as a reason for obtaining a licence

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- establishing a system of licensing and regulation for firearms dealing
- establishing a system of permitting and regulating the acquisition and disposal of firearms and related items
- establishing a system of registering firearms
- establishing requirements for secure storage and carriage of firearms
- establishing a Firearms Appeal Committee to hear applications for review of decisions of the Chief Commissioner under the Act
- making provision for the education of the community in the safe and responsible use of firearms, and
- providing for strict control on the possession, carriage, use, acquisition, disposal and storage of firearms.<sup>9</sup>

During the Review, focusing on the purpose of the *Firearms Act* was a key consideration in developing the recommendations.

### 4.3.2 Key terms in the *Firearms Act*

The language used in the *Firearms Act* is technical and complex. Some key terms are defined below for context when reading this report.

- **Genuine reason:** All applicants for a firearms licence need to establish a ‘genuine reason’ for using a firearm. Genuine reasons are outlined in the National Firearms Agreement and the top three in Victoria are shown below. Examples of other genuine reasons include security work, firearms collecting and firearms dealing dealers. The National Firearms Agreement is clear that personal protection is not a ‘genuine reason’ for acquiring, possessing or using a firearm.
- **Genuine need:** To acquire or possess certain firearms, a licence holder or applicant for a licence must apply to the Chief Commissioner of Police for a permit to acquire, and they must demonstrate ‘genuine need’ for each firearm. Establishing ‘genuine need’ requires the applicant to outline why they need the firearm and why the need cannot be satisfied in another way.

The categories outlined in the *Firearms Act* are modelled on the categories established in the National Firearms Agreement. The table below provides more detail on what kinds of firearms belong in each category.

**Table 2: Firearm categories**

Category	Examples of types of firearms included
<b>Category A longarm</b>	an airgun; a rimfire rifle (other than a semiautomatic rimfire rifle); a shotgun (other than a lever action, pump action or semi-automatic).
<b>Category B longarm</b>	a muzzle loading firearm; a centre-fire rifle (other than an automatic or a semi-automatic centre fire rifle); a lever action shotgun with a magazine capacity of no more than 5 rounds.

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Category	Examples of types of firearms included
<b>Category C longarm</b>	a semi-automatic rimfire rifle with a magazine capacity of no more than 10 rounds; a semi-automatic shotgun with a magazine capacity of no more than 5 rounds; a pump action shotgun with a magazine capacity of no more than 5 rounds; a tranquilliser gun.
<b>Category D longarm</b>	a semi-automatic rimfire rifle with a magazine capacity of more than 10 rounds; a semi-automatic shotgun with a magazine capacity of more than 5 rounds; a lever action shotgun with a magazine capacity of more than 5 rounds; a pump action shotgun with a magazine capacity of more than 5 rounds.
<b>Category E handgun</b>	a machine gun that is a handgun; any handgun prescribed for the purposes of this category; any other firearm that is declared under section 3A(1) to be a category E handgun.
<b>Category E longarm</b>	a machine gun that is a longarm; a tear gas gun or projector; a shotgun or rifle with a length of less than 75 centimetres measured parallel to the barrel; a mortar, bazooka, rocket propelled grenade or similar large calibre military firearm designed to fire an explosive or projectile.
<b>General category handgun</b>	a handgun that is not a category E handgun.

The three most common genuine reasons in Victoria – hunting, sport and target shooting, and primary production – all relate to Category A and B firearms licences.

Category A and B firearms are the least restricted firearms under the Act. As the categories progress, stricter regulations apply including:

- To obtain a Category C firearm you must demonstrate that your ‘genuine need’ cannot be satisfied by any other means, including the use of a Category A or B firearm
- Category D firearm licences are only issued where there is a demonstrated need for a Category D firearm, and
- Category E are the most restricted firearms under the *Firearms Act* and the licence holder must meet a range of additional requirements.

### 4.3.3 Recent firearms reform in Victoria

In recent years, Victoria has introduced several targeted reforms to strengthen firearms regulation:

- ***Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Act 2025***  
Passed in November 2025, this reform amended the *Firearms Act* to prohibit the possession or distribution of documents that can be used to manufacture firearms using 3D printing (digital blueprints), unless a person has a reasonable excuse or holds a firearms dealer licence. The law includes exceptions to ensure legitimate and innocent conduct is not captured.<sup>10</sup>

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- ***Firearms and Control of Weapons (Machete) Amendment Act 2024***

This reform strengthened police powers to serve Firearms Prohibition Orders (FPOs). It allows police to stop a person in a public place and require them to remain or accompany police to a station or safe place for up to two hours to enable service of an FPO where a person is attempting to avoid service. This reform also included permitting police to enter premises without consent for the purposes of serving a FPO, subject to a service search warrant.<sup>11</sup>

- ***Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Act 2024 – National Firearms Amnesty***

To support the ongoing National Firearms Amnesty, this Act amended the *Firearms Act* to allow licensed firearms dealers to receive firearms from unlicensed persons who are not otherwise exempt. It also introduced a new licence condition for Category A and A & B longarm licence holders, preventing the possession, carrying or use of detachable magazines holding more than five rounds with bolt-action shotguns, unless the firearm is used at a Chief Commissioner-approved event.<sup>12</sup>

- ***Firearms and Other Acts Amendment Act 2021***

This reform strengthened storage requirements by prohibiting Category A and B firearms from being stored in hardwood receptacles and aligning the requirements for these firearms with those of Category C and D which are required to be stored in a steel receptacle which is of a thickness of at least 1.6 mm, and which weighs less than 150 kilograms when empty. Further, the receptacle must be bolted to the structure of the premises where the firearm is authorised to be kept.<sup>13</sup>

### 4.3.4 How the *Firearms Act* is regulated and enforced

Victoria Police is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the *Firearms Act*.

Decisions about licences, permits and approvals under the Act are the responsibility of the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police. Victoria Police is responsible for enforcing offences committed under the Act.

Victoria Police's Licensing and Regulation Division is responsible for day-to-day regulatory functions and undertakes compliance and enforcement activities to reduce the risks to community safety that firearms inherently pose.

Victoria Police's Licensing and Regulation Division is responsible for:

- assessing and issuing firearm licences and permits. In 2024-25, Victoria Police advised this involved approving 46,078 new and renewal firearm licences and 70,064 firearm permits (and refusing 428 and 252 respectively).
- maintaining accurate records of firearm ownership and movement. For example, in the five financial years prior to 2025-26, Victoria Police tracked 347,944 firearm imports into Victoria from overseas, and 303,317 firearms transferred out of Victoria including imported firearms and firearms transferred interstate.
- overseeing dealers, clubs and other authorised entities.<sup>14</sup>

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Victoria Police's other key responsibilities for firearms regulation are carried out by:

- Victoria Police's Divisional Firearms Officers (DFOs). Based throughout Victoria, DFOs are responsible for supporting the community in the safe handling, storage and use of firearms. They conduct and coordinate regular storage inspections and compliance checks at licensed premises and private residences to ensure all firearms are stored according to the legislated requirements.
- Victoria Police's Illicit Firearms Squad. Established in 2020 as the first dedicated squad in Australia tasked specifically with detecting and investigating the use of illicit firearms. The squad focuses on targeting and disrupting sources of illicit firearms; investigating the trafficking, manufacturing and illegal importation of firearms; and detecting, preventing and deterring illicit firearms offending. It conducts intelligence-led operations to disrupt organised crime involving firearms, often working closely with partner state, federal and international agencies.
- Victoria Police's Crime and Counter Terrorism Investigation Services (CCTIS). Commenced in March 2026, amalgamating the previous Crime Command and Counter Terrorism Command. CCTIS includes the expertise for investigating serious and high-harm offending, including those involving firearms, and terrorist activity/threats.
- Victoria Police's Policy and Legislation Division. Drives the policy agenda for the organisation by developing current operational and organisational instructions; developing and implementing legislative and non-legislative Government reform; and advising on national and interjurisdictional matters. More specifically to the Rapid Review of Victoria's firearms laws and any resulting work, this includes managing all law reform processes on behalf of Victoria Police to ensure a consistent and considered organisational position is presented on legislative changes and coordinating responses to external agencies proposing legislative and policy change.

### 4.3.5 *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*

Victoria's *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (*Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities* or 'the Charter') sets out the rights that must be considered when developing new laws and policies.

The Review recognises that some recommendations may engage rights under the Charter, including:

- equality before the law
- privacy and reputation
- freedom of association
- cultural rights
- property rights
- the right to a fair hearing.

Any reforms arising from this Review will be assessed against the Charter during the development of legislation.

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As required, a Statement of Compatibility will be tabled with any Bill introduced into Parliament, outlining how Charter rights are engaged, whether any rights are limited, and the justification for those limitations.

Public authorities, including Victoria Police and the Department of Justice and Community Safety, are required to act consistently with the Charter and to properly consider human rights when making decisions.<sup>15</sup>

### 4.4 The Rapid Review

#### 4.4.1 Terms of Reference

The Rapid Review examined nationally agreed firearms reform principles within Victoria's legislative, regulatory and operational context.

This Review considered Victoria's existing firearms laws to identify jurisdiction-specific risks, assess proposed reforms, and advise on how nationally agreed changes could be implemented effectively in Victoria.

It was undertaken within the scope of reforms agreed by National Cabinet on 15 December 2025. Its recommendations cover, but are not limited to, the following matters:

- limits on the number of firearms that may be held by an individual
- the classification of firearms, including whether current categories remain fit for purpose given changes in manufacture and emerging technologies
- the firearms licensing scheme, including licence types and any additional requirements, such as citizenship or residency
- the duration of licences and options to strengthen application, renewal and ongoing monitoring requirements
- measures to strengthen the management of illicit firearms
- regulation of imitation firearms, accessories and related items
- the use of criminal intelligence in firearms licensing decisions and in review and appeal processes
- information-sharing arrangements between agencies to strengthen firearms regulation
- any other matters relevant to promoting public safety.

In developing its recommendations, the Rapid Review considered:

- decisions and direction from National Cabinet and other intergovernmental processes, including the Police Ministers' Council
- the need to enhance community safety following the Bondi attack
- firearms reforms enacted in New South Wales in December 2025
- the most effective approaches taken across Australian and international jurisdictions, with a focus on national consistency

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- the balance between best practice firearms laws and regulation and the benefits of nationally consistent firearms regulation
- consultation with community groups, including those with legitimate reasons to possess and use firearms
- advice from Victoria Police on improving firearms regulation and licensing and other matters
- Victoria’s obligation to implement the National Firearms Register, consistent with agreed national timeframes.

### 4.4.2 Timing of Rapid Review

The Review commenced on 5 January 2026, and the Final Report was delivered to Government on 5 March 2026.

Key milestones of the Review are outlined below:

**Table 3: Review milestones**

Milestone	Time period
Rapid Review announced	22 December 2025
Rapid Review commenced	5 January 2026
Consultation & Engage Victoria survey	19 January to 3 February 2026
Review of evidence, recommendation development and Report	19 January 2026 to 4 March 2026
Final Report delivered to Government	5 March 2026

As noted earlier, further decisions may affect firearms regulation across jurisdictions as national processes continue. Some considerations in this report may therefore need to be refined to ensure alignment with nationally agreed frameworks and consistent implementation across Australia.

### 4.4.3 What was out of scope of the Rapid Review?

The Review assessed nationally agreed firearms reform principles within Victoria’s legislative, regulatory and operational context. Issues not directly related to these principles were outside the scope of the Review.

Day-to-day policing activities and operational enforcement of Victorian laws were outside scope.

Consideration of any firearms buy-back scheme was not included in the Review. This is a matter for ongoing discussion between the Commonwealth and the states and territories.

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### 4.4.4 How the Rapid Review was conducted

#### Consultation overview and participation summary

The Review was informed by extensive consultation and evidence-gathering to ensure its findings and recommendations are grounded in public safety, fairness and operational reality.

The Review examined available domestic and international evidence on firearms regulation and community safety, including comparative experience across Australian jurisdictions and internationally.

As requested under its Terms of Reference, particular regard was given to nationally agreed reform directions and recent legislative changes in New South Wales.

Consultation was wide-ranging and deliberately inclusive.

The Review engaged with the Victorian Firearms Consultative Committee (VFCC) as the primary advisory body on firearms policy, recognising its role in providing structured advice to Government.

Members of Parliament with a relevant interest in firearms regulation and community safety were consulted.

Victoria Police was consulted extensively in its dual role as regulator and law enforcement agency, including on licensing, compliance, intelligence, enforcement, operational feasibility and system impacts.

Victoria Police put forward a formal submission to the Review.

The Review conducted 40 separate consultation sessions with identified groups as per the Terms of Reference and provided opportunities for diverse perspectives to be heard, including:

- metropolitan and regional firearms users
- people with legitimate occupational, sporting and recreational reasons for firearms use
- community members who do not use firearms
- multicultural communities and faith leaders
- victims and victim-support organisations affected by firearms-related harm
- public safety, health, community and human rights organisations
- other government organisations.

This approach was intended to capture lived experience alongside expert and operational insight and reflect community concern and lawful firearms use.

Together, this evidence and consultation informed a set of recommendations designed to strengthen community safety while remaining proportionate, targeted and consistent with nationally agreed reform directions.

A full list of stakeholders engaged throughout the consultation period is available at Appendix C.

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### Survey, submissions and analysis

In addition to targeted consultations, the Review invited broader community input through Engage Victoria.

From 19 January to 3 February 2026, community members were invited to share their views on Victoria's firearms laws and potential reforms. Participation was available through an online survey, with the option to provide a more detailed written submission.<sup>16</sup>

Due to the rapid nature of this Review, the engagement process was conducted over a two-week period and achieved exceptionally high participation, estimated to be among the top 20 Engage Victoria consultations to date. The Review received: 19,026 survey responses, and over 500 written submissions.

Participation in the survey was voluntary and self-selected. As such, the findings reflect the views of those who chose to participate and should not be interpreted as representative of the Victorian population as a whole. Overall:

- 87.8 per cent of respondents reported being licensed firearm users, and
- 63.8 per cent reported living in regional Victoria.

To avoid misinterpretation, survey results are reported only for all respondents combined, rather than by specific groups (for example, firearms users and non-firearms users).

A summary of survey results and key themes from Engage Victoria is provided at Appendix D.

Given the volume of responses, automated tools, including artificial intelligence, were used to assist with identifying and summarising common themes. These tools supported analysis only and did not replace human judgement. All AI-assisted insights were reviewed by the Review team and used in line with Victorian Public Sector guidance on the safe and responsible use of AI.<sup>17</sup>

All personal information was handled in accordance with privacy and data protection laws, and all analytical tools met required security standards.

Community feedback from Engage Victoria, together with targeted consultations, informed the findings and recommendations of the Review.

### The use of case studies and profiles in this Review

Throughout this report, two kinds of examples appear. The first are case studies – drawing on data, incidents, and the experiences of organisations – used to illustrate key issues under consideration.

The second are a small number of profiles, titled 'In their own words', which draw on direct engagements the Review had with members of the Victorian community. These profiles are not intended to be representative of the full range of views the Review received, but to illustrate, in human terms, some of the experiences and perspectives that informed our approach.

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### **The use of data in this Review**

Data has been provided to the Review to inform its analysis, findings and recommendations.

Agencies that have supplied this information have requested that a significant proportion of it not be publicly released.

Should the Government determine to publicly release the report, the data sets will need to be refreshed and, where necessary, redacted prior to release.

### **Implementation considerations**

Due to the rapid nature of this Review, not all historical data, relevant findings from other state-based firearms reviews, or coronial inquest material could be comprehensively examined.

Where materials were readily available and directly relevant to firearms regulation, they have informed this Review. Matters requiring further consideration are outlined in the relevant chapters of this Report and should be addressed as part of implementation.

## 5. Limiting the number of firearms

### Terms of Reference 1: Limiting the number of firearms that may be held by any one individual

#### Recommendations

##### The Review recommends Government consider:

##### **Recommendation 1: Introducing a cap of up to 4 firearms per individual category A & B licence holder.**

This should include:

- a strengthened requirement to demonstrate a genuine need for each firearm, supported by formal and verifiable evidence
- where an applicant seeks to hold firearms beyond the base cap, a requirement to demonstrate a compelling need for each additional firearm, supported by strong, specific and evidence-based justification
- where an applicant seeks approval beyond any exemption threshold, a requirement to demonstrate an exceptional need, reflecting rare and extraordinary circumstances that justify approval beyond the cap
- a review after five years to assess impact and effectiveness, informed by research and data, to guide future firearm caps and broader policy settings.

Implementation would require amendments to the *Firearms Act 1996* (Vic) to introduce and apply clear statutory definitions of 'compelling need' and 'exceptional need', and to specify the escalating evidentiary thresholds that apply.

##### **Exemptions**

Specific exemptions should be available where a compelling need can be demonstrated to hold firearms above the base cap of four, specifically for:

- primary producers
- sports shooters

Where an exemption applies, consideration will be given to up to an **additional six firearms per licence holder, allowing a total of up to ten firearms** (this will likely affect approximately 23 per cent of licence holders).

The following conditions apply to exemptions:

- applications for firearms **above four and up to ten must demonstrate a compelling need** for each additional firearm
- applications to hold firearms beyond a total of ten must **demonstrate an exceptional need**, reflecting rare and extraordinary circumstances

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- exemptions should apply to professional hunters, where firearms are required on the basis of employment, distinct from recreational hunting, and subject to appropriate oversight and compliance requirements
- exemptions should apply to licensed firearm dealers, licensed firearm collectors and corporate licence holders, subject to existing regulatory controls
- all exemptions must be subject to appropriate oversight, conditions and compliance requirements, at the discretion of the Chief Commissioner.
- no exemptions will be considered for recreational hunters beyond the 'up to four' cap.

### Key findings

#### **Reducing firearm numbers reduces harm**

The significant reduction in firearms following the 1996 amnesty and buyback saw a decrease in firearm-related harm and an increase in community confidence in firearm regulation.

#### **National alignment supports firearm caps**

A nationally consistent approach supports consideration of firearm caps, while allowing Victoria to respond to its specific community safety, economic and environmental context.

#### **A cap of up to four reflects current ownership patterns**

The average Victorian firearm owner holds four firearms, noting that some licence holders do not own any firearms.

#### **Hunting drives higher firearm numbers in the state**

Hunting is the most common reason for firearm ownership in Victoria.

#### **Genuine need is not always assessed for each firearm acquired**

Under current arrangements, a 'genuine need' is not required to be demonstrated for each Category A longarm once a licence purpose is established.

#### **Stronger assessment of genuine need is required**

Applicants and regulators face challenges demonstrating and assessing 'genuine need' for each firearm, particularly for hunting-related firearms.

#### **Multiple genuine reasons correlate with higher ownership**

Most licence holders have a single 'genuine reason'. Those with multiple 'genuine reasons' own more firearms and have more complex assessment needs.

#### **Precedents already exist for limiting higher-risk firearms**

Existing limits on Categories C, D and E demonstrate an established approach to restricting firearm numbers based on risk and need.

**Some licence holders present low public safety risk**

There is no evidence that licensed dealers, collectors or corporate licence holders require numerical caps to manage public safety risk.

**Firearm caps are an emerging policy tool**

Firearm caps are a relatively new regulatory approach, and evidence of their long-term effectiveness is still developing.

**Chart 4: Recommended firearms cap model (for Category A and B)**

**Up to 4 firearms**

- Genuine reason: hunting/ sports target shooters/ primary producers
- This is not a right. Need to demonstrate a specific **genuine need** for each firearm

**Up to an additional 6 firearms (totalling 10)**

- Genuine reason: sports target shooters/ primary producers
- This is not a right. Need to demonstrate specific **genuine and compelling need** for each single additional firearm

**Any additional firearms**

- Genuine reason: sports target shooters/ primary producers
- This is not a right. Need to demonstrate a specific **genuine and exceptional need** for each single additional firearm

**5.1 Context**

The Bondi attack prompted renewed focus on nationally consistent firearms reforms, including consideration of limits on the number of firearms an individual may lawfully possess.

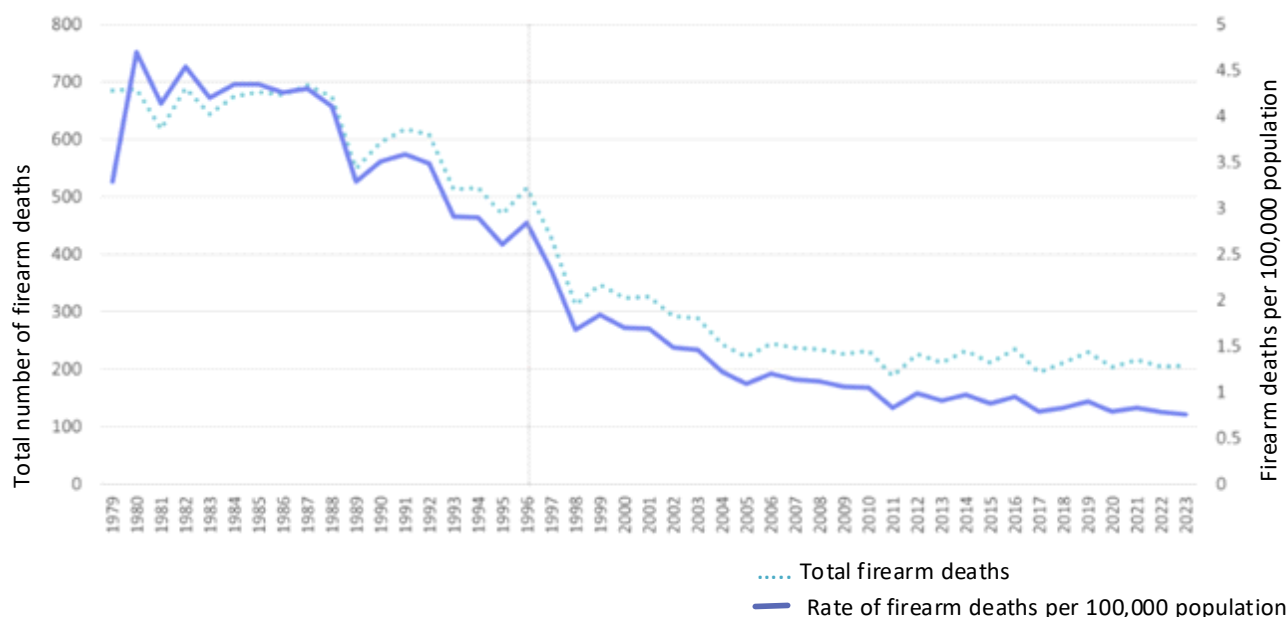
The proposal to introduce firearm caps is based on the strong correlation between stricter gun laws and a reduction in the number of firearms in the community, both independently contributing to improved public safety.

This is most clearly demonstrated by the sustained decline in mass shootings and other firearm-related harm, including suicides and homicides, in the decades following the 1996 national amnesty and buyback.

The decline is evident in total numbers and in the rate per 100,000 of the population as shown in Chart 1 below. Evidence also indicates a reduction in overall harm, suggesting that individuals generally did not take up other means of harm in the absence of firearms) <sup>18</sup>.

Chart 1 further illustrates the recognised public safety benefits that began a decade earlier, attributed to the strengthening of Victorian firearms legislation<sup>19</sup> in response to the 1987 Hoddle Street and Queen Street massacres.

Chart 1: Annual firearm deaths in Australia – 1979 to 2023



Source: Data compiled by the Australian Gun Safety Alliance, using statistics only available on request from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Caps are also intended to prevent the gradual accumulation of firearms over time, ensuring that ownership remains proportionate to demonstrated ‘genuine need’.

While national firearms statistics were not systematically collected prior to the National Firearms Agreement in 1996, the Australia Institute estimates that there were approximately 3.2 million firearms in Australia before the National Firearms Agreement reforms.

It took several years for national data collection to become fully standardised, though available evidence indicates that fewer than 2.2 million firearms were registered following the 1996 reforms and national buyback scheme.<sup>20</sup>

The Review’s Terms of Reference focus on the number of firearms that can be held by an individual, however, for context, the Review also looked at data on the proportion of households affected by the 1996 amnesty and buyback. While there was no official count, different research estimates range from less than 50 per cent to up to 75 per cent reduction in the number of households with firearms.<sup>21</sup>

Research by the University of Sydney, conducted 25 years after the introduction of the National Firearms Agreement, found that:

- the proportion of Australians holding a firearms licence fell by 48 per cent between 1997 and 2021.
- growth in the total number of firearms has been driven by existing firearm owners acquiring additional firearms, rather than an increase in the number of new firearm owners.<sup>22</sup>

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This pattern can be seen in Victorian data, as outlined below, which shows an increase in both firearms and licence holders over the past nine years, with the number of registered firearms growing at more than double the rate of licences each year between 2017 and 2022 and growing at a similar slow rate to licences until 2025.

**Table 4: Victorian firearms licences and registered firearms**

<b>Rate of change in Victorian firearms licences and registered firearms (December annual snapshot from 2017)</b>				
	<b>Licences</b>	<b>% change</b>	<b>Firearms</b>	<b>% change</b>
<b>2017</b>	223,388		819,878	
<b>2018</b>	225,819	1.1	840,533	2.5
<b>2019</b>	228,452	1.2	863,725	2.8
<b>2020</b>	226,754	-0.7	865,895	0.3
<b>2021</b>	229,252	1.1	887,805	2.5
<b>2022</b>	230,780	0.7	925,692	4.3
<b>2023</b>	235,430	2.0	950,254	2.7
<b>2024</b>	239,900	1.9	966,232	1.7
<b>2025</b>	240,565	1.0	975,951	1.0

Source: Victoria Police Licensing and Registration System (LARS), General Statistics 2018-2025.

Reasons for the slower rate of licence growth could be that each year a smaller segment of the population decides they need a firearm<sup>23</sup>, that firearms licence holders have a higher average age than the overall population, and that the average age is continuing to rise. Firearm licence growth is modest compared to general population growth – however there is no nationally consolidated data on licence holder demographics.

Based on advice from Victoria Police, in Victoria, most firearms licence holders are 51-61 years of age, and more than 30 per cent are aged 61 or older.

**Table 5: Age demographics of firearms licence holders in Victoria**

<b>Age demographic of individual Victorian firearms licence holders</b>		
<b>Age group</b>	<b>Number of licences</b>	<b>Percentage of licences</b>
17 years and younger	5,156	2.1
18- 20 years	4,013	1.7
21- 30 years	26,472	11.0
31- 40 years	40,650	16.9
41- 50 years	41,366	17.2
51- 60 years	47,159	19.7
61- 70 years	40,627	16.9

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Age demographic of individual Victorian firearms licence holders		
Age group	Number of licences	Percentage of licences
71- 80 years	26,094	10.9
81- 90 years	7,650	3.2
91 years and older	668	0.3

Source: Victoria Police Licensing and Registration System (LARS) 21 January 2026

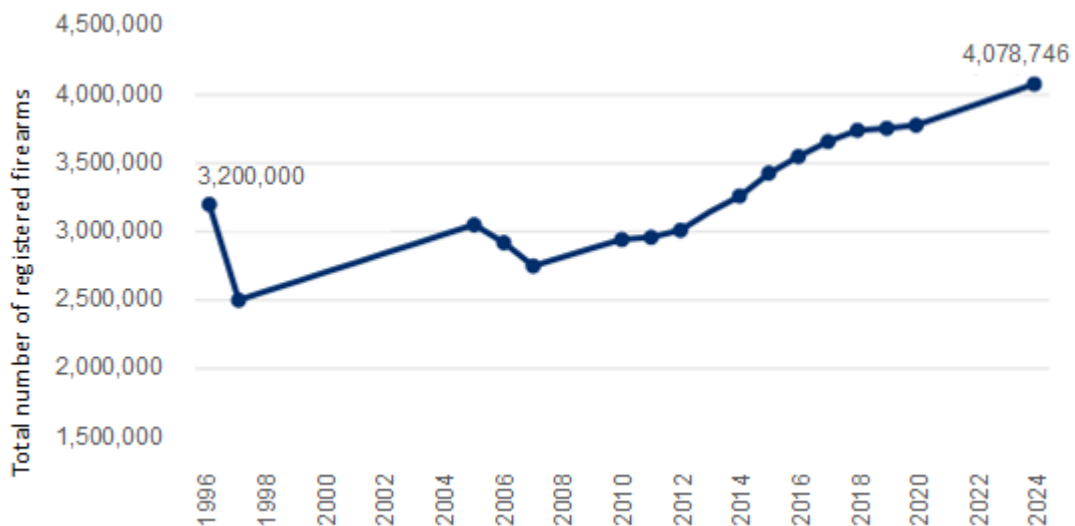
Table 6: Snapshot of firearms in Australia in 2025

**Firearms in Australia – 2025**

- More than 4 million registered firearms
- Between 250,000– 500,000 illicit firearms
- Approximately 1 in 30 people has a firearms licence
- The Australian average firearm owner has 4 – 5 firearms
- Some individuals have more than 250 firearms (this figure excludes collectors and dealers)
- More than 40 per cent of firearm owners live in major cities
- Just over 80 per cent of firearm owners live in major cities and regional towns.

(The Australia Institute, 2025)<sup>24</sup>

Chart 2: Registered firearms in Australia, 1996 - 2024



Source: [Australian gun control: 29 years after Port Arthur - The Australia Institute](#)

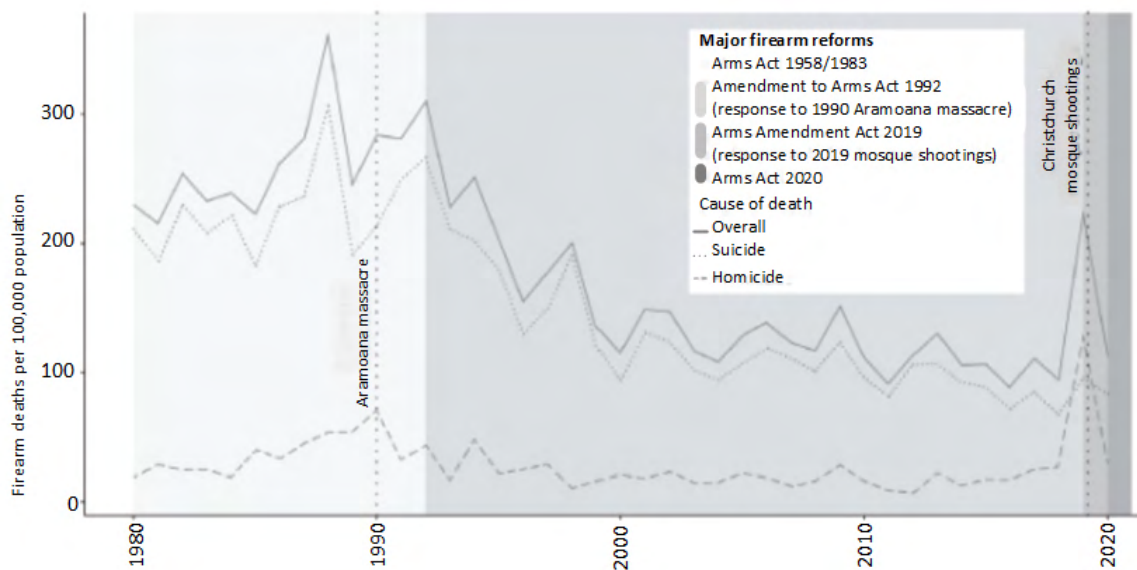
Strong community support for firearms regulation has endured in the decades since the 1996 reforms. A nationally representative survey conducted by the Australia Institute in September 2024 found that 70 per cent of Australians believed laws should make it harder for individuals to access firearms, and 64 per cent support tighter gun laws.<sup>25</sup>

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New Zealand provides an example of how strengthening firearms laws contributes to fewer firearms suicide and homicide deaths over time<sup>26</sup>. This was notable after 1992 reforms in response to the 1990 Aramoana massacre as shown in Chart 3.

More recently, New Zealand reformed its firearms laws by making changes to the *Arms Act 1983* (NZ) following the 2019 Christchurch shootings. However, it is too early to see the effects of these reforms.<sup>27</sup>

**Chart 3: Milestones in New Zealand firearms reform and a correlation with firearms deaths over time**



Source: [Firearms incidents cost Aotearoa \\$322m a year: Strong laws save lives | PHCC](#)

## 5.2 Other jurisdictions

Ahead of a nationally agreed policy position, several state and territory governments have made announcements or implemented jurisdiction-specific firearm ownership caps:

- Western Australia, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland have each articulated clear policy positions. Out of these jurisdictions, only Queensland has not announced caps.
- New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory have drawn on the Western Australian model, which was developed following several years of consultation with communities and industry stakeholders.
- Tasmania has announced that it will not introduce firearms ownership caps.<sup>28</sup>
- South Australia and Northern Territory have not made any announcements relating to caps on firearms ownership.

### 5.3 Victorian context

Understanding how Victoria's licensing framework operates, including who owns firearms and why, is essential to assessing how a cap would work in practice and where exemptions are warranted.

#### Who uses firearms and why

A significant majority of firearm licence holders use Category A and B firearms.

**Table 7: Breakdown of Victorian firearms licence holders**

Individual Victorian firearms licence holders by licence type	
Licence type	Number of licence holders
Category A and B Longarm	204,880
Category A Longarm Licence	15,022
General Category Handgun Licence	7,158
Category C Longarm Licence	5,448
Category D Longarm Licence	189
Category E Longarm Licence	135
Category E handgun	1

*Note: This list of firearm licence categories is not exhaustive*

*Source: Victoria Police Licensing and Registration System (LARS) 21 January 2026*

Genuine reasons for Category A and B firearms licences typically include hunting, primary production and sport/target shooting either solely or in combination. Hunting is the most common reason for using and owning firearms in Victoria with 62 per cent of all licences and 76 per cent of Category A and B firearms are used for the purpose of hunting.

**Table 8: Breakdown of 'genuine reasons' for holding a firearms licence**

Top three genuine reasons (number and percentage) for holding a firearms licence in Victoria by location of licence holder				
Genuine reasons	Metropolitan Melbourne licences		Regional/rural Victoria licences	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>Hunting</b>	57,195	62.8	117,695	59.9
<b>Sport/target shooting</b>	23,381	25.7	29,510	15.0
<b>Primary producer</b>	2,912	3.2	36,660	18.7

*Source: Victoria Police Licensing and Registration System (LARS) 21 January 2026*

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In Victoria, new licence holders are subject to a mandatory 28-day waiting period before acquiring their first firearm.<sup>29</sup> A licensed firearms dealer must review and validate every permit to acquire, including confirmation of payment, before facilitating the transfer of a firearm between licence holders.

The Chief Commissioner of Police assesses each application for a permit to acquire on the basis of 'genuine need' and has a general discretion to refuse a permit to acquire where:

- the applicant, or any responsible person, is a prohibited person
- the applicant is not a fit and proper person
- the applicant has not demonstrated a genuine need to possess, carry or use the firearm
- the acquisition would be contrary to the public interest (noting this requirement does not apply to Category A firearms).<sup>30</sup>

### Key definitions

Victoria's licensing framework relies on key tests of need, each applying at different points in the regulatory process:

**Genuine reason** is the basis on which a firearms licence is granted – the licence holder must demonstrate a lawful purpose for holding a licence, such as hunting, primary production or sport shooting.

**Genuine need** applies when acquiring a firearm under that licence – the licence holder must demonstrate a specific need for that particular firearm.

**The Review recommends amendments to the Firearms Act 1996 (Vic) to add clear definitions of 'compelling need' and 'exceptional need' and to set out the evidence required as the number of firearms a person can own increases.**

**Compelling need** applies to higher-risk firearm categories – a strong, specific and evidence-based reason showing the additional firearm is necessary and cannot reasonably be replaced by an existing firearm (example: a primary producer operating across multiple properties who also participates in target shooting.)

**Exceptional need** applies where an applicant seeks approval beyond the cap – a rare and extraordinary circumstance showing not only necessity, but that the applicant's situation is materially different from typical applicants and justifies special approval or exemption (example: an Olympic sports shooter requiring multiple firearms for professional purposes).

The concept of limiting the number of firearms an individual may possess is not new in Victoria. Existing legislative settings already place effective limits on certain categories of firearms based on genuine (and for higher calibre firearms, 'compelling') need.

For example, a permit to acquire cannot be issued for a Category C or D semi-automatic rifle where the applicant already possesses another semi-automatic rifle.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the acquisition of handguns for target shooting is restricted for licence holders who have held a licence for six months or less.<sup>32</sup>

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The Review has considered the specific Victorian context, including the factors contributing to multiple firearm ownership:

- Many Victorian firearms licence holders do not possess any firearms. This reflects the range of circumstances in which a licence is held without personal ownership – including farm workers who share household firearms for stock management, employees of zoos and animal welfare organisations who use organisationally-owned firearms, and junior or provisional licence holders who are not permitted to own firearms.
- Among licence holders who do possess firearms, the average number held is four per licence holder.
- Hunting is the most common single reason for firearm possession in Victoria. There are more than 131,000 people who possess firearms for the purpose of hunting which is approximately five times as many licence holders as for primary production, and seven times as many as for sports shooting.
- Each of these individuals currently possesses 4.1 firearms on average, with almost 35,900 individuals possessing more than four firearms solely for the purpose of hunting, including one individual possessing 135 firearms solely for this purpose.
- Victoria's regulatory environment for hunting differs from other jurisdictions. Recreational hunting is permitted on both public and private land, subject to species-specific and land-use controls. New South Wales presents the closest comparison, although it has a smaller and less diverse land base available to recreational hunters.

### 5.3.1 Firearms-related harm in Victoria

Understanding where and how firearms-related harm occurs in Victoria helps explain why reducing the overall number of firearms in the community is a proportionate public safety response.

Evidence from Victorian and national sources indicates that firearms-related harm most commonly involves self-harm, particularly among men, older adults, and people living in outer regional, rural, and remote areas.

This pattern, outlined in the table below, suggests that the greatest risks often occur in private and domestic settings rather than in public spaces.

**Table 9: Coroners Court data on firearms deaths in Victoria - Annual number of firearm deaths by intent, Victoria 2016-2025**

Year	Assault	Suicide	Unintentional	Undetermined	All
2016	13	38	1	1	53
2017	15	35	1	0	51
2018	6	39	1	0	46
2019	16	41	0	0	57
2020	8	30	3	0	41
2021	8	37	0	0	45
2022	12	30	2	0	44
2023	7	34	0	0	41
2024	10	32	1	0	43
2025	9	26	1	2	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>459</b>

Source: Victorian Coroners Court

**Table 10: Coroners Court data on annual number of firearm assault deaths by fatal incident location, Victoria 2016-2025 and Triple Zero Victoria data on firearms-related calls from 2015-2025**

**Victorian Coroners Court and Triple Zero Victoria data shows:**

Firearms-related harm in Victoria is not evenly distributed but occurs in predictable demographic, geographic, and situational pattern

- Suicides by firearm (342 deaths) were more than three times as frequent as firearm-related assaults (104 deaths).
- Firearm suicides were more likely in regional Victoria (217 deaths) than metropolitan Melbourne (125 deaths).
- Firearm suicides were more than four times as likely to occur in residential settings than non-residential locations.

Other notable findings include:

- Unintentional firearm deaths are rare (10 deaths over 10 years) and occurred at similar rates in metropolitan and regional Victoria.
- Non-fatal firearms incidents substantially outnumber fatalities.
- More than 10,500 firearms-related calls were made to triple zero over the 10 years to 2025, increasing by an average of approximately five per cent per year.\*
- Over the same period, there were 459 firearm-related deaths, showing that many more people are affected by incidents without fatal outcomes.

\* The data from Triple Zero Victoria is not linked to Victoria Police case outcomes, so may include multiple callers reporting the same incident and may not align with any subsequent firearm event data recorded by Victoria Police. The data reflects calls where the caller’s primary concern was a firearm. Some call locations are unknown and may include calls originating from New South Wales and South Australia in bordering areas.

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The Victorian Department of Health injury data outlined in the table below, which includes both fatal and non-fatal firearm injuries, show that when non-fatal injuries are included, firearms are more often linked to homicides, assaults and workplace incidents than to suicides.

**Table 11: Department of Health injury data**

Injury Events Summary	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Contact with Objects (WorkSafe or similar type)	32	29	38	25	25	36
Suicide	7	4	5	5	4	6
Homicide or Assault	30	26	23	32	39	40
Undetermined Intent	23	21	18	16	27	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>108</b>

Source: Victorian Admitted Episode Data (VAED)

Available evidence from the Department of Health indicates that illicit firearms are more commonly involved in assault-related incidents than registered firearms.

Firearm assault deaths are more than twice as likely to occur in metropolitan Melbourne than in regional Victoria.

These patterns indicate that harm is not random but occurs in predictable settings and among identifiable groups.

Reducing the overall number of firearms in circulation — particularly those held without a demonstrated genuine need — is intended to limit diversion into the illicit market, reduce theft risks, and constrain overall availability. In this way, it addresses some of the structural factors associated with firearm harm<sup>33</sup>.

Understanding these patterns more deeply over time, including through the impact of a cap, will be essential to keeping communities safe and ensuring the firearms system continues to function effectively.

### 5.4 What we heard: Limiting the number of firearms

#### **Firearm owners expressed strong opposition to caps and reported feeling unfairly targeted**

- There was strong opposition to the introduction of caps, with concern that compliant licence holders would be unfairly penalised for the actions of a small number of individuals who misuse firearms.
- Consistent compliance with licensing, safe storage and regulatory requirements was emphasised, alongside concern that caps do not adequately distinguish between lawful ownership, and unlawful behaviour.

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- Caps were seen as limiting the ability to hold the appropriate firearms required for work or operational purposes, including having the right tool for the task.
- Caps were also seen as limiting participation in lawful sporting, recreational or hunting activities.
- While the Review's online survey was not representative of the whole Victorian community (or of all Victorian firearm users), there was low support among respondents for tighter limits on the number of firearms people can own. Only 2.8 per cent (n=527) supported tighter limits on the number of firearms people can own.
- Similarly, low numbers of all respondents (3.1 per cent, n=592) thought there was an issue with some individuals holding too many legal firearms. Among non-user respondents, this figure was 13.7 per cent (n=318). Noting that the Review's online survey was not a representative survey of the Victorian population, and 88 per cent of responses were from licensed firearm users.
- In addition, some respondents used open/free-text fields in the survey to state they did not support a limit to the number of firearms

### **Community members expressed support for caps to improve safety and confidence**

- We heard views from members of the broader community that caps would increase feelings of safety and confidence in firearms regulation.
- Many community members reported limited understanding of why individuals may lawfully own multiple firearms, which contributed to concern and increased levels of fear about the number of firearms in the community.
- Among respondents to the Review's online survey who reported they were not licensed firearm users, 14.4 per cent (n=334) supported tighter limits.

### **Operational and occupational needs were cited as reasons for holding multiple firearms**

- Primary producers described operating across large geographic areas and multiple properties, requiring firearms to be stored at different locations to support safe and practical operations.
- Firearms were described as essential tools for pest and feral species control, animal welfare, and farm management, with different firearms required for different operational purposes.

### **Conservation and population control activities require access to a range of firearms**

- The need for multiple firearms to ensure humane and ethical management of species including deer, birds, rabbits, foxes, pigs, goats, wild dogs and kangaroos was emphasised.
- Deer were consistently identified as a significant invasive species causing damage to ecosystems, agriculture and public infrastructure. The Game Management Authority estimates that recreational hunters remove approximately 167,600 deer from the Victorian environment each year.

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### Hunting contributes to regional economies and tourism

- Victoria was described as Australia's most popular destination for international and interstate hunters.

#### Economic contribution of hunting in regional Victoria

The economic contribution of hunting to regional Victoria was estimated at more than \$350 million annually, supporting accommodation providers, hospitality venues, fuel retailers, and equipment and firearms dealers.

Regional communities also reported tangible economic benefits during hunting seasons.

#### An example of a Victorian hunter's use of multiple firearms:

A compliant Victorian firearms licence holder and hunter detailed the specific firearms they used regularly:

- .22 LR for rabbit control
- .22-250 Remington for fox control at distance
- 6.5 Creedmoor for fallow deer (legal calibre requirement)
- .300 Winchester Magnum for sambar deer
- Multiple shotguns for competition and field use.

This example illustrates the range of purposes that can drive multiple firearm ownership among Victorian hunters.

### Caps may have economic impacts on firearms dealers

- Dealers raised concerns that the introduction of caps may result in a slowdown in business activity, with flow-on impacts for the firearms retail sector.

### Hunters and primary producers considered they could generally operate under New South Wales-like caps

- Some hunters and primary producers acknowledged that they would be able to continue to operate under caps similar to those in place in New South Wales.

### High-level sports shooters and people with multiple genuine reasons anticipated greater impacts from caps

- Professional-level sports shooters and individuals with multiple genuine reasons for firearm ownership were most likely to anticipate challenges, due to the variety of firearms required for their sport or trade and the need for backup firearms for contingency in high-level competitions.

### In their own words

As a child growing up in regional Victoria, Sarah\* spent her spare time on the firing line at her local clay target club.

"It's where my Olympic dream began," she says.

From that simple hobby, Sarah progressed through junior competitions to elite international events, representing Australia at her first Olympics as a teenager.

"If limits on firearms like this had been in place, I wouldn't have been able to compete," she says. "My Olympic dream may never have been realised."

Clay target shooting is a highly technical sport made up of multiple disciplines, each requiring different firearms to suit varying events and conditions.

At elite level, backup equipment is essential for consistency and reliability.

"This isn't a sport where one firearm does everything," Sarah says.

"To perform at the highest level, you need the right equipment for the discipline and the conditions."

Sarah says there is often limited community understanding of what elite target shooting involves, and that assumptions about firearm numbers do not reflect the realities of high-performance sport.

As an Olympic athlete, Sarah also holds sponsorship firearms as part of her professional sporting arrangements.

She says proposed caps on firearm numbers would have directly affected her ability from a young age to learn the sport.

"I worry that caps could significantly limit pathways for younger athletes coming through the sport."

"I worry about the next generation," Sarah says.

"We don't want to regulate Olympic pathways out of existence."

**Sarah's experience highlights that firearm caps will have real consequences for some firearm users, including young people whose professional sporting pathways may be impacted. This Review is recommending exemptions for elite athletes to pursue their sport.**

*\*Names have been changed to protect participants' privacy.*

### Junior licensing arrangements create additional complexity for elite sports pathways

- Olympic and high-level sports shooters often commence training on junior licences that do not permit firearm ownership. Junior licence holders, while not being permitted to own firearms, can carry and use firearms under the immediate supervision of an adult with a current firearm licence for the same category of firearm – not only their parents. These adults, who are often the parents of the junior licence holder, are often the ones to own the firearms used by their children for sporting purposes.

### Views differed on the prevalence and sources of illicit firearms

- We heard differing views on the number of illicit firearms in the community and the extent to which theft or loss of registered firearms contributes to illicit supply.

### Concerns were raised about the loss of firearms with sentimental or historical value

- Concerns were expressed that caps may require the surrender of family heirlooms and firearms with significant sentimental or historical importance.

## 5.5 Victoria Police advice

- In balancing the principles of the *Firearms Act 1996 (Vic)*, the community safety benefit associated with removing firearms - particularly high-powered firearms - from circulation, that most licensed firearms owners in Victoria have a low number of firearms, and the genuine use for multiple firearms, Victoria Police is supportive of a cap being introduced on the total number of firearms a person can possess.
- Victoria Police has considered the New South Wales approach and suggests this is considered for Victoria to provide consistency, particularly for border communities.
- A reduction in the number of firearms held for recreational purposes is expected to provide greater community confidence that each firearm has a clear, reasonable and defensible purpose.
- A cap may have unintended impacts on certain professional and agricultural cohorts and consideration should be given to appropriate exemptions where a higher number of firearms is demonstrably required.
- Exemptions should be available to licence holders with multiple genuine reasons (for example, occupational and recreational use). In such cases, applicants should be required to meet clearly defined and robust criteria to demonstrate genuine need.
- The consolidation of firearms ownership is expected to reduce the total number of firearms in circulation and ease pressure on the regulatory system, enabling a stronger focus on higher-risk activity. In particular:
  - caps may strengthen regulatory oversight and support earlier intervention
  - caps may create additional points of regulatory engagement, allowing closer scrutiny of licence holders seeking to acquire higher numbers of firearms, including assessment of storage arrangements.
- There are potential risks associated with the introduction of caps, including:
  - individuals associated with existing licence holders seeking licences for the purpose of transferring ownership.
  - compliant licence holders disengaging from the regulatory system, potentially increasing diversion into the illicit market. By limiting the number of firearms held by an individual, caps would reduce the number of firearms available for theft or misuse in a single incident, particularly where firearms are stored at residential premises or infrequently occupied rural properties.

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- effective systems and data integration will be critical to ensure consolidation of firearms records, oversight of ownership, and enforceability of any cap.

### 5.6 Evidence and data

#### Illicit firearms

Stolen or missing registered firearms account for nearly 10\* per cent of illicit longarms and around 31 per cent of illicit handguns in Australia.<sup>34</sup>

Although their total volume is small compared to other sources of illicit firearms, this contribution remains significant in the context of serious crime and supports the rationale for maintaining firearm caps.

*\*Note these figures may not reflect current trends and the Review is currently seeking updated figures and will provide prior to any public release of this Report.*

#### Demonstrating genuine need

Currently, a large number of Category A firearms are held by individuals without an explicit requirement to demonstrate genuine need for each firearm.

A firearm licence holder or applicant may obtain a Crown land hunting certificate from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action for the purpose of supporting a firearm licence application.<sup>35</sup>

This process requires limited information (name, date of birth, contact details) and a fee of \$13. In practice, this certificate may be the primary or sole evidence available to Victoria Police when assessing genuine reason for hunting and genuine need for firearm possession.

#### 5.6.1 Modelling the effect of caps

The average Victorian firearm owner possesses 4.1 firearms.

Modelling of the proposed cap using Victoria Police data indicates that approximately 46,540 licence holders currently own more than four firearms (Category A and B) and would be directly affected, either needing to dispose of firearms or apply for an exemption where applicable.

**Table 12: Modelling of Category A & B longarm licences impacted by cap**

Caps modelling data table (Category A & B longarm licence)								
	0 Firearms		1-4 firearms		5-10 firearms		Greater than 10 firearms	
Genuine reason	Licence holders	Firearms	Licence holders	Firearms	Licence holders	Firearms	Licence holders	Firearms
Hunting	25,676	0	69,738	166,198	31,466	207,043	4,443	61,724
Sport / target Shooting	4,631	0	9,273	20,637	3,107	20,297	621	9,587
Primary Production	4,797	0	14,324	35,131	6,304	40,597	599	8,395

Source: Victoria Police LARS data 24/02/2026

Together, these licence holders account for an estimated 347,600 firearms above the proposed cap threshold.

Under the recommended model, including exemptions for primary producers and sport shooters, it is estimated that approximately 286,749 firearms could be disposed of in Victoria.

This represents close to 30 per cent of registered firearms in the State.

Irrespective of the disposal pathway, the proposed reduction would result in a meaningful consolidation of firearm numbers, while maintaining access for those able to demonstrate a genuine need.

Beyond the immediate reduction, the cap is also intended to limit the incremental accumulation of firearms over time.

In the absence of a cap, growth in firearm numbers has been driven primarily by existing licence holders acquiring additional firearms, rather than by new entrants to the licensing system.

The cap directly addresses this pattern by ensuring that future ownership remains proportionate to demonstrated genuine need, rather than increasing incrementally without active regulatory oversight.

### 5.6.2 What we found

- A general cap of up to four (Category A and B firearms) accommodates most lawful use while setting a firm default that limits accumulation. This is a clear and proportional starting point.
- Estimates based on current Victorian firearms ownership data showed that fewer than 20 per cent of the state’s firearms users (those with the highest volumes of firearms and the least demonstrated genuine need) would be impacted by the cap, while approximately 73 per cent would see no change at all and an additional six per cent may be eligible to apply for one or more exemption.

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- Aligning the base cap with New South Wales reduces regulatory divergence, supports enforcement, and provides clarity for licence holders in border communities
- Firearm ownership patterns in Victoria show concentration among a smaller cohort of licence holders with higher volumes.
- A flat cap would not account for legitimate variation in firearms use; scaling allows regulation to tighten as holdings increase.
- Victoria already applies differentiated limits for higher-risk firearm categories (C, D and E), establishing a precedent for graduated regulation based on risk and need. The recommended escalation from genuine to compelling to exceptional need ensures scrutiny increases in step with firearm numbers.
- The scaled regulatory model recommended balances community safety with legitimate firearms users by increasing scrutiny as firearm numbers increase, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all limit.
- The recommendation also aims to prevent the gradual accumulation of firearms over time, ensuring that ownership remains proportionate to genuine need.
- As firearm caps are an emerging policy tool with limited international uptake to date, a scaled model manages uncertainty, while allowing future adjustment.
- There is limited empirical evidence demonstrating a clear causal link between numerical caps on firearm ownership and reductions in firearm-related harm, reflecting the small number of jurisdictions that have implemented caps and the difficulty of isolating their impact.
- There is also no clear evidence that firearm caps are ineffective, or that they undermine broader public safety objectives when implemented as part of a wider regulatory framework.
- A five-year review would assess the impact of the cap against these projections, providing an evidence base to guide future policy settings.

### Use of regulatory caps in other high-risk areas

#### Road safety reform in Victoria

Road safety reform in Victoria is an example of how governments can reduce harm in a legal activity without banning it.

Driving carries inherent risks, especially when combined with alcohol or high speeds.

Alcohol affects perception, vision, concentration and reaction time, making crashes more likely. In Victoria, around one in five drivers killed on the roads have a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.05 or higher. Even small amounts of alcohol can impair judgment and increase risk, and individual factors such as age, weight, health, and tolerance make it impossible to predict a 'safe' level for driving.<sup>36</sup>

Speed also greatly increases crash risk. Exceeding the limit by just a few kilometres per hour raises the chance of an accident, and higher speeds increase the severity of

### Use of regulatory caps in other high-risk areas

crashes.<sup>37</sup> Lowering speed limits reduces crash severity, while setting BAC limits reduces the likelihood of crashes occurring.

Governments have successfully reduced road fatalities by introducing practical limits rather than bans. Measures such as maximum speed limits, legal BAC thresholds, and stricter rules for new drivers (Graduated Licensing System<sup>38</sup>), combined with enforcement and public education, lowered overall risk while allowing driving to continue.

These preventative caps show how high-risk situations can be restricted to reduce harm without prohibiting an activity.

### Fisheries management: catch limits and quota systems

Fisheries management in Victoria shows how practical limits can reduce harm without banning a lawful industry.

Fish stocks are finite, and even moderate increases in total catch can place pressure on sustainability over time. Because environmental conditions, breeding cycles and stock levels vary, it is difficult to identify a precise tipping point at which a fishery will decline.

Without limits, each operator has an incentive to maximise their catch. When this occurs across the industry, the cumulative effect can exceed sustainable levels and damage the resource on which the industry depends.

Rather than prohibiting commercial fishing, Victoria manages risk by setting clear, enforceable caps. Under the *Fisheries Act 1995*,<sup>39</sup> the Victorian Fisheries Authority sets total allowable catch limits and allocates quotas to individual licence holders in key fisheries. These limits are monitored, enforced, and adjusted as better scientific data becomes available.

The approach recognises that commercial fishing is lawful and economically important, but that defined boundaries are necessary to protect the long-term health of the resource and the stability of the industry.

### What these examples show

These examples show that caps are a practical way to manage risk where unrestricted growth could increase harm.

Caps reduce exposure to higher-risk situations, can stop problems from building up over time, and make the system easier to monitor and manage. They are often introduced as a precaution where the consequences of doing nothing could be significant, even if the evidence is still developing.

## 6. Existing firearms categories and whether they remain fit for purpose

**Terms of Reference 2: The existing firearms categories and whether these remain fit for purpose having regard to developments in firearms manufacture and emerging technologies**

### Recommendations

#### The Review recommends Government consider:

**Recommendation 2: Legislative change to the *Firearms Act 1996* to update existing firearm categories so that higher-risk firearms are appropriately classified, with sufficient flexibility to accommodate emerging technologies and future developments in firearms manufacture.**

Any legislative change should have regard to:

- Firearm categories and classification principles, including:
  - the intended function of the firearm, including lethal or non-lethal capability
  - the mechanism of operation, including semi-automatic, lever-action, self-loading or repeating functions
  - rate of fire and ease of rapid reload
  - magazine type and capacity, including detachable and high-capacity magazines
  - design features or modifications that may increase lethality
  - emerging technologies and design innovations, with sufficient flexibility to capture new or evolving firearm features.
- Reclassification powers, specifically:
  - expanding the powers of the Chief Commissioner of Police to temporarily or permanently classify and reclassify all types of firearms where this is in the public interest, including in response to operational intelligence or emerging risk.

**Recommendation 3: Further work to examine the scope of the *Firearms Act 1996* (Vic) and related legislation.**

This should include:

- reviewing the interaction between the *Firearms Act 1996* (Vic) and the *Control of Weapons Act 1990* (Vic) to ensure items are regulated under the most appropriate legislative framework
- relocating non-lethal items to the *Control of Weapons Act 1990* (Vic) framework where this better reflects relative risk and regulatory intent.

### Key findings

#### **There are opportunities to review and modernise Victoria's firearms categories**

The firearm categorisation framework is broadly fit-for-purpose but was developed prior to recent advances in manufacture, design and technologies.

There were concerns around multiple categories of firearms, including rapid-fire and linear repeating firearms.

#### **The Chief Commissioner of Police's powers to reclassify firearms are currently limited**

The current design of these powers in the Firearms Act 1996 (Vic) restricts the ability to respond flexibly to changes in firearm design and reclassify appropriately in all circumstances.

#### **Paintball markers are an inconsistent inclusion in the *Firearms Act 1996* (Vic)**

The use of paintball markers is contrary to the purpose and intent of the *Firearms Act 1996* (Vic) and may warrant relocation to the *Control of Weapons Act 1990* (Vic).

## 6.1 National context

Work to review the categorisation of firearms is currently underway at the national level, coordinated across states and territories through the National Firearms Agreement. This work will be finalised following the conclusion of the Review and needs to be further considered.

National Cabinet has also tasked the Police Ministers Council (PMC) and the Standing Council of Attorneys-General (SCAG) with examining options to limit open-ended firearms licensing and to review the types of firearms that may be lawfully owned, including the regulation of firearm modifications.<sup>40</sup>

## 6.2 Other jurisdictions

While that national process continues, several jurisdictions have progressed their own reforms:

- New South Wales introduced reforms in 2025 to restrict access to straight-pull, pump-action and button or lever-release firearms, reduce magazine capacity limits for Category A and B firearms, and prohibit the use of belt-fed magazines.<sup>41</sup> This was in addition to earlier New South Wales reforms in 2018, which removed paintball markers from its Firearms Act 1996 (NSW) and established a separate system of permits for the regulation of paintball markers and of paintball venues under a standalone Paintball Act 2018 (NSW).
- Western Australia implemented reforms from 31 March 2025, including prohibiting rapid-release action firearms and expanding the range of items excluded from the definition of a 'firearm', such as certain compressed air devices, flares and children's toy guns.<sup>42</sup>
- The Australian Capital Territory has proposed reforms to strengthen controls on rapid-fire and high-capacity firearms, including prohibiting belt-fed magazines,

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introducing magazine capacity limits for Category A and B firearms, and clarifying definitions of specific firearm actions to support stricter categorisation and limit access to certain firearms to primary producers.<sup>43</sup>

- Tasmania has announced reforms intended to progress in 2026 to reclassify straight pull and button/lever release centre-fire and shotgun firearms to the more restrictive Category C licence.<sup>44</sup>

### 6.3 Firearms categories

Victoria's *Firearms Act* regulates two main types of firearms:

- **Handguns**

Defined as firearms that can be carried or concealed on a person, fired with one hand, or that do not exceed 65 centimetres in length (measured parallel to the barrel).<sup>45</sup>

- **Longarms**

All firearms other than handguns.<sup>46</sup> Longarms are classified into Categories A, B, C, D and E.

The *Firearms Act* also regulates paintball markers.

Victoria's current firearms categorisation framework – outlined in the [Context section of Chapter 4](#) – already captures most of the firearm category reforms introduced in New South Wales. For example, in Victoria:

- Pump-action shotguns are classified as Category C.
- Lever-action shotguns were reclassified following the 2017 refresh of the National Firearms Agreement after the 2014 Martin Place siege:
  - Lever-action shotguns with a magazine capacity of up to 5 rounds are Category B.
  - Lever-action shotguns with a magazine capacity of more than 5 rounds are Category D.
- Straight-pull and button-release firearms may fall into Category A, B, C or D, depending on their technical characteristics. The operating mechanism alone does not determine the category.
- Amendments made in 2024 introduced additional restrictions for hunting, sport and target shooting:
  - Licensed users must not possess, carry or use a detachable magazine with a capacity greater than five rounds in combination with a bolt- or lever-action shotgun.
  - These changes responded to the emergence of straight-pull firearm designs.

#### 6.3.1 What we heard: Firearms categories

##### **Victoria's firearms categorisation framework is broadly fit for purpose**

- Victoria's firearms categories have operated effectively for decades by distinguishing firearms based on action type, functionality and risk.

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- The existing framework was widely viewed as remaining fit for purpose.
- However, we also heard concerns that restrictions did not always have a solid evidence basis and could harm legitimate firearms use (e.g., sporting activities) without improving safety.
- Some stakeholders cautioned that reforms introduced rapidly in response to specific incidents, without sufficient consideration and rationale, may only provide an illusion of safety.

### **Clarification and review were preferred over broad reclassification**

- Clarifying existing legislative definitions was preferred to reclassifying firearms assessed as lower risk.
- Periodic, evidence-based reviews of firearms categories were supported.

### **Rate of fire was identified as a key risk factor**

- Firearms capable of rapid or sustained fire were consistently identified as posing higher risk.
- Some respondents to the Review's online survey suggested having greater restrictions for rapid-fire firearms, as well as military-style-looking firearms.
- Past mass casualty incidents, including Hoddle Street (1987), Port Arthur (1996) and Bondi (2025), were cited as demonstrating this risk.

### **Support for restrictions on automatic, semi-automatic and rapid-fire firearms**

- Many respondents supported bans on automatic or semi-automatic firearms.
- Some also supported tighter controls on rapid-fire firearms and those with military-style features.
- Many respondents to the Review's online survey supported automatic or semi-automatic guns being banned.

### **Concerns about lever-release and push-button firearms**

- Lever-release (not lever-action) and push-button firearms were raised as an area of concern.
- These firearms were viewed by some as resembling semi-automatic firearms and potentially requiring greater oversight.
- Respondents to the Review's online survey indicated notable concern about the use of lever-release (not lever-action) and push-button firearms, with some supporting their reclassification and some supporting the complete ban of these firearms. Some firearm users suggested the current classification of lever-release or push-button firearms represents a loophole that requires greater oversight, as these firearms may resemble a semi-automatic firearm.

### **Emerging technologies raise regulatory and compliance issues**

- Emerging firearm technologies were seen as creating compliance challenges.
- Clear, objective and function-based definitions were preferred.

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- While design and modularity have improved, the core mechanical operation of many firearms has not fundamentally changed.

### 6.3.2 Victoria Police advice

- Victoria's firearm categories were developed prior to recent advances in firearms manufacture, modular design and emerging technologies. This is at odds with the technological advancements in firearm and firearm related technology which are constantly evolving. Accordingly, Victoria Police is of the position these categories are no longer fit for purpose.
- Lever-action shotguns and self-closing firearms are currently classified as Category B in Victoria and are available to Category A and B longarm licence holders, the most common licence types. Reviewing the classification of lever-action shotguns and self-closing firearms would align more closely with New South Wales and improve consistency for border communities.
- Straight-pull shotguns are currently classified as Category A, despite being similar in form, function and capacity to lever-action shotguns. With detachable magazines, straight-pull shotguns can hold more rounds than lever-action firearms. While importation of magazines is currently restricted to 10 rounds, higher-capacity magazines have been developed overseas, including drum magazines holding up to 25 rounds.
- Linear repeating firearms present elevated risk if misused. Despite reforms in 2017 and 2023, linear repeating firearms remain relatively common. These firearms can enable rapid reloading and, if misused, pose a heightened risk of mass casualty events. These risks may warrant further consideration of reclassification or prohibition, including potential reclassification of bolt-action shotguns to align with lever-action longarms.
- Victoria could further align with New South Wales by introducing a prohibition on belt-fed firearms, including machine guns.
- Inconsistent terminology across jurisdictions, legislation, industry and the community creates challenges for national consistency, enforcement and compliance. Updating Victorian legislation to align with the National Firearms Agreement and the National Firearms Identification Database could better reflect technological developments, improve clarity for industry and the community, support cross-jurisdictional consistency, and strengthen enforcement and prosecution.

### 6.3.3 What we found

- The Review found that consideration does need to be given to reclassifying existing firearms categories to ensure that high-risk firearms are appropriately classified. The Review considers that further work needs to be undertaken in this space as well as alignment with work being done at the national level.
- Reclassifying firearms requires further consideration of who uses them and for what purpose, and whether those uses are recognised as a genuine reason. These considerations will be considered at the national level.

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- For example, concerns were raised that reclassifying straight-pull firearms to Category C could unintentionally affect biathlon athletes, as Category C currently recognises clay target shooting as a genuine reason, but not sport or target shooting more broadly.

### 6.4 Reclassification powers

The *Firearms Act* allows the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police to reclassify firearms in certain circumstances.

- The Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police may temporarily declare a firearm, or type of firearm, as:
  - a Category D longarm,
  - a Category E handgun, or
  - a Category E longarm.<sup>47</sup>
- The Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police may also permanently reclassify a firearm, or type of firearm, from:
  - Category A, B or C longarms to Category D or Category E longarms.<sup>48</sup>

#### 6.4.1 What we heard: Reclassification powers

**Existing powers are generally sufficient, with issues lying in implementation rather than authority**

- With the exception of reclassification powers, the Chief Commissioner is considered to already have sufficient powers to manage firearms regulation effectively.
- Challenges were seen as relating more to enforcement, intelligence sharing and interagency coordination than to gaps in legislative authority.

**Current reclassification powers are viewed as limited in some circumstances**

- While the Chief Commissioner can reclassify certain firearms, the current settings were described as restrictive.
- In some cases, there may be a need to permanently reclassify a Category A longarm to Category C, rather than to the higher Category D or E classifications.

**Limitations on permanent reclassification to Category E handguns were noted**

- Situations were identified where permanent reclassification to a Category E handgun may be necessary.
- Existing provisions allow for temporary reclassification to Category E, but not permanent reclassification.

#### 6.4.2 Victoria Police advice

- The current structure of the Firearms Act limits the Chief Commissioner's ability to reclassify firearms in a consistent and proportionate way. Section 3B allows permanent reclassification of Category A, B or C longarms to Category D or E only

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where a firearm is assessed as substantially duplicating a military firearm in design, function or appearance.

- Current reclassification powers limit the reclassification of a firearm to the highly restricted Categories D and E, which may not always be appropriate.
- The absence of broader reclassification powers restricts the ability to respond flexibly to changes in firearm design and risk. This limitation may result in some firearms being subject to higher levels of restriction than other firearms with similar function or risk profiles.
- In some situations, a particular firearm may not be suitable for general recreational use, but there may be demonstrable and legitimate occupational or competition uses for that firearm. Under current powers, the Chief Commissioner would only be able to reclassify to Category D or E, and would not be able to reclassify a firearm from, for example, Category A to Category C.
- There may also be situations where other jurisdictions with more flexible reclassification powers reclassify a firearm from, for example, Category B to Category C. Under current power, Victoria would be unable to harmonise with these changes and would only be able to reclassify to Category D or E.

### 6.4.3 What we found

- In determining whether to reclassify a firearm, the Chief Commissioner must consider the public interest, including the impacts on industry, licence holders, Government and inter-jurisdictional arrangements, as well as the interests of the wider community.
- There are opportunities to work within the existing legislative framework using a risk-based regulatory approach, including:
  - focusing compliance and enforcement in higher-risk locations
  - aligning police resources with firearm volumes and higher-risk firearm categories in specific areas
  - using existing delegated powers when assessing firearms licensing requirements.
- These matters are operational in nature, and the Chief Commissioner of Police retains independence in making operational decisions under the *Victoria Police Act 2013* (Vic).

## 6.5 Non-lethal items

The intent of the *Firearms Act* is that firearms ownership and use are a privilege, not a right, with public safety as the overarching principle.

The *Firearms Act* currently regulates firearms and related items including low-risk firearms such as paintball markers.

### 6.5.1 What we heard: Non-lethal items and the *Firearms Act*

The *Control of Weapons Act 1990 (Vic)* (*Control of Weapons Act*) is an important complementary regulatory framework to the *Firearms Act*.

- There are challenges in determining what constitutes an 'imitation firearm' and that overly broad definitions may capture low-risk items.
- Non-lethal items like paintball markers should not be regulated in the same way as lethal firearms.

### 6.5.2 Victoria Police advice

- Victoria Police's advice on imitation firearms is covered in [TOR 6: Imitation Firearms and accessories](#). It did not provide advice on other non-lethal items.

### 6.5.3 What we found

- The existing framework for regulation in the *Firearms Act* and the *Control of Weapons Act* be explored to ensure that firearms, imitation firearms and related items are located in the Act that best reflects relative risk and regulatory intent. This could include relocating non-lethal items to the *Control of Weapons Act* framework.

## 7. Licence types and additional restrictions

**Terms of Reference 3: The existing licensing scheme, including licence types, and any additional restrictions or requirements that should be in place, including citizenship and residency requirements**

### Recommendations

**The Review recommends Government consider:**

**Recommendation 4: Limiting firearms licences to Australian citizens, or New Zealand citizens with permanent residency in Australia, who can demonstrate a genuine reason for holding a licence.**

This should include:

- applying transitional arrangements for existing licence holders who do not meet these requirements
- restricting exceptions for non-Australian citizens to circumstances where firearms possession is required for employment, subject to strict conditions and oversight.

**Recommendation 5: Reviewing the Firearms Regulations 2018**

Modernising permit fee arrangements to ensure consistent safeguards, alignment with broader licensing approaches and sustainable cost recovery.

This should include:

- updating permit-to-acquire fee structures
- requiring permit fees to be paid upfront
- introducing graduated fees for additional permits to support cost recovery.

### Key findings

#### **Opportunity to align with National Cabinet**

Citizenship, or residency-based eligibility requirements would align Victoria with the approach being considered through National Cabinet and adopted in some other jurisdictions. Such requirements would also narrow the number of people eligible to hold firearms and may, over time, reduce the number of firearms in the community.

#### **Firearms licensing and permit fees in Victoria are not aligned with cost recovery**

Current fee structures for firearms licences and permits have not been reviewed in recent years and operate well below the cost of administering the licensing system. Broader firearms reform provides an opportunity to review and update fees to align with contemporary cost recovery principles and broader licensing approaches.

## 7.1 Context

### 7.1.1 National Cabinet considerations

Following the Bondi attack, National Cabinet agreed to explore whether citizenship should be required to hold a firearms licence.<sup>49</sup> This work is being progressed through senior officials reporting to Police Ministers and Attorneys-General, under the broader direction of National Cabinet.

In January 2026, the Prime Minister indicated that proposed firearm-related amendments, including potential citizenship requirements, would be progressed separately from broader criminal law and migration reforms. Those broader reforms have since passed Parliament, allowing firearms-specific measures to continue to be considered on their own track.<sup>50</sup>

While national settings are still being developed, some states have moved ahead with their own reforms.

### 7.1.2 Other jurisdictions

New South Wales introduced changes in 2025 that limit firearms licences to Australian citizens, or to New Zealand permanent residents who can demonstrate a genuine reason for holding a licence, such as primary production, pest control, employment or other legitimate rural or occupational purposes.<sup>51</sup> New South Wales also allows for the regulations to prescribe persons who are members of a class of persons to be treated in the same way as citizens.

In February 2026, the Queensland Government introduced legislation proposing an Australian citizenship requirement for firearms licences, with exemptions for sports and target shooters and for people who require a firearm as part of their work.<sup>52</sup>

South Australia's *Firearms Act 2015* (SA) already contains a requirement that the applicant for a firearms licence must prove that they are an Australian citizen or a permanent resident who ordinarily resides in South Australia.

On February 27 2026, the Tasmania Government announced that it would establish Australian citizenship as an eligibility requirement for firearms licensing, with limited exceptions for primary producers and citizens from prescribed countries such as New Zealand.<sup>53</sup>

Other jurisdictions have not yet introduced citizenship requirements for firearms licences, with national settings still under development.

### 7.1.3 Firearms licences in Victoria

Victoria Police's Licensing and Regulation Division uses a partially digital system for firearms licence and permit applications. Most licence types can be submitted online (e.g. all categories of longarms, handguns and junior firearms licences), but some still require a hard copy application (e.g. Category 1 and 2 Firearm Collectors, Antique Handgun Collectors and Ammunition Collectors licences).

There are five main types of firearms licences under the *Firearms Act*. Licences are issued by the Chief Commissioner, with requirements varying depending on the licence type.

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- **Longarm licences** apply to rifles and shotguns across Categories A, B, C, D and E.<sup>54</sup>
- **Handgun licences** cover general category handguns and Category E handguns.<sup>55</sup>
- **Junior licences** are available to people aged 12 to 17 years.<sup>56</sup>
- **Collectors and heirloom licences** apply to antique firearms and items of historical or commemorative value and require membership of an approved firearms collectors club.<sup>57</sup>
- **Dealer licences** allow the sale of firearms, either across all categories or limited categories, and may be refused where the applicant or close associates are not considered fit and proper persons.<sup>58</sup>

## 7.2 Citizenship requirements

In Victoria, there is currently no requirement for a firearms licence holder to be an Australian citizen. Licence holders must, however, ordinarily reside in Victoria.

Victoria's regulatory framework also accommodates limited participation by overseas hunters. The Blonde Bay Hog Deer hunting ballot, which has operated since 1989, allows international participants to hunt under tightly controlled conditions, despite not being Australian citizens or Victorian residents.<sup>59</sup> The longevity of this program suggests that clear eligibility criteria, permit systems and supervision can support safe outcomes and maintain public confidence.

Any consideration of citizenship or residency-based restrictions in Victoria requires careful attention to the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities*. Unlike most other jurisdictions, the Victorian Government must consider how such changes may engage protected rights and ensure that any limitations are lawful, proportionate and justified.<sup>60</sup>

The Review understands that the introduction of a citizenship requirement for firearms licences would engage the right to recognition and equality before the law. Any limitation on this right must be clearly justified, proportionate and supported by compelling evidence at the point of implementation, including the use of criminal intelligence and other relevant information to inform rigorous individual risk assessment.

There may be limited exemptions considered for non-citizens in narrowly defined circumstances only, such as individuals who have resided in Victoria or Australia for a substantial period and can demonstrate enduring community ties and a demonstrably low-risk profile.

### 7.2.1 What we heard: Citizenship requirements

#### Concerns were raised about the efficacy of a citizenship requirement

- There is limited evidence that introducing a citizenship requirement for firearms licences would improve public safety.
- Many people support continuing to assess licence applicants on individual merit, including criminal history, suitability and genuine reason, regardless of citizenship status.

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- Concerns that excluding permanent residents and long-term visa holders who meet all licensing requirements may be discriminatory.
- No clear evidence that citizenship status is linked to violent behaviour or firearms misuse by licensed owners.
- Views that addressing intelligence gaps and improving resourcing of the existing system would have a greater impact on community safety than a citizenship requirement.

### **We also heard support for introducing a citizenship requirement**

- There was support for stronger vetting, with some views that citizenship provides a more complete and reliable framework for background checks.
- There were concerns that non-citizens should have limited or delayed access to firearms, although these views were often not supported by detailed evidence.
- While Victoria Police can conduct background checks that include information from overseas jurisdictions, these checks primarily rely on Victorian intelligence holdings and self-declarations before initiating international police checks.
- Obtaining information from overseas jurisdictions presents challenges, as, outside of the Australian Federal Police liaison network through INTERPOL, there is no established method to access such information, except for New Zealand.
- As the Review's online survey did not ask a question specifically on citizenship requirements, there were no quantifiable responses on whether respondents supported these restrictions. Where there were free-text fields, many respondents did support a citizenship requirement. Some respondents viewed non-citizens as being 'unsuitable' for having access to firearms and should either be delayed or prevented from possessing a firearm.

### **Concerns about unintended impacts were raised, including:**

- potential effects on people who rely on firearms for work or land management.
- the possible need for narrowly defined exemptions for specific occupational or agricultural purposes.
- impacts on long-term permanent residents who meet all licensing requirements but have chosen not to become Australian citizens.

### **Strong support was shown for exceptions to this requirement**

- Specific carve-outs for New Zealand permanent residents reflect the unique Australia–New Zealand relationship and existing visa and information-sharing arrangements.

## **7.2.2 Victoria Police advice**

- There is no difference between how Victoria Police accesses information and intelligence on an Australian citizen versus a permanent resident. Victoria Police assess information obtained from the applicant as part of their application, alongside

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records held on the Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) and the National Criminal Intelligence System (NCIS).

- Victoria Police verifies an applicant's Victorian residency based on the primary identification document provided as part of the application. As a result, Victoria Police may not know if a licence applicant is an Australian citizen or a permanent resident if no passport is provided as part of the application. Any requirements to confirm and record citizenship status would require changes to the application process and systems.
- Intelligence holdings in relation to non-citizens are inherently constrained, particularly where individuals have limited time in Australia or where relevant information is held offshore.

### 7.2.3 What we found

- Victoria's current licensing system does not collect data on citizenship status. There is limited available data to demonstrate that introducing a citizenship requirement for firearms licence holders in Victoria would, on its own, result in measurable harm reduction. The impact of a citizenship requirement on existing licence holders is therefore not well understood through current data sources.
- There is an opportunity to strengthen data collection and evidence to better understand the effects of any change. The need for further data and evaluation is reflected in Recommendation 14 of [TOR 9: Promoting public safety](#) of this Review.
- Introducing a citizenship requirement aligns Victoria with the direction being considered through National Cabinet and with approaches emerging in other states and territories, supporting consistency for communities.
- Introducing citizenship and residency requirements strengthens the licensing system by addressing limits in overseas background checks and aligning Victoria with emerging national reforms. Narrowing eligibility is also a precautionary step that may reduce firearm numbers in the community over time, while still allowing legitimate use.
- Reform must avoid unfair or retrospective impacts, particularly for long-term, law-abiding licence holders. Consideration should be given to transition arrangements for existing licence holders who are not Australian citizens or New Zealand permanent residents. Transitional arrangements will be required to minimise unintended or retrospective impacts. These arrangements should recognise the time required to apply for and obtain citizenship and seek to avoid unnecessary licence loss during this period, particularly where firearms are relied upon for legitimate purposes.
- This Review has carefully considered concerns raised through the consultation process, including that direct evidence linking citizenship status to harm reduction is limited, that many permanent residents and long-term visa holders are law-abiding licence holders, and that the existing system already requires comprehensive background checks.

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- When weighed against the direction set by National Cabinet, the limitations identified by Victoria Police, and the broader precautionary case for reducing the number of firearms in the community, this Review concludes that introducing a citizenship requirement is an appropriate and necessary step.

### 7.3 Licence fees in Victoria

Firearms licence fees in Victoria are set out in the Firearms Regulations 2018. These regulations cover a range of matters, including fees for licences and permits, administrative requirements for dealers and collectors, and enforcement and compliance arrangements.

They also specify:

- fees for the issue and renewal of licences and permits, and for applications to review decisions of the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police
- items that are excluded from the definition of a firearm
- record-keeping requirements for firearms dealers and collectors
- offences for which infringement notices may be issued
- requirements for certain uses of firearms on private land
- how searches without a warrant may be conducted

Victoria Police publishes a full list of firearms fees and charges.<sup>61</sup> Examples of current fees (as at 1 July 2024) include:

- **Longarm licence (Category A, five years):** \$267.80 for an individual; \$485 for a body corporate
- **Handgun provisional licence:** \$62.70 for 6 months; \$125.40 for 12 months
- **Permit to acquire a longarm:** \$9.20
- **Permit to acquire a handgun:** \$58.60

#### 7.3.1 What we heard: Fees and charges associated with firearms ownership

##### Concerns about increased costs and administrative burdens for applicants and firearms licence holders

- Licensed firearm owners already invest significant time and resources to meet compliance requirements
- Concerns that additional fees could increase burden without addressing the primary sources of harm
- Fees and charges were ultimately not a major focus of submissions or responses to the online survey, with greater emphasis placed on enforcement effectiveness, safety outcomes and the proportionality of regulation.

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### We also heard that there are many benefits to increasing fees:

- Increased applicant fees could help offset rising regulatory costs for Victoria Police
- Higher fees may support more rigorous screening and background checking processes
- Licence and permit fees that better reflect the cost of regulation could help fund compliance, inspection, administration and monitoring activities.

### 7.3.2 Victoria Police advice

- Current fees and charges do not operate on a cost-recovery basis and are lower than the actual cost of administering and issuing licences.
- Existing arrangements only include a licence fee, do not include an initial application fee, and do not require fees to be paid upfront. If an application does not proceed, this may result in unrecovered costs incurred by Victoria Police.
- Fees and charges have not increased alongside inflation as they are charged in fixed dollar amounts and not in fee units, which would make them subject to regular indexation.

### 7.3.3 What we found

- As part of the review of the Firearms Regulations 2018, there is an opportunity to update permit fee structures to better align with broader licensing approaches and ensure appropriate safeguards.
- Fees should reflect the true cost of administering a regulatory system to ensure sustainability and fairness.
- Victoria Police currently absorb unrecovered administrative and background-check costs.
- Changes could include:
  - moving permit fees from fixed dollar amounts to fee units, allowing for automatic annual indexation in line with other Victorian Government fees and charges
  - reviewing permit-to-acquire fee arrangements
  - requiring permit fees to be paid upfront
  - introducing an application fee to reflect Victoria Police resourcing and processing costs, in addition to licence fees
  - introducing graduated fees for subsequent permits to support cost recovery
  - recovering the cost of AusCheck background checks.
- The Review understands the implementation of AusCheck background checks would result in Victoria Police incurring additional costs at the application stage, as AusCheck operates on a cost recovery basis, and these costs would be incurred before any fees are paid. If an application were to not proceed, the current lack of

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application fee would mean the applicant undergoes an AusCheck background check entirely paid for by Victoria Police.

- In addition to supporting regulatory administration, cost-recovery arrangements could also enable targeted investment in research, communication and engagement. This could include strengthening the evidence base to inform firearms regulation, improving public and licence-holder understanding of regulatory requirements, and supporting education initiatives that reinforce safe, lawful firearms use and community safety outcomes.
- The Victorian Government's Cost Recovery Guidelines (2013) note that the default position for regulatory schemes is full cost recovery, where appropriate.

## 8. Licensing duration, assessments and ongoing monitoring

**Terms of Reference 4: The appropriate duration of different licence types and options for strengthening application and renewal requirements and ongoing monitoring of licences during their lifecycle**

### Recommendations

**The Review recommends Government consider:**

**Recommendation 6: Retaining the existing overall duration of firearms licences**

**Recommendation 7: Strengthening oversight across the full licence lifecycle. This should include renewal requirements, fit and proper person assessments, genuine need assessments, training and ongoing monitoring - to support early identification and management of risk**

This should include:

**In relation to new licence and renewal applications:**

- establishing a single firearms licence covering multiple firearm categories, with the most stringent applicable requirements prevailing, where appropriate
- strengthening application and renewal assessments to consider licence holders' medical or health circumstances or conditions (where these have a demonstrable relevance to their continued holding of a licence), in alignment with any revisions to the National Firearms Agreement
- in consultation with relevant agencies and organisations, developing a pathway for medical practitioners (including GPs and psychologists) to report concerns to Victoria Police where a licence holder's medical or health circumstances or conditions may impact their continued holding of a firearms licence
- aligning licensing requirements for longarms under the Firearms Act 1996 (Vic) with those applying to handguns, including mandatory membership of an approved club, mandatory reporting obligations for approved clubs and stronger storage for Category A and B longarms.
- introducing minimum participation and usage requirements for longarm licence holders, consistent with existing handgun shooting requirements, to support ongoing competency and regulatory oversight.

**In relation to training requirements:**

- mandating completion of firearms training as a condition of obtaining a firearms licence for all applicants, regardless of licence type or category
- introducing mandatory live-fire training as part of initial licensing to ensure competency in safe handling and use
- mandating minimum firearms training standards delivered by specialised training providers or Registered Training Organisations as a condition of licensing.

**In relation to permits and unlicensed activity:**

- introducing a permit-based regime to enable unlicensed persons to participate in supervised shooting activities at approved firearms clubs, reducing reliance on club-based discretion and ensuring consistent safeguards and oversight.
- reviewing junior permit age thresholds, including consideration of alignment with graduated licensing approaches used in other regulatory frameworks.

**In relation to ongoing monitoring:**

- strengthening ongoing, risk-based monitoring during the licence period to capture changes in licence holder circumstances
- introducing mandatory reporting or trigger mechanisms to identify emerging risks during the licence lifecycle
- strengthening Victoria Police systems to support enhanced monitoring, including through integration with AusCheck.

**Key findings**

**The current duration of firearms licences in Victoria is appropriate**

There may be greater regulatory value in strengthening monitoring and intelligence across the life of a licence, rather than focusing on more frequent licence renewal processes.

**Some longarm requirements should be aligned with handgun requirements in the *Firearms Act 1996 (Vic)***

There is a gap in the current legislation in relation to minimum participation standards and live-fire training for longarms users, resulting in lower levels of oversight and monitoring than for handgun holders. (Noting that it is not suggested that firearms licence duration be aligned across handguns and longarms).

**Introducing health assessments as part of the licensing application and renewal process may help identify changes in an individual's circumstances that could affect whether they remain a 'fit and proper person'**

While a significant proportion of firearms licence holders in Victoria are older adults, risks to safe firearm use are not limited to age. Physical, cognitive, and mental health conditions at any stage of life may affect a person's capacity to safely possess and use firearms.

**Introduction of a mandatory health reporting pathway would strengthen ongoing licensing suitability assessments**

In consultation with relevant agencies, a clear and secure reporting pathway should be established to enable medical practitioners, including GPs and psychologists, to notify Victoria Police where a licence holder's health condition may impact their ongoing fitness to hold a licence.

**The permit system should be strengthened**

Applicants seeking a permit to acquire for Category A firearms should be required to demonstrate a genuine need to possess, carry or use such a firearm. This would align with

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the treatment of all other categories of firearms. Additionally, a formalised system should be introduced to allow individuals who attend approved clubs to receive supervised firearm training without requiring a permit.

### **Consistency in the training of firearms licence holders**

There is currently no minimum training standard in Victorian law. Introducing mandatory standards set by accredited providers would address this gap and contribute to elevating the standard of firearms licence holders.

### **Ongoing monitoring of firearms licence holders could be improved**

Victoria should consider how continuous checking at the Australian Government level (including AusCheck) could be built into Victoria's regulatory scheme. This should include identifying trigger points for monitoring throughout the lifespan of a licence including introducing mandatory reporting requirements for firearms clubs.

Consideration could also be given to introducing a platform similar to New South Wales's GunSafe, enabling clubs to report concerns online rather than liaise directly with Victoria Police.

### **Victoria Police's information management systems must be enhanced**

This is required to ensure integration and effective information sharing with other jurisdictions as well as compatibility with the ongoing national work on the National Firearms Register.

## 8.1 Context

Victoria has well-established systems for licensing and registering firearms users and dealers, with clear requirements governing possession, carriage, use, acquisition, storage and disposal of firearms.

There is a strong level of regulatory compliance by most firearms licence holders and dealers, demonstrating responsible use of firearms and a culture of safety across Victoria.

Any changes to Victoria's firearms regulatory framework should be practical and proportionate - modernising the system where needed, recognising the legitimate roles firearms play in many Victorians' lives, and making it easier, not harder, for responsible licence holders to comply.

### 8.1.1 National Cabinet considerations

Following the Bondi terrorist attack, National Cabinet directed work to explore the appropriate duration of different licence types and opportunities to strengthen application and renewal requirements.

Consideration of this Review's recommendations in this area will need to align with any changes to the National Firearms Agreement arising from the National Cabinet process.<sup>62</sup>

### 8.1.2 Other jurisdictions

Several states have recently moved ahead with reforms to their firearms licensing schemes.

In 2025, New South Wales introduced changes that reduce the duration of a general firearms licence from five years to two, require licensees to join an approved firearms club unless exempt, and remove the appeals pathway to the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal for licence decisions.<sup>63</sup>

New South Wales has also announced it will require all approved clubs to use the GunSafe online platform to improve record-keeping, compliance, and traceability of club membership and activities.<sup>64</sup>

Western Australia enacted reforms to its firearms licensing scheme commencing in 2025, which included:

- changes to the duration of licences – licences in Western Australia can now be granted or renewed for 1, 3 or 5 years, with the period chosen by the applicant (and subject to any limitations imposed by the *Firearms Regulations 2024 (WA)*)
- introducing a mental and physical health check into the fit and proper person test for licence applications and renewals
- introducing the ability to issue a licence card or digital licence card
- introducing disqualification orders for those who have committed serious offences, are subject to a disqualifying order (such as a Family Violence Restraining Order made under the *Restraining Orders Act 1997 (WA)*), or are members of disqualified organisations
- prescribing training courses by approved trainers.<sup>65</sup>

At the time of writing, other jurisdictions have not made changes to their broader firearms licensing scheme settings. National settings are still under development for broader licensing scheme settings.

## 8.2 Duration of firearms licences in Victoria

Licensing requirements for Victorian licence holders are outlined in the *Firearms Act*.<sup>66</sup>

In Victoria, licence types and durations are based on firearm categorisations. Unless suspended, surrendered or cancelled, firearms licences have one of three durations:

- Three years for a Category C, D or E longarm licence
- Three years (or until the age of 18) for a junior firearm licence
- Five years for other licences (including Category A or B longarms and Category E or general handguns).

There are instances under the existing settings where a person can access and use firearms at a firearms range without holding a firearms licence or permit. In this circumstance, although the person is supervised while at a firearms range, they are not required to undergo a police background check and can be given access to a firearm and, under instruction, learn how to use it.

### 8.2.1 What we heard – Licence durations

#### **Firearms stakeholders maintained that current licence periods are adequate**

- Managing increased administrative demands would require improved resourcing of Victoria Police, rather than changes to licence duration.
- Concerns were raised that shorter licences would divert Victoria Police resources from intelligence, monitoring and enforcement activities, as well as be an additional financial burden for licence holders.

#### **Community safety groups supported shorter licence periods**

- Licences were viewed as an ongoing responsibility rather than involving a one-off assessment or approval.
- Shooting proficiency testing at licence renewal was identified as a measure to support public safety and animal welfare.

### 8.2.2 Victoria Police advice

- Existing licence durations provide an appropriate balance between community safety, the impost on licence holders, and regulatory workload.
- Some applicants use their 12-month membership to an approved club or similar to demonstrate a genuine reason. Consideration of longer approved club membership, or demonstration of continued ongoing membership.
- Applicants can circumvent club membership requirements by instead providing a letter to support a genuine reason for hunting pests on Crown land.

### 8.2.3 What we found

- The current duration of firearms licences in Victoria is appropriate. Applications and renewals are a point-in-time assessment of a person's suitability to hold a licence - even with shorter durations, there are greater opportunities for strengthened monitoring and intelligence throughout the life of a licence than at renewal alone.
- Victoria's licence durations are also already among the shorter of Australian jurisdictions (for example, the Northern Territory and Queensland have maximum durations of 5 or 10 years, and South Australia a maximum of 5 years)
- Shorter licence durations would also likely significantly increase the administrative burden and costs on both licence holders and Victoria Police as the regulator. There may be greater utility and more efficient use of regulatory resources to focus on ongoing monitoring and intelligence rather than more frequent renewal processes.

### 8.3 Licensing and renewal requirements in Victoria

#### Treatment of handguns and longarms

The *Firearms Act* treats handguns and longarms differently. The below table outlines the main difference between regulation of these two firearm types.

**Table 13: Snapshot- handguns vs longarms requirements**

Requirement	Handguns	Longarms
Join a registered club	Yes – must join an approved handgun target shooting club	Most genuine reason categories, including hunting, are exempt from club membership. For example, hunters, primary producers and security guards do not need to join an approved club.  Sport or target shooting requires approved club membership.
Genuine reason	Yes	Yes
Firearms safety course	Yes	Yes
Fingerprinting	Yes	No
Probationary period	Yes – must serve a six-month probationary period before applying for a full licence	No
Renewal requirements	Every 3 years	Every 3-5 years depending on type of longarm
Minimum participation	Yes – must participate in a certain number of shoots depending on handgun licence type (e.g. 1 or 2 handgun/s = 10 shoots; 3 handguns = 12; 4 handguns = 16)	No
Storage	<p><b>Storage receptacle:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose-built steel container.</li> <li>• Minimum thickness: 1.6 mm, compliant with Australian/New Zealand Standard 1594:2002.</li> <li>• If empty weight is more than 150 kg it must be bolted to the structure of the premises.</li> <li>• Locked with a sturdy lock when firearm is inside.</li> </ul>	<p>Storage requirements are the same as handguns with the exception of the below which applies to <b>Cat C and D only</b>.</p> <p><u>Key to the receptacle must either:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be carried by the licence holder, or</li> <li>• Kept securely in a separate room when not accessing the firearm.</li> </ul>

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Requirement	Handguns	Longarms
	<p><b>If more than 15 firearms:</b></p> <p><u>Intruder alarm system:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliant with Australian Standard 2201.1:2007.</li> <li>• Activates audible alarm and external visible warning light.</li> <li>• Ammunition: stored separately in a locked container.</li> <li>• Paintball markers: same storage rules as Cat A/B.</li> <li>• Security guard licence holders: firearms stored at employer premises if used in employment.</li> </ul> <p><u>Key to the receptacle must either:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be carried by the licence holder, or:</li> <li>• Kept securely in a separate room when not accessing the firearm.</li> </ul> <p><i>Category E handguns must be stored in the manner provided for by the Chief Commissioner in the licence.</i></p>	<p><i>Category E longarms must be stored in the manner provided for by the Chief Commissioner in the licence.</i></p>

### In their own words

#### **Firearms are part of Alison’s\* family, culture and connection to the land.**

“It’s how we provide for our family and spend time together. We harvest as a family, and that’s something really special,” says Alison, a mother, pest controller, hunter and avid teacher from regional Victoria.

Alison actively manages vermin control on her parents’ property, where firearms are tools for practical land management.

She says there is often limited community understanding of legitimate firearms use, particularly why multiple firearms are necessary.

“People don’t always understand why you need more than one firearm,” she says.

“But every situation is different, and using the right firearm is about safety and humane outcomes.”

Each of her roles – pest control, deer hunting, and waterfowl hunting – requires different firearms and configurations.

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"It's about using the right tool for the job," she says. "That's what responsible hunting looks like."

For Alison, being a member of a shooting club is central to that responsibility.

She sees shooting club membership as a strength of the firearms regulation system and believes clubs play a central role in promoting safe and legitimate firearms use by providing structure, shared standards and opportunities to learn.

In her view, stronger expectations around engagement with clubs would support better understanding of firearms use, reinforce responsibility, and help build confidence in how firearms are used and managed within the community.

"Clubs aren't just about rules, they're about connection. They are being around people who care about doing things properly and looking out for each other."

"That's where good habits and responsibility are built and where experience gets passed on."

**Alison's experience illustrates both why multiple firearms serve distinct and legitimate purposes, and why approved club membership is a meaningful indicator of responsible ownership. This reinforces the Review's recommendation that club engagement and membership should play a stronger role in the licensing framework.**

*\* Names have been changed to protect participants' privacy*

### Assessment of fit and proper person

To hold a firearms licence in Victoria, a person must satisfy the 'fit and proper person' test – a common law principle applied across all licence applications, renewals and alterations.

The Chief Commissioner must be satisfied the person is responsible, knowledgeable, and fit to possess the type and number of firearms sought.

Relevant considerations include criminal history, history of irresponsible firearms handling, medical history where it bears on fitness to hold a licence and demonstrated knowledge and competency.<sup>67</sup>

For applicants wanting a firearm dealer licence, consideration is also given to their close associates. These are defined as someone able to exercise a significant influence over or regarding the way business is conducted under the dealer's licence (e.g., because they hold an interest in the business, because they participate in management of the business under the licence).

There is currently no assessment of close associations for other licence types.

### Renewal requirements

Before their licence expires, a licence holder may apply to the Chief Commissioner for a renewal of their licence.<sup>68</sup> The renewal application must be accompanied by:

- a list of all the firearms in the possession of the applicant

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- for a body corporate, a list of the responsible persons if this has changed during the course of the licence (including proof of identity and a full set of the new persons fingerprints)
- payment of the relevant fee as prescribed in regulations
- If a licence holder has applied for a renewal and the application is not determined before the firearms licence expiry date, the licence is deemed to continue until the renewal application is determined.<sup>69</sup>

There are specific instances where the Chief Commissioner must not renew a licence, including if:

- the applicant can no longer demonstrate that they have the reason for which the licence was previously issued
- the applicant is not ordinarily residing in Victoria (although there are exceptions, including if the applicant requires the licence for work purposes in Victoria)
- the Chief Commissioner is satisfied that the applicant is not a fit and proper person.<sup>70</sup>

The Chief Commissioner must also be satisfied that all responsible persons in relation to the application are fit and proper persons, that the applicant can comply with the relevant storage requirements, and that renewal of the licence is not against the public interest.<sup>71</sup>

### 8.3.1 What we heard: licensing and renewal requirements

#### **Alignment of longarm and handgun licensing settings is a policy consideration**

- Views differed on aligning longarm licence renewal and monitoring requirements with those applying to handguns, with some expressing no concern and others identifying additional regulatory burden.

#### **Introducing health assessments as part of the licensing process may be complex**

- Medical practitioners are not currently required to report mental health concerns, which some stakeholders identified as a potential gap in the licensing process.
- Some stakeholders opposed mandatory health checks as impractical and potentially counterproductive – citing Western Australia's recent reforms – as resource-intensive and raising concern that linking health checks to licence eligibility could deter people from seeking treatment for mental health conditions. This concern was raised by the Department of Health (including the Chief Psychiatrist).
- Mental health checks should occur at any time within the licence period, not just at firearms licence application and renewal dates.
- That firearm licensing should be approached through a public health framework, prioritising harm prevention.

#### **Differing views on increased checks for close associates of firearms licence holders**

- The 'fit and proper person' test provides sufficient coverage to assess existing licence holders and has resulted in licences being revoked in circumstances including sharing a residence with a criminal, suspected sovereign citizen ideology, motorcycle

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gang affiliations, mental health concerns, and, in some cases, comparatively minor matters such as repeated traffic offences.

- Extending close associate checks to the household level would address observed practices where firearms owners coerce family members into obtaining a firearms licence for the purpose of transferring ownership, thereby avoiding the need to surrender firearms they would otherwise be required to relinquish.
- Close associate checks raise particular considerations in family violence contexts. Incorporating non-criminal risk indicators into firearms licensing, and drawing on relevant service system intelligence, would better align eligibility settings with real-world family violence risk.

### 8.3.2 Victoria Police advice

#### Treatment of handguns and longarms

- The regulatory framework for longarm and other firearms clubs (also known as hunting clubs) is limited, with no reporting or recording obligations, creating a gap in regulatory oversight that is disproportionate given the number of longarm firearms in the community.
- Introducing reporting and recording obligations for clubs on longarm participation would allow a proactive, intelligence-led approach to regulation and help identify concerning behaviours by club attendees.

#### Health assessments as part of licensing process

- A greater onus could be placed on licence holders to proactively disclose changes in circumstances, mandated through licence conditions or legislation. This could include health-related information, as well as changes to address, cohabitants and other relevant information.
- There is currently no proactive requirement to demonstrate positive health, and untreated but active conditions may not be captured at the point of licence application.

#### Close associate checks for firearms licence holders

- The fit and proper person test should be expanded to allow for consideration of close associates of a person applying for a firearms licence and transferring firearm ownership.
- Given the fit and proper test applies to lawful employment including private security and prison guards, any changes to the eligibility test may disproportionately impact people's livelihoods and have notable impact on the recruitment market for these industries.
- Broadening assessments to explicitly allow for the consideration of close associates for all firearms licences, similar to the tobacco licensing scheme, would reinforce the National Firearms Agreement's fundamental aspect of fit and proper person requirements for licensing. This public safety benefit would be achieved by preventing persons who are associating with known/suspected offenders from obtaining a firearms licence, as well as preventing family members and close associates from

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obtaining firearms licences on behalf of persons considered unfit and/or improper (e.g. offenders).

### 8.3.3 What we found

#### Treatment of handguns and longarms

- Longarm licence holders currently face fewer oversight requirements than handgun holders. Aligning the rules would help ensure all licence holders meet similar standards for safety and competence.
- During implementation, particular attention will need to be given to regional and rural licence holders – including farmers and primary producers – to avoid imposing impractical requirements on people who may have limited access to clubs or face significant travel to meet minimum participation standards.
- Under the *Firearms Act*, the storage requirements of Category C and D firearms are already aligned to the storage requirements imposed on General category handguns. Implementation of this recommendation would see the storage requirements relating to Category A and B firearms elevated to align with the handgun storage requirements. This would include requiring the key to the receptacle where a Category A or B firearm is stored to be carried by the holder of the licence or kept securely in another room.
- Consideration should be given during implementation to situations where firearms licence holders, including vertebrate pest control or farming, may need to have their firearms readily accessible during transport rather than securely locked away.

#### In their own words

Over a recent five-day clay target shooting competition in regional Victoria, hundreds of competitors travelled to attend the state titles, many driving long distances to participate.

It is estimated the event drew around 450 competitors, with 1,200 to 1,500 firearms transported into and out of a major Victorian town over the course of the competition.

Sam\*, who attended the event, said competitive clay target shooting spans multiple distinct shooting formats – from trap to skeet to sporting clays – each requiring different shotgun configurations.

Variations in barrel length, choke and setup mean competitors often need multiple firearms to participate safely and competitively across an event.

He said while the majority of competitors take their responsibilities seriously, Victoria's transport laws fall well short of community expectation

“If I go out shooting for a weekend I would use around a thousand rounds. Currently, I can put a thousand rounds on the front seat and put an under-and-over shotgun on the front seat of the ute and drive through the middle of Melbourne.”

Sam contrasted Victoria's approach with other states, where transport requirements more clearly specify the use of secure, fixed containers or compartments within the vehicle, and require firearms and ammunition to be stored separately. He said the

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current transport requirements for longarms in Victoria relied heavily on visibility, rather than prescribed storage standards.

Sam said tighter transport rules weren't about restricting people's ability to actively participate in the sport – they were about meeting community expectations.

"I think we need to tighten up how we transport and move firearms around. If I lock the car and throw a blanket or jacket over it, I'm meeting the requirements."

"It's just out of sight, out of mind in Victoria."

**Sam's experience illustrates the gap this Review has identified in Victoria's longarm firearms transport requirements – that current rules rely on visibility rather than prescribed secure storage standards, falling short of both community expectation and the approach taken in other states.**

*\*Names have been changed to protect participants' privacy.*

### Health assessments as part of licensing process

- Any implementation of health assessments within the licensing process will require close consultation with the Department of Health and broader health stakeholders, including careful consideration of interactions with the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2023* (Vic).
- It will be important to manage the risk of unintended consequences, in particular, that people may avoid seeking treatment for health conditions out of concern that doing so could jeopardise their firearms licence and their livelihood.
- Regard to the ongoing work the National Firearms Agreement will also be important, and this recommendation is subject to alignment with any revisions to the National Firearms Agreement.
- Victoria must also consider how rights under the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities* may be affected, including impacts on the right to privacy. The Review understands that the right to privacy may be engaged where interference with privacy, family, home and correspondence is unlawful or arbitrary. It will be important for this to be considered further during implementation to demonstrate that the recommended strengthening of the licensing process is not arbitrary in nature.

### Close associate checks for firearms licence holders

- The Review considers that it may be appropriate for close associate checks to be expanded beyond firearms dealers and be implemented for individual licence holders. Given the timeframes of the Rapid Review this issue could not be considered in detail. Further work should be undertaken to explore this issue considering the potential for strong public benefit.

### Case study

A 65-year-old male was driving home from the Field and Game National Championships when he experienced a medical episode and crashed his vehicle into the outdoor dining area of the Royal Daylesford Hotel, killing five people.

The man had lived with Type 1 diabetes for many years and while driving that day in 2023 had suffered a severe hypoglycaemic episode and lost consciousness at the wheel.

He was initially charged with multiple offences, including culpable driving causing death. Those charges were later dismissed after a court found his actions were involuntary due to the medical episode.

At the time of the crash, the man had a firearm in his vehicle – located on the seat next to him. He had held a Category A firearms licence for many years for hunting and sport shooting purposes.

Following the incident, his driver's licence was suspended pending medical review.

His firearms licence was also suspended, based on concerns relating to his medical condition and fitness to hold a firearms licence.

A coronial inquest into the five deaths is scheduled.

**In Victoria, there is no routine requirement for medical assessment during the life of a firearms licence, or at renewal to determine whether a person remains a fit and proper person, unless an applicant or licence holder raises specific concerns or issues, or concerns are otherwise identified.**

## 8.4 Permits and unlicensed activity in Victoria

A range of permits are available under the *Firearms Act*, including a permit to acquire a firearm.

The Chief Commissioner of Police decides whether to issue a permit to acquire. The Chief Commissioner can only do so if satisfied that:

- the applicant is a fit and proper person
- relevant storage requirements will be complied with
- the acquisition of firearms is not against the public interest.<sup>72</sup>

The Chief Commissioner cannot issue a permit to acquire for a Category B longarm or general category handgun unless the applicant has demonstrated a genuine need to possess, carry or use such a firearm.<sup>73</sup> No such requirement applies to Category A firearms.

### 8.4.1 What we heard: Permits

**A formalised system for individuals attending clubs to learn to shoot should be considered**

- Probationary permits issued by Victoria Police could allow anyone who wants to try shooting to do so legally and safely, either for a single day or over a longer trial

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period. This would ensure people are properly supervised, remove uncertainty for clubs, and provide a clear, consistent entry pathway into the sport.

- In New South Wales, permits are required before being able to try shooting at clubs or ranges.

### In their own words

#### **For Michelle Fernando, community safety begins at the point of access to firearms.**

Michelle, a criminal lawyer and member of Gun Control Australia, says she was shocked to learn that a person could enter a gun club without a firearms licence or police background checks, be given immediate access to a firearm and learn how to shoot.

"I never imagined someone could walk into a gun club with no checks and be handed a gun," she says.

In August 2010, that reality turned into tragedy for Michelle and her family.

Michelle's sister, Shamin, attended the Sydney Pistol Club at La Perouse.

She was not subject to any police background checks, criminal history screening, or mental health risk assessments before she was allowed to access a firearm.

Participants were required only to self-declare whether they had a mental illness.

Shamin, who lived with serious mental illness, completed the declaration and ticked "no".

She gained access to a firearm and received instruction in its use.

Shamin left the Pistol Club taking an automatic handgun and 30 rounds of ammunition, and fatally shot her father, Vincent.

Michelle firmly believes that if a permit requirement or police background check had applied at the point of access, her sister's criminal history would have been identified and flagged that she should not have access to a firearm.

For Michelle, the tragedy highlights a major systemic gap and significant community safety risk.

"Firearms laws exist to prevent access where there is clear risk," she says.

"That protection was absent, with tragic consequences for my family."

Michelle warns that the risk across Australia remains systemic.

In Victoria, a person can attend a firearms range without holding a firearms licence or permit, is not required to do a police background check and be given access to a firearm and under instruction, learn how to use it.

**Michelle's experience illustrates the consequences of the gap this Review has identified. In Victoria, a person can access a firearm at a licensed range and learn how to use a firearm without a police background check, permit, or licence.**

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### Strong stakeholder support was expressed for the current permit-to-acquire system

- The permit-to-acquire system is Victoria's case-by-case control mechanism, requiring each individual firearm acquisition to be justified by a genuine reason.
- This system was seen to be a key control point and more important than introducing numerical caps on firearms ownership.
- Multiple submissions emphasised that the existing system already requires justification for each individual firearm, not just the licence.

#### 8.4.2 Victoria Police advice

- In 2024-25, Victoria Police approved 70,064 firearm permits and refused 252 permits.
- Applicants for a permit to acquire should be required to show a genuine need for a further Category A firearm.
- A mechanism should be introduced allowing licence holders to apply for a permit to possess a detachable magazine of more than five rounds suitable for use with a bolt action shotgun.

#### 8.4.3 What we found

- Applicants seeking a permit to acquire for Category A firearms should be required to demonstrate a genuine need to possess, carry or use it – consistent with the treatment of all other categories of firearms.
- As these are typically 'conventional firearms' used in farm work, sport shooting and recreational hunting, there should be limited impacts for these cohorts who already have an established genuine need.

### 8.5 Training requirements

All individuals applying for a firearm licence must successfully complete a course in firearm safety and law, demonstrating knowledge of responsibilities and offences.<sup>74</sup>

The Chief Commissioner of Police approves firearms safety courses and instructors.<sup>75</sup>

Historically, the Longarms Firearm Safety Course was facilitated and delivered by the Victoria Police Divisional Firearms Officers (DFO) and a pool of volunteers. Handgun safety courses are conducted by handgun shooting clubs or security training organisations. Currently, there is a pool of around 240 approved firearms safety instructors available to deliver longarm firearm safety courses across Victoria.

Upon completion, a certificate must be submitted with the individual's licence application to Victoria Police.

Specific training requirements for firearms licence holders are not outlined in the *Firearms Act*. As minimum training requirements are not currently mandated, firearm safety training standards vary across organisations. Currently there is limited oversight and visibility of the standards and whether licence holders are meeting these standards.

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### 8.5.1 What we heard: Training

#### Victoria's existing training framework is robust

- The current framework supports safe and responsible firearms use and does not require wholesale change.
- There is scope to strengthen pre-screening and ongoing testing requirements, including periodic renewal and demonstrated knowledge of marksmanship and ballistics.
- More comprehensive initial training models could be considered, including full-day courses and assessments covering risk, potential hazards and the safe operation of firearms.

#### Targeted improvements to training and competency requirements were identified

- Existing requirements for corporate firearms licence holders- including entry, annual competency and compliance checks- demonstrate that periodic requalification is already operating effectively in some parts of the system.
- A probationary model, similar to a 'P-plate' approach, could be applied to new entrants or during a licence holder's first 12 months when acquiring or using certain firearms.
- We heard calls from some respondents to the Review's online survey for stronger and more rigorous pre-screening licence tests which could be renewed every few years, with mandated marksmanship and ballistics training/knowledge. A notable number of respondents suggested thorough tests, which included a full-day course and test around risks, potential hazards and basic operation of firearms.

### 8.5.2 Victoria Police advice

- Training standards for firearms are not consistent and vary across organisations.
- There are no mandated minimum training standards and practical assessment is not required for all licences.
- Using specialised training providers or registered training organisations would improve training standards as would requiring both theoretical and practical training components, including manual handling of firearms and live fire training. Safety refresher training should also be required and demonstrated throughout the life of a licence.

### 8.5.3 What we found

- There is an opportunity to create a level of consistency in the training of firearms licence holders. Proper training helps ensure firearms are used safely and responsibly, reducing accidents and supporting community safety.
- There is currently no minimum standard in Victorian law. Introducing mandatory standards set by accredited providers would address this gap and contribute to elevating the standard of firearms licence holders. This could include:

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- aligning longarm licensing with handgun requirements including mandating firearms training for all licence applicants
- requiring live-fire practice for initial licensing for longarms (noting this is already required for handguns).

### 8.6 Ongoing monitoring

Once a licence is granted, Victoria Police remain engaged with licence holders via email, post and through contemporary website communications to ensure licence holders are aware of their obligations, including any new legislation or regulatory changes.

In addition, compliance checks are randomly conducted. During random checks, Victoria Police – typically Divisional Firearms Officers – will conduct a firearm storage inspection.

#### 8.6.1 What we heard: Ongoing monitoring

##### **There was broad support for ongoing monitoring and intelligence-led approaches to firearms-related risks**

- Strengthening ongoing monitoring and intelligence-led approaches to firearms-related risks is important to support early identification and management of risk.
- This includes ensuring adequate resourcing and clear pathways for authorities to identify and respond to emerging risks or concerns about licence holders.
- Victoria already undertakes continuous database monitoring through Victoria Police as part of the existing regulatory framework.
- There is scope to further strengthen monitoring of firearm storage, background checks and licence holders to ensure consistent accountability and closer management of genuine risk.
- Firearms clubs provide regular points of contact and engagement within the firearms community, performing an important on-the-ground and connective role in settings where regulators cannot be present at all times.
- A platform similar to New South Wales's GunSafe, enabling clubs to report online rather than liaise directly with Police, would simplify administration, support safe and accountable management, and make it easier for clubs to operate. Use of this platform - or a similar platform - could be explored further.

#### 8.6.2 Victoria Police advice

- Approximately five per cent of firearms licence holders are subject to compliance checks each year, reflecting current resourcing capacity. Increasing the volume of checks alone would not constitute a risk-based approach and would have significant resource implications, particularly for community policing in regional and rural areas.
- Storage inspections are primarily conducted through in-person visits.
- Some jurisdictions such as New South Wales have adopted hybrid models that use technology to supplement physical inspections. Victoria could consider a similar approach, including requiring licence holders to upload digital evidence of their

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storage arrangements to the National Firearms Register, allowing resources to be more effectively targeted to higher-risk cases.

### 8.6.3 What we found

- Any additional requirements to engage and monitor licence holders need to be carefully considered to ensure benefits can be identified and realised, and undue burden is not being put on both licence holders and regulators, particularly noting existing resourcing challenges to assess compliance.
- It is important that Victorian systems be upgraded or replaced to ensure seamless interaction with the relevant national databases to enable real-time information sharing, accurate risk assessments, and ongoing assessments where risk profiles change.
- Feedback around firearms clubs providing regular engagement and a connective and on-the-ground role supports the rationale for requiring longarm holders to meet club engagement requirements, similar to existing requirements for handguns, ensuring responsible practice, oversight and education.

## 8.7 Information systems

Victoria Police use a range of information systems to support:

- licensing and regulatory processes
- intelligence and risk assessments
- communication with firearms holders
- Firearm Prohibition Order recording and reporting
- interagency collaboration, and
- information sharing.

These systems are discussed further in [TOR 7: Criminal intelligence in licensing decisions](#) and [TOR 8: Information sharing arrangements between agencies](#)

As there are information and security risks associated with public dissemination of Victoria Police's information systems, discussion of these systems remains high-level within this Report.

### 8.7.1 What we heard: Information systems

#### **Stakeholders were concerned about Victoria Police's resourcing in relation to firearms licensing**

- Many submissions called for greater resourcing of Victoria Police's Licensing and Regulation Division to process applications, suspensions and cancellations within reasonable timeframes.

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### Concerns were raised about information management and cybersecurity

- While there is general support for national work towards the National Firearms Register, cybersecurity concerns have been raised, noting that the creation of a national register would represent a significant concentration of highly sensitive personal and location-based data.

#### 8.7.2 Victoria Police advice

- Modern, integrated systems are required to support intelligence, licensing, registration and monitoring of firearms and firearm-related items, including the Firearm Prohibition Order scheme, with effective links to relevant agency databases (discussed further in [TOR 8: Information sharing arrangements between agencies](#).)
- The current use of separate licence categories allows firearms to be accumulated without clear, consolidated oversight. If a cap on total firearm numbers is introduced (as discussed in [TOR 1: Limiting the number of firearms](#)), robust systems will be essential to support consolidation and enforcement
- As a critical partner in the National Firearms Register, Victoria Police has responsibility for achieving program objectives, including cradle-to-grave firearm tracking, near real-time information sharing, national data consistency, and licence and permit verification. The absence of an overarching data management and intelligence system poses a risk to fulfilling these responsibilities.

#### 8.7.3 What we found

- Systems limitations and a lack of interaction and integration between different regulatory and intelligence systems presents a significant issue for Victoria Police.
- From the advice provided to the Review, Victoria Police requires modern, fit-for-purpose, and interconnected information systems. Without an upgrade to existing systems, it will be unlikely that the full benefit of increased monitoring of firearms licences can be realised.

## 9. Illicit firearms and emerging risks

**Terms of Reference 5: any strengthening of laws in relation to the management of illicit firearms**

### Recommendations

**The Review recommends Government consider:**

**Recommendation 8: Strengthening laws relating to the management of illicit firearms to address unlawful use, trafficking and transport risks.**

This should include:

- introducing specific offences relating to the trafficking of firearms within the *Firearms Act 1996* (Vic)
- introducing regulatory requirements for individuals and entities involved in the transport of firearms across Victoria to reduce the risk of diversion to illicit markets
- strengthening oversight of firearm movement across the supply chain to disrupt trafficking and organised criminal activity.

### Key findings

**There is a gap in Victoria's existing laws on illicit firearms management**

Firearms can enter the illicit market through several pathways, including theft, unlawful manufacture, and other diversion or trafficking activities; however, not all of these are currently captured in Victorian firearms laws.

**Regulation of individuals involved in transporting firearms needs strengthening**

Improved oversight of how firearms move through the supply chain would support efforts to disrupt criminal activity and prevent diversion of legal firearms into the illicit market.

**There may be opportunities to future-proof Victoria's firearms laws**

Emerging technologies are often used in organised crime and criminal offending. Recent reforms in Victoria prohibited the possession of digital blueprints for 3D-printed firearms. The implementation of these reforms should be monitored to assess whether further modernisation of the *Firearms Act 1996* (Vic) is required.

### 9.1 Context

Firearms pose an ongoing risk of community harm through mishandling, diversion into the illicit market, and use by serious and violent criminals. In the illicit firearm space, new technologies such as 3D-printing and modified firearms are increasing in prevalence.

The Review looked at opportunities to strengthen laws relating to illicit firearms and further support community safety.

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### 9.1.1 National Cabinet considerations

The exposure draft for the Commonwealth's proposed Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill 2026 included amendments to the Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956 to:

- strengthen the safeguards around firearms availability and access
- require the relevant Minister to determine whether the importation of a firearm or weapon poses a risk to the health, safety or security of the public or a segment of the public, which includes emergency services personnel.

On 17 January 2026, the Prime Minister announced that the proposed Bill's firearm amendments would be pursued separately from the bill's criminal law and migration amendments.<sup>76</sup>

The Review understands that work is ongoing at a national level to consider addressing privately manufactured firearms, 3D-printed firearms and emerging technology requirements.<sup>77</sup>

The recommendations from this review will need to be considered in light of any proposed changes to the National Firearms Agreement based on this work.

### 9.1.2 Other jurisdictions

Recent New South Wales reforms through the *Terrorism and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2025* do not include any amendments related to illicit firearms, the manufacture of firearms, or the trafficking of firearms. However, they did include provisions related to inheriting firearms as part of a deceased estate (in the context of its effect on the number of firearms an individual owns).<sup>78</sup>

The *Firearms Act 1996* (NSW) already includes offences for the unauthorised manufacture of firearms, possession of a 'digital blueprint' that can be used to 3D-print a firearm and supplying firearms or firearms parts to unauthorised persons.<sup>79</sup>

In the Australian Capital Territory, the *Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026* proposes to introduce a similar offence for possession of a digital blueprint to manufacture firearms or firearm parts.<sup>80</sup> These are in addition to an existing offence for the unauthorised manufacture of firearms and existing regulations regarding the delivery and transport of firearms.<sup>81</sup>

Under Western Australia's reformed *Firearms Act 2024*, there are offences related to unauthorised manufacture of firearms and digital blueprints.<sup>82</sup>

Tasmania has announced reforms to introduce stronger penalties for theft and possession of stolen firearms.<sup>83</sup>

## 9.2 Illicit and manufactured firearms in Victoria

In 2021, Victoria Police set up a dedicated Illicit Firearms Unit to focus on investigating and deterring the manufacture and trafficking of illicit firearms.<sup>84</sup>

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More recently, the *Victoria Police Illicit Firearms Strategy 2022–2025* took an intelligence-led approach to reducing firearms-related violence by limiting the availability of illicit firearms and disrupting criminal supply chains.

Victoria Police advise that by 2025, they had laid more than 2,900 charges, seized more than 200 firearms and imitation firearms, and seized more than 650 ammunition and firearm parts, including 3D-printed firearm equipment and parts.

This work followed 2018 amendments to the *Firearms Act* which created offences for possessing parts and equipment for the purposes of manufacturing firearms.<sup>85</sup>

3D-printed firearms are emerging as an issue in the management of illicit firearms. In 2019, the Victorian Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee's *Inquiry into Victoria's Firearms Prohibition Legislation* (the 2019 Inquiry) considered illicit firearms and 3D-printed firearms.<sup>86</sup>

The 2019 Inquiry recommended that the Victorian Government regulate the possession of digital blueprints and parts for the manufacture of 3D-printed firearms. The Victorian Government supported this recommendation in principle.

In November 2025, reforms were passed to amend the *Firearms Act* to prohibit possession and distribution of a digital blueprint for 3D-printing firearms and firearms-related devices or accessories (unless the person has a firearm dealer licence or a reasonable excuse).<sup>87</sup> The new offences include exceptions in certain circumstances, including:

- possession or distribution of a digital blueprint in the public interest or for an academic, artistic, educational, industrial or scientific purpose
- possession for law enforcement
- distribution to a person engaged in law enforcement.<sup>88</sup>

These new offences are due to commence on 4 March 2026.

While the majority of firearm crime involves illegal weapons, many of these firearms were originally legally owned. In its submission to the 2019 Victorian Inquiry into Firearms Prohibition Legislation, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) noted that its trace data indicates that most illicit firearms in the Australian market were legally imported prior to the 1996 National Firearm Agreement.<sup>89</sup>

ACIC's 2020 report 'Illicit Firearms in Australia' noted that theft of registered firearms is the primary contemporary method for regulated firearms being diverted into Australia's illicit market.<sup>90</sup> Addressing pathways from legal to illegal ownership is key to reducing the risk that lawful firearms end up in illicit circulation.

Victoria Police uses several strategies to address firearm theft. Frontline police and specialist teams work to locate and seize these weapons and hold offenders accountable for their unlawful actions. This includes charging individuals for unlawful possession, applying for Firearm Prohibition Orders (FPOs) where people are identified as a serious community safety risk, and detecting and disrupting organised criminal networks that supply firearms for violent crime.

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Firearms stored at holiday homes and on agricultural properties that are not continuously occupied present a significant and ongoing theft risk, with these locations deliberately targeted by criminals, resulting in hundreds of firearm thefts each year.

Table 14 shows the total number of registered firearm thefts in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria between 2015 and 2025. Victoria Police data shows a declining trend in the annual numbers of registered firearms stolen since 2015.

**Table 14: Theft of registered firearms between 2015 and 2025**

Location	Number of firearms stolen
Metropolitan Melbourne	2,253
Rural Victoria	3,381
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,634</b>

### Case study

Since May 2025, Victoria Police has identified 32 handguns transferred to individuals in Victoria through legitimate interstate dealers using fraudulent Victorian firearms dealer licences. Only seven have been recovered, with the remaining 25 suspected to have entered the illicit market at inflated prices.

Between May and June 2025, a New South Wales dealer transferred 19 handguns to a Victorian individual using two fraudulent licences. In August, a second individual received six handguns from two New South Wales dealers using one of the same licences. In October, a third individual acquired three handguns through dealers in New South Wales, South Australia, and Queensland, all using a third fraudulent licence. These cases demonstrate the wide geographic spread and the organised nature of these illicit transfers.

The investigations highlight vulnerabilities in the firearms transfer system, particularly the misuse of fraudulent licences to bypass regulatory checks. The low recovery rate underscores the difficulty of tracing firearms once they enter the illicit market.

Victoria Police continue to work with interstate partners to recover the weapons and prevent further misuse of fraudulent dealer licences.

**This case illustrates a specific vulnerability in the current system – that fraudulent dealer licences can be used to acquire handguns across state lines, bypassing regulatory checks, with the majority of those firearms proving unrecoverable once they enter the illicit market.**

### 9.2.1 What we heard: illicit firearms

#### There are many ways that illicit firearms enter the community

- Illicit firearms remain a concern across the community – for firearms owners, non-owners and law enforcement.

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- Illicit firearms in Australia enter the community through several pathways. These include theft from lawful owners, failure to surrender firearms following licence expiry or cancellation, unlawful manufacture or modification, importation of prohibited firearms or parts, and unregulated transfer through deceased estates.

### Support for stronger laws to manage illicit firearms use

- Through the Review's online survey, more than half (54.0 per cent, n=10270) of all respondents expressed concern about the possession or use of illegal firearms, and one-fifth of all respondents (20 per cent, n=3810) reported being aware of illegal possession, sale or sharing of firearms in Victoria.
- One-third of all survey respondents (33.2 per cent, n=6320) thought the Government's priority when strengthening firearms laws should be to better prevent and address illegal firearms possession, use and trafficking. A majority (61.6 per cent, n=11728) supported stronger rules to prevent illegal firearms supply and trafficking.
- There is a need for better intelligence sharing, stronger border enforcement, and more enforcement resources. Information sharing and enforcement are discussed further in [TOR 8: Information sharing](#).

### 9.2.2 Victoria Police advice

#### Management of illicit firearms

- Since May 2025, 32 handguns have been transferred by legitimate interstate firearms dealers to individuals in Victoria using fraudulent Victorian firearms dealer licences. Of these, only seven have been recovered, with the remaining 25 suspected to have been sold through the illicit firearms market at significantly inflated prices.
- The *Firearms Act* does not sufficiently address illicit firearms, emerging technologies used by organised crime, and criminal offending as it relates to illicit firearms.
- A greater focus on these issues is required to support Victoria Police in protecting the community from firearm violence. Any strengthening of laws governing illicit firearms is likely to increase the volume of seized firearms and demand on policing resources, including frontline services, specialist crime capabilities, and forensic staffing and infrastructure, with sustained funding required to support effective delivery.
- Where an interim Personal Safety Intervention Order (PSIO) or Family Violence Intervention Order (FVIO) is in place, the *Firearms Act* should prohibit a respondent from transferring ownership of any firearms they own until the interim order is finalised.
- A further option for final orders is to amend the *Firearms Act* to prohibit the sale of firearms to anyone other than a licensed dealer. This would prevent seized firearms from being transferred to associates who might otherwise facilitate a respondent's continued access to firearms.

### 9.2.3 What we found

#### Management of illicit firearms

- The absence of reliable, current estimates of illicit firearms in Victoria reflects the inherent difficulty of tracing illicit firearms. This challenge is further compounded by the growing availability of digital blueprints and advanced manufacturing equipment, including metal 3D-printing technology.
- Victoria's new offences related to 3D printing firearms will support the Firearms Act adapt and modernise to these changes. Monitoring the implementation of these offences will help determine whether they require strengthening – particularly whether the current exceptions remain appropriate.
- We identified several opportunities to reduce the diversion of firearms into the illicit market. The recommended limits on firearm ownership (see [TOR 1: Limiting the number of firearms](#)) may have positive consequences in this context. Introducing limits on the number of firearms an individual can own, in addition to existing suitability and storage requirements, may help reduce the concentration of firearms in residential settings and lower the potential impact of theft. These limits may also reduce cases where individuals inherit large quantities of firearms from deceased estates and are then faced with handling and storing them.
- The Review considers that it may be appropriate for the *Firearms Act* to prohibit a respondent from transferring ownership of any firearms they own where an interim PSIO or FVIO is in place and the final order is not finalised yet. Given the timeframes of the Rapid Review this issue could not be considered in detail. Further work should be undertaken to consult with relevant stakeholders and explore this issue considering the potential for strong public benefit.

#### Firearms trafficking

- The laws surrounding trafficking of firearms can be strengthened. The *Firearms Act* includes offences for possession, acquisition or disposal of a trafficable quantity of firearms.<sup>91</sup> However, there are no specific offences for the act of trafficking firearms.
- There is little to no regulation covering the transport of firearms. Currently, any courier or trucking company can lawfully transport firearms throughout Victoria, and from Victoria into border states, without the need for a licence or police check. Improved oversight of the individuals involved in transporting firearms may mitigate risks of diversion of legitimate firearms into the illicit firearm market.
- This Review recognises that existing offences may not adequately capture the level of criminality involved in firearms trafficking. There may be opportunities to introduce specific trafficking offences within the *Firearms Act* to address this gap. Further work should be undertaken to review existing offences in the *Firearms Act* to ensure that they remain fit for the modern firearms landscape.

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### 9.3 Firearms offences and unlawful use of firearms

- In 2016, Victoria Police and the then Department of Health and Human Services entered a Memorandum of Understanding under which the Department agreed to share information about patients admitted to hospital with firearm injuries.
- Victoria Police advised that the timely sharing of this information is critical to community safety, supporting firearms investigations and the accurate reconstruction of crime scenes.

#### 9.3.1 What we heard: Firearms offences and unlawful use of firearms

##### **The majority of firearms licence holders comply with the law.**

- Firearms crime is primarily associated with illegal firearms, unlicensed possession and illegal importation – not law-abiding licence holders.
- Enforcement efforts should focus on addressing illegal firearms trafficking networks rather than imposing additional restrictions on licensed firearms owners.

##### **Firearm-related harm requires a preventive public health approach**

- Firearm-related injury and harm would be most effectively addressed as a public health issue, requiring preventive regulation rather than reactive intervention.
- Firearms increase the severity of family violence incidents and coercive control and create ongoing risks for children and other household members, including where firearms are stored in accordance with regulatory requirements.
- Privately manufactured firearms, including 3D-printed firearms, present a growing risk, with increasing association with both criminal misuse and accidental injury.

#### 9.3.2 Victoria Police advice

- In the five financial years prior to 2025/26, Victoria Police tracked 303,317 firearms transferred out of Victoria, including imported firearms and firearms transferred interstate.
- The lack of regulatory oversight of firearms transport creates a significant enforcement gap that is open to exploitation by organised crime. There have been several investigations involving the theft of large quantities of firearms while in transit.
- Extending the 'fit and proper person' test to those involved in transporting firearms could address regulatory gaps and reduce the risk of diversion into the illicit market.
- Reluctance by some hospitals to disclose information about patients with firearm injuries, due to privacy concerns, has required the use of search warrants to obtain bullets or fragments as evidence.
- Prompt sharing of relevant gunshot wound information would strengthen the investigation of firearms offences involving injured victims.

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### 9.3.3 What we found

- The Review considered how firearms are transported, supplied and delivered, and the risks of diversion to the illicit market or other criminal activity at each stage.
- The Review found that stronger regulation of firearms transportation and delivery, as well as improved oversight of how firearms move through the supply chain, would support efforts to disrupt criminal activity and prevent diversion of legal firearms into the illicit market.
- This Review acknowledges that there is complexity involved in the disclosure of medical information to Victoria Police. Further work should be undertaken to consider interactions with the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2023* relating to the use and disclosure of medical information and how this can be better used to manage harm from illicit firearms.

### 9.4 Storage of firearms and risk of theft

#### 9.4.1 What we heard: Storage of firearms and risk of theft

##### **Most licence holders comply with storage requirements, but theft from residential properties remains a risk**

- Where larger collections of firearms are stored at a single location, this may increase both the attractiveness of the property to offenders and the potential impact of a single theft event.
- While secure storage requirements play an important role in mitigating this risk, their effectiveness depends on consistent compliance, adequate enforcement, and the practical limitations of storing firearms in residential settings.
- Managing the scale of private firearm holdings may help reduce the consequences of theft and diversion, even where overall compliance is high. This is discussed further in [TOR 1: Limiting the number of firearms.](#)

##### **Improvements could be made to the storage of firearms**

- In the Review's online survey, relatively small numbers of respondents thought there was an issue with safe storage and secure handling of legally owned firearms, with differences between groups: 7.3 per cent (n=169) of non-owners and 1.0 per cent (n=170) of licenced firearm owners thought this was an issue in Victoria.
- Some respondents to the Review's online survey identified unsafe storage of firearms (e.g., in sheds, vehicles, other accessible and non-locked spaces) as a potential risk.
- We heard concerns from respondents that Victoria Police was not undertaking regular firearm and secure storage checks, with some respondents reporting not having had their firearms checked in years. One respondent noted their firearm had not been checked for over 30 years, and others highlighted that having a firearm stored in the house could be a concern in a household with member/s with family violence histories.

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### 9.4.2 Victoria Police advice

- Requiring licence holders to nominate a regularly occupied residential address as their primary storage location would reduce risk associated with firearms stored at premises that are not continuously occupied.
- Holiday homes and buildings on agricultural properties are known targets for criminals seeking to obtain firearms, resulting in hundreds of firearm thefts each year. As these locations are visited intermittently, thefts may go undetected and unreported for weeks or months. Alternatively, storage requirements for firearms not kept at a regularly occupied premises could be reviewed and possibly strengthened.

### 9.4.3 What we found

- The Review acknowledges the risk of theft of firearms from largely unoccupied or intermittently occupied premises. Currently there is inadequate data to understand the impact and prevalence of this type of theft.
- Further work should be undertaken to understand the level of risk posed and if material benefit would be achieved by increasing storage requirements for firearms in unoccupied premises in line with Victoria Police's advice (similar to reforms introduced in Western Australia and New South Wales requiring alarm systems at these locations, regardless of the number of firearms present).

## 10. Imitation firearms, firearms accessories and related items

### Terms of Reference 6: The regulatory treatment of imitation firearms, firearms accessories and related items

#### Recommendations

##### The Review recommends Government consider:

**Recommendation 9: Strengthening the regulation of imitation firearms, firearm accessories and firearms-related items to ensure settings are risk-based, support public safety, and remain fit for purpose.**

This should include:

- clarifying and aligning definitions of firearm parts with Commonwealth legislation to improve consistency, close regulatory gaps and support effective enforcement.
- introducing stronger controls on high-risk firearm accessories and components that may increase lethality, rate of fire or ease of misuse.
- ensuring regulatory frameworks capture accessories and firearms-related items (such as ammunition) that are not firearms in themselves but pose public safety risks due to their design, appearance, potential for adaptation or lack of existing oversight.
- enabling flexible regulatory mechanisms to allow timely responses to new or modified accessories and imitation items as they emerge.

#### Key findings

##### **Imitation firearms and firearm accessories require clearer, modern regulation**

Clear and nationally aligned laws would support more effective and efficient law enforcement.

##### **High-risk firearm accessories warrant stronger controls**

While accessories are not firearms, some can modify how firearms operate. This creates public safety risks that justify tighter regulation.

##### **Ammunition regulation requires stronger oversight**

Improved controls would help law enforcement identify stockpiling or the purchase of ammunition for illicit use, strengthening community safety.

### 10.1 Context

Under the *Control of Weapons Act*, an imitation firearm is defined as having an appearance that means it could be reasonably mistaken as an operable firearm, but is not designed or adapted to discharge shot, a bullet or other missile by the expansion of gases.<sup>92</sup>

Imitation firearms can be used to intimidate, control and traumatise victims, even where they are incapable of firing a projectile. Their impact on community fear and perceived safety can

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be significant. At the same time, imitation firearms may have legitimate uses that need to be recognised and preserved.

Similarly, firearm accessories are commonly used for lawful and practical purposes, including improving safety, accuracy and performance. However, some high-risk accessories can alter how a firearm operates or increases its potential for misuse, creating risks to both users and the broader community.

The Review examined how imitation firearms, firearm accessories and firearm related items are currently regulated under Victorian legislation, and whether the existing framework adequately reflects the risks these items can pose, while continuing to support legitimate use and public safety.

### 10.1.1 National Cabinet considerations

Work is underway at the national level to examine the regulation of imitation firearms and firearm accessories.

As part of this work, the exposure draft of the Commonwealth's proposed Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill 2026 included measures to strengthen import controls on certain firearms, firearm parts and accessories.

These measures covered items such as:

- firearms capable of using belt-fed ammunition
- magazines with a capacity exceeding 30 rounds
- frames and receivers
- skirmish markers
- silencers/ sound suppressors
- speed loaders.<sup>93</sup>

At the time of writing, these reforms remain under consideration.

On 17 January 2026, the Prime Minister announced that proposed firearm-related amendments would be progressed separately from the Bill's criminal law and migration measures.<sup>94</sup>

### 10.1.2 Other jurisdictions

The recent reforms in the Terrorism and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2025 expanded prohibited firearms in New South Wales to include firearms that can use:

- a link ammunition source
- a belt ammunition source
- a similar ammunition source to the above (i.e., outside of a detachable or fixed magazine).<sup>95</sup>

These reforms did not include any changes to how imitation firearms are regulated.

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Similarly, in its Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026, the Australian Capital Territory Government has proposed to prohibit belt-fed firearms.<sup>96</sup>

### 10.2 Imitation firearms

In Victoria, imitation firearm offences were part of the *Firearms Act* until amendments in 2010 to move these offences to the *Control of Weapons*.<sup>97</sup>

The *Control of Weapons Act* continues to regulate imitation firearms and sets out offences related to these devices.

In Victoria, imitation firearm offences were part of the *Firearms Act* until amendments in 2010 to move these offences to the *Control of Weapons Act*. The *Control of Weapons Act* continues to regulate imitation firearms and sets out offences related to these devices. Under the *Control of Weapons Act*, imitation firearms are treated as prohibited weapons and can be possessed with an exemption issued by the Governor in Council or an approval granted by the Chief Commissioner. Limited additional exceptions apply for workers in health and education who take possession of prohibited weapon for surrender to police.

#### 10.2.1 What we heard: Imitation firearms

##### **Imitation firearms are used for a range of legitimate purposes**

- Imitation firearms are used in the performing arts, historical re-enactments and public ceremonies.
- They are also required for events such as RSL commemorations and ANZAC Day services where blank-firing or replica firearms are used.

##### **Imitation firearms present emerging risks to community and police safety**

- The availability of realistic replicas and new imitation firearm products via online platforms has increased.
- There is a risk that imitation firearms may be mistaken for operational firearms, prompting police responses.

##### **Most respondents to the Review's survey consider current laws to be adequate**

- 85.3 per cent of all survey respondents (n=16,229) believe existing rules governing firearm parts, modifications, emerging technologies, imitation firearms and accessories are strong enough. Noting that the Review's online survey was not a representative survey of the Victorian population, and 88 per cent of responses were from licensed firearm users.
- 9.9 per cent of respondents overall (n=1,886) support stronger regulation.

#### 10.2.2 Victoria Police advice

- Offences and regulatory settings relating to imitation firearms are best aligned with those applying to illicit firearms. This is because imitation firearms must, by definition, be capable of being reasonably mistaken for real firearms.

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- The capacity of an imitation firearm to intimidate, control or traumatise a victim is not reduced by the fact that it cannot discharge a projectile. In practice, victims typically perceive a firearm as real and respond accordingly.
- Similarly, Victoria Police respond to reports of a firearm on the assumption that it is operational. These factors create real risks of harm and escalation for both the community and police.

### 10.2.3 What we found

- The Review acknowledges that existing legislation already recognises educational and performance uses as legitimate reasons for the possession and use of imitation firearms. These include the performing arts and historical re-enactments.
- As imitation firearms, by definition, do not meet the threshold of a functioning firearm under the *Firearms Act*, the Review does not recommend that their regulation be returned to the *Firearms Act*.
- The Review considers that the *Firearms Act* should remain confined to the regulation of operational firearms.
- This position does not preclude further consideration of whether existing regulatory settings for imitation firearms remain fit for purpose, including in relation to emerging products and technologies. The Review also acknowledges ongoing safety concerns associated with imitation firearms and the responses they can prompt. In this context, the Review considers there may be scope for future work, including improved education and awareness initiatives, to support public and community safety.

## 10.3 Firearms accessories and parts

The *Firearms Act* regulates accessories and parts related to firearms. This includes:

- parts of a firearm (e.g. screws)
- cartridge ammunition
- a silencer
- an attachment for a firearm
- an accessory for a firearm
- any other item related to a firearm that is prescribed by regulation.<sup>98</sup>

Belt-fed magazines are an accessory that New South Wales has addressed in their recent reforms. Belt-fed magazines are primarily used for machine guns, which Victorian law already classes as highly restricted firearms.

All categories of firearms under the National Firearms Agreement exclude automatic firearms, such as machine guns.

### 10.3.1 What we heard: Firearms accessories and parts

#### Firearm accessories are integral to lawful firearms use

- There is strong support for regulatory approaches that distinguish between accessories used for lawful purposes and those that enable circumvention of safety controls.
- Any restrictions should be evidence-based and proportionate to demonstrated risk.
- Survey results indicate most respondents consider current laws governing firearm parts, modifications, emerging technologies, imitation firearms and accessories to be sufficiently strong, with around one in ten supporting stronger regulation.

#### There is significant interest in the legalisation of silencers

- Legitimate reasons for legalising silencers identified through consultation include reducing peak noise levels, minimising noise pollution, lowering the risk of permanent hearing damage (including for working dogs), and supporting more humane and effective pest control by reducing animal distress.
- Silencers were frequently characterised as personal protective equipment that could improve occupational health and safety.
- Firearms users highlighted that media and film portrayals often incorrectly suggest silencers render firearms silent.

#### Ammunition regulation raises issues relating to compensation, practicality and oversight

- Concerns were raised that buyback compensation may not extend to ammunition, accessories and parts (noting this is outside the scope of the Review).
- Different hunting activities require different ammunition types, with specific cartridges needed for particular species and terrain to ensure ethical and humane outcomes.
- Stronger regulation and tracking of ammunition, including bulk purchases and privately manufactured ammunition, was raised as an area requiring further attention.

### 10.3.2 Victoria Police advice

- The *Firearms Act* does not include a definition of a 'firearm part'. The absence of a statutory definition creates challenges for enforcement and prosecution, with courts required to interpret legislative intent rather than rely on clear legislative thresholds.
- Introducing a legislated definition of 'firearm part' would provide greater clarity and consistency. The definition contained in the *Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956 (Cth)* provides a broad, well-established framework that aligns with industry terminology and understanding and could be considered for adoption in Victoria.
- The Commonwealth regulatory framework also includes separate definitions for 'accessory' and 'magazine', which may provide a useful reference point for strengthening definitional clarity in Victorian legislation.

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- Some firearm components are common everyday items, such as screws and springs.
- Regulatory oversight of ammunition sales is more limited than the governance, recording and monitoring arrangements that apply to firearms. This creates a gap in the ability to monitor ammunition acquisition and use.
- Introducing reporting obligations for ammunition retailers could support improved intelligence collection, including the proactive identification of licence holders who may be stockpiling ammunition or purchasing ammunition for illicit purposes.
- These reporting arrangements would be supported through integration with the National Firearms Register, with appropriate access shared across law enforcement agencies.

### 10.3.3 What we found

- Victoria's firearms regulatory framework would benefit from alignment with proposed Commonwealth reforms to strengthen controls on certain firearm accessories. Alignment would improve consistency across jurisdictions, address regulatory gaps identified, and support more effective enforcement.
- Implementation of alignment with Commonwealth reforms will require further examination of Victoria's existing legislative framework once national reforms are finalised, noting that these reforms remain proposed at the time of writing.
- The absence of a clear statutory definition of a 'firearm part' limits certainty about the conduct captured by Victorian manufacturing offences and Commonwealth import controls. Introducing a clear definition would support more effective regulation, including consideration of offences relating to the possession and trafficking of firearm parts.
- Existing regulatory controls on high-risk firearm accessories in Victoria are insufficient, particularly where accessories or components may increase lethality, rate of fire or ease of misuse.
- Although accessories and related items are not firearms and do not inherently carry the same level of risk, their capacity to modify existing firearms and alter their function presents a public safety risk that warrants targeted regulation.
- Current regulatory settings governing ammunition are inadequate and require strengthening.
- Effective reform in these areas requires regulatory mechanisms that are sufficiently flexible to respond to emerging accessories, components and imitation items as they develop.

## 11. Criminal intelligence in licensing decisions

**Terms of Reference 7: The appropriate use of criminal intelligence in firearms licensing decision making and the handling of intelligence information in licensing reviews**

### Recommendations

**The Review recommends that Government consider strengthening:**

**Recommendation 10: The use of criminal intelligence in firearms licensing and prohibition decisions**

This should include:

- using relevant criminal intelligence, such as AusCheck assessments where appropriate, to inform firearms licensing and suitability decisions
- strengthening integration with national intelligence systems, including real-time information sharing and alerts, to support timely risk-based decision-making
- allowing adverse intelligence to be considered in fit and proper person assessments, licence suspension or cancellation, and firearms prohibition order decisions, with appropriate safeguards

**Recommendation 11: How intelligence is protected and used in licensing reviews and appeals**

This should include:

- introducing protected or closed processes for the use and review of sensitive intelligence in licensing reviews and appeals
- applying these processes to matters considered by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)

### Key findings

**Intelligence is not consistently or promptly integrated into firearms licensing decisions**

- Victoria currently lacks real-time access to interstate intelligence and automated alerts for offending by licence holders.
- This limits the ability to identify emerging risks and undermines risk-based decision-making.

**System fragmentation limits effective use of criminal intelligence**

- Victoria Police relies on multiple, non-integrated systems to manage firearms licensing and intelligence.
- These limitations mean decision-makers may not have a complete intelligence picture when assessing fitness to hold firearms.

**Criminal intelligence is relevant beyond initial licensing decisions**

- Risk may still arise after a firearms licence is granted.
- Existing arrangements limit timely action where adverse intelligence becomes known post-licensing.
- Intelligence is relevant to firearms prohibition order decisions, not only fit and proper person assessments.

**National reforms create an opportunity to strengthen Victoria's approach**

- Commonwealth reforms enabling AusCheck, ASIO and ACIC assessments from 1 July 2026 provide a clear pathway to strengthen firearms licensing.
- State-based legislative change is required for Victoria to fully utilise these national intelligence capabilities.

**Current review and appeal processes do not adequately protect sensitive intelligence**

- Existing arrangements do not provide strong mechanisms to use intelligence without risking disclosure.
- This creates tension between public safety outcomes and procedural fairness.

**Independent review and legislative safeguards remain essential**

- Decisions relying on intelligence require independent oversight and clear safeguards to ensure fairness and compliance with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic).
- Legislative reform is needed to enable lawful use of intelligence while protecting sensitive holdings.

## 11.1 Context

### 11.1.1 Use of intelligence in firearms decision-making

Following the Bondi terrorist attack in December 2025, National Cabinet committed to strengthening how intelligence is used in firearms licensing decisions across Australia.

Firearms regulation protects public safety by identifying and responding to risk. Victoria Police has advised that intelligence, produced through systematic analysis of data and information, can inform assessments of whether a person is suitable to hold a firearms licence, particularly where risks may not be apparent from criminal history alone.

### 11.1.2 National Cabinet and Commonwealth reforms

Work has commenced at a national level to more closely examine how firearms laws can better identify and manage risk. For example, National Cabinet is working to strengthen firearms regulation, including making better use of criminal and national security intelligence when deciding who should be allowed to hold a firearms licence.<sup>99</sup>

In January 2026, the Australian Parliament passed new laws that strengthen background checks linked to firearms. These changes updated Commonwealth firearms import rules and introduced a national background-checking framework for firearms licensing through AusCheck.<sup>100</sup>

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AusCheck is a national service that confirms a person's identity and coordinates criminal history and national security checks. It is already used in high-risk and security-sensitive areas such as aviation, maritime transport, critical infrastructure, major national events and national health facilities.<sup>101</sup>

From 1 July 2026, the new framework will allow national security and criminal intelligence assessments by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) to be used as part of firearms licence applications and renewals.

Further work is underway between Governments to finalise how these checks will operate and how they will be implemented through state and territory laws.

### 11.1.3 Other jurisdictions

New South Wales has not introduced recent reforms specifically addressing the use of criminal intelligence in firearms licensing or decision-making processes.

Other Australian jurisdictions are similarly yet to implement changes in this area, pending further national and state-based work.

## 11.2 Criminal intelligence in licensing decisions

Separate from the AusCheck process, Victoria Police holds information and intelligence relevant to firearms licence holders and applicants, including material that may be classified or otherwise protected. This can include intelligence relating to organised crime or national security matters.

Victoria Police has advised that there are limitations on how this intelligence can be relied on in licensing decisions, as review and appeal processes may require disclosure of sensitive material.

The disclosure of such information, or confirmation of its existence, may expose law enforcement or intelligence-gathering methodologies, compromise ongoing or future investigations, and create broader risks to public and community safety.

Victoria Police support strengthening the way intelligence is used and protected within firearms decision-making to allow relevant risk information to be considered more effectively. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the appropriate safeguards are in place to prevent harmful disclosure. This would support more informed licensing and prohibition decisions that balance public safety with procedural fairness.

### 11.2.1 What we heard: Criminal intelligence in licensing decisions

#### **Strong support for better use of intelligence to improve public safety**

- There is broad support for integrating intelligence into firearms decision-making to prevent unsuitable individuals from accessing firearms.
- Regulatory effort should focus on risks such as violent extremism and organised crime, rather than law-abiding firearms licence holders.

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- Recent serious incidents were seen as highlighting failures in information sharing, rather than weaknesses in firearms laws themselves.

### **Safeguards are critical to ensure fairness and trust**

- There is strong support for safeguards to protect procedural fairness, transparency and privacy when intelligence is used.
- Concerns were raised that decisions based on incomplete, outdated or unverified intelligence could undermine confidence in the system.

### **National intelligence and information sharing are essential**

- Access to intelligence from other jurisdictions was seen as critical to informed firearms decisions in Victoria.
- The National Firearms Register is expected to improve real-time monitoring and strengthen access to relevant intelligence.

## **11.2.2 Victoria Police advice**

- Limitations in current information systems undermine effective risk assessment, with police and regulatory systems not interacting seamlessly or in real time.
- Gaps in alerts and notifications limit the identification of emerging risks, particularly in relation to interstate offending. These limitations affect the ability to make fully informed assessments of whether an individual is fit and proper to hold a firearms licence.
- Greater use of national intelligence in firearms licensing decision-making, including through the AusCheck process, prior to licence determination would strengthen risk assessment while appropriately balancing intelligence sensitivity, human rights and procedural fairness.
- Legislative settings should also support timely licence suspension or cancellation where adverse information becomes known after a licence has been issued.

## **11.2.3 What we found**

- Empirical evidence on the public safety impact of using criminal intelligence in firearms licensing decisions is currently limited, reflecting that this approach is still being implemented at a national level and that the AusCheck framework commences from July 2026. Notwithstanding this, there is a strong logical basis for the use of criminal intelligence to inform licensing decisions, as preventing unsuitable individuals- including those involved in organised crime, violent extremism or family violence- from accessing firearms would be expected to reduce the risk of firearms-related harm.
- Greater use of whole-of-Government information-sharing platforms across state, territory and Commonwealth agencies would strengthen secure, timely sharing of relevant information to support firearms licensing and regulation. Improved intelligence sharing is particularly important for identifying emerging and cross-jurisdictional risks.

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- Integrating Victoria's firearms licensing arrangements with national reforms, including AusCheck and other criminal intelligence assessments, would strengthen the licensing framework and support more informed, risk-based decision-making. This integration should be considered alongside ongoing national work to establish a National Firearms Register and update the National Firearms Agreement.

### 11.3 Use of intelligence in appeals of firearms licence decisions

Under Part 9 of the *Firearms Act*, the Firearms Appeals Committee (FAC) is currently responsible for reviewing decisions of the Chief Commissioner to:

- cancel a firearms licence
- refuse a firearms licence application
- impose certain conditions on a firearms licence.

The FAC includes representatives from the legal community, the firearms industry, and members nominated by the Minister for Police.

The future forum for firearms reviews and appeal processes is under consideration.

In 2025, the Independent Review of the Victorian Public Service recommended abolishing the FAC and transferring its functions to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).<sup>102</sup>

This change is intended to streamline governance, reduce administrative burden, and support more consistent handling of complex matters, including those involving sensitive intelligence. The Victorian Government has accepted this recommendation.

#### 11.3.1 What we heard: Use of intelligence in appeals of firearms licence decisions

##### **Intelligence should play a greater role in firearms licence decisions**

- Using national intelligence, including through AusCheck, prior to firearms licence decisions would strengthen risk management while appropriately balancing intelligence protection, human rights and procedural fairness.
- Legislative settings should allow for firearms licences to be suspended or cancelled where adverse intelligence becomes known after a licence has been granted.

##### **Fairness and independent review must be maintained**

- Intelligence-informed decision-making must maintain procedural fairness.
- Independent merits review of firearms decisions is considered essential.
- Sole reliance on internal police reconsideration is viewed as insufficient without independent oversight.
- Safeguards are required to ensure transparency and fairness.

##### **Appeal processes must protect sensitive intelligence**

- Bodies that hear firearms licensing appeals must be able to protect criminal and national security intelligence.

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- Existing legislative settings limit the ability to fully protect sensitive intelligence in some appeal processes.

### 11.3.2 Victoria Police advice

- The ability to make well-informed, risk-based decisions is critical to the effectiveness of the firearm regulatory framework. At the same time, the use of national intelligence, including AusCheck, must prioritise the protection of sensitive intelligence holdings to avoid compromising investigations, intelligence sources or national security.
- Transferring firearms appeal functions from the Firearms Appeals Committee to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) would strengthen governance, independence and oversight of review processes.
- The use of intelligence should apply to firearms prohibition order decisions, as well as to firearms licensing and registration decisions.
- Information received through AusCheck and other partner agencies should be capable of being used in firearms prohibition order decisions, subject to appropriate safeguards.
- Adverse intelligence may be relevant not only to an individual applicant, but also to close associates, recognising that access to firearms can occur through family or associate networks.
- Legislative amendments could enable VCAT to conduct special hearings in firearms matters, with an independent person appointed to represent the interests of applicants, allowing sensitive material to be disclosed and considered safely during reviews.

### 11.3.3 What we found

- The use of intelligence in firearms licensing and registration decisions raises significant considerations relating to fairness, procedural transparency and human rights, which must be considered in accordance with Victoria's obligations under the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities*.
- These considerations are particularly complex where intelligence cannot be verified or disclosed to an applicant whose licence is refused or revoked, even where legitimate community safety concerns underpin the decision. Managing the tension between community protection and procedural fairness is a central challenge in the use of intelligence-based decision-making.
- As processes relating to AusCheck findings will be managed by the Australian Government, any Victorian reforms should be embedded in legislation and applied as a prerequisite to a firearms licensing application proceeding.
- This approach would enable firearms licensing decisions in Victoria to appropriately reflect relevant assessments by ASIO and the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, while operating within a clear, lawful and transparent framework.

## 12. Information sharing arrangements between agencies

### Terms of Reference 8: Information sharing arrangements between agencies to strengthen licensing regimes

#### Recommendations

##### **The Review recommends that Government consider strengthening:**

##### **Recommendation 12: National information-sharing arrangements for firearms licensing and monitoring**

This should include:

- implementing the National Firearms Register to provide consistent, near-real-time visibility of firearms and licence holders across jurisdictions
- enabling access through a secure national trusted-user portal for authorised agencies
- integrating Victoria's firearms licensing framework with national information-sharing systems to support timely alerts and risk identification

##### **Recommendation 13: State-based information-sharing and systems to support risk-based decision-making**

This should include:

- modernising Victoria Police firearms licensing, compliance and intelligence systems to support real-time information sharing and risk assessment
- improving integration between Victoria Police systems and state-based digital platforms, including Service Victoria, to streamline information flow and user interaction
- exploring opportunities for information sharing within Victoria, including with health agencies, to support prevention, compliance and risk management
- ensuring appropriate funding and resourcing for Victoria Police to implement and sustain these system and information-sharing reforms

#### Key findings

##### **Modernising Victoria Police firearms information systems will enable timely access to relevant licensing and risk information**

Current systems need updating to support a near-real-time national register and integration with state-based digital platforms, including Service Victoria.

##### **There are opportunities for greater information sharing within Victoria**

Mechanisms for Victorian health agencies to share firearm injury information and details with Victoria Police should be explored to inform risk assessment, compliance and prevention efforts.

##### **Integration with a national information sharing system will have resource implications for Victoria Police**

Victoria Police's existing systems cannot perform the essential information sharing functions needed to achieve the objectives of the National Firearms Register.

## 12.1 Context

### 12.1.1 National reforms

The Commonwealth has recently introduced a package of firearms-related reforms aimed at strengthening national oversight and information sharing. These reforms include measures to:

- enable the future establishment of a national background-checking scheme for firearms licence applicants and holders through AusCheck
- enable firearms data to be shared with the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) to strengthen criminal intelligence assessments.<sup>103</sup>

The use of background checks and criminal intelligence in firearms decision-making is examined in more detail in [TOR 7: Criminal Intelligence in licensing decisions](#).

At present, all police services in Australia, including Victoria Police, share firearms-related law enforcement information with other jurisdictions through the National Criminal Intelligence System (NCIS) managed by the ACIC. The NCIS allows near-real-time visibility of a person of interest's national involvements and relevant incidents.

However, the limitations of Victoria Police's Licensing and Registration System (LARS) – discussed in [TOR 3: Licence types and additional restrictions](#) – mean that it can neither receive information from NCIS nor share more than limited information with it. Currently, the NCIS does not create automatic notifications and requires manual checks. This means there is no continuous, real-time (or near-real-time) checking for incidents in other jurisdictions or the Commonwealth.

Alongside NCIS, each state and territory — including Victoria — operates its own separate firearms registry. Both arrangements will be significantly strengthened through the planned introduction of the National Firearms Register.

The National Firearms Register will connect firearms registries, portals and management systems across all jurisdictions, providing near-real-time visibility of firearms, licence information and relevant incidents.<sup>104</sup> It will also address current limitations, such as the inability for firearms dealers to readily verify the validity of interstate licences and the lack of automatic NCIS notifications of incidents in other jurisdictions.

Commencement of the National Firearms Register is expected by July 2028.

The Licensing and Registrations System (LARS) is the regulatory system used by Victoria Police. It was introduced in response to the *Firearms Act* and now supports firearms and private security regulation. Replacement of LARS is essential prior to acquitting Victoria's commitment to implement the National Firearms Register to facilitate systems integration.

### 12.1.2 Other jurisdictions

New South Wales has not introduced specific reforms focused on the use of criminal intelligence in firearms licensing decision-making. New South Wales, like other jurisdictions, currently operates its own firearms registry and participates in national information-sharing arrangements through ACIC-managed systems.

Further alignment with national reforms, including the National Firearms Register and AusCheck, will be determined through ongoing intergovernmental work and the implementation of complementary state-based legislation.

## 12.2 What we heard: National information-sharing arrangements

### Strong support for improved intelligence and information sharing

- There is strong support for better intelligence sharing and cooperation between national security agencies and Victoria Police to identify individuals linked to terrorism, violent extremism or organised crime.
- Failures in intelligence and information sharing were seen as a greater risk to public safety than gaps in existing firearms laws.
- Ongoing, real-time monitoring was a recurring theme, with multiple stakeholders considering it more effective than point-in-time assessments at application or renewal. Some stakeholders suggested that real-time monitoring of flaggable events (e.g., charges, intervention orders, court outcomes) had the potential for immediate licence suspension and/or revocation of firearms.

### Cyber security and data protection are critical

- Concerns were raised about the potential consequences of a cyber security breach involving the national firearms register.
- Exposure of firearms ownership data could increase the risk of targeted theft and violent crime affecting licence holders, their families, the wider community and police.
- Strong cyber security and governance measures were considered essential, including strict access controls, encryption and independent auditing.

### Victoria Police firearms information systems require modernisation

- Victoria Police's Licensing and Registration System (LARS) requires upgrading to reduce the risk of human error and loss of information.
- Modernising LARS would support more accurate, timely and reliable firearms licensing and registration data.
- Upgrading LARS is a prerequisite for effective integration with national systems such as the National Firearms Register.
- Delays in updating firearm storage locations and registration details mean outdated information can remain on file, limiting the effectiveness of compliance and risk management.

### National system integration will have resource implications

- The scope of information to be included in the National Firearms Register is still being determined, including whether it will contain factual data only or also link to intelligence or unverified information.
- Access to intelligence-linked information would have significant resourcing implications for Victoria Police, given different legal thresholds, decision-making requirements and staff capability needs.
- Additional funding and workforce capability will be required to support effective use of national information-sharing systems.

## 12.3 What we heard: State-based information-sharing arrangements

### Information sharing within Victoria can be strengthened

- Effective firearms monitoring requires better integration between licensing systems and criminal intelligence to identify and manage risk.
- Relevant information held by other Victorian agencies, such as the Game Management Authority and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, is currently stored in separate systems and not routinely accessible to Victoria Police. As a result, Victoria Police's Licensing and Regulation Division (LRD) may be unaware of prosecutions undertaken by non-Victoria Police enforcement agencies (e.g., WorkSafe, the Game Management Authority, Parks Victoria), and subsequently unable to consider this when undertaking fit and proper persons assessments.
- Recording this information in a state-managed system and making it available to authorised National Firearms Register users would strengthen licensing and regulatory decision-making. Notably, while the National Firearms Register is intended to automatically notify Victoria Police of relevant incidents in other jurisdictions, no equivalent mechanism is proposed within Victoria itself – leaving a gap in LRD's awareness and intelligence.
- Victoria Police does not have automated access to approved shooting range attendance records and relies on manual or proactive information sharing.
- Electronic recording of attendance data in a state-managed system, accessible to authorised users, would support compliance and risk identification. Multiple industry stakeholders and representative groups felt that real-time, integrated information-sharing would allow for better and faster identification and management of risk.
- Cultural and organisational barriers were identified as limiting information sharing within Victoria Police and across Victorian Government agencies, indicating that legislative change alone will not address these challenges.

### Digital platforms could support this work and benefit licence holders

- A state-managed digital platform could improve information sharing between Victorian public sector agencies, firearms licence applicants and industry.
- Service Victoria integration for firearms licences is currently being trialled. The trial allows for digital versions of existing firearms licences and for renewals to be done

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mostly online. If funded, the next phase of the trial would be to accept new licence applications.

### 12.4 Victoria Police advice

- Enhanced information-sharing arrangements at the state level would support the effective operation of Victoria's firearms licensing and registration framework.
- While work is underway to improve internal information sharing and system interactions, existing arrangements are constrained by outdated and fragmented systems. There is a clear need for modern, fit-for-purpose regulatory information systems capable of creating a holistic view of an applicant's or licence holder's history, risk profile, suitability and firearms holdings, and that can adapt as risks and technologies evolve.
- Victorian systems require significant upgrade or replacement to enable real-time information sharing with national databases and to support accurate, up-to-date risk assessments as individual circumstances change.
- Better connecting firearms licensing systems with other government data sources, including notifications of address changes and outcomes of medical or regulatory reviews that result in licence or permit cancellation in other schemes (such as driver or occupational licences).
- Further consultation and design work is necessary to ensure sensitive personal and health information is appropriately protected, governed and shared.

#### 12.4.1 What we found

- Effective information sharing is essential to safer firearms regulation. Achieving this will require sustained investment, clear governance arrangements and coordinated collaboration across agencies.
- Strengthening firearms licensing and public safety depends on improved connectivity between firearms regulatory systems and other relevant government data sources. This includes the ability to receive timely notifications when a licence holder or applicant experiences a material change in circumstances, such as a change of address or a medical or regulatory review resulting in licence cancellation or restriction under other schemes (for example, driver licensing or professional licensing).
- Victoria's current information-sharing arrangements are constrained by siloed systems and fragmented data holdings. Experience from national intelligence and law enforcement coordination models demonstrates that formalised, long-term structural mechanisms for collaboration can help overcome cultural and organisational barriers to effective information sharing.
- Any expansion of information-sharing arrangements must be supported by careful consultation and design to ensure sensitive personal and health information is collected, stored, accessed and shared in a lawful, proportionate and secure manner.

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- Cyber security is a critical risk consideration. Centralised firearms information systems, including the National Firearms Register, present heightened risks if compromised, including the potential for targeted theft and violence against licence holders and their families. Robust governance frameworks, strict access controls, encryption and independent auditing are essential prerequisites for implementation.
- Successful implementation and use of the National Firearms Register will require additional resourcing and funding. Existing Victorian firearms regulatory systems are not capable of supporting the level of information sharing required to meet the objectives of the National Firearms Register.
- These legacy systems cannot be readily upgraded due to age, incompatibility with modern platforms and known vulnerabilities. Replacement of these systems is therefore a critical dependency for effective integration with national reforms.
- Improved information sharing between jurisdictions through the National Firearms Register, and within Victoria through enhanced state-based systems, would significantly increase visibility of emerging risks associated with licence holders. This would support earlier intervention and more responsive regulatory action to prevent harm.
- Building on the trial of Service Victoria integration for firearms licences, full implementation of a single licensing platform could enable all licences to be held within one system. This would benefit licence holders with multiple licences and strengthen regulatory oversight by supporting real-time information sharing.

## 13. Promoting public safety

### Terms of Reference 9: Any other associated matters required to promote public safety

#### Recommendations

The Review recommends Government consider strengthening:

#### Recommendation 14: The evidence base for informing firearms policy

- Improve research, data collection and analysis on both firearms-related harm and lawful firearms use, including economic and societal impacts, to support evidence-based decision-making and ongoing evaluation of regulatory settings.

#### Recommendation 15. Advisory governance arrangements and representation

- Review the role, membership and operation of the Victorian Firearms Consultative Committee (VFCC) to ensure advice reflects community safety objectives, victim perspectives, independent expertise and the broader public interest. Embed victim experience and the principles of the *Victims' Charter Act (2006)* (Vic) in firearms policy development.

#### Recommendation 16. Community engagement and public communication

- Establish clear and accountable roles for community engagement and public communication to deliver accurate, accessible and consistent information about firearms regulation and its public safety purpose. Engagement should be informed by research and evidence, support understanding of legitimate regulation, and proactively address community concerns and perceptions.

#### Key findings

#### Promoting public safety depends on the strength and effectiveness of Victoria's firearms regulatory system

Community safety depends on clear legislation, effective licensing, monitoring and enforcement, and public confidence that the system can identify and respond to risk when it arises.

#### Maintaining public confidence in the *Firearms Act 1996* (Vic) is essential to reducing the risk of harm and ensuring that all Victorians feel safe

Reducing the risk of harm and ensuring all Victorians feel safe requires effective laws, supported by clear public understanding of how the *Firearms Act 1996* (Vic) operates and why targeted reforms may be necessary to preserve public safety into the future.

Strengthening the evidence base through evaluation and improved data collection will support well-informed policy decisions, clarify which regulatory settings are most effective, and help build community confidence and acceptance of future change.

**The structure of advisory governance bodies influences the quality and legitimacy of firearms policy**

While current advisory arrangements provide valuable operational insight, they are weighted toward firearms industry and user perspectives, limiting the breadth of views informing advice on community safety and the public interest.

**Victims' experiences reinforce the importance of preventative regulation and early intervention**

Firearms-related harm extends beyond physical injury to include fear, loss of safety and secondary impacts on families and communities, highlighting the need for risk-based regulation and coordinated responses.

**Variation in community understanding affects confidence in firearms regulation**

Community understanding varies, including limited awareness of the strength of existing regulation and the legitimate, lawful use of firearms, as well as concern or fear about the number of firearms in the community. Clear roles and responsibilities and evidence-based communication support informed public discussion and reinforces the primary purpose of the *Firearms Act 1996 (Vic)* - community safety.

## 13.1 Context

Major firearms-related incidents, including the Bondi terrorist attack in December 2025, have heightened community concern about safety and prompt renewed public debate about firearms regulation.

The attack led directly to National Cabinet's decision to strengthen firearms laws nationally, with Australia currently undergoing the most significant tightening of firearm regulation since the original 1996 National Firearms Agreement.

This work involves National Cabinet-driven reforms, state and territory legislative changes, and nationwide system upgrades – all aimed at improving community safety.

Community debate can become polarised following major incidents, particularly where fear and loss of safety are present. Perceptions of harm, whether from lawful or unlawful firearms, play a strong role in shaping public concern and the demand for regulatory action. These impacts are relevant to the purpose of firearms regulation, even where risk is perceived rather than realised.

This Review heard from both sides of this debate. Some people expressed fear about firearms access and want stronger controls. At the same time, lawful firearms users reported that public debate following major incidents can place disproportionate focus on lawful ownership, leading to perceptions of blame or stigma, despite high levels of compliance.

This reinforces the importance of proportionate, evidence-based policy responses clearly focused on managing risk addressing harm from illicit firearms, and respecting lawful firearms use.

## 13.2 Research, data collection and analysis

Evidence confirms a broadly accepted link between strong firearms laws and improved community safety. Jurisdictions with clear, well-enforced rules governing firearm ownership and use achieve better safety outcomes. This is evident in harm reduction since the 1996 National Firearms Agreement was introduced and backed by US research comparing community safety outcomes state-by-state based on various legislated firearms controls.<sup>105</sup>

The Review identified limitations in the available evidence base informing firearms policy in Victoria. There is limited independent data on the effectiveness of specific regulatory measures and a lack of locally relevant research.

These gaps affect both policy design and confidence in the regulatory system.

When reforms cannot be clearly linked to evidence, trust can be undermined – both among those concerned about public safety and among lawful firearms users seeking assurance that regulation is fair and effective.

Firearms misuse, whether by legitimate or unlawful users, is a complex policy issue with no single solution proven to be fully effective. A combination of measures, supported by ongoing evaluation, is required to understand what works and to adjust settings over time.

Greater investment in research, data and evidence would support assessment of whether regulatory changes are contributing to community safety, help identify unintended consequences, and strengthen the basis for future policy decisions.

Given these evidence limitations, the Review's recommendations focus on strengthening Victoria's capacity to build the evidence base.

Investing in independent research and evaluation, ensuring policy advice draws on diverse expertise including victim perspectives, and improving public understanding of how regulation works and why reforms are made.

Together, these build the system capabilities needed to promote public safety effectively.

### 13.2.1 Comparative experience on firearms reform, evidence and community safety

Firearms reform in other jurisdictions can provide useful context for Victoria's approach to promoting community safety.

#### Canada

In 2022, Canada introduced a national freeze on handgun ownership<sup>106</sup>. The Government was explicit that the objective was not immediate crime reduction, but limiting future growth in the legal handgun market and reducing longer-term risks associated with diversion, theft and misuse. The reform was framed as a long-term, preventative strategy. At the time of this Review, comprehensive outcome data on the impact of the freeze is not yet available.

#### Australia

International research consistently recognises the effectiveness of Australia's 1996 firearms reforms, which are associated with sustained reductions in firearm suicides and homicides and, for many years, the near elimination of mass shooting incidents.<sup>107</sup> Despite this, serious incidents have continued to occur, reinforcing that strong firearms laws reduce risk over time but cannot eliminate all harm.

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### New Zealand

Research from New Zealand shows that firearm incidents impose significant social and economic costs beyond immediate injury and loss of life, affecting families, communities and public services.<sup>108</sup> The terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019 exposed weaknesses in New Zealand's firearm licensing and regulatory framework, prompting urgent legislative action.

*The Arms (Prohibited Firearms, Magazines, and Parts) Amendment Act 2019* was enacted on 11 April 2019, amending the *Arms Act 1983* to prohibit most semi-automatic firearms, large-capacity magazines and related parts, supported by a temporary amnesty and buy-back scheme to remove these weapons from circulation and compensate owners with valid licences.

These reforms show that the Christchurch attack led directly to stronger gun laws across the country, aimed at preventing similar tragedies and limiting the wider harm firearm violence inflicts on society.

### Licensed firearm ownership

Across jurisdictions, evidence indicates licensed firearm owners are rarely responsible for firearm violence. Most firearm-related crime involves unlicensed or illicit firearms. Where licensed firearms are involved, incidents most commonly relate to accidental discharge, family violence or self-harm.

### Bondi terrorist attack

The Bondi terrorist attack had a profound impact on community confidence and perceptions of safety. One perpetrator was a licensed firearm owner, highlighting the importance of ensuring firearms licence holders remain fit and proper persons. The attack highlights a central policy tension: strong firearms laws reduce harm over time, but no regulatory system can eliminate risk entirely.

Across these examples, a consistent pattern emerges: Strong firearms regulation reduces harm and saves lives.

As Bondi demonstrates, no regulatory system eliminates all risk.

The question is not whether reforms guarantee prevention. Rather, the question is whether they improve safety while allowing lawful use.

International evidence suggests they do, but only when implemented with clear intent, adequate resourcing and ongoing evaluation.

## 13.2.2 What we heard: Research and Evidence

### A stronger evidence base is needed to support confident firearms policy and informed public debate

- Independent research and evaluation are needed to assess the impact of regulatory settings over time.
- The ability to test whether regulation and enforcement measures are working as intended was seen as critical to improving community safety.

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### Gaps in data limit evidence-based decision-making

- Clear, accessible and locally relevant data to support firearms policy decisions is limited.
- Limited independent evidence reduces confidence in both existing regulatory settings and proposed reforms.

### Views on reform are shaped by lived experience

- Perspectives on firearms reform were strongly influenced by personal and professional experience.
- Support ranged from broader regulatory controls to more targeted, risk-based reforms.

### There are differing policy preferences

- Licensed firearm users favoured stronger enforcement and increased education rather than additional regulation.
- Non-users were more likely to support strengthened regulatory controls, alongside enforcement and education.

### Understanding of firearms laws varies significantly

- Almost half of all survey respondents (49.3 per cent (n=9387) reported that they understood Victoria's current firearms laws and licensing rules well because they are a licensed firearms user.
- A further 41.4 per cent (n=7882) reported understanding laws and rules well and feeling confident in commenting on them.
- A little under one-in-ten (8.1 per cent, n=1533) had a general understanding of firearms laws, but not the details of them or how they are regulated.
- Very few respondents knew only a little about firearms laws (0.9 per cent, n=161). Even fewer (0.3 per cent, n=63) did not know much or were not sure about their understanding.

## 13.3 Roles and responsibilities in promoting community safety

Victoria's firearms regulatory system is designed to promote community safety through effective, preventative regulation and to demonstrate that firearms are subject to rigorous oversight in Victoria.

As the regulator, Victoria Police plays a central role in administering the licensing framework, assessing whether individuals remain fit and proper to possess firearms, monitoring compliance with legislative requirements, and taking enforcement action where risk or non-compliance is identified.

This combination of clear legislative intent and active, specialist regulation supports early risk identification, consistent decision-making and public confidence that firearms are regulated in the interests of community safety.

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Effective firearms regulation in Victoria requires settings that reduce risk, are enforceable and proportionate, and recognise legitimate use, consistent with the *Firearms Act's* primary purpose of preserving public safety and the peace of the community.

Stakeholders consulted during this Review highlighted that firearms organisations, clubs and industry groups also have an important supporting role in promoting safe, responsible and lawful use.

These groups support education and training, reinforce safety standards, foster a culture of compliance, and contribute to broader community understanding of firearms regulation and responsible ownership. While regulatory authority rests with Government, these groups form part of the broader system that supports community safety outcomes.

A consistent theme throughout consultations was the importance of strong governance, inclusive engagement and evidence-based decision-making. Effective firearms policy depends on Governments being informed by a wide range of views, experiences and evidence, including operational insight from regulators, expert advice, community sentiment and the voices of victims.

Advisory arrangements should reflect this full range of perspectives – not only operational and technical expertise, but also victim experience, independent research, and broader community safety considerations. Balanced advisory governance ensures that advice to Government is transparent, evidence-based and focused on the Act's primary purpose of preserving public safety.

Achieving these outcomes will require coordinated cross-departmental and inter-agency effort, supported by appropriate funding. Clear governance and resourcing will help ensure consistent implementation and maintain public confidence in the regulatory system.

### 13.4 Strengthening advisory governance and representation

The Victorian Firearms Consultative Committee (VFCC) provides advice to the Minister for Police on firearms policy in Victoria. Advisory arrangements play an important role in supporting transparent, evidence-informed advice and ensuring policy development reflects community safety objectives and the broader public interest.

While the VFCC is the primary advisory body, effective firearms governance also depends on clear role definition across the regulatory system. This includes the respective roles of Victoria Police as regulator, relevant Government agencies, advisory bodies and firearms organisations in supporting understanding, compliance and public confidence in firearms regulation.

#### 13.4.1 What we heard: Strengthening advisory governance and representation

##### **Broadening perspectives would strengthen the community safety focus**

- Including victim perspectives, independent academics and researchers, and community representatives without a direct firearms interest would strengthen advice to Government.

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- Broader representation was seen as important to ensuring community safety, prevention and public confidence considerations are consistently reflected in policy advice.

### **Current membership provides operational insight, but may limit breadth**

- Firearms users and industry representatives were recognised as providing valuable technical and operational insight into how firearms laws operate in practice.
- At the same time, the current balance of representation was seen as limiting consideration of wider harm-prevention, victim experience and public interest perspectives.

### **A clearer system-wide role in promoting understanding of the Act**

- Stakeholders noted that misunderstanding about firearms regulation contributes to fear, polarisation and reduced confidence in the system.
- The VFCC could support clearer communication about the intent and operation of Victoria's firearms laws, including the responsibilities associated with lawful ownership.
- Promotion and education were viewed as a shared responsibility, involving:
  - Victoria Police, through guidance, regulation and enforcement visibility and public reassurance;
  - The Game Management Authority whose stated purpose is to regulate hunting through education, research and enforcement to achieve responsible and sustainable game hunting;
  - Government agencies, through policy development, victim-centred approaches and public safety frameworks;
  - The VFCC, through advisory leadership and support for consistent messaging; and
  - Firearms organisations and clubs, through education, training, mentoring and reinforcement of compliance culture.
- A co-ordinated approach to education and engagement was seen as reducing misunderstanding without shifting regulatory authority and responsibility from Government.

### **Greater transparency and evidence would support confidence**

- Stronger and more explicit use of independent research and data in advisory discussions would improve confidence in advice to Government.
- Broader representation was viewed as supporting more transparent deliberation and clearer articulation of how community safety considerations inform policy advice.

## 13.4.2 What we found

- Representation on the VFCC is currently weighted toward firearms industry and user groups. While this provides valuable operational insight, it may narrow the range of perspectives informing advice to Government and limit transparency around how

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community safety, victim experience and public confidence considerations are incorporated.

- There is an opportunity to strengthen advisory governance by adopting a more balanced membership model and clarifying how advisory, regulatory and promotional roles operate together.
- A clearer system-wide approach would support stronger governance, more robust evidence-informed advice and improved community confidence that firearms regulation is operating in line with the *Firearms Act's* primary purpose of preserving public safety and the peace of the community.

### 13.5 Victims and community impacts

Understanding the full impact of firearms-related harm – including death, injury, fear, loss of safety and secondary impacts on families and communities – is essential to assessing risk and designing effective regulatory responses.

The Review heard from victims of firearms-related crime, health professionals, family violence services, and the Victorian Victims of Crime Commissioner about these impacts.

#### In their own words

Firearms were central to Rebecca Burdon's tragic loss.

Her 70-year-old mother, Marilyn was shot and killed by a man with a firearm he should never have had.

Rebecca described him as "a ticking time bomb."

He was a prohibited person, subject to a Family Violence Intervention Order, who had previously held multiple firearms.

When his licence was revoked, those firearms were transferred to associates rather than removed from circulation – an arrangement that left him with continued access to firearms he was legally prohibited from holding.

Several of the firearms he was required to relinquish were never reliably traced, including one recorded as "whereabouts unknown" for many years before it was used in the murder.

Rebecca and her family did not initially recognise what was happening as family violence.

Like many people, they understood family violence as something that required ongoing or physical abuse – not the pattern of coercive control and threat their mother was living with.

After her mother's death, Rebecca found the system response dismissive.

"Murder-suicide. Nothing to see here. Let's move along," was how she experienced the system.

Her family had to persistently push for scrutiny of the circumstances and ultimately fund a coronial inquest themselves to bring the critical issues to light.

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The coronial findings identified firearms-specific regulatory gaps – including permissive transfer arrangements, unresolved missing firearms, and limited follow-up – that weakened the effectiveness of prohibition settings and allowed firearms to remain accessible despite known risks.

**Rebecca's experience illustrates how failures in firearms transfer, tracking and removal from circulation can have fatal consequences when firearms remain accessible to people who should not have them.**

### 13.5.1 What we heard: Victims and community impacts

#### **Firearms-related injury and death are viewed as preventable harms**

- Firearms increase lethality in interpersonal violence and self-harm.
- Risks extend to children and other household members.
- Approximately one-tenth of respondents (12.3 per cent, n=2,344) to the Review's online survey had observed community members being concerned about firearms and public safety.

#### **Victimisation extends beyond direct physical harm**

- Harm affects families and communities, including through fear and threat.
- Victimisation occurs in multiple forms, as recognised by the Victims of Crime Commissioner.

#### **Firearms present specific risks in family violence contexts**

- Firearms were identified as a foreseeable risk factor in coercive control.
- Access in regional communities can increase risk and affect help-seeking.

#### **Preventative regulation and early intervention reduce risk**

- Timely firearm removal, licence monitoring and visible enforcement were identified as critical.

#### **Information sharing supports risk management**

- Strengthened information sharing between agencies was seen as essential.

Victims' experiences show that harm extends far beyond direct injury, and that preventative regulation can reduce risk before it escalates.

### 13.5.2 Victoria Police advice

- There have been circumstances where respondents to court-issued FVIOs of firearms prohibition orders have transferred their licenced firearms to other licensed associates. While such transfers may be lawful, they create a risk that the respondent may retain practical access to those firearms despite the existence of the order.
- Amendments to the Firearms Act could provide for the automatic forfeiture of firearms where a licence holder becomes the respondent to a FVIO or PSIO.

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- In such circumstances, firearms could be forfeited to Victoria Police or transferred to an authorised firearms dealer pending the finalisation of any prosecution and an assessment of whether the licence holder remains a fit and proper person to hold a firearms licence.

### 13.5.3 What we found

- The Review heard that in circumstances where a final FVIO or PSIO is issued against a person, this person becomes a 'prohibited person' under the Firearms Act. This means it is an offence for this person to possess, carry or use a firearm.
- However, the Review considers that there is a gap in between when the behaviour is reported or an interim order is made and when the final FVIO or PSIO is issued (and the person becomes a 'prohibited person'). During this period, the individual still retains access to their firearms, and the victim will likely continue to feel unsafe and may face considerable or heightened risk of harm.
- The Review understands that New South Wales has introduced reforms to expand disqualifying offences in their regulations, including personal and domestic violence offences within the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007. Further, Western Australia have introduced Mandatory Disqualifying Offences and Orders (MDOs) to revoke or deny gun licenses for serious, violent, or domestic offenders.
- While Victoria has an existing *prohibited person* framework that restricts family violence offenders from accessing firearms, further work should be undertaken to assess whether additional reforms may be appropriate in the Victorian context. This should include consultation with relevant family violence stakeholders and consideration of human rights implications, including in relation to potential property forfeiture.

#### In their own words

Grace is a Victorian mother who has experienced ongoing family violence.

Over several years, she obtained multiple Intervention Orders (IVOs) against her perpetrator.

Different Magistrates found that he had committed family violence and required his behaviour to be restrained. Despite this, he was later permitted to regain access to a firearm.

For Grace, the firearm represented part of the fear and control she experienced.

The perpetrator made serious threats to kill her and described how he would harm her.

Knowing he had firearms training and legal access to a gun made those threats feel credible.

Grace continues to live with anxiety and trauma and says she has never felt fully safe while he has access to a firearm.

Grace reported threats and alleged breaches to police. While IVOs were granted, she says breaches were not always acted on.

In one instance, a magistrate acknowledged that family violence had occurred but described the perpetrator as an "exemplary citizen" and restored his firearm licence.

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Grace found this deeply distressing and believes discretion in the law allowed his occupation and status to outweigh the risks to her and her children.

Grace believes that where there has been a court finding of family violence should automatically mean no access to a firearm. For her, this is not about punishment but about prevention and collective safety.

Grace central message to decision makers reviewing firearms laws in Victoria is simple: family violence does not discriminate, and neither should gun laws.

Grace wants a system where findings of family violence lead to consistent consequences, so that women and children are not left living in fear while perpetrators retain access to lethal weapons.

*\*Names have been changed to protect participants' privacy.*

### 13.6 Strengthening community engagement and public communication

Confidence in Victoria's firearms regulatory system supports community safety.

This confidence is shaped not only by the law itself, but by how well the system is understood to operate in practice.

Where understanding of firearms regulation is limited, concern and fear can increase regardless of the underlying strength of the regulatory framework. Clear, proactive communication supports informed public debate, distinguishes between lawful and unlawful activity, and strengthens acceptance of evidence-based reform.

#### Victorian context: lawful firearms use within a regulated system

There is limited general awareness of the long history of regulated firearms use in Victoria.

Lawful firearms use in Victoria occurs across a range of agricultural, conservation, pest management, sport shooting and occupational activities, operating within structured licensing, compliance and enforcement frameworks.

Firearms are used as part of coordinated programs to manage invasive species such as deer, pigs, foxes and rabbits, which pose ongoing risks to biodiversity, land stability and public infrastructure. These programs are typically undertaken in partnership with land managers and Government agencies as part of broader environmental risk-reduction strategies.

Recreational hunting is a significant and regulated activity in Victoria, involving more than 38,000 licensed participants each year.<sup>109</sup>

In 2024, an estimated 167,600 deer were harvested, reflecting the scale of the invasive deer population.<sup>110</sup>

A Victorian hunter with more than 50 years of experience demonstrates how effective pest management and game harvesting across varied landscapes requires access to firearms suited to specific species, environments and legal settings.

In managing rabbits, foxes, feral pigs, goats, wild dogs, invasive birds and sambar deer, different calibres and configurations are required to meet minimum calibre laws, ensure

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humane outcomes and operate safely in conditions ranging from close range scrub to longer distance shooting and thermal assisted night control.

In this case, maintaining a collection of multiple firearms reflects functional necessity, proportionality and compliance, supporting responsible pest control and sustainable meat harvesting rather than unnecessary duplication.

While recreational hunting contributes to population management and regional economies, it has not, on its own, been sufficient to prevent population growth or range expansion.

More rapid population reduction is typically achieved through specialist contract shooting programs, while authorised and accredited volunteer hunters may be engaged in longer-term ground programs.<sup>111</sup>

This reflects a risk-based approach within Victoria's regulated system: professional shooters for rapid control, volunteer hunters for sustained management over time.

Hunting and shooting activities also generate economic benefits for regional Victoria, contributing to accommodation, fuel, equipment retail, hospitality and associated services. These activities operate within a regulatory framework designed to manage risk and support public confidence.

Many Victorians, particularly in metropolitan areas, have limited understanding of why some users require multiple firearms for different legitimate purposes – such as humane harvesting of different species in different terrains and conditions – or how regulatory safeguards operate in practice.

Maintaining confidence in lawful firearms use, particularly on public land, depends on clear regulatory safeguards, effective oversight and visible compliance and enforcement.

Oversight by agencies such as the Game Management Authority plays an important role in reinforcing confidence that firearms are being used safely, lawfully and in accordance with public interest objectives.

Improved public understanding of regulatory safeguards, oversight arrangements and enforcement activity can reinforce confidence that firearms regulation in Victoria is focused on preventing harm and preserving community safety.

### 13.6.1 What we heard: Strengthening community engagement and public communication

#### Understanding of firearms regulation varies widely

- Levels of understanding differ by geography, occupation and cultural background.
- For many Victorians, firearms do not feature in daily life unless a serious incident attracts media attention.
- Responses to the online survey indicated that licensed firearm users preferred greater enforcement and increased education over strengthened regulation, whereas non-users preferred increased enforcement and education.

#### Licensed firearm owners focus on how regulation operates in practice

- Clear, practical regulation focused on higher-risk behaviour was preferred.
- Predictable and proportionate requirements were seen as supporting compliance.

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### Perceptions of safety differ across communities

- Lawful firearms use was recognised as contributing to regional, environmental and economic outcomes.
- Concerns were raised about safety risks near residential areas, highlighting the importance of oversight and enforcement.
- Approximately one-tenth of respondents (12.3 per cent, n=2,344) to the Review's online survey had observed community members being concerned about firearms and public safety.

### Experiences in countries of origin shape expectations

- In many countries, particularly across parts of South-East Asia, private firearms ownership is rare or prohibited.
- These experiences influence expectations of regulation and can heighten concern in the Victorian context.

### Education and awareness support confidence

- Proactive education delivered outside periods of heightened concern was preferred to reactive communication following major incidents.
- Ongoing education was seen as more effective in building understanding of how regulation works and how risks are managed.

### Broad support for public education and reassurance

- More than a quarter (28.6 per cent, n = 5,444) of all respondents to the online survey supported public education programs about safe and responsible firearms use. Noting that the Review's online survey was not a representative survey of the Victorian population, and 88 per cent of responses were from licensed firearm users.
- More than one-third (39.1 per cent, n = 7,431) of all respondents supported community reassurance to build confidence in firearms controls and help people feel safe. Note that respondents could select multiple options in this survey question, so there may be overlap between the percentages reported here.

## 13.6.2 What we found

Together, these three recommendations – strengthening the evidence base, broadening advisory governance, and improving public communication – support the primary purpose of Victoria's firearms regulation: preserving public safety and the peace of the community.

They work together to ensure the regulatory system remains effective, responsive, evidence-based and focused on community safety, while maintaining public confidence in its operation.

## Case study

### **Transport Accident Commission (TAC)**

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) has led some of Australia's most recognisable public education campaigns, guided by a clear purpose: to improve public understanding of road risk and support safer behaviour.

Through campaigns such as 'Speed Kills', 'Drink Driving. Bloody Idiot.' and more recently 'Towards Zero', TAC has translated complex crash data into clear, accessible messages that explain how trauma occurs on the road and who is most at risk. By making risk visible and understandable, these campaigns have helped replace uncertainty with knowledge.

Over time, TAC communications have contributed to:

- increased public understanding of how crashes occur and how individual behaviours contribute to risk
- reduced social tolerance for high-risk driving behaviours
- a shift in community attitudes from viewing crashes as unavoidable 'accidents' to preventable events
- stronger public support for enforcement, speed limits and graduated licensing reforms

Importantly, TAC's approach has evolved. Earlier campaigns relied heavily on shock to capture attention. More recent messaging has focused on shared responsibility and system safety, reinforcing that road trauma is preventable when driver behaviour, infrastructure and policy settings work together.

This sustained investment in public education has lifted community literacy about speed, stopping distances and impairment, improved acceptance of evidence-based safety reforms, and supported more informed and confident public engagement in road safety policy discussions.

TAC's experience demonstrates that well-designed public communication can reduce fear by replacing uncertainty with understanding. When people understand risk and how it is managed, confidence in the system increases.

### **Bushfire preparedness campaigns**

In Victoria, bushfire risk is a lived and recurring reality.

Following the devastation of the 2009 Black Saturday fires, public communication around bushfire preparedness underwent significant reform. Agencies including the Country Fire Authority and Emergency Management Victoria shifted from predominantly reactive warnings to sustained community education focused on preparedness and early decision-making.

Campaigns such as 'Leave Early and Live' reframed evacuation as a proactive safety decision rather than a last resort. Messaging focused on clarity: what Fire Danger Ratings mean, what 'Catastrophic' conditions involve, and what actions households should take well before a fire starts.

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This approach recognised that uncertainty fuels fear. By building understanding before emergencies occur, public communication aimed to give communities clearer expectations and practical guidance.

As a result, Victoria strengthened its approach to public risk communication through clearer Fire Danger Ratings, improved warning systems and consistent leave-early messaging. These changes have contributed to increased early evacuation on high-risk days, improved public comprehension of Fire Danger Ratings, higher rates of household bushfire planning and property preparation, and stronger engagement with VicEmergency warnings and official communication channels.

The Victorian experience demonstrates that sustained, consistent and practical communication reduces uncertainty and community fear by building risk literacy over time.

### **Implications for firearms regulation and public confidence**

The experience of both road safety and bushfire preparedness demonstrates that public confidence is strengthened when risk is clearly explained, responsibilities are understood and regulatory settings are reinforced through consistent public education.

In both cases, sustained communication reduced fear by replacing uncertainty with knowledge and by clarifying how systems operate to keep people safe.

The same principle applies to firearms regulation.

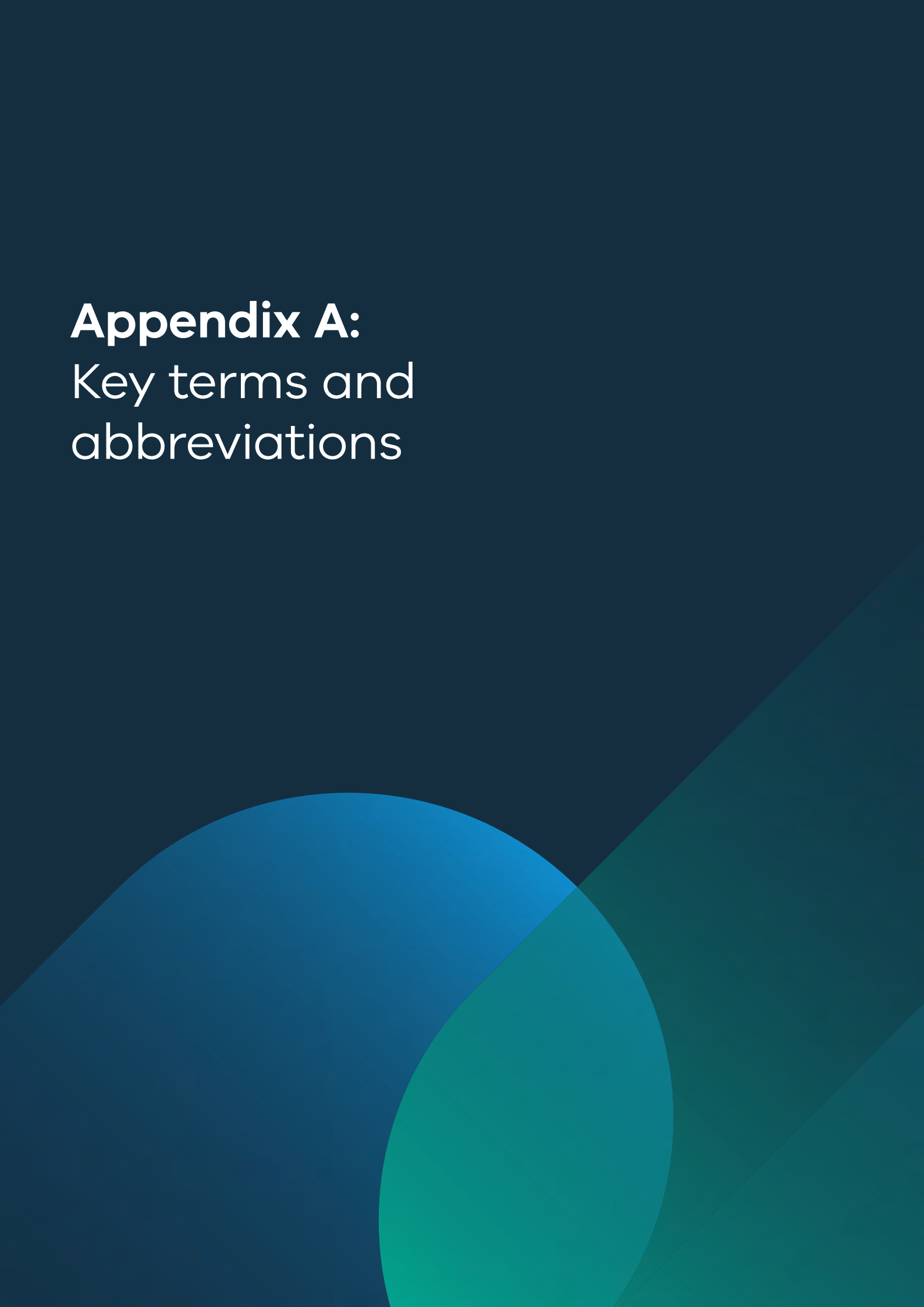
Where understanding of firearms laws and legitimate, lawful firearms use is limited, concern can increase regardless of the strength of the regulatory framework.

Clear, evidence-based communication that explains how firearms regulation operates, why particular controls exist, and how legitimate use is supported within a strong regulatory system can strengthen informed public discussion and confidence.

This approach supports the objectives of firearms regulation.

By building community literacy over time (and not only having the conversation with the community on the back of firearms incidents), including literacy about lawful firearms ownership and use, public communication can help align community expectations with regulatory intent, support acceptance of evidence-based reform and reinforce trust that the system is designed to protect community safety and public peace.

# **Appendix A:** Key terms and abbreviations



## 14. Appendix A: Key terms and abbreviations

Acronyms	Description
<b>ACIC</b>	Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission
<b>AFP</b>	Australian Federal Police
<b>ASIO</b>	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
<b>DJCS</b>	Department of Justice and Community Safety
<b>FAC</b>	Firearms Appeals Committee
<b>FVIO</b>	Family Violence Intervention Order
<b>GMA</b>	Game Management Authority
<b>LARS</b>	Licensing and Registration System (used by Victoria Police)
<b>LEAP</b>	Law Enforcement Assistance Program
<b>LRD</b>	Licensing and Regulation Division (of Victoria Police)
<b>NCIS</b>	National Criminal Intelligence System (managed by ACIC)
<b>NFA</b>	National Firearms Agreement
<b>NFR</b>	National Firearms Registry
<b>PSIO</b>	Personal Safety Intervention Order
<b>VCAT</b>	Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
<b>VFCC</b>	Victorian Firearms Consultative Committee

Terms	Description
<b>AusCheck</b>	A national service that confirms a person’s identity and coordinates criminal history and national security checks.
<b>Belt ammunition source</b>	Ammunition style only used in military style machine guns.
<b>Button-release firearm</b>	A button on the receiver must be pressed to release the bolt forward to chamber the next round, enabling fast and manual shooting. Not currently defined in Victorian legislation. Will be worked through in the National Firearms Agreement.
<b>Cartridge ammunition</b>	Ammunition having a bullet or other projectile and a priming device fixed to or enclosed in a cartridge case which is composed wholly or partly of material other than paper.

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Terms	Description
<b>Charter</b>	The <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)</i> or ‘Charter’ is a Victorian law that sets out rights, freedoms and responsibilities for all people in Victoria.
<b>Chief Commissioner of Police</b>	The highest-ranking officer and chief executive of Victoria Police, responsible for the management, operations, and strategic direction of Victoria Police.
<b>Digital blueprints</b>	A document that can be used to instruct a machine to manufacture a firearm. Use in this report in relation to 3D printed firearms.
<b>Divisional Firearms Officer</b>	Police members located in metro and regional areas tasked with Firearms compliance and enforcement.
<b>Engage Victoria</b>	The Victorian Government’s online consultation platform which allows the community to participate in the development of Government policies and programs.
<b>Firearm</b>	Any device, whether or not assembled or in parts— which is designed or adapted, or is capable of being modified, to discharge shot or a bullet or other missile by the expansion of gases produced in the device by the ignition of strongly combustible materials or by compressed air or other gases. A more detailed definition is found in section 3 of the <i>Firearms Act</i> .
<b>Firearms Act</b>	The <i>Firearms Act 1996 (Vic)</i> or ‘ <i>Firearms Act</i> ’ regulates firearms in Victoria. Modelled on the resolutions of the National Firearms Agreement, the core principle of the <i>Firearms Act</i> is that the possession, carriage, use, acquisition and disposal of firearms are conditional on the need to ensure public safety and peace.
<b>Firearms owners</b>	Individuals who are firearms users and also own their own firearms.
<b>Firearms users</b>	Individuals authorised by a current licence, permit, or legal exemption to possess, carry, or use specific categories of registered firearms for legitimate, lawful purposes. Not all firearms users own their own firearms. For example, an individual could be a firearms user for work purposes and the firearm they use is owned by the company they work for.
<b>Firearms Appeals Committee</b>	A committee established to review decisions of the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police to cancel firearms licences, refuse firearms licence applications and impose certain conditions on firearm licences.
<b>Firearms related item</b>	Includes parts of a firearm (e.g. screws), cartridge ammunition, a silencer, an attachment for a firearm, an accessory for a firearm and any other item related to a firearm that is prescribed by regulation.
<b>Game Management Authority</b>	An independent authority responsible for the regulation of game hunting in Victoria.

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Terms	Description
<b>Genuine need</b>	To acquire, possess or use certain firearms an applicant for a licence must demonstrate 'genuine need' in addition to the 'genuine reason' test. Establishing 'genuine need' requires the applicant to outline why they need the firearm and why the need cannot be satisfied in another way. The Chief Commissioner of Police determines if 'genuine need' has been established by an applicant.
<b>Genuine reason</b>	All applicants for a firearms licence need to establish a 'genuine reason' for owning, possessing or using a firearm. Genuine reasons are outlined in the National Firearms Agreement and include sports shooters, recreational shooters and hunters, primary producers, security employees, firearms collectors and firearms dealers, among others. The National Firearms Agreement is clear that personal protection is not a 'genuine reason' for acquiring, possessing or using a firearm.
<b>Handgun</b>	A firearm that can be carried or concealed on a person, fired with one hand, or that does not exceed 65 centimetres in length (measured parallel to the barrel).
<b>Imitation firearm</b>	A device the appearance of which could reasonably be mistaken for that of an operable firearm but which is not designed or adapted to discharge shot or a bullet or other missile by the expansion of gases.
<b>Lever-action shotgun</b>	A lever action is a type of action for repeating firearms that uses a manually operated cocking handle located around the trigger guard area (often incorporating it) that pivots forward to move the bolt via internal linkages, which will feed and extract cartridges into and out of the chamber, and cock the firing pin mechanism.
<b>Linear repeating firearm</b>	A firearm that uses a sliding action—typically a bolt, pump, or lever—to move multiple cartridges from a magazine into the chamber, allowing for rapid, successive firing without manual reloading between shots. Not currently defined in Victorian legislation. Will be worked through in the National Firearms Agreement.
<b>Longarm</b>	Defined in the Firearms Act as a firearm that is not a handgun. Generally, a category of firearm designed to be operated with two hands and braced against the shoulder for stability.
<b>Magazine</b>	A feeding device for repeating firearms, available as either fixed (internal) or detachable (external) units, which store and load cartridges into the chamber.
<b>National Cabinet</b>	A meeting where leaders of the Australian and state and territory Governments work together.
<b>National Firearms Agreement</b>	A document that outlines the national approach to the regulation of firearms and sets out minimum requirements that Australian states and territories must abide by.

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Terms	Description
<b>National Firearms Identification Database</b>	A database run by ACIC that contains information that identifies a firearm by the manufacturer's markings, chambering and action type. It is focused on firearms that are known to have been sold and possessed within Australia.
<b>National Firearms Register</b>	An integrated system that is under development to improve information sharing and law enforcement capability across Australia by providing near real-time access to accurate firearms information.
<b>Paintball marker</b>	A paintball marker means a firearm that is designed to discharge a paintball. A paintball means a projectile that primarily consists of a dye or similar substance designed to mark a person or object.
<b>Permit to acquire</b>	A permit that a firearms licence holder needs to obtain if they want to acquire a new firearm.
<b>Police Ministers Council</b>	A forum that comprises the Minister for Home Affairs, the police ministers from every Australian state and territory and the New Zealand Police Minister.
<b>Professional hunter</b>	A person that hunts for the purposes of their job or operates a hunting business, requiring insurance, accreditation for humane practices and commercial industry accreditation.
<b>Primary producer</b>	An individual, trust or company undertaking plant or fungi cultivation, animal maintenance or domestic breed, fishing or pearling or tree farming or felling.
<b>Pump-action longarm</b>	A firearm (rifle or shotgun) that utilises a manual, sliding handguard to operate the mechanism, allowing for rapid follow-up shots without releasing the grip on the stock (rear part of the firearm).
<b>Recreational hunter</b>	A person that hunts done for leisure, sport or enjoyment rather than professional purposes.
<b>Self-closing firearm</b>	A firearm that automates the reloading cycle. Not currently defined in Victorian legislation. Will be worked through in the National Firearms Agreement.
<b>Semi-automatic rifle</b>	A self-loading firearm that fires a single round, ejects the spent casing, and chambers a new cartridge from its magazine automatically each time the trigger is pulled. Requires the shooter to manually actuate the trigger in order to discharge each shot.
<b>Silencer</b>	Any instrument or thing by means of which the sound caused by the discharge of a firearm is rendered less audible, whether the instrument or thing forms part of the firearm or is or can be affixed or attached to the firearm
<b>Skirmish marker</b>	A paintball marker.

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Terms	Description
<b>Straight-pull firearm</b>	<p>A type of rifle or shotgun that uses a two-motion, linear bolt mechanism (pull back, push forward) to chamber a round, rather than the four motions required by traditional turn-bolt actions (lift, pull, push, turn).</p> <p>Not currently defined in Victorian legislation. Will be worked through in the National Firearms Agreement.</p>
<b>Sound suppressor</b>	A silencer.
<b>Speed loader</b>	A device designed to significantly reduce the time and effort needed to reload firearms, including revolvers, rifles, shotguns, and magazine-fed pistols.
<b>Sports shooters</b>	Sports shooters take part in shooting sports - Shooting sports are a group of competitive and recreational sporting activities which focus on shooting accuracy, precision and speed.
<b>Statement of Compatibility</b>	A document that accompanies a Bill introduced into Parliament that sets out whether the proposed legislation aligns with the <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i> .
<b>Victorian Firearms Consultative Committee</b>	An expert advisory group for the Minister for Police.

# **Appendix B:** Rapid Review Terms of Reference



## 15. Appendix B: Rapid Review Terms of Reference

# Terms of Reference: Rapid Review of Victoria's Firearms Laws

### Purpose

At National Cabinet on Monday 15 December 2025 First Ministers agreed to strengthen firearm laws in a nationally consistent manner. Police Ministers and Attorneys-General have been commissioned to develop options for all jurisdictions. At that time, jurisdictions were awaiting announcement from New South Wales (NSW) on the immediate firearms reforms introduced into the NSW Parliament on Monday 22 December 2025.

Following the NSW announcement of the proposed scope of reforms, it is intended that Victoria stand-up a rapid review of the Victorian firearms control framework (the Rapid Review) with a focus on identifying opportunities to strengthen firearms laws.

The Rapid Review will be led by former Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Mr Ken Lay AO APM and will identify areas for improvement, consistent with the National Cabinet agreement and having regard to the NSW proposals. The Rapid Review will make recommendations to the government about what changes are needed and how these changes can be effected.

The Rapid Review will inform the Victorian Government's decision on firearms reforms, including any decision to amend the *Firearms Act 1996* and other relevant legislation.

The Rapid Review will also provide an opportunity for key stakeholders to provide input into the reforms, ensuring the proposed reforms balance the need to make changes to protect all Victorians and the legitimate need for sectors of the community to possess, carry and use firearms.

## Rapid Review of Victoria's Firearms Laws – Final Report

The Rapid Review will occur in the context of work currently underway by all states and territories and the Commonwealth to renegotiate the National Firearms Agreement (NFA). The NFA constitutes a national approach to the regulation of firearms and sets out minimum requirements that all jurisdictions must abide by. Nothing in the NFA prevents jurisdictions from adopting additional – including more restrictive – regulations. Any changes to Victorian firearms laws must be consistent with the minimum standards set by the NFA.

### Scope

On 17 December 2025, the Police Ministers' Council agreed to establish a Senior Officials Group (SOG) to develop options and consult on nationally consistent reforms, including:

- accelerating work to stand up the National Firearms Register
- allowing for expanded use of criminal intelligence to underpin firearms licensing decisions within administrative licensing regimes
- limiting the number of firearms that may be held by any one individual
- limiting open-ended firearms licensing and restricting the types of firearms that are legal, including modifications
- introducing Australian citizenship as a condition of holding a firearms licence.

The Victorian Rapid Review will assess and test nationally agreed firearm reform principles within the Victorian legislative, regulatory and operational environment. It will examine existing Victorian firearms legislation to identify jurisdiction-specific issues or risks, assess proposed legislative reforms and provide advice on how these reforms can be effectively implemented in Victoria. The Rapid Review will be consistent with the scope of reforms agreed by National Cabinet on 15 December 2025, and will include, but is not limited to, making recommendations in relation to:

- the number of firearms that can be held by an individual
- the existing firearms categories and whether these remain fit for purpose having regard to developments in firearms manufacture and emerging technologies
- the existing licensing scheme, including licence types, and any additional restrictions or requirements that should be in place, including citizenship and residency requirements
- the appropriate duration of different licence types and options for strengthening application and renewal requirements and ongoing monitoring of licences during their lifecycle

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- any strengthening of laws in relation to the management of illicit firearms
- the regulatory treatment of imitation firearms, firearms accessories and related items
- the appropriate use of criminal intelligence in firearms licensing decision making and the handling of intelligence information in licensing reviews
- information sharing arrangements between agencies to strengthen licensing regimes
- any other associated matters required to promote public safety.

In making recommendations to the Victorian Government, the Rapid Review must take into account:

- the decisions and direction of National Cabinet and other intergovernmental processes (e.g. Police Ministers Council)
- the overarching imperative to enhance community safety in the aftermath of the Bondi terrorist attack
- NSW legislation that was introduced to the NSW Parliament on Monday 22 December 2025 has now been passed.
- best practices from other Australian and international jurisdictions, ensuring jurisdictional consistency and alignment
- the need to balance 'best practice' with the desirability for national consistency in firearms regulation
- consultation with community groups, including those with legitimate reasons for possessing and using firearms. This may include broader community engagement where appropriate.
- feedback from Victoria Police regarding better regulation of firearms and licence holders
- the need for Victoria to implement the National Firearms Register in line with agreed timeframes (1 July 2028, with work being accelerated in accordance with National Cabinet decision of 15 December 2025).

### Timing

The Rapid Review commenced on 5 January 2026 and will take into account the timing of the National Cabinet process. The final report is to be delivered in March 2026.

Complementary work underway includes:

## **Rapid Review of Victoria's Firearms Laws – Final Report**

- National Cabinet timing: The Rapid Review will align with decisions made at National Cabinet, including consideration of the NFA and any nationally agreed reforms.
- NFA timing: The NFA is currently being rewritten, with agreement across jurisdictions targeted by the end of March 2026.
- Work on legislative reforms is underway in parallel at the national and Victorian levels.

**This approach ensures the Rapid Review is aligned with national reform processes, while enabling recommendations to be informed by broader stakeholder consultation and emerging national agreements.**

**We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pay our respect to them, their culture, and their Elders past and present.**

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# **Appendix C:**

List of stakeholders consulted  
through the Review



## 16. Appendix C: List of stakeholders consulted through the Review

<b>Organisation</b>
Australian Deer Association Inc
Australian Gun Safety Alliance
Australian Security Industry Association
Community Security Group Victoria
Deakin University
Duck Shooters Association
Electrical Trades Union
Firearm Safety Foundation
Firearms Traders Association of Vic
Gun Control Australia
International Confederation of Revolver Enthusiasts
International Practical Shooting Confederation
Shooting Industry Foundation of Australia
Shooting Sports Council of Victoria
Sporting Shooters Association of Australia
Target Rifle Victoria
The Police Association of Victoria
Victorian Amateur Pistol Association
Victorian Clay Target Association
Victorian Farmers Federation

### **Multi-cultural/ multi-faith groups**

<b>Multi-cultural and multi-faith roundtable</b>
<i>Invitees included:</i>
Afghan Women's Organisation in Victoria Inc.
AfriCausc
Albury-Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council
Australia Karen Organisation VIC
Australian Nepalese Multiculture Centre
Chinese Association of Victoria Inc.
Chinese Museum
Chin-Myanmar Community Care
Cultura
Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV)

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Ethnic Council of Shepparton & District Inc
Federation of Chinese Associations
Greek Community of Melbourne
Gurdwara Council of Victoria
Hindu Council of Australia
Islamic Council of Victoria
Jewish Community Council of Victoria
Muslim Welfare Trust of Victoria
Somali Community Inc.
South Sudanese Community Association in Victoria Inc.
South-Sudanese Australian Academic Society
Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council
United Pasifika Council of Victoria
Victorian Afghan Associations Network
Victorian Afghan Youth Association


### Government MPs

Electorate/ portfolio	MP name
Member for Eastern Victoria	Melina Bath MP
Member for Gippsland East	Tim Bull MP (and constituents)
Leader of The Victorian Greens	Ellen Sandell MP
Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party Victoria	Jeff Bourman MP

### Government stakeholders

Organisation
Agriculture Victoria (as part of DEECA)
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)
Department of Health
Department of Justice and Community Safety - Aboriginal Justice
Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR)
Game Management Authority
Parks Victoria
Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC)
Victoria Police
Victims of Crime Commissioner (as well as discussions with victims of gun violence)
Victorian Multicultural Commission

**Appendix D:**  
Summary of Engage Victoria  
submissions and survey





# Rapid Review of Victoria's Firearms Laws

Survey analysis

Operational Performance team

February 2026





# Responses to the *Rapid Review of Victoria's Firearms Laws* survey were analysed

## Survey overview and methodology

The *Rapid Review of Victoria's Firearms Laws* survey (the survey) was undertaken as part of an independent consultation process to inform a review of Victoria's firearms regulatory framework.

The survey was publicly available via the Engage Victoria website between 19 January and 3 February 2026.

The survey was composed of **up to 24 questions**, including:

- 13 core questions
- Nine 'triggered' questions that were only required when respondents selected a specific response to a core question
- Two optional free text questions to capture any additional views

The survey included **three types of questions**:

- **Single selection** (Only one option could be selected)
- **Multiple selection** (One or more options could be selected)
- **Written** (Free-text)

## Survey analysis

This analysis includes two sections:

- A high-level analysis of the survey responses
- An appendix containing both a thematic analysis of the free-text responses and the raw survey response data

### Analysis methodology

As a methodology, online surveys rely on self-selection, which can result in sampling bias if specific groups are overrepresented. Accordingly, the survey results should not be interpreted as representative of Victoria's broader population.

To mitigate the impact of sampling bias, which in this case is an overrepresentation of firearm users (88 per cent of respondents), this analysis has disaggregated some responses by firearms user/non-user status. This approach enables identification of issues with the most material differences between these groups.

These disaggregated analyses can be found for firearm users on **Slide 4** (in purple), with the same data points found for non-users on **Slide 5** (in orange).

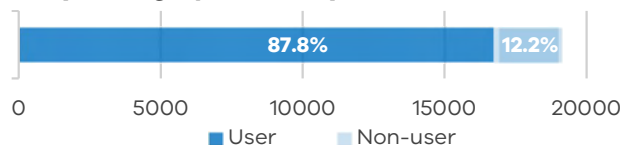


# Strong statewide engagement was likely supported by promotion from firearms user groups

## 19,026 Survey responses

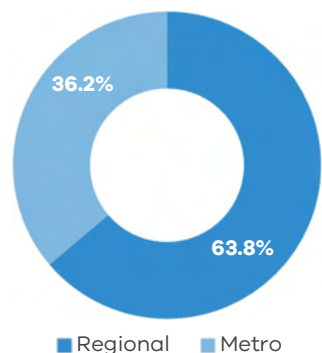
Licensed firearm users accounted for the vast majority of responses

Survey demographics – Do you use firearms and have a license?



Survey respondents (both users and non-users) were predominately located in regional areas

Survey demographics – Do you live in a regional or metro area?



Top 5 Postcodes	
3551 – Bendigo	(317)
3844 – Traralgon	(270)
3875 – Bairnsdale	(247)
3550 – Bendigo	(213)
3690 – Wodonga	(192)

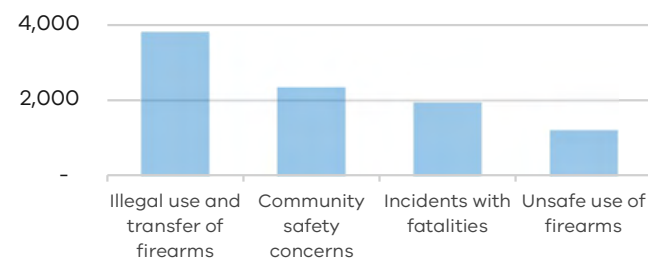
For simplicity, the largest city/town within the area has been listed

Almost all respondents were aware of firearms being used legally and responsibly, dwarfing all other responses

Q3 – What firearms related activity are you aware of in Victoria?\*

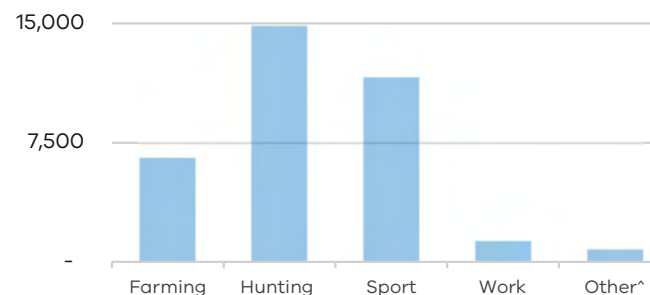
18,514 respondents were aware of people using firearms legally and responsibly...

...with a minority aware of negative activities



The survey had strong coverage across different firearm users

Survey demographics – What purpose do you use firearms for?\*



The majority of user respondents (77%) reported using firearms for more than one purpose

^Refer to the Appendix for a summary of written responses

\*Responses were not mutually exclusive and may exceed total survey respondents

+Immaterial response categories excluded, refer to Appendix for full data

Survey responses from firearm users only

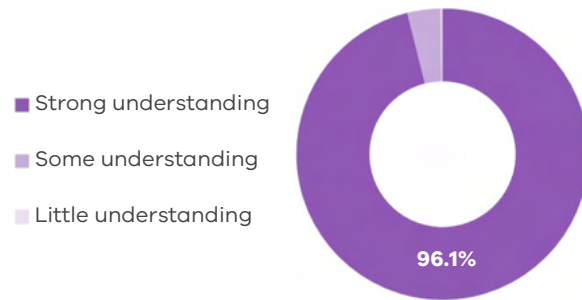


# Users were more likely to believe they had a strong understanding of firearms laws and less likely to support strengthened laws

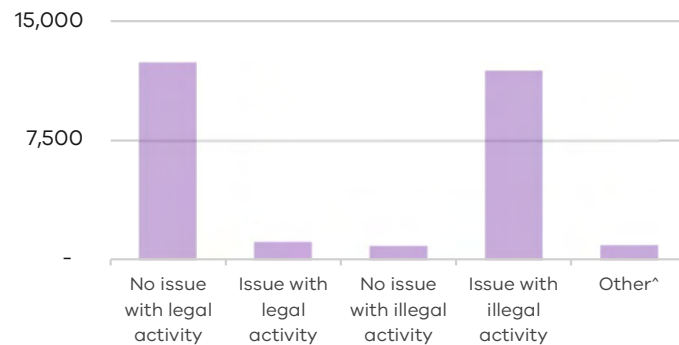
16,710 survey responses from users

Users believed they had a strong understanding of the current laws and did not think there were significant issues

Q1 - How well do you understand the current firearms laws?#



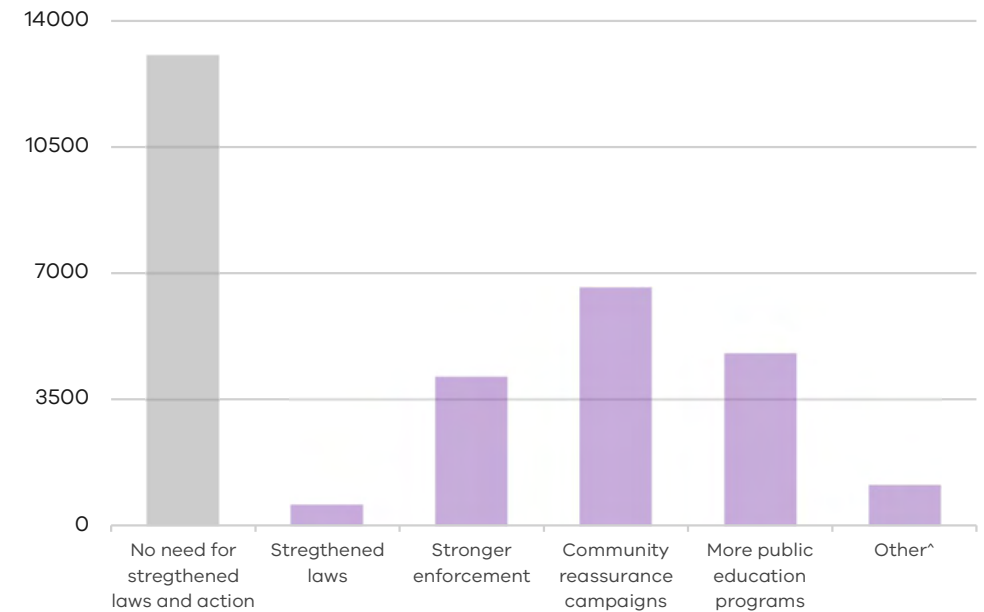
Q2 - Do you think there is an issue with firearms in Victoria?\*



Users were slightly less likely to think there is an **issue with legal activity**, but both groups believed there is an **issue with illegal activity**

Users preferred greater enforcement and increased education over strengthened regulations

Q4 - Does Victoria need to strengthen firearm controls and regulations?\*



#Responses were mutually exclusive

\*Responses were not mutually exclusive and may exceed total survey respondents

^Refer to the Appendix for a summary of written responses

Survey responses from non-users only

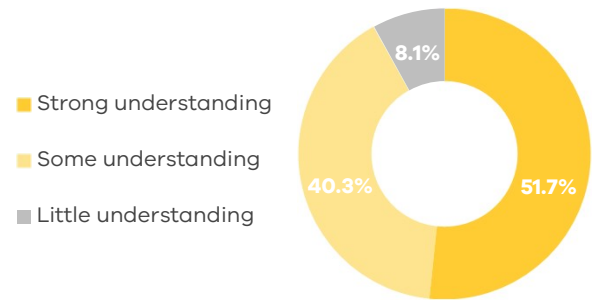


# Non-users were less likely to believe they had a strong understanding of firearms laws and more likely to support strengthened laws

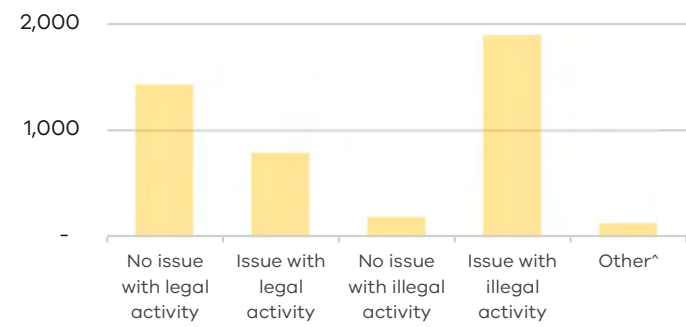
2,316 survey responses from non-users

Non-users were less confident in their understanding of the current laws and were more likely to think there were issues

Q1 - How well do you understand the current firearms laws?#



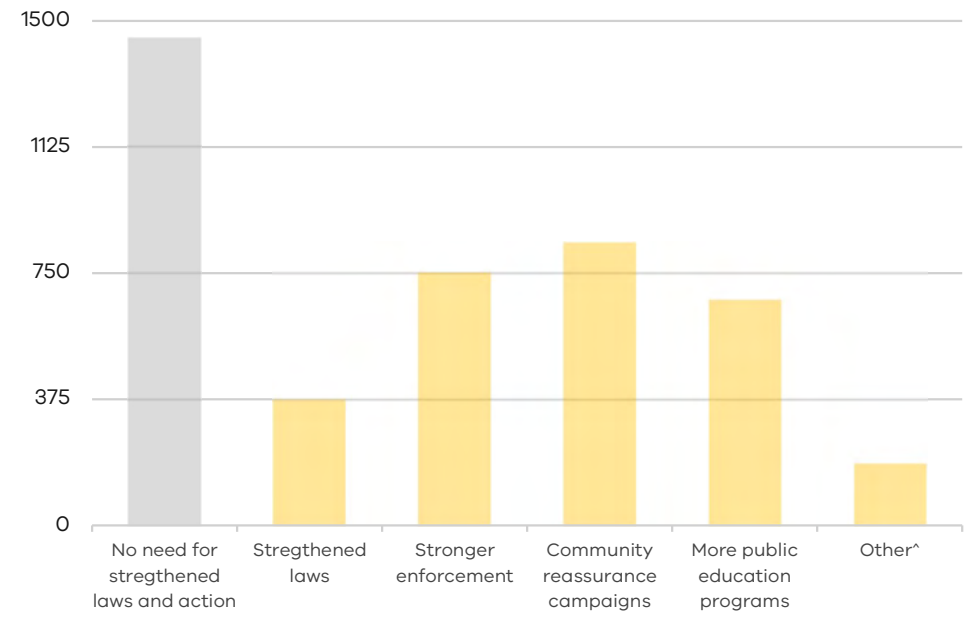
Q2 - Do you think there is an issue with firearms in Victoria?\*



Non-users were slightly more likely to think there is an **issue with legal activity**, but both groups believed there is an **issue with illegal activity**

Non-users also preferred increased enforcement and education, but were comparatively more supportive of strengthened laws

Q4 - Does Victoria need to strengthen firearm controls and regulations?\*



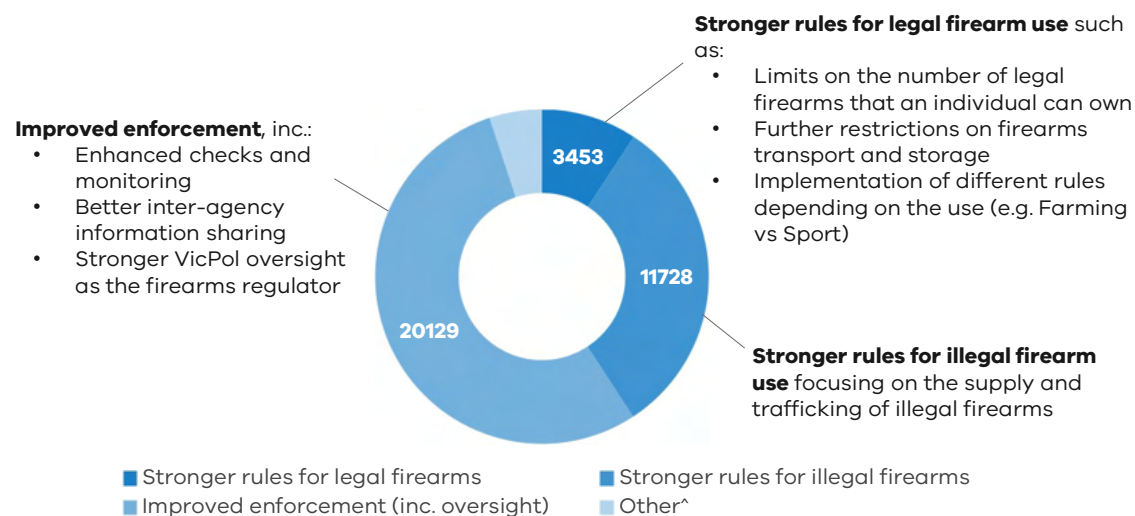
#Responses were mutually exclusive  
 \*Responses were not mutually exclusive and may exceed total survey respondents  
 ^Refer to the Appendix for a summary of written responses



# Stronger enforcement and increased public awareness was preferred over strengthened laws

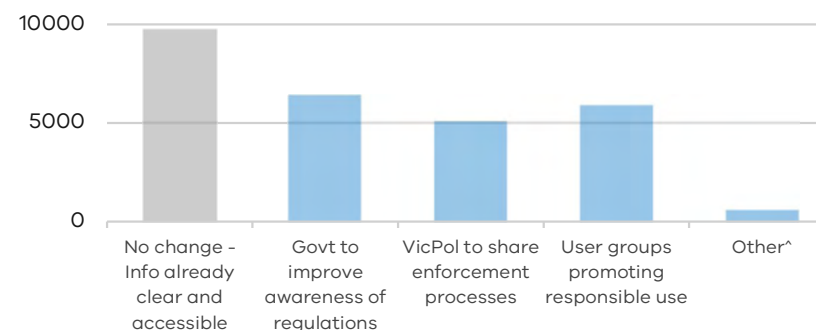
## Both users and non-users supported increased enforcement and improved agency oversight

Q7 – How should laws balance community safety and legal firearms use?\*



## Respondents thought the current rules were clear, but that improvements could be made

Q8 – How could we improve how firearms rules and safety info are shared with the community?\*



Q9 - Are there specific firearm types or modifications that should be more strongly regulated?#^

**1,886** respondents (9.0% of users and of 16.6% of non-users) thought that there were specific firearm types or modifications that require stronger rules

- The evolution of 3D printed firearms and the presence of semi-automatic (including quick reload upgrades) and automatic firearms were the most common concerns

#Responses were mutually exclusive

\*Responses were not mutually exclusive and may exceed total survey respondents

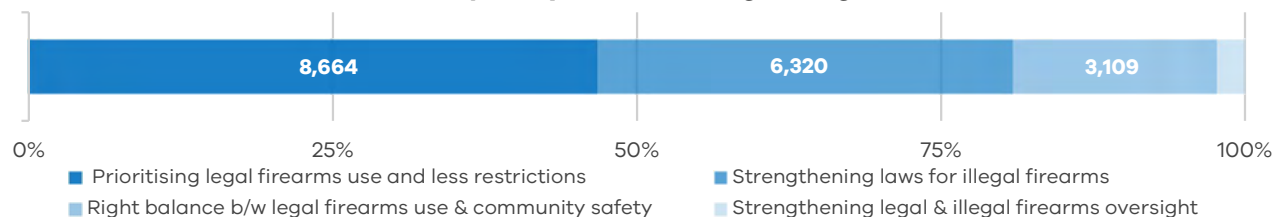
^Refer to the Appendix for a summary of written responses

+Immaterial response categories excluded, refer to Appendix for full data

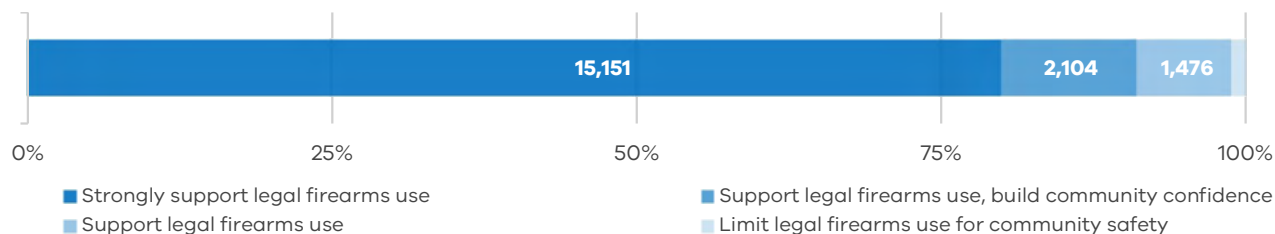


# Respondents strongly supported the use of legal firearms and improved inter-agency collaboration

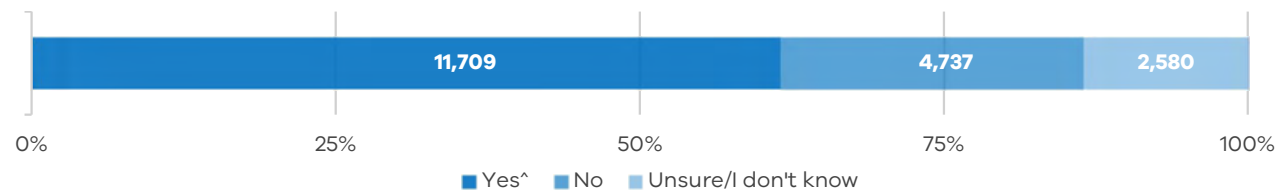
**Q5 – What should Government's main priority be when strengthening firearms laws?#\***



**Q6 – How much should laws support the legal use of firearms?#\***



**Q10 – Do you think how government agencies work together and share information to help manage firearms risks and protect the community should be improved?#\***



## KEY THEMES FROM WRITTEN RESPONSES

**Q10a – What would you most like to see improved?^**

- Greater inter-agency collaboration and information-sharing
- License denial for 'Unsuitable' individuals
  - 'Unsuitable' individuals included non-citizens, people with mental health concerns and those on watchlists
- Stronger penalties for illegal firearm activity
- Increased enforcement of existing rules, with the current firearms and secure storage checks commonly considered to be too infrequent

**Q11 – What matters most about strengthening firearms controls in Victoria?^**

- Existing controls are sufficient, with legal firearms users being scapegoated for other governance failures that enabled the Bondi terrorist attack

**Q12 – How can trust and confidence in firearms rules and safety be improved?^**

- Improving public awareness of the rigorous pre-screening required for firearms licences would enhance community confidence in Victoria's firearms laws

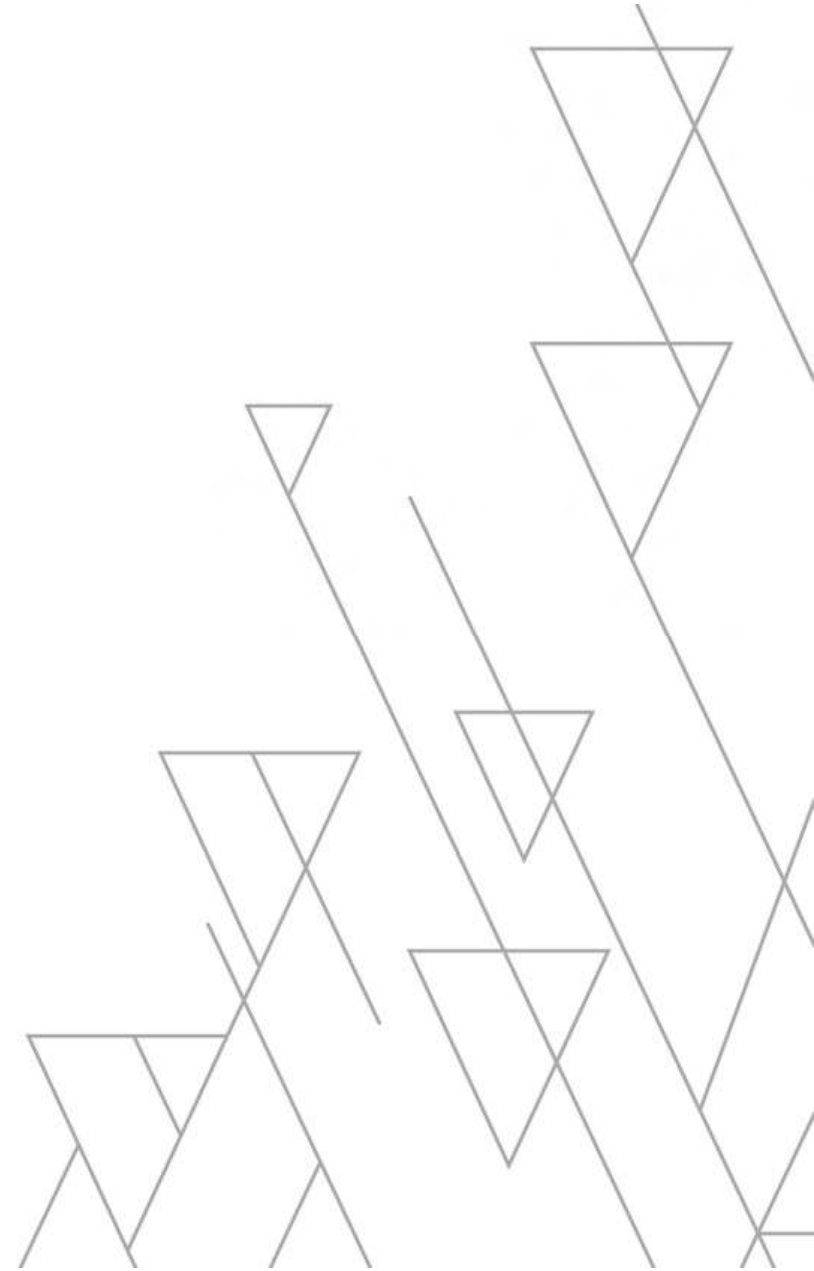
#Responses were mutually exclusive

\*Refer to the Appendix for a summary of written responses

+Immaterial response categories excluded, refer to Appendix for full data

# Appendix

Raw survey data – Including summary of free-text responses



Survey Question	Responses
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<b>Overview</b>	
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19,026 responses were received while the survey was open between 19 January and 3 February.

The vast majority of responses (87.8%) were from firearm users.

<b>SECTION 1 – SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS</b>	
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<b>1.</b>	<b>Do you use firearms and have a firearms license?</b>	<p><b>Yes – 16,710</b> (87.8% of responses received)</p> <p><b>No – 2,316</b> (12.2% of responses received)</p>
	<p><b>1a. For what purpose?</b></p> <p><i>^Respondents could select multiple options</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hunting – 14,850</b> responses</li> <li>• <b>Sport – 11,633</b> responses</li> <li>• <b>Farming – 6,575</b> responses</li> <li>• <b>Work – 1,341</b> responses</li> <li>• <b>Other – 820</b> responses (see responses to 1b)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>1b. What other purpose do you have a firearms license and use a firearm for?</b></p>	<p><i>Key 'Other' responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pest management</li> <li>• Euthanising injured livestock and wildlife</li> <li>• Collecting firearms for research, historical interest or as family heirlooms</li> <li>• Hobby – Target shooting or family tradition</li> <li>• Firearms re-enactment and/or educational/demonstrative purposes while delivering sessions (i.e. Victorian Longarm Safety Courses)</li> </ul>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Do you live in regional or metropolitan Victoria?</b>	<p><b>12,138</b> (63.8%) respondents live in <b>regional</b> Victoria</p> <p><b>6,888</b> (36.2%) respondents live in <b>metro</b> Victoria</p>
<b>3.</b>	<b>What is your postcode?</b>	<p>In order, the top five postcodes* of respondents are:</p> <p>(1) 3551 – Bendigo</p> <p>(2) 3844 – Traralgon</p> <p>(3) 3875 – Bairnsdale</p> <p>(4) 3550 – Bendigo</p> <p>(5) 3690 – Wodonga</p> <p><i>*Largest city/town listed</i></p>

Survey Question		Responses			
<b>SECTION 2</b>					
<b>1.</b>	How well do you understand Victoria's current firearms laws and licensing rules?*	<b>Response</b>	<b>Responses – Users</b>	<b>Responses – Non-users</b>	<b>Total responses (% of responses received)</b>
		I understand them well because I am a licensed firearms user	9,363	24	<b>9,387 (49.3%)</b>
		I understand them well and feel confident commenting on how they work now and how they could be strengthened	6,698	1,184	<b>7,882 (41.4%)</b>
		I have a general understanding of firearms laws, but not the details of them or how they are regulated	610	923	<b>1,533 (8.1%)</b>
		I know a little about them	27	134	<b>161 (0.9%)</b>
	I don't know much about them/I'm not sure	12	51	<b>63 (0.3%)</b>	
	<i>*Respondents could only select a single option</i>				

Survey Question		Responses			
2.	Do you think there is an issue with firearms in Victoria? <sup>^</sup>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Responses – Users</b>	<b>Responses – Non-users</b>	<b>Total responses</b>
		There is an issue with illegal firearms possession or use in Victoria	9,009	1,261	<b>10,270</b>
		There is an issue with firearms being sold, transferred or shared unlawfully in Victoria	2,871	633	<b>3,504</b>
		There is an issue with some individuals holding too many legal firearms, which may increase risks to community safety	274	318	<b>592</b>
		There is an issue with safe storage and secure handling of legally owned firearms	170	169	<b>339</b>
		There is an issue with unsafe, or irresponsible use of all firearms in Victoria	692	299	<b>991</b>
		There are no significant issues with the use of legal firearms in Victoria	12,405	1,428	<b>13,833</b>
		There are no significant issues with the use of illegal firearms in Victoria	892	186	<b>1,078</b>
<sup>^</sup> Respondents could select multiple options	Other (See Question 2a summary below)	940	130	<b>1,070</b>	
2a. What other issues are there with firearms in Victoria?#	<p><i>There were 1,070 responses to this question, including 940 from firearm users and 130 from non-users</i></p> <p><b>Recurrent themes from responses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents note that ‘unsuitable’ people may have access to firearms, including non-citizens, people with past convictions, people on ASIO watch lists (links to terrorist organisations), and people with mental health issues and/or family violence histories</li> <li>• Many respondents report that current firearms laws are not being enforced, with firearms and secure storage checks not being carried out regularly by VicPol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Some respondents reported that their firearms had not been checked in years, with one respondent stating their firearms had not been checked for over 30 years</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There is a widespread belief that the Licensing and Regulation Division in VicPol is under-resourced, with the division only open two days a week and perceived to perform no regular checks and minimal community engagement</li> <li>• There is a need for stronger and more rigorous pre-screening license tests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ A notable number of respondents are supportive of more thorough tests (i.e. full day course and test around risks, potential hazards and basic operation of firearms) which could be renewed every few years. Marksmanship and ballistics training/knowledge could also be mandated</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Non-users, who are outweighed in the survey by users, note their concern about individuals owning multiple firearms and firearms being stored in residential homes which may increase domestic violence risk.</li> </ul>				
<sup>#</sup> Only respondents who selected ‘Other’ in Question 2 completed this question					



Survey Question		Responses			
4. Do you think Victoria needs to strengthen firearms controls and regulations?^		Response	Responses – Users	Responses – Non-users	Total responses
		There is no need for strengthened government laws and action on firearms controls and regulation	13,043	1,448	<b>14,491</b>
		There is a need to strengthen firearms laws and regulations (for example, number of firearms an individual can possess, strengthened licensing arrangements, or stronger checks and balances)	589	375	<b>964</b>
		There is a need to improve how existing firearms laws and controls are enforced (for example, monitoring, compliance and increased penalties)	4,122	752	<b>4,874</b>
		There is a need for more public information and education about safe and responsible use of firearms	4,773	671	<b>5,444</b>
		There is a need to strengthen public information and community reassurance to build confidence in firearms controls in Victoria and help people feel safe	6,590	841	<b>7,431</b>
		Other (See Question 4a summary below)	1,135	185	<b>1,320</b>
	<i>^Respondents could select multiple options</i>				
4a. What other thoughts do you have on question 4?#	<p><i>There were 1,320 responses to this question, including 1,135 from firearm users and 185 from non-users.</i></p> <p><b><u>Recurrent themes from responses</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is widespread belief among firearm users that the Victorian Government's response to the Bondi terrorist incident is a kneejerk reaction and that the Government is scapegoating and punishing law-abiding firearm users by inappropriately considering a blanket ban on firearms</li> <li>• Many respondents believe that firearm users are being vilified by the Government and media outlets, contributing to fear mongering, and suggest the need for greater awareness in the community of legal firearms use and its importance for the rural economy and way of life</li> <li>• Most respondents believe that the existing laws are adequate and note the Federal and NSW Governments' intelligence failure in allowing the Bondi terrorists to have access to a firearms license despite one of the terrorists previously being on the ASIO watchlist as the actual and primary problem</li> <li>• There is a need for greater inter-agency relationship and information-sharing, including between federal and state governments, AFP and ASIO to identify people not fit for a firearms license.</li> <li>• There are respondents who do not support there being a limit to the number of firearms a user can own, as every firearm serves a different purpose (i.e. different firearms are used for different species of animals).</li> </ul>				
	<i>#Only respondents who selected 'Other' in Question 4 completed this question</i>				

Survey Question		Responses			
5.	What should Government's main priority be when strengthening firearms laws?*  <i>*Respondents could only select a single option</i>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Responses – Users</b>	<b>Responses – Non-users</b>	<b>Total responses (% of responses received)</b>
		Prioritising legal firearms use through less restrictions and increase community understanding of current laws and community protection in place	7,724	940	<b>8,664 (45.5%)</b>
		Strengthening laws and enforcement to better prevent and address illegal firearms possession, use and trafficking	5,579	741	<b>6,320 (33.2%)</b>
		Finding the right balance between the responsible use of legal firearms and community safety	2,721	388	<b>3,109 (16.3%)</b>
		Strengthening legal and illegal firearms controls and oversight with a clear focus on community safety	218	202	<b>420 (2.2%)</b>
		Unsure/ I don't know	468	45	<b>513 (2.7%)</b>
6.	How much should laws support the legal use of firearms (for example, for sport, farming or work)?*  <i>*Respondents could only select a single option</i>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Responses – Users</b>	<b>Responses – Non-users</b>	<b>Total responses (% of responses received)</b>
		Firearms laws should strongly support legal firearms use (for sport, hunting, farming or work)	13,528	1,623	<b>15,151 (79.6%)</b>
		Firearms laws should support legal firearms use, with a focus on building community confidence	1,904	200	<b>2,104 (11.1%)</b>
		Firearms laws should support legal firearms use, provided risks are well managed	1,175	301	<b>1,476 (7.8%)</b>
		Firearms laws should limit legal firearms use where needed to support community safety	43	182	<b>225 (1.2%)</b>
		Unsure/ I don't know	60	10	<b>70 (0.4%)</b>

Survey Question		Responses			
<b>7.</b> How should laws balance community safety and legal firearms use?^  <i>^Respondents could select multiple options</i>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Responses – Users</b>	<b>Responses – Non-users</b>	<b>Total responses</b>	
	Stronger rules for legal firearms ownership	446	296	<b>742</b>	
	Stronger checks and monitoring of legal firearms	3,014	702	<b>3,716</b>	
	Tighter limits on the number of firearms people can own	193	334	<b>527</b>	
	Stronger rules for safe storage and transport of firearms	372	263	<b>635</b>	
	Different rules depending on why firearms are needed (for example, farming, sport or work)	1,071	478	<b>1,549</b>	
	Stronger rules to prevent illegal firearms supply and trafficking	10,364	1,364	<b>11,728</b>	
	Better information-sharing between agencies to help manage risks	10,407	1,401	<b>11,808</b>	
	Stronger Victoria Police oversight as the firearms regulator, to support community safety and enforce rules	3,924	681	<b>4,605</b>	
	Unsure/I don't know	288	39	<b>327</b>	
Other	1,645	257	<b>1,902</b>		
<b>7a.</b> How else should laws balance community safety and legal firearms use? #  <i>#Only respondents who selected 'Other' in Question 7 completed this question</i>	<p><i>There were 1,897 responses to this question, including 1,641 from firearm users and 256 from non-users.</i></p> <p><b>Recurrent themes from responses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most respondents believe that the current laws are adequate and note that firearm owners and police should not be overly burdened by new laws designed to make people feel safe while delivering no tangible benefits to community safety</li> <li>• There is a need for existing laws to be enforced appropriately, with many respondents supporting stronger background checks and a rigorous application process when obtaining a firearms license, regular checks and increased resourcing for the Licensing and Regulation Division in VicPol</li> <li>• Many respondents suggest people without citizenship, those who have a criminal/offending or family violence history, or those who have been on or have a family member/close friend in the present or the past on the ASIO watchlist should be delayed and/or prevented from possessing a firearm. Multiple respondents noted people with extremist ideologies, including Islamic extremism, should be banned from having a firearms license</li> <li>• Some respondents suggest that the 'recreational hunting' category presents a loophole, as it could be used as a blanket category for firearms applicants to obtain a license regardless of whether they hunt recreationally or for pest management. For example, one of the Bondi terrorists who had a firearms license had obtained their license under this category <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Some non-users support banning recreational/sport shooting entirely as this may allow for excessive gun ownership without there being a genuine need</li> </ul> </li> </ul>				

Survey Question		Responses			
<b>8.</b> How could we improve the way firearms rules and safety information are shared with the community?^  <i>^Respondents could select multiple options</i>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Responses – Users</b>	<b>Responses – Non-users</b>	<b>Total responses</b>	
	No change needed. Information on firearms rules and safety is clear and easy to access	8,754	979	<b>9,733</b>	
	More information from Government about how firearms laws work and how they are regulated in Victoria	5,651	774	<b>6,425</b>	
	More information from Victoria Police about monitoring, compliance and enforcement of firearms laws	4,366	718	<b>5,084</b>	
	More practical information from firearm user groups (such as sporting or industry groups) on their safe and responsible firearms use	5,161	741	<b>5,902</b>	
	Other	516	84	<b>600</b>	
	Unsure/I don't know	181	78	<b>259</b>	
<b>8a.</b> What other improvements or changes could be made to share firearms rules and safety information with the community? #  <i>#Only respondents who selected 'Other' in Question 8 completed this question</i>	<p><i>There were 599 responses to this question, including 515 from firearm users and 84 from non-users.</i></p> <p><b>Recurrent themes from responses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some respondents support the view that there should be regular testing and monitoring of gun owners to ensure they are up to date with the legislation</li> <li>• There is notable support among respondents to raise more awareness of firearms use, the steps and background checks required to obtain a firearms license and the low crime rates among legal owners to increase community confidence and provide a positive perception of users</li> <li>• Firearm users support funding the Licensing and Regulation Division within VicPol to enable greater accessibility (i.e. Mon-Fri 9am-5pm contact for the public)</li> <li>• Some respondents suggest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Running targeted community campaigns and outreach, including local information nights/days held at local community halls or police stations</li> <li>○ Advertising on media outlets on safe handling and use of firearms</li> <li>○ More firearms ranges need to be built for practical safety courses</li> <li>○ Improving ongoing education for licensed owners</li> <li>○ Strengthening partnerships and community involvement</li> <li>○ Enhancing transparency and feedback mechanisms</li> <li>○ Leveraging existing knowledge and experience of shooting/gun clubs, hunting clubs and associations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Some respondents suggested moving the management of firearms and the firearms registry out of VicPol into an independent body such as VicRoads.</li> </ul>				

Survey Question		Responses			
<p>9. Are there any types of firearms, firearm parts, modifications, emerging technologies, imitation firearms, or accessories that you think should be more strongly regulated in Victoria?*</p> <p><i>*Respondents could only select a single option</i></p>	Response	Responses – Users	Responses – Non-users	Total responses (% of responses received)	
	No. The current rules and laws are strong enough.	14,593	1,636	<b>16,229 (85.3%)</b>	
	Yes. Some should be more strongly regulated.	1,502	384	<b>1,886 (9.9%)</b>	
	Unsure/ I don't know	615	296	<b>911 (4.8%)</b>	
<p>9a. Please explain which types should be more strongly regulated and why.</p> <p><i>#Only respondents who selected 'Yes. Some should be more strongly regulated' in Question 9 completed this question</i></p>	<p><i>There were 1,886 responses to this question, including 1,502 from firearm users and 384 from non-users.</i></p> <p><b>Recurrent themes from responses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many respondents support banning or heavily restricting automatic or semi-automatic guns</li> <li>• There is widespread concern about 3D printing of parts and full weapons</li> <li>• There should be regular reviews of new technology and new products to ensure they are captured under rules and regulations</li> <li>• Some respondents suggested having greater restrictions for rapid-fire firearms (including straight-pull firearms) as well as military style firearms</li> <li>• There is a notable concern amongst firearms users about the use of lever-release (not lever-action) and push-button firearms, with some supporting their reclassification and some supporting the complete ban of these firearms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ These firearms are manually reset by the user via a button or lever which allows more rapid shots to be taken than a lever action, bolt action or pump action firearm</li> <li>○ Some suggested the classification of lever-release or push-button firearms is an example of the firearms industry taking advantage of outdated regulations and is a loophole that requires greater oversight, as these firearms may resemble a semi-automatic firearm</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Some respondents note that modified firearms (automatic switches, glock switches, and other modifications to guns) should be restricted or banned <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ While some firearms users support legalising suppressors with proper licensing, non-users support them remaining banned</li> </ul> </li> </ul>				

Survey Question		Responses			
10.	Do you think how government agencies work together and share information to help manage firearms risks and protect the community should be improved?*  <i>*Respondents could only select a single option</i>	Response	Responses – Users	Responses – Non-users	Total responses (% of responses received)
		Yes	10,354	1,355	<b>11,709 (61.5%)</b>
		No	4,190	547	<b>4,737 (24.9%)</b>
		Unsure/ I don't know	2,166	414	<b>2,580 (13.6%)</b>
	10a. What would you most like to see improved?#	<p><i>There were 11,704 responses to this question, including 10,351 from firearm users and 1,353 from non-users</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is widespread support for greater inter-agency collaboration, communication and information-sharing, including between state and federal governments and relevant law enforcement bodies to identify at-risk persons (i.e. ASIO watchlist, prior criminal/offending history etc.) and prevent them from obtaining a license</li> <li>• Many respondents support having a citizenship requirement for a firearms license</li> <li>• Many respondents support having stronger penalties for illegal firearms activities</li> <li>• A notable number of respondents support a national firearms registry being established for greater transparency</li> <li>• Some non-users support an overall reduction of total firearms in the community</li> </ul> <p><i>#Only respondents who selected 'Yes. Some should be more strongly regulated' in Question 10 completed this question</i></p>			
11.	In one sentence, what matters most to you about strengthening firearms controls and community safety in Victoria?	<p><i>There were 17,447 responses to question 11, including 15,352 from firearm users and 2,095 from non-users</i></p> <p><i>There were 15,299 responses to question 12, including 13,549 from firearm users and 1,750 from non-users.</i></p> <p><b>Recurrent themes from responses</b></p> <p>Responses for Questions 11 and 12 generally reflected themes from earlier survey questions</p>			
12.	Do you have any suggestions on how trust and confidence in firearms rules and safety could be improved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a general, strong sentiment amongst users and non-users alike that law-abiding firearm users should not be punished for governance failures enabling the Bondi incident</li> <li>• There is support for evidence-based policy over emotional reactions to the Bondi incident</li> <li>• Firearm users note they feel there is a conflation of legal firearms use with illegal firearms use and greater public awareness is needed around existing pre-screening checks required for a firearms license to reduce community concern               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Both users and non-users support potentially publishing enforcement data (e.g. number of checks completed, number of users who were compliant, number of users who had their licenses revoked, number of illegal firearms found, etc.).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Some users note that government accountability is needed, where agency failures occur</li> <li>• Non-users call for the restriction of gun lobby influence within government, including politicians disclosing firearms connections</li> </ul>			

# **Appendix E:**

Jurisdictional comparison of  
announced firearms reforms

## 18. Appendix E: Jurisdictional comparison of announced firearms reforms

Issue	VIC Rapid Review recommendations	New South Wales	Queensland	Western Australia	Australian Capital Territory	Tasmania	South Australia	Northern Territory
<b>Reform passed, announced or commenced</b>	N/A	Reforms <b>passed</b> on 24 December 2025 as part of <i>Terrorism and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2025</i>	Reforms <b>announced</b> on 9 February 2026 and second read in Parliament on 27 February 2026.	Reforms <b>commenced</b> on 31 March 2025.	Reforms <b>announced</b> on 2 February 2026 and introduced into Parliament on 4 February 2026.	Reforms <b>announced</b> on 27 February 2026.	No reforms announced (as of 2 March 2026).	No reforms announced (as of 2 March 2026).
<b>Caps on firearm ownership</b>	A general cap of 4 firearms per licence holder.  Exemptions for up to 10 firearms if applicant can demonstrate 'compelling need'.  Further exemption if applicant can demonstrate 'exceptional need'.	<b>Introduced</b> A general cap of 4 firearms.  Exemptions for primary producers who can have up to 10 firearms.	No reform announced.	<b>Introduced</b> A general cap of 5 firearms.  Primary producers and competition shooters can have up to 10 firearms.	<b>Announced</b> A general cap of 5 firearms.  Exemptions for primary producers, sports/ target shooters and certain other cohorts who can have up to 10 firearms.	<b>Announced</b> No caps to be imposed on individual firearms owners.	N/A	N/A
<b>Restrictions on firearms classification</b>	Update existing firearm categories so that higher-risk firearms are appropriately classified.  Increase reclassification powers of the Chief Commissioner of Police.	<b>Introduced</b> Limits to straight-pull/pump action and button/lever release firearms to primary producers.  Reduced magazine capacity for category A and B firearms.	No reform announced.	<b>Introduced</b> Prohibition on rapid-release action firearms  Expansion of the range of items excluded from the definition of a 'firearm', such as certain compressed air devices, flares and children's toy guns.	<b>Announced</b> Recategorisation of certain types of firearms to account for advances in technology and functionality.  Restrictions on high-risk features including limits on the magazine capacity &	<b>Announced</b> Reclassification of straight pull and button/lever release (self-ejecting) centre-fire and shotgun firearms to the more restrictive Category C licence.	N/A	N/A

### Rapid Review of Victoria's Firearms Laws – Final Report

Issue	VIC Rapid Review recommendations	New South Wales	Queensland	Western Australia	Australian Capital Territory	Tasmania	South Australia	Northern Territory
		Prohibition on firearms using belt-fed magazines.			rapid-fire mechanisms  Prohibition of belt-fed firearms.			
<b>Medical assessment to hold a firearms licence</b>	Strengthening application and renewal assessments to consider licence holders' medical or health circumstances or conditions.	No reform announced.	No reform announced.	<b>Introduced</b> All firearms owners are required to undergo a regular health assessment (including mental and physical health).	No reform announced.	No reform announced.	N/A	N/A
<b>Duration</b>	No change to firearms licence duration.	<b>Introduced</b> Reduced the duration of a general firearms licence from 5 years to 2 years.	No reform announced.	<b>Introduced</b> Licences in WA can now be granted or renewed for 1, 3 or 5 years, with the period chosen by the applicant (subject to limitations).	No reform announced.	No reform announced.	N/A	N/A
<b>Citizenship requirement</b>	Introduce a citizenship requirement to be eligible to hold a firearms licence.  Extended to New Zealand permanent residents who can demonstrate a genuine reason for holding a licence.	<b>Introduced</b> Limited eligibility for firearms licences to Australian citizens or New Zealand permanent residents who can demonstrate a genuine reason for holding a licence.	<b>Announced</b> A requirement for Qld weapons licence holders to be Australian citizens.  Limited exemptions for sports and target shooters and people who need to use a firearm for work purposes.	No reform announced.	No reform announced.	<b>Announced</b> Australian citizenship will be the default eligibility requirement for firearms licensing.  Exemptions announced for primary producers and citizens from prescribed countries	N/A  Already has citizenship requirement as part of eligibility for firearms licence (or person must ordinarily reside in	N/A

### Rapid Review of Victoria's Firearms Laws – Final Report

Issue	VIC Rapid Review recommendations	New South Wales	Queensland	Western Australia	Australian Capital Territory	Tasmania	South Australia	Northern Territory
						such as New Zealand.	South Australia).	
<b>Training requirements</b>	Mandating firearms training for all firearms licence types (including live-fire training). Noting that this is already in place for handguns.  Mandating minimum firearms training for all firearms licence types standards.	No reform announced.	No reform announced.	<b>Introduced</b> Mandatory firearms training for all firearms licence holders.	No reform announced.	No reform announced.	N/A	N/A
<b>Firearms club membership</b>	Introducing mandatory membership of an approved firearm club for all firearms licence types. Noting that this is already in place for handguns.	<b>Introduced</b> Mandatory gun club membership for all firearms licence holders.	No reform announced.	No reform announced.	No reform announced.	No reform announced.	N/A	N/A
<b>Firearms offences &amp; penalties</b>	Introducing specific offences relating to the trafficking of firearms.  Introducing regulatory requirements for individuals and entities involved in the transport of firearms across Victoria.	No reform announced.	<b>Announced</b> Penalties for trafficking firearms or ammunition increased to life imprisonment.  New offence prohibiting the reckless discharge of a weapon towards a building or vehicle to crackdown on the rise in drive-by shootings.  A new offence prohibiting the possession and	<b>Announced</b> Increased penalties for firearms crime.	<b>Announced</b> Introduction of offence for the possessions of a digital blueprint for the manufacture of a firearm.	<b>Announced</b> Stronger penalties for theft and possession of stolen firearms.	N/A	N/A

**Rapid Review of Victoria's Firearms Laws – Final Report**

Issue	VIC Rapid Review recommendations	New South Wales	Queensland	Western Australia	Australian Capital Territory	Tasmania	South Australia	Northern Territory
			distribution of blueprints for 3D-printed firearms.					
<b>Other</b>	<p>Strengthening regulation of imitation firearms and firearms accessories.</p> <p>Improving the use of criminal intelligence in firearms licensing decisions and appeals.</p> <p>Strengthening information sharing arrangements within Victoria and to other jurisdictions.</p> <p>Increase the evidence base for firearms policy.</p> <p>Strengthening governance, community engagement and public communication around firearms laws.</p>	<p><b>Introduced</b></p> <p>People will no longer be able to seek to overturn a licence decision through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.</p> <p>All firearms clubs required to use the GunSafe online platform.</p> <p>Safe storage inspections required before the issue of a permit.</p>	<p><b>Announced</b></p> <p>Strengthened police powers to disrupt illegal firearm trafficking.</p>	<p><b>Introduced</b></p> <p>Mandatory Disqualifying Offences and Orders (MDOs), which strip guns from the hands of serious offenders such as family and domestic violence perpetrators.</p>	<p><b>Announced</b></p> <p>introduction of Firearm Prohibition Orders.</p>	<p><b>Announced</b></p> <p>Additional sharing of intelligence information and associated background checks.</p>	N/A	N/A

# Appendix F:

## Literature review



## 19. Appendix F: Literature review

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# Endnotes

The image features a dark blue background with abstract, overlapping circular shapes in various shades of blue and teal. The shapes are positioned in the lower half of the frame, creating a modern, geometric aesthetic. The word "Endnotes" is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font in the upper left quadrant.

## 20. Endnotes

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