



Speech by

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WEAPONS AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (12.57 p.m.): I rise to add my support to the Weapons and Another Act Amendment Bill. The bill establishes, in line with a national agreement, the process through which firearms amnesties should occur. It also makes some changes to the Weapons Act and the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act. Other members have elaborated on them. I do not think I need to, except to say that I support them. I have not spoken before now on gun control, but it is an area in which I hold some pretty firm views, and I think it is important to put those views on the record. I am sure I will offend some people, but this is not an issue that I will tiptoe around. In Australia we are fortunate to have a culture that does not normalise the possession of guns. We are fortunate not to have institutionalised the misguided notion of a right to bear arms and we are fortunate that relatively few people are shot dead. These are tremendously positive aspects of our society and we should protect them.

In my view, there is no such thing as a right to bear arms. A gun gives its holder quite an extraordinary and unnatural power over others, not to mention the capacity to do him or herself harm. While the line that 'guns don't kill people, people do' might appeal to the simple mind, the fact is that people with guns kill people and it is much harder to kill anyone, even yourself, if you do not have a gun. I have spoken to many people in the gun lobby and the bottom line is that I do not believe that anyone should have a gun—of any kind—unless they can seriously establish that they need it. And as far as I can see, that need is limited to people like police whose work may place their lives in danger, to some farmers or hunters of feral animals and to indigenous people who hunt for food. There is also an argument for sporting shooters.

The member for Beaudesert, when outlining the opposition's position on this bill, said that many people would not realise just how hard it is to get a gun. So it should be. I might have heard him wrongly, but I thought he also said he had one himself. That struck me as a quite scary thought, so maybe it is not hard enough. Another argument that is frequently made against gun control is that licensed gun owners are punished when the proliferation of guns is in fact among criminals who buy their guns through the black market and own them illegally. That may well be the case, but it is hardly the point. Gun policy should aim to absolutely minimise the proliferation of guns in the community. It should make it hard to get a gun legally, it should police the unlawful ownership of weapons and customs should make a serious effort to stop illegal gun importation. I commend the Minister for Police for pursuing that issue.

From a policy perspective, the policing of legal and illegal weapons is not mutually exclusive and to suggest otherwise is a complete farce. Gun people argue that they need guns to protect themselves against the bad elements out there, but that seems to me to be about as plausible as saying that we need two-bit citizens militias to save us from the invading hordes. While we might all watch a lot of TV and we might all have some deep-seated fears of people coming into our homes, the fact is that Australians are not in that kind of day-to-day danger. If you are really worried about your safety, you probably should not drive on the roads.

It might seem clear that I am frustrated by some of the silly arguments that are put up by the gun lobby to justify having guns in our community. The fact is that we all are safer if there are fewer guns out there. This bill makes some small steps in that direction and I commend it to the House.