

FIREARM LICENSING SCHEME

**35. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Police:**

I refer to the new gun licensing scheme and the devastating impact it is having on small business operators.

- (1) Did the minister prepare a small business risk analysis and impact statement for this scheme; and, if yes, was this document presented to cabinet?
- (2) Did the minister seek the approval of the Minister for Commerce for these changes, which introduce a tangle of red tape for small businesses?
- (3) Has the minister acted on the dozens of complaints from small business owners whose livelihood has been jeopardised as a result of the red tape associated with the minister's new scheme?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON replied:**

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(3) He is referring to the small business scheme for firearms dealers. I have had many meetings with firearms dealers, sporting clubs and associations, collectors of firearms and so forth. I have met with many of them. In Esperance I met at least 16 or 20 dealers, collectors, members or presidents of sporting shooters associations. In my ministerial office I met a group of people who represent the industry, if I may put it that way.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** After you introduced the scheme.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I am sorry, but the question was asked by the member for Collie–Preston, so I would like to answer the member for Collie–Preston, Mr Speaker.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you, members!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I accept that there have been some problems and I do not deny that for one moment. The whole purpose of bringing on the new system of registering licences for firearm holders is this: if people already had a firearm and a firearm licence, the idea was to try to make it easier if they wanted to add another firearm to their existing licence, so that they would not have to go to the police station. As the member knows, virtually every police station throughout the whole of the state has very often to devote one officer for one day to deal with firearm licence applications. The idea was to try to do away with that system so that the police officers could get out and do front-line duties. It was the police department that suggested to me—I cannot claim the glory for this one, even though I might like to—that it would be done much more easily if it were done through Australia Post. The police made an arrangement with Australia Post whereby —

**Mr P.B. Watson:** It's never been the same since I left!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Australia Post has gone up a notch or two since you left, my friend! We get our mail on time.

To get back to the question that was asked, the purpose of the new system was that a person would not have to take the firearm to either a post office or a police station in the future. The new system was designed to make the process simpler.

Several members interjected.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** We know that the member for Midland believes that if she were the leader of the Labor Party, she would probably be sitting on this side of the chamber. That is her theory. Unfortunately she has to get in the queue because there are a few other members in front of her, including the member sitting next to her and the members sitting next to the Leader of the Opposition. The member for Midland has a lot of competition.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I suggest that the minister return to answering the question that was asked. I note that the member for Collie–Preston is also having difficulty hearing the answer. I ask members on both sides of the chamber to remain a little quieter than they have been.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I am attempting to answer the member's question because it is a good and genuine question, and I will give him a genuine answer. I accept that there have been some problems. It is because of those problems that I have listened to all the people involved in the firearms industry, whether they be sporting shooters, dealers or collectors. I accept and admit that there have been problems. As the responsible minister, I have to take responsibility for that, and I am happy to do that.

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** What are you going to do about it?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I will ignore that comment and the comments by the member for Girrawheen, who is missing in action most of the time, but I will tell the member for Collie–Preston that I have arranged for a forum to be held at the police academy next Wednesday. Dealers, sporting shooters associations and anyone else who is interested in the gun licensing situation can attend that forum. The purpose of the forum is to try to iron out the teething problems and to reduce some of the paperwork. I must be honest and admit that I am astounded at some of the paperwork that is needed. I have told the police that I am not happy with the amount of paperwork that is required. The idea is to make it a simpler system. The forum will give the police a chance to listen to the concerns of the people who have an interest in this matter.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** What risk analysis did you undertake before you implemented this?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Stop being stupid. Risk analysis? What a stupid comment. I will conclude my remarks by saying that once that forum —

**Mr M.P. Whitely:** There's no risk with you; you're a short bet.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** The member for Bassendean is totally irrelevant to the Labor Party and to Parliament.

When the forum has taken place and the police and interested parties have listened to each other and have worked out a way to make the system simpler and run more smoothly, we will implement that system. I assure members that I want a much simpler system. If people are responsible enough to hold a licence for one, two, three or four guns, there is no reason why they should not be deemed to be responsible to own a fifth one if they need it. Shooters use a lot of different guns for different purposes. Different shotguns are used for one type of competition than for another. I do not have a problem with that. We have licensed firearms in our society and I want to make the system simpler for those people who are deemed to be responsible gun owners. At the same time, we must make sure that people who are not responsible do not get a firearm licence in the first place because we do not want a proliferation of people who are neither responsible enough nor able enough or who do not have the necessary faculties to be able to treat a firearm as a deadly weapon. I am sure that a system will be worked out once the forum has taken place.