

FIREARMS AMENDMENT BILL 2003

Motion

MR J.C. KOBELKE (Nollamara - Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection) [12.53 pm]: On behalf of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, I move -

That the scope of the Firearms Amendment Bill 2003 be extended to enable amendments relating to historical firearms collectors to be moved.

In December 2002 the Council of Australian Governments endorsed 28 resolutions made by the Australasian Police Ministers Council to restrict the availability and use of hand guns. Among other reforms, the Firearms Amendment Bill 2003 implements provisions to achieve state compliance with most of the APMC-COAG resolutions. When the Bill was introduced into Parliament on 19 November 2003, the State was still engaged in negotiations with the Commonwealth to reach agreement on appropriate measures to achieve state compliance with the APMC-COAG resolutions relating to historical firearms collectors. Agreement has recently been reached between the State and the Commonwealth on an alternative model to achieve state compliance.

The agreed model requires further amendments to be progressed in the Firearms Amendment Bill 2003. The amendments have been presented to the opposition spokesperson on police matters and to the National Party. The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly advised that the amendments would be outside the scope of the existing Bill. To overcome this, the Government is moving this motion to expand the scope of the Bill. The amendments will be dealt with tomorrow. At the request of the member for Kalgoorlie, the Government seeks to have a pro forma Bill prepared including the amendments. Hopefully, a copy will be available for him by this evening and the Bill can be dealt with tomorrow. This motion has the support of the member for Kalgoorlie. It is to enable the agreement with the Commonwealth concerning amendments to historical firearms collectors to be incorporated in this Bill. As this will extend the scope of the Bill, this motion is necessary.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys) [12.55 pm]: I cannot let this moment go by without making a few comments. Once again, this shows the incompetence of this Government in bringing legislation into this House. It never seems to introduce legislation that does not need amending, not necessarily by this side of the House but by its own ministers. This is an absolute nonsense. Members were kept back until 11.30 last night because the Leader of the House demanded that all the second reading debate speeches on this Bill be made yesterday. He knew full well that Liberal members did not have a briefing until 11 o'clock this morning. Liberal members received a briefing this morning that encompassed the amendments referred to by the Leader of the House on behalf of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. This is an absolute nonsense and an abuse of parliamentary time. One wonders why the Government is in such a rush to get this legislation through the House without members having a proper briefing. Members on this side of the House were forced to deliver their second reading debate speeches without the benefit of the briefing that was given this morning. It is an atrocity.

My negotiations with the Leader of the House fall far short of amicability these days. I put the point to him: what is the rush for this legislation? Why did he want to keep members back until 11.30 at night, which is an hour and a half beyond the agreed finishing time of this House on a Tuesday? Both sides of the House have agreed that the House will adjourn at 10.00 pm on Tuesdays, 7.00 pm on Wednesdays and 5.00 pm on Thursdays. When the Government was in opposition, those are the times it wanted. When this side of the House was in government, it agreed to those times. It is not working that way. We are sitting all sorts of times. I asked the Leader of the House, why the rush? There are plenty more weeks of sitting scheduled for this year. He said that we had to get through a lot of legislation early this year. I asked whether that meant there would be an early election. He did not respond to that. However, I did not expect him to. I predict that we will go to an election before Christmas. I believe that is why the Government is desperate to ram through any legislation it wants. Whether it is proclaimed is another matter. When a Government rises for an election, a lot of legislation is left unproclaimed. I think that will be the case this time.

My good friend and colleague, the shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the member for Kalgoorlie, has agreed with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services that the Opposition will agree to this motion; it will not oppose it. Once again, it is a classic case of incompetence when a Government brings in so much legislation that it has to amend. The Leader of the House referred to the ministerial council's actions in November last year. If we are implementing amendments because of that, why was it not done before the House rose for Christmas so that members had plenty of time to consider the matter? The shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the member for Kalgoorlie, said last night that he was not offered a briefing by the minister before Christmas. He said the first opportunity was today. It is pretty unreasonable that we have to deal with this now. I know the Minister for Police and Emergency Services is not in the Chamber today, although I do not know why. I am sure there is a good reason. We could have had the second reading debate this morning after members received the benefit of the briefing. Members would have been better informed in their speeches.

As it was, we had to fly blind last night until 11.30 when the Leader of the House decided it was time to go home. That is not the way this Parliament should operate; however, it is operating that way at the moment. I am not happy with the way the Leader of the House is conducting the business of this place. He knows that and he knows the consequences. Governments need the cooperation of the Opposition in passing legislation and in the operation of this Parliament. The Leader of the House has had unprecedented cooperation from me and the Liberal and National Parties over the past year or two. However, that cooperation appears to be coming to an end. At this stage of the electoral calendar, the Opposition will not be bullied into rushing legislation through Parliament without the opportunity to give it proper consideration. We will not agree to legislation in future unless we have had the courtesy of being offered the appropriate briefings that should be made available to opposition members. Government members are given briefings much earlier than members of the Opposition. They often see the draft legislation. We accept that because that is the way government works. Opposition members are not given that same courtesy. We receive draft legislation at the last minute when it is introduced into this Parliament and then we must almost get on our knees to be granted a briefing.

I have an hour in which to speak on this matter, but I will not take up much time of the House because it has other important issues to debate today. However, it is important to record the Government's incompetence because it continually wants to amend its legislation every time it is introduced. The Leader of the House should get his act together and stop trying to be a bully. He should do the job properly and seek cooperation from both sides of the House. Perhaps then the passage of legislation through this Parliament will be smooth. Unless the Leader of the House does that, that smooth transition will not happen. I am giving him fair warning that without cooperation -

Mr P.B. Watson: You aren't being a bullyboy are you?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am responding most forcefully to the bullyboy. It is the last warning he will get from me. I can assure him that any more stunts like the one that occurred last night will not pass without some sort of repercussion. As we said, the Liberal Party will support this amendment to the Firearms Amendment Bill. Debate during consideration in detail will be interesting.

Question put and passed.