

# Firearms Amendment Bill 2026

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## **Introduction**

The Shooting Industry of Australia (SIFA) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the Northern Territory's *Firearms Amendment Bill 2026*.

SIFA is the national peak body representing major importers, wholesalers and retailers of firearms and related accessories across Australia.

The industry makes a significant economic contribution, with conservative estimates indicating it contributed approximately \$2.4 billion to Australia's GDP and supported around 19,500 jobs in 2019.

## **4 Section 4 amended (Exemptions)**

### **Digital blueprints.**

SIFA has no in principle objection to measures that target the illegal manufacture of firearms and firearm parts.

Our concern relates to the definition and interpretation of "digital blueprints" within the proposed framework, particularly given the significant penalties attached to the offence provisions.

Many firearms are supplied with user manuals that include exploded technical diagrams to assist with cleaning, maintenance and safe handling. These materials are commonly available in digital format. While such diagrams illustrate component relationships, they do not contain the dimensional specifications, tolerances or machine instructions required to manufacture a functional firearm.

Without clear legislative and regulatory boundaries, there is a substantial risk that these materials could be misinterpreted as "digital blueprints" and inadvertently captured by the offence provisions.

To ensure the provisions are appropriately targeted, the Act and supporting regulations should define digital blueprints as files that contain sufficient technical detail to enable the manufacture of a functional firearm or firearm part, including machine-readable files used to program 3D printers or CNC equipment.

This should be accompanied by a clear exclusion for illustrative, instructional or non-dimensional materials, such as user manuals and maintenance diagrams.

This level of clarity is necessary to ensure the provisions are proportionate, enforceable and do not unintentionally capture lawful and widely available materials.

## **7 Section 14 amended (Period of licence)**

The pending implementation of the National Firearms Register (NFR), together with enhanced vetting processes and improved intelligence sharing across jurisdictions, provide a strong policy basis against reducing licence durations.

These reforms strengthen oversight and risk identification capabilities, reducing the need to rely on shorter licence terms as a primary regulatory control.

Licence terms of less than five years would act as a disincentive for licensed firearms dealers to invest in their businesses and workforce, introducing unnecessary uncertainty into an already highly regulated sector.

SIFA notes and supports the retention of five-year licence periods for armourers and dealers. However, it is unclear why firearms corporate licences are set at ten years while other business-related licences remain at five years.

In our view, there should be consistency across business-related licensing categories. Given the regulatory powers available to vary, suspend or impose conditions on licences during their term, there is a strong case for extending all business-related licences to ten years.

This would better align the licensing framework with contemporary regulatory practice, support long-term investment, and maintain appropriate oversight through existing compliance and enforcement mechanisms.

## **8 Section 34 amended (General provisions relating to permits)**

As noted above, the Commissioner is already empowered to revoke, vary or impose conditions on licences and permits during their period of operation.

SIFA further notes that the expansion of these powers under Section 34 strengthens a responsive, risk-based regulatory approach. While such discretion is appropriate, it should be exercised within clear thresholds and supported by procedural safeguards to ensure consistency, transparency and accountability.

In this context, expanding discretionary powers under Section 34 further, reinforces the argument that shorter licence durations are not necessary as a primary regulatory control.

Where robust powers exist to intervene on a risk basis, regulatory effort can be directed toward intelligence-led oversight rather than routine administrative renewal processes.

Accordingly, extending all business-related licences to ten years would be a proportionate and efficient measure, allowing regulatory resources to be better allocated while maintaining appropriate safeguards through existing powers.

## **9 Section 55 amended (Firearms Advisory Council)**

SIFA supports the continued role of the Firearms Advisory Council as an important mechanism for informing policy development and regulatory practice. A well-functioning advisory body can provide valuable insight by drawing on practical experience, technical knowledge and an understanding of how regulation operates in real-world settings.

To ensure the Council is effective in this role, it is important that its membership includes individuals with substantial experience across the shooting sports, hunting and the broader firearms industry. Participants with direct, operational knowledge are best placed to provide informed, evidence-based advice that reflects both regulatory intent and practical application.

Strong representation from those actively involved in the sector will support balanced, credible and workable policy outcomes, and ensure that the Council continues to provide meaningful input into the development and implementation of firearms regulation.

## **10 61B Possession of digital blueprints for manufacture of firearms**

SIFA supports measures that target the illegal manufacture of firearms and firearm parts, including provisions addressing the possession and distribution of digital blueprints capable of facilitating such activity.

However, the proposed offence in Section 61B is broad in scope and carries significant penalties, making it essential that the definition of “digital blueprint” is clear, precise and appropriately targeted.

As currently drafted, the definition may capture a wide range of materials, including technical diagrams and instructional content that are not capable of being used to manufacture a functional firearm. Many firearms are supplied with user manuals that include exploded diagrams for maintenance and safe handling, and these are commonly available in digital form. These materials do not contain the dimensional specifications, tolerances or machine instructions required to produce a working firearm.

Without clear boundaries, there is a risk that lawful and widely available materials could be inadvertently captured by the offence provisions, creating uncertainty for licence holders, businesses and the broader community.

To ensure the provision is effective and proportionate, SIFA considers that “digital blueprints” should be defined as files that contain sufficient technical detail to enable the manufacture of a functional firearm or firearm part. This should include machine-readable files used to program 3D printers or CNC equipment, or files containing precise dimensions and tolerances required for production.

This should be accompanied by a clear exclusion for illustrative, instructional or non-dimensional materials, including user manuals and maintenance diagrams.

SIFA also notes the breadth of the concept of “possession”, including control of digital files held on devices or systems not physically in a person’s custody. This further reinforces the need for clarity and precision in drafting to ensure the provision is enforceable and does not unintentionally capture lawful conduct.

With these clarifications, the provision can more effectively target unlawful activity while maintaining a fair and workable framework for lawful participants.

## **12 Section 68A amended (Sale and purchase of ammunition)**

SIFA welcomes this amendment which corrects previous legislative drafting errors.

The mutual recognition of equivalent interstate licenses is an important element in achieving the consistency sought by the National Firearms Agreement.

## **13 Section 69 amended (Possession of ammunition)**

SIFA notes the amendment to Section 69, which clarifies that possession of ammunition is lawful where a person holds a corresponding licence or permit for the relevant category of firearm.

SIFA supports this amendment as a practical clarification that aligns possession requirements with existing licensing frameworks. The recognition of corresponding licences and permits improves consistency, particularly in circumstances involving interstate participants or equivalent authorisations.

This change reduces ambiguity for licence holders and assists in ensuring that lawful possession is clearly defined and understood. SIFA considers this to be a sensible and proportionate amendment that supports regulatory clarity without imposing additional burden on lawful participants.

## **14 Section 92 amended (Temporary recognition of interstate licences for shooting competition)**

SIFA notes the amendments to Section 92, which broaden the temporary recognition of interstate licences for participation in shooting activities.

SIFA supports this amendment as a practical improvement that facilitates legitimate participation in shooting competitions across jurisdictions. The recognition of interstate licences is an important component of a nationally consistent framework and reduces unnecessary administrative barriers for competitors.

## **17 Part 13, Division 5 inserted**

### **125 Matters to be notified (b)**

SIFA considers that this provision would benefit from further clarification, as it is not clear what specific regulatory issue it is intended to address.

Firearms may become inoperable or altered in minor and often temporary ways through ordinary use. For example, a firearm may be rendered inoperable by the removal of a bolt, or through routine wear and tear affecting replaceable components such as magazines. Similarly, minor damage, such as cosmetic wear to a stock, may occur through normal handling.

It is unclear whether such circumstances are intended to trigger a notification requirement under this provision. Without clearer thresholds, there is a risk that minor or routine matters could fall within scope, creating uncertainty for licence holders and an unnecessary compliance burden.

A broad interpretation may also capture routine activities undertaken by licensed gunsmiths, where firearms are temporarily rendered inoperable, repaired or modified as part of standard work. If each instance of such work were to become a reportable event, this would create a significant administrative burden and may inadvertently criminalise ordinary, lawful industry activity.

Given the penalties attached to non-compliance, including the potential for imprisonment, it is important that the provision is clearly targeted toward material and permanent changes that affect the status of a firearm, rather than temporary, minor or routine circumstances.