

VERY LIGHT

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Revocation of the Tasmanian Section 4 Exemption for Antique Firearms

The surprise announcement by the Tasmanian Government on the 18th of January revoking the Section 4 exemption of antique arms that take obsolete and non-commercially available ammunition from licensing and registration comes as a shock to us all.

It demanded that collectors who possessed these antiques needed to either transfer them immediately to an existing collectors licence (paying an estimated \$80.00 per firearm) or place them with a dealer for storage or disposal. The language was draconian. It demonstrated that governments could make arbitrary decisions that ignore informed advice with shocking suddenness.

However there is more to this story than was revealed in 18th of January announcement in which the Tasmanian Government said -

“The exemption has also been subject to misinterpretation and some people have relied on it to possess firearms that take commercially available cartridge ammunition. This was never the intent of this exemption. To have firearms with this capability that aren’t subject to registration and storage requirements is a potential risk to the community”

But it apparently it did not tell the whole story which was that the exemption was actually illegal and had been since its introduction in 1998.

This was only revealed following a backlash of protest from collectors in the days that followed. On the 24th of January in a letter to collectors from the Minister he stated -

“The Commissioner of Police has received legal advice that the “blanket exemption” from licensing and registering antique firearms is not valid and needs to be cancelled.”

So in reality the exemption had been illegal since 1998.

The illegality of the exemption notwithstanding, there had been persistent abuse of it by a minority who were shooting firearms covered by the exemption without appropriate licences (longarm or pistol) and is a common feature of legislation in the other states.

This minority when caught doing so were using the exemption to attempt to evade the overall spirit of the legislation in regard to firearm use. That it has taken so long for the Tasmanian

government to take action to crack down on this is not helpful to either themselves, or to legitimate law abiding firearm owners. In fact it was allowed to drag on for far too long.

Since the announcement and following discussion with various collector organizations the police have softened their stance and individuals are allowed to apply for extended exemptions as they comply with the new conditions. This does not absolve the Tasmanian government from legislating to amend their firearms legislation so that these exemptions are speedily restored in line with exemptions in other states. As we have long maintained antique flintlocks etc. are not weapons of choice for criminals.

In Victoria, as we are aware, genuine pre-1900 antiques such as flintlocks and their predecessors as well as single shot percussion pistols and all longarms that take obsolete ammunition are exempt from licensing and registration and that has been the case since 1985.

BUT this does not mean that they are exempt from the legislation regarding use of firearms, all it means is that they are firearms exempt from registration and licencing. They remain firearms under the *Act*.

This means that if you wish to shoot exempt antique firearms you must do so in accordance with the *Firearms Act* which means that the firearm must be registered to the appropriate pistol or longarm licence held by the shooter.

So be aware that in Victoria if you wish to shoot exempt firearms you must be appropriately licenced and those firearms must be registered to your licence. And any attempt to avoid the appropriate licensing requirements by individuals mistakenly seeking to exploit imagined loopholes regarding use will only cause harm to our common interest.

Vale Peter Ruse

After the December issue of *Very Light* was issued we received the sad news that Peter Ruse had passed away. Peter was a former committeeman, avid collector and a stalwart at the Guild table when we had gun shows in Melbourne. The Guild extends our sympathies to his wife Barbara and his family.

Notice Regarding Security and Safety at Meetings

We note that while it is pleasing to see increasing attendance at the Monday night meetings there has been a slackening of necessary security measures by members presenting displays.

Accordingly the Committee has resolved that –

1. All registerable firearms displayed must have either cable ties locking their actions, or trigger locks, or be firmly affixed to the table by locked cables, and the display must be attended at all times. The Guild has some cables and locks and these can be supplied if requested.

2. In regard to ammunition the sale of ammunition by individual members who do not possess the necessary WorkSafe permit to sell cartridge ammunition is banned.

This does not apply to licensed dealers and members who hold the appropriate Ammunition Collectors Licence who may be presenting displays. Any members who can sell ammunition under these conditions are reminded that they need to physically confirm that the purchaser has the appropriate licence before a sale can be made.

The restrictions on ammunition display either for sale, or as part of a display e.g. is because we run the risk that someone may take a loose round and chamber it in a firearm in an unattended display. The results of that would be horrendous for the club.

We also run the risk of a spot check by a L&RD Officer. This has not happened in the past. However the future is uncertain we must assume a visit will only be looking for trouble.

National Firearms Register

In February 2023 National Cabinet tasked the Attorney-General and Police Ministers with bringing options for a National Firearms Register back to National Cabinet by mid-2023. A public consultation paper was released nation-wide. 86 submissions were received from the public. ACIC led workshops with Commonwealth and state and territory jurisdictions and reached working level agreements on Register options. Stakeholders generally agreed that the biggest challenge to the success of a Register is timely and accurate data. Submissions from firearm users, industry and representative groups supported the community safety objectives of the Register and the related verification service advocated for increased data security to protect firearm owners information. The Register is a high priority reform for all governments, with National Cabinet considering options for a preferred model.

Currently there are delays and the Attorney-General's Department has said that the matter is still currently being considered by at various levels within the federal, state and territorial governments.

Monday Meetings 2024

The date for the Guild Monday Meetings in 2024 are February 26, March 25, April 29, May 27, June 24, July 29, August 26 (AGM), September 30, October 28 and November 25.

Attendance and Participation in Monday Night Meetings

The committee has made all meetings a Buy and Sell night. We want members to bring along items for sale which can include exempt firearms i.e. pre-1900 genuine antiques like single shot percussion pistols, flintlocks etc. and other types of exempt firearms such as longarms taking obsolete ammunition.

It would also be helpful if we could have some volunteers to help set up the hall before our normal start time of 7.00 PM.

Licence Renewals and PTAs

Members are requested to submit licence renewals, licence applications and Permits to Acquire requiring the signature of a Nominated Officer to the Guild at PO Box 2976 Cheltenham, 3192, or by email to cupfire1@ozemail.com.au

Please remember to enclose a stamped addressed envelope so that we may forward them to the required destination. Mail costs are increasing, and we appreciate members' cooperation in this matter.

Alternatively members may scan and send by email the page that requires a Nominated Officer's signature and this will be signed and returned by email to the member.

The Secretary can be contacted on (03) 9584 2907 or by email at cupfire1@ozemail.com.au

Books for Sale

Australian Service Bayonets, Ian Skennerton, Limited Edition no 1241 of 2000. Unmarked as new, **\$120.00**; *Australian Service Longarms* Ian Skennerton, Limited Edition no 1011 of 2000, the paper cover has a slight tear while the book itself as new. **\$75.00**, *The British Service Lee*, Ian Skennerton. De Luxe Edition no 146 of 300, unmarked, **\$155.00**.

Contact Terry 0429 008 950

Information Wanted by John Corcoran

I would like to inform members that I am currently compiling information for a forthcoming work, titled *Notable Handguns in Australia*, documenting selected handguns from private collections in Australia.

Over years of ongoing contact with collectors of antique and semi-modern firearms, I have constantly been surprised by the quality and rarity of firearms to be found in Australian collections.

This was the reasoning behind the recent publication of *Classic Rifles in Australia*, when Fred Bienvenu and I decided that some of these fine pieces should be brought to the attention of local and overseas enthusiasts. We selected rifles with some, or all, of the following features – quality, condition, rarity, and provenance, and documented fifty-eight outstanding examples, dating from a wheel lock of 1645 to a Winchester Model 70 of 1948.

Notable Handguns in Australia will be produced in a similar format, and I would ask collectors of handguns to contact me if they believe that they have a piece that may warrant inclusion.

Owners of any firearm chosen for the book will not be identified.

I can be contacted on 03 575 22194 or margandon@bigpond.com

Details of *Classic Rifles in Australia* can be accessed on www.buffalocreekpress.com.au