



**Australian Government**  
**Attorney-General's Department**

# **National Firearms Register**

## **Public Consultation Paper**

# National Firearms Register

## Overview

On 3 February 2023, National Cabinet tasked Police Ministers to report back to National Cabinet in mid-2023 with options to implement a National Firearms Register (Register). Options for a Register will be developed in line with the following principles of operation:

- Operate in near real-time
- Provide details of licence holders
- Provide a single firearm record (technical details, identity and history)
- Be interoperable between jurisdictions
- Link firearms and individuals
- Leverage existing systems where possible, and
- Provide notification of cross-jurisdictional movement of firearms.

The purpose of this paper is to obtain public input on the key capabilities and benefits a Register could provide for law enforcement, government regulators, and the public. Input will be used to inform the development of Register options for National Cabinet consideration.

## The objective of a National Firearms Register

The primary objective of a National Firearms Register (Register) is to preserve community and police safety, by ensuring police have timely and accurate information required to accurately assess the firearms risk posed by an individual, and protect the community from harm.

The proposed Register is intended to improve the way firearms ownership information is shared between jurisdictions to support public safety outcomes. Equipping law enforcement and regulatory agencies across the country with information on the movement of firearms and individuals in possession of firearms will better enable police to appropriately respond to firearms-related matters and incidents.

In providing better information on firearms movements (import, export, interstate transfer and ownership), the Register would also aim to increase the identification of the movement of firearms to the illicit market, allowing law enforcement to take decisive and timely action to locate and seize these firearms.

The sharing of information between jurisdictions could also facilitate the efficient administration of licensing, permit and registration systems, decreasing regulatory impost on the firearms community through reducing duplication, while ensuring that vital information can be shared between registries.

Firearms would continue to be managed as they are now, with the Commonwealth retaining responsibility for firearms import and export management, while the states and territories would continue to have responsibility for firearms possession laws and licensing systems. The Register would not change the way that firearms regulation is managed.

## Key capabilities for law enforcement and regulatory agencies

Law enforcement and regulatory agencies that issue firearms permits and licences could benefit significantly from the development of a Register, particularly if the Register is able to operate in near real-time to produce the following capabilities:

- Provide a single shared record that uniquely identifies each firearm in Australia, as well as each non-government individual or entity authorised to possess a firearm,
- Provide a view of firearms in Australia, with an ability to track the movement of firearms between entities from import or manufacture to export or destruction, and
- An alert or notification function for prescribed high risk information or events, for example alerts for rejected, suspended or cancelled licences, interstate transfers, detected non-compliance with licence conditions, stolen firearms and ongoing probity checks.

These key capabilities would ensure that government regulators and law enforcement are aware of the key inter-jurisdictional information required to assess a person's suitability to hold a relevant firearms licence or permit, identify the movement of firearms between jurisdictions and allow operational law enforcement to appropriately respond to firearms-related incidents.

**Question 1:** What capabilities should a National Firearms Register provide to government regulators and law enforcement?

**Question 2:** Should a National Firearms Register trace more than firearms, for example firearms accessories, magazines and parts?

**Question 3:** Do you have any comments on the benefits a National Firearms Register will offer to law enforcement and community safety, including any broader benefits that should be explored?

## Other capabilities

Trusted non-government entities, such as authorised firearms dealers, contribute to the safety of the Australian community by complying with regulations and codes of practice and ensuring that firearms are only being sold to purchasers who are eligible to own them. The contribution that authorised firearms dealers make to community safety could be strengthened as part of a Register. Specifically, a Register could improve how trusted entities engage with firearms registries by providing:

- A national licence and permit verification service – capable of electronically verifying any firearms licence or permit issued in Australia, and
- The ability for firearms dealers to electronically submit and manage information regarding their dealer stock and make relevant reports to registries.

**Question 4:** What other capabilities could a National Firearms Register have that would be of benefit to the community, including to lawful firearms owners?

**Question 5:** Do you have any comments on the creation of a national licence and permit verification service?

**Question 6:** Do you think trusted entities should be able to electronically communicate with firearms registries, if so, what capabilities should be available to trusted entities such as firearms dealers?

## Information held by a National Firearms Register

To fulfil its primary objective of preserving community and police safety, the Register will need to hold a range of information, which could include:

- Firearms information – enough information to uniquely identify firearms and related articles, and track their movement (through import, export or domestic transfer) and notable events (such as surrender, destruction, loss or theft and use in criminal activity),
- Licence holder information – including identification details, licence/authorisation information and relevant information that may affect a person's eligibility to hold a licence, and
- Firearms/licence holder link information – information required to link a licensed firearms owner to the articles in their possession, including details of firearms registered to a person and details of articles transferred to and from the person.

**Question 6:** Do you have any comments on the information proposed to be held by a National Firearms Register?

## Submissions

The Attorney-General's Department is seeking public submissions on the questions outlined above. Please send submissions on these questions and any related comments to [firearms.policy@ag.gov.au](mailto:firearms.policy@ag.gov.au). Public submissions will be accepted until **11:59PM 25 April 2023**.

**Note:** Submissions are invited on a public basis. Tell us at the time of lodgement if you wish for your submission to be treated as confidential. Any submission provided on a confidential basis remains subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

The Attorney-General's Department (the department) retains discretion about publishing and sharing submissions. Submissions provided without a confidentiality request may be published on the department's website. The department retains the right to share your submission with other parties such as state and territory governments or other Commonwealth agencies.