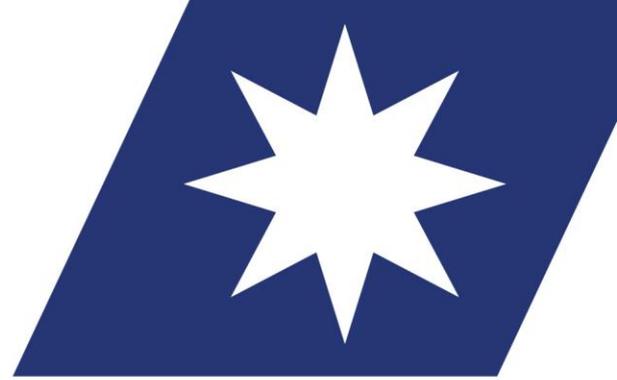


ROBBIE KATTER

Member for Traeger



MEDIA RELEASE

15th March 2023

BUREAUCRATIC STONE-WALLING SENDING GUN SHOPS TO THE WALL

Queensland's licensed gun dealers, at the centre of the State's firearm registration system, are threatening to walk away from the industry due to inexplicable approval processing delays that are driving their businesses into the ground, Katter's Australian Party (KAP) MPs have warned.

The situation could lead to an over-demand and under-supply of firearms through legal means, leaving the State vulnerable to an explosion in the black-market trade of weapons, KAP Leader Robbie Katter said.

These dealers are also the ones that administer the registration of new firearms and the recording of transfers of firearms between individuals.

As they leave the industry, the work will fall to frontline police officers in already-under resourced country regional police stations and an increase in unauthorised transfers of firearms amongst individuals.

Mr Katter said representative organisations, gun dealers and licensed firearm owners seeking to abide by the law had attempted to engage with Police Minister Mark Ryan over the issue but were being stone-walled and treated like "would-be criminals".

Currently, wait times within the Queensland Police Service's Weapons Licensing division are at 35 weeks for licence applications and 46 days for permits to acquire.

These processing times are the worst in the country and highlight the appalling state of Queensland's firearms management system - these processing times are the public's window to the inefficiencies of the system.

"Some firearm retailers have either closed down or are in the process of doing so due to the financial impact of holding firearms in their secure inventory on behalf of customers who are waiting for permits to acquire to be issued," Mr Katter said.

"They have no cash flow and cannot make ends meet – they're trying to assist the Government in controlling and monitoring the trade of firearms across the State, which of course is vital, and for their trouble they're being run into the ground.

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"The most dangerous guns in this State are the ones police don't know about, so instead of risking an explosion in the illegal firearms trade the Minister and Weapon's Licensing should be rushing to work with industry.

"The situation is also causing a stockpile of guns in single locations which, again, is a public safety risk."

Queensland Firearms Dealers Association president Jade Cleaver said licensed firearm owners were losing faith in the permit and approval process and he feared the long-running positive relationship the industry has had with the State Government was breaking down.

"Queensland firearms dealers are the front line of the firearms registration process and public safety issues will arise as more dealers consider closing their doors in coming months because of the lack of turnover due to permit to acquire delays," Mr Cleaver said.

"Dealers take deposits from customers who purchase firearms and then hold the firearm in secure storage until the customer's permit to acquire is approved and the final payment is made," he said.

"Businesses can't survive and pay their bills when they are physically unable to stock or sell any more product because their vaults are full of partly paid firearms pending permit approval."

Mr Cleaver said the outstanding amount owed to his own store from customers waiting for permits was in the millions.

"We're not asking for assistance, we just want things to go back to normal with workable processing times of seven days or less," he said.

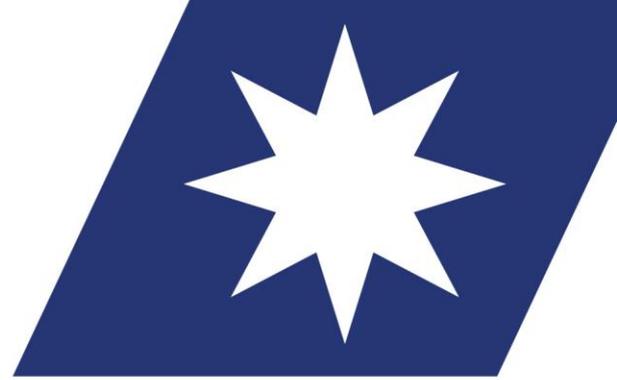
KAP Deputy Leader and Member for Hinchinbrook Nick Dametto said that demand for weapons, whether it be for sport shooting or for agribusiness purposes, was not going to change.

"The Police Minister needs to think very carefully about how to fix this situation, which poses a real risk of evolving into an illegal firearm industry boom," he said.

"It is in the State Government's interest to ensure that legal firearm supply continues with an industry that is willing and able to comply but is now on the verge of losing all faith in the licensing system.

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MEDIA RELEASE

"On behalf of all Queensland law abiding firearm owners, who have genuinely participated in the licensing regime, I urge the Police Minister to restore their faith in a broken system."

KAP Member for Hill Shane Knuth questioned the efficacy of a recent cash injection into the Weapon's Licencing branch.

"\$1.6 million was allocated in last year's Budget by the State Government towards, as the Minister stated, to provide additional resources to deliver better services by streamlining processes at the Weapons Licencing branch and a new weapons licencing managing system," he said.

"It has been 10 months since that announcement, and nothing has changed.

"Complaints are increasing at my office regarding wait times for approvals and the situation has drastically worsened, so, where has the \$1.6million been spent?"

ENDS

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