



Rene Hidding MP

Liberal Member for Lyons

Building
your
future

9 February 2018

Dear Consultation Group member

The majority Hodgman Liberal Government has over the last four years demonstrated that it has the interests of all law abiding Tasmanian firearms owners at heart.

We have readily acknowledged that service levels at Firearms Services (FAS) have disappointed some. While 2017 was a year of extraordinary levels of licence and permit activity, we needed to act, and we did. Heeding your calls, a civilian manager of FAS has been appointed, extra staff were employed to handle the huge increase in activity, an independent review of processes and services of FAS was conducted, and a new FAS website was launched with a large increase in information available for firearms owners.

All these actions bode well for future service delivery from FAS however we intend to go further.

Only a re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government can continue to provide Tasmania's lawful firearm owners with a supportive, responsible framework, which addresses the genuine needs of the various sporting, hunting and farming users of firearms in Tasmania.

Our firearms policy for the election, outlined below, is a comprehensive policy which responsibly addresses the many concerns of the various firearms owners groups in Tasmania.

Our policy recognises the many different pursuits of lawful firearms owners including farmers, hunters, collectors, and sporting and target shooters.

Establish the Tasmanian Firearms Owners Council

A re-elected Hodgman majority Liberal Government will establish a truly representative peak body, a Statutory Council to provide advice to the Minister for Police, and State Government generally, on all matters to do with the regulation and use of firearms in Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Firearm Owners Council (TFOC) will be a nine-member statutory body with the Chair and members to be paid positions, and nominations open to major stakeholder bodies.

Improve the interaction between Firearms Services (FAS) and firearms owners – and higher service levels

A re-elected Hodgman majority Liberal Government will continue to promote the re-development of FAS into a civilian-led, responsive, regulatory body offering online services and which provides clarity of legal responsibilities for all firearms owners as well as timely responses to queries.

We will move to have FAS establish a digital platform where every firearm owner in Tasmania can manage their own licence and registration arrangements in a secure and timely manner and maintain a high level of communication with Firearms Services on all changes, updates or latest advice.

We will ensure frontline Service Tasmania staff receive training in the handling of sensitive firearms matters during face-to-face transactions. We will deliver an end to inappropriate delays and waiting times for licensing and permits

Establishing a new Tasmanian competition shooting range

A re-elected Hodgman majority Liberal Government will commit to identifying a substantial parcel of Crown Land in Tasmania that could be developed into a suite of world-class, multi-discipline, sporting shooting ranges to cater for the very positive activity of competitive shooting in all disciplines for Tasmanian shooters. The facility would be available to all registered clubs in Tasmania.

Broader firearms training and testing provisions

A re-elected Hodgman majority Liberal Government will end the exclusive, single-provider model currently in place for training and testing services for new firearms license applications.

This will promote a higher level of service across the State.

Extend periods of licences

A re-elected Hodgman majority Liberal Government will extend the active period for licensing of firearms to include options for up to 10 years for Category A and B for all licence holders and two years for a Category C agent of a primary producer (currently every year) in order to stagger the annual renewal process and remove red tape.

Infringement notices for minor storage offences

A re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government will amend the Regulations so that where a lawful firearms owner (including a dealer) has been found in contravention of storage laws for relatively minor reasons, an infringement notice may be issued rather than a summons, and no firearms will be removed as a result, if the contravention is rectified without delay.

Finalise an MOU between the Government, Tasmania Police and the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA)

A re-elected Hodgman majority Liberal Government will develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Government, Tasmania Police and the TFGA, which declares that firearms are 'tools of trade' for primary producers and which provides for new, practical approaches to the use of those tools.

The MOU will be reviewed and updated every two years. It will provide recognition that firearms are tools-of-trade and need to be available, and carried, in the best form and function for primary producers to discharge their responsibilities as safe, efficient and humane practitioners in their industry.

The MOU will acknowledge that an active primary producer in Tasmania has a genuine reason for owning a firearm by reason of that fact.

As recognition of the 'tools of trade' requirement for primary producers we will ensure the legislation:

- Spells out a practical, safe and responsible method of carrying and conveying firearms while at work in primary production, the practice of which will be better allowed for by reviewing the "in use" provisions of the Firearms Act.
- Provides for genuine employees to include contractors or agents of primary producers to be able to hold Category C licences for standard crop protection and pest control purposes.
- For workplace health and safety reasons, permits Category C holders or crop protection permit holders to own and use sound suppressors in the course of the use of their firearms for primary production purposes, but ensures that stringent storage requirements are applied.

We will refer to TFOC for an examination of a simpler renewal process for Category C licences if circumstances of the ownership and of the holder have not changed.

We will review the income threshold that defines a person to be considered a 'primary producer' for the purposes of the Firearms Act.

Clarifying requirements for responsible firearms owners

A re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government will:

- Clarify arrangements for target pistol events to harmonise events between jurisdictions.

- Replace the existing requirement that a competition clay target shooter wishing to use a Category C semi-automatic shotgun must belong to one particular clay-target organisation, with a choice of approved clubs being made available.
- Amend Section 98 of the Firearms Act to clarify that for firearms received temporarily from interstate for repairs it is sufficient to have seen the interstate registration subject to normal reporting.
- Re-define the term "manufacture" to allow certain repairs and assembly of firearms to take place in an appropriate manner.
- Amend the Firearms Act to allow an owner to have a dedicated and secured room which can be designated a temporary "safe area" for the purposes of the reloading of ammunition. This will deal with the reality that specialist reloading can take extended periods but the room involved can be made secure through practical arrangements.
- Develop a protocol between Tasmania Police and antique firearms and militaria groups for the operation of shows, militaria and re-enactment events in a way that provides a high level of safety and compliance, but also for reasonable and lawful trade and display of material.
- Review Section 47 of the Firearms Act relating to anomalous restrictions on the collection and display of militaria such as trigger locks on inoperative antique pistols.

We will refer to the new TFOC:

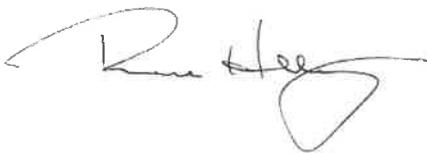
- The creation of a new Category E to encompass all "prohibited firearms" – as most of these are not prohibited to all citizens, and certain specialists have lawful reasons to possess them.
- To review and develop a useful and safe protocol for the carriage of firearms in public places in vehicles to deal with all practical circumstances.
- The entire matter of "military appearance" laws for a full review.
- The restrictions on carriage of ammunition across Bass Strait between Victoria and Tasmania, removing unfair barriers for travelling competitors and hunters.

We will refer to the Council of Police Ministers:

- The need for sound, sustainable, safe and non-political amendments to the National Firearms Agreement to reduce the frustrations of differing standards and the need for harmonisation of firearms laws across jurisdictions.
- The possibility to expand the "reason to own" a Category C firearm to include competition shooting, as occurs for clay target shooters, for recognised competition shooting events in Australia.

Only a re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government can deliver on this policy. Single interest, or limited interest parties, will not be in any position to deliver any meaningful change for the law abiding firearms owning community. Neither will Labor as they will need to be in partnership with the anti-firearms Greens in order to form a Government.

Yours sincerely



Hon M.T. (Rene) Hidding MP
Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management
 Liberal Member for Lyons