

## Submission to Standing Committee on Legislation's Inquiry into the Firearms Act 2024

3 July 2025

---

The Western Australian Council of Social Service Inc. (WACOSS) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Standing Committee on Legislation on the implementation of the Firearms Act 2025 ('the Act').

WACOSS is the peak body for the community services sector in Western Australia and works to create an inclusive, just, and equitable society. We advocate for social and economic change to improve the safety and wellbeing of Western Australians. WACOSS is part of a network consisting of National, State and Territory Councils of Social Service, who advance the interests of people on low incomes and those made vulnerable by the systems that have been put in place.

### Summary of recommendations

---

- Maintain the strong prioritisation of community safety in the Firearms Act 2024;
- Ensure any amendments do not undermine our commitment to the National Firearms Agreement;
- Increase the minimum age at which someone can use a firearm or obtain firearm authority approval to 18 years of age;
- Ensure WA's data management systems can effectively contribute to the pending National Firearms Register;
- Consider resourcing, such as training, to address concerns raised by medical practitioners about firearms health assessments.

WACOSS also endorses the recommendations submitted by Injury Matters WA to this consultation.

### Submission detail

---

WACOSS applauds the WA Government's conviction in prioritising community safety in the Firearms Act 2024. This legislation contains some of the strictest gun controls in the country, appropriately recognising the risk that guns pose to Western Australians. It is critical that the WA Government stay the course, and do not weaken the Act.

#### *Support for the Firearms Act 2024*

The community backs the reforms introduced by the WA Government in 2024. According to a study conducted by the Australia Institute in 2024, over three in four Western Australians support the limits on firearm numbers contained in the Firearms Act 2024. In this regard, WA is leading the way for the rest of Australia. Over three in four Australians living outside of WA would support similar firearm limits being introduced in their jurisdiction. Seven in ten Australians think gun laws should make it harder to buy a gun.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Chollet, O., et al. (2025), [Gun control in Australia](#), The Australia Institute.

While the Terms of Reference for this Committee focus primarily on implementation of the Firearms Act 2024, WACOSS wishes to take the opportunity to reiterate our particular support for several of the reforms introduced in the Act, including: the tightening of license requirements, introduction of theoretical and practical training requirements, heightened disqualification orders, stricter storage requirements, and the introduction of firearm limits for individuals.

#### *Opportunity to further strengthen Firearms Act 2024 – young people*

While supportive of the introduction of minimum age limits, WACOSS is disappointed that the Act allows young people aged 15-18 to obtain firearm authority approval and younger children to use firearms under supervision. We believe that there are no community benefits to exposing children to firearms, and that doing so presents significant public health and safety risks.

As the frequency and length of exposure to firearms influences the degree of risk, early and prolonged firearm use directly increases the risk of accident, fatal and non-fatal injury, suicide, and hearing damage.<sup>2,3</sup> Significantly, people who use firearms are at increased risk of lead exposure.<sup>4</sup> When firearms are discharged, lead dust can often be inhaled or stick to the users clothing, skin, or hair.<sup>5</sup> There is no safe level of lead exposure. Any exposure potentially leads to lead poisoning and organ failure.<sup>6</sup>

To increase child and community safety, WACOSS recommends increasing the minimum age at which someone can use a firearm, and at which a person can obtain firearm authority approval, to 18 years of age.

#### *Opportunity to strengthen safety – National Firearms Register*

In 2024, the Federal Government committed funding to implement the National Firearms Register. This presents an opportunity for WA to contribute valuable firearms data to support the creation of comprehensive datasets and real-time information across jurisdictions.

WACOSS recommends ensuring WA's firearm register and data management systems can effectively contribute to the pending National Firearms Register.

#### *Keeping the Firearms Act 2024 strong on community safety*

The National Firearms Agreement sets out minimum requirements for state and territory gun regulation, without preventing the adoption of more restrictive regulations. The Agreement stipulates that gun possession and use is a privilege that must not override the need to ensure community safety.<sup>7</sup> WACOSS concurs that the appropriate approach to gun control is treating community safety as paramount. With that in mind, we urge this Standing Committee to reject any amendments that would weaken the Firearm Act 2024, or undermine commitment to the National Firearms Agreement.

---

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of health and Welfare (2017), [Firearms injuries and deaths](#), Australian Government.

<sup>3</sup> Meinke, D., et al (2017), [Prevention of Noise-Induced Hearing Loss from Recreational Firearms](#).

<sup>4</sup> Laidlaw, M., et al (2017), [Lead exposure at firing ranges – a review](#), Environmental Health.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> HealthyWA (2022), [Lead exposure and firearms use](#), Department of Health.

<sup>7</sup> Attorney-General's Department, [2017 National Firearms Agreement](#), Australian Government.

### *Common misconceptions about gun ownership*

Misconceptions about gun ownership and deaths can arise in arguments opposing strict gun control. Acting on such misconceptions would undermine community safety and the progress made in WA.

A common perception that guns are primarily located in rural areas and used for farming or pest control is misleading. Almost half of the guns in WA are located in metropolitan areas.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, the notion that legally held guns are not used in gun deaths is simply not true. Gun deaths, including mass shootings, are frequently perpetrated by licensed firearm owners. Between 1987 and 2014, 16 mass shootings occurred in Australia and New Zealand. 55 per cent of the victims were shot by licensed gun owners.<sup>9</sup> In 2012, the Queensland Police Union stated that “*since 2000, half of the police gunned down in the line of duty were killed by licensed firearm owners*”.<sup>10</sup> Multiple studies conducted in Australia have found that rates of suicide by firearm are significantly higher among firearm license holders compared to people without licenses.<sup>11,12</sup>

We urge the Standing Committee to reject these frequently arising misconceptions.

### *Media reports of concerns from medical practitioners*

WACOSS is aware of concerns raised by the Royal Australian College of GPs about GP responsibility to conduct firearms health assessments for their patients. We note that this requirement has only been in effect for approximately three months. As outlined in WACOSS’ submission to the 2023 Firearms Act reform consultation, we would expect that medical practitioners are provided with the resources and training required to conduct a mental health assessment appropriate for licensing.

If medical practitioner concerns remain, rather than removing or watering down this requirement, we recommend consideration of whether training, resourcing or other forms of support could address persisting challenges.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to this Standing Committee. We strongly support the Firearms Act 2024 and appreciate the effort that has been dedicated to ensuring the safety of WA communities.

Yours sincerely,



Rachel Siewert  
Acting Chief Executive Officer

---

<sup>8</sup> Chollet, O., et al. (2025), [Gun control in Australia](#), The Australia Institute.

<sup>9</sup> Philip Alpers (2015), [If lawful firearms owners cause most gun deaths, what can we do?](#), The Conversation.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Hurst (2012), [‘More people will die’: Police Union berates gun law overhaul](#), Brisbane Times.

<sup>11</sup> Negin, J., et al. (2021), [Gun Violence in Australia, 2012-2016: a cohort study](#), Medical Journal of Australia.

<sup>12</sup> Klieve, H., Svetcic, J., & De Leo, D., (2009), [Who uses firearms as a means of suicide? A population study exploring firearm accessibility and method choice](#), BMC Medicine.

### Contact Details

---

For further enquiries on this submission please contact:

Sophie Hantz  
Manager Social Policy and Projects  
Sophie.h@wacoss.org.au  
08 6381 5300