

## Weapons Licensing Regulator Performance Framework Report 2020-21



The Weapons Licensing business unit within Specialist Services Group, Operations Support Command, consists of 11 sworn and 71 unsworn full-time equivalent officers of the Queensland Police Service.

Weapons Licensing is responsible for the licensing of persons and bodies to possess and use firearms and other weapons. Additionally, Weapons Licensing maintains the Commissioner's Firearms Register. Weapons Licensing undertakes this administration in accordance with the *Weapons Act 1990*, *Weapons Regulation 2016* and *Weapons Categories Regulation 1997*.

The Queensland Police Service is guided by the principles of the Act that:

- weapon possession and use are subordinate to the need to ensure public and individual safety, and
- public and individual safety is improved by imposing strict controls on the possession of weapons and requiring the safe and secure storage and carriage of weapons.

Through the effective administration of the Act, the Queensland Police Service contributes to public safety by preventing the misuse of weapons.

Further information about Weapons Licensing and Queensland's weapons-related legal framework are available at [www.police.qld.gov.au/units/weapons-licensing](http://www.police.qld.gov.au/units/weapons-licensing).

Additionally, Weapons Licensing can be contacted at:

POST: Weapons Licensing

GPO Box 892

BRISBANE QLD 4001

EMAIL: [weaponslicensing@police.qld.gov.au](mailto:weaponslicensing@police.qld.gov.au)

The following table details Weapons Licensing's environment and overview as a regulator and provides a non-exhaustive selection of action undertaken within the 2020-21 financial year.

Regulator model practices and supporting principles	Environment and overview	Actions undertaken
<p><b>1. <i>Ensure regulatory activity is proportionate to risk and minimises unnecessary burden</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A proportionate approach is applied to compliance activities, engagement and regulatory enforcement actions</li> <li>• Regulations do not unnecessarily impose on regulated entities</li> <li>• Regulatory approaches are updated and informed by intelligence gathering so that effort is focussed towards risk.</li> </ul>	<p>Weapons Licensing undertakes a wide range of regulatory activities in the Queensland weapons environment, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessing applications for weapons licences</li> <li>• monitoring existing licensees to ensure ongoing compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements,</li> <li>• maintaining the accuracy of the Commissioner's Firearms Register,</li> <li>• regulating and reviewing reporting of weapons industry stakeholders including dealers, armourers, clubs, ranges and galleries, and</li> <li>• overseeing the statewide program of secure storage audit inspections.</li> </ul> <p>The Queensland community expects the regulation of weapons in the community to be vigorous, robust and comprehensive to ensure that public safety and order is maintained.</p> <p>A key policy challenge for Weapons Licensing within the regulatory environment is to ensure that these community expectations are met and exceeded while ensuring that stakeholders in the weapons community are not unnecessarily burdened by regulation which does not further this aim.</p> <p>These activities occur within a regulatory environment consistent with the principles contained within section 3 of <i>the Weapons Act 1990</i>, which are that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• weapon possession and use are subordinate to the need to ensure public and individual safety, and</li> <li>• public and individual safety is improved by imposing strict controls on the possession of weapons and requiring the safe and secure storage and carriage of weapons.</li> </ul> <p>This supports the object of the Act which is to prevent the misuse of weapons.</p>	<p>Weapons Licensing has been focused on continuing to deliver regulatory measures that remain fit-for-purpose in 2020-2021 and beyond.</p> <p>With the impacts of the COVID-19 health pandemic continued throughout 2020-2021, Weapons Licensing continued to ensure an ongoing regulatory capacity to ensure effective risk minimisation without unnecessarily burdening Queensland's firearms community.</p> <p>Planning ensured that a sufficient staffing contingent was able to work from alternate locations and deliver the services required of the business unit.</p>

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<p><b>2. Consult and engage meaningfully with stakeholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal and informal consultation mechanisms are in place to allow for the full range of stakeholder input and Government decision-making circumstances</li> <li>• Engagement is undertaken in ways that helps regulators develop a genuine understanding of the operating environment of regulated entities</li> <li>• Cooperative and collaborative relationships are established with stakeholders, including other regulators, to promote trust and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulatory framework.</li> </ul>	<p>Weapons Licensing engages with a wide range of stakeholder groups.</p> <p>These include formal and informal engagement with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dealers and armourers,</li> <li>• ranges and galleries,</li> <li>• collectors, museums and historical societies,</li> <li>• weapons community associations, and</li> <li>• industry representative groups.</li> </ul> <p>Significant volumes of correspondence are actioned, including applications, enquiries and engagement.</p> <p>In 2020-21 financial year Weapons licensing received more than 18000 new applications for a weapons licence.</p>	<p>Weapons Licensing actively engaged with the weapons business community to ensure that emergent issues and trends are understood including any flow-on business impacts.</p> <p>Weapons Licensing continued its approach of openness,, proactivity, honesty and responsiveness when engaging in stakeholder discussions.</p>

Regulator model practices and supporting principles	Environment and overview	Actions undertaken
<p><b>3. <i>Provide appropriate information and support to assist compliance</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear and timely guidance and support is accessible to stakeholders and tailored to meet the needs of the target audience</li> <li>• Advice is consistent and, where appropriate, decisions are communicated in a manner that clearly articulates what is required to achieve compliance</li> <li>• Where appropriate, regulatory approaches are tailored to ensure compliance activities do not disproportionately burden particular stakeholders (e.g. small business) or require specialist advice.</li> </ul>	<p>Weapons Licensing provides extensive information and support to stakeholders across all areas of firearm and other weapon licensing and regulatory compliance.</p> <p>The Queensland Police Service website contains a suite of information including a Knowledge Centre of over 40 articles relating to weapons licensing processes and procedures.</p> <p>These relate to licensing, compliance with weapons laws and other relevant information.</p> <p>Weapons Licensing provides a fully staffed phone contact centre four days per week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday) from 9.00am to 3.00pm with specialist advice available about new applications, renewal applications, permits and approvals, compliance and other related matters.</p>	<p>During the inspection of dealerships and ranges, Weapons Licensing provided education and advice to support ongoing compliance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>Weapons Licensing continues to work towards ensuring that clear and consistent advice is available to the firearms community and other stakeholders via its website, correspondence and phone enquiries.</p>

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<p><b>4. Commit to continuous improvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular review of the approach to regulatory activities, collaboration with stakeholders and other regulators, to ensure it is appropriately risk based, leverages technological innovation and remains the best approach to achieving outcomes</li> <li>To the extent possible, reform of regulatory activities is prioritised on the basis of impact on stakeholders and the community</li> <li>Staff have the necessary training and support to effectively, efficiently and consistently perform their duties.</li> </ul>	<p>Weapons Licensing's role in ensuring public safety remains key to the evaluation of regulatory actions.</p> <p>While ensuring that this role is not compromised, Weapons Licensing continually seeks innovative and improved ways to undertake its roles.</p> <p>Weapons Licensing continually reviews processes and procedures, incorporating feedback received from stakeholders.</p> <p>Staff within Weapons Licensing have ongoing support and training to ensure that they have the requisite capabilities to undertake their duties.</p>	<p>The Queensland Audit Office (QAO) commenced a performance review in 2019-20 which has subsequently been reported on. The Queensland Police Service accepted all recommendations and has been working on their implementation.</p>
<p><b>5. Be transparent and accountable in actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where appropriate, regulatory frameworks and timeframes for making regulatory decisions are published to provide certainty to stakeholders</li> <li>Decisions are provided in a timely manner, clearly articulating expectations and the underlying reasons for decisions</li> <li>Indicators of regulator performance are publicly available</li> </ul>	<p>Weapons Licensing's regulatory framework is established under the <i>Weapons Act 1990</i>, Weapons Regulation 2016 and Weapons Categories Regulation 1997. These are publicly available in their most up-to-date form from the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel</p> <p>Weapons Licensing articulates clear timeframes for expected responses to enquiries received with acknowledgement that responses will usually be provided within 28 days from receipt.</p> <p>When decisions are made on licensing matters, clear reasons for the outcome determined are provided in writing, as required under the <i>Weapons Act 1990</i>.</p>	<p>During the 2020-21 financial year, Weapons Licensing continued to demonstrate commitment to transparency and accountability in its actions as an administrative and regulatory unit.</p>