

## Weapons Licensing Regulator Performance Framework Report 2018-19



The Weapons Licensing business unit within Specialist Services Group, Operations Support Command, consists of 12 sworn and 72 unsworn full-time equivalent officers of the Queensland Police Service.

Weapons Licensing is responsible for the licensing scheme covering Queensland's firearms and other weapons to support the Queensland Police Service's role in preventing the misuse of weapons. 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.

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:

**Weapons Licensing**  
**GPO Box 892**  
**BRISBANE QLD 4001**

The following table details Weapons Licensing's environment and overview within the regulatory space and a non-exhaustive selection of examples of actions undertaken within the 2018-19 financial year. Further information can be sought from [weaponslicensing@police.qld.gov.au](mailto:weaponslicensing@police.qld.gov.au).

Regulator model practices and supporting principles	Environment and overview	Actions undertaken
<p><b>1. Ensure regulatory activity is proportionate to risk and minimises unnecessary burden</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 within Queensland weapons environment.</p> <p>These activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessment of weapons licence applications,</li> <li>• ongoing review of licence holders,</li> <li>• maintaining the accuracy of the Commissioner’s Weapons 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 a 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 the <i>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 is actively focussed on a rolling-program of policy and procedure review to ensure that regulatory measures and treatments remain fit-for-purpose in 2018-19 and beyond.</p> <p>This review is being undertaken to ensure internal Weapons Licensing procedures and policies are efficient and effective.</p> <p>Where opportunities for simplification and streamlining are identified, procedures are being replaced and updated.</p> <p>For example, Weapons Licensing is working to reduce the number and complexity of licence condition codes where it is identified that this is not furthering the object of the <i>Weapons Act 1990</i> – to prevent the misuse of weapons and enhance community safety.</p> <p>Where it has been identified that any revision of policy or procedure may have an impact upon external stakeholders, these stakeholders have been engaged in consultation.</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 actively 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 the 2018-19 financial year Weapons Licensing received over 160 000 items of postal service and more than 25 500 direct emails.</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>In the 2018-19 financial year, 'gel blaster' toys, which discharge a water-based projectile, emerged as a developing policing issue due to a significant increase in calls for service from community concern.</p> <p>In this developing area Weapons Licensing has proactively engaged with the developing 'gel blaster' community, which includes importers, retailers, associations and game-field operators, to ensure effective and open engagement as the QPS develops strategies to allow the safe use of these items while also addressing areas of operational concern.</p>

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<p><b>3. Provide appropriate information and support to assist compliance</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 <i>Knowledge Centre</i> 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 4.00pm with specialist advice available about new applications, renewal applications, permits and approvals, compliance and other related matters.</p> <p>All regulatory actions undertaken by Weapons Licensing are considered within the context to ensure that they are both fit-for-purpose and have the necessary scalability so that they do not disproportionately impact either small or larger stakeholders.</p>	<p>Weapons Licensing has contributed to the whole-of-department redevelopment of the Queensland Police Service website to ensure that information is accessible in a user-friendly format.</p> <p>This included the review of all content provided to stakeholders via the website including making information easier to find and understand.</p> <p>Educational materials have been developed in consultation with the “gel blaster” community, including the “Stop and Think” awareness campaign, which provides information to consumers to ensure that they comply with their legal requirements.</p> <p>This awareness campaign is directed at users of “gel blasters” to ensure that their actions do not result in community concern or unintentionally contravention of the law.</p> <p>Amendments to the Weapons Regulation 2016 clarified the need to ensure that safe keys, codes and combinations must be secured in a way that unauthorised persons cannot gain access to secure storage facilities.</p> <p>This clarification provided the community with clearer direction to assist their compliance with secure storage requirements under the weapons licensing legal framework.</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 regularly reviews processes and procedures, incorporating feedback received from stake holders, to ensure ongoing improvements through the integration of iterative improvements.</p> <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>Staff within Weapons Licensing have ongoing support and training to ensure that they have the requisite capabilities to undertake their duties.</p> <p>Weapons Licensing staff have well-documented procedures for the regulatory functions they perform with several officers skilled in the delivery of training packages and modules.</p>	<p>In the 2018-19 financial year, Weapons Licensing launched a new online <i>Weapons Licence Card Status Check</i> allowing licence holders, dealers, armourers and other stakeholders to verify that a licence was in current issued status.</p> <p>This new free service provides additional assurance to the community – for example, allowing a dealer to be confident that an individual’s licence remains valid before conducting business.</p> <p>The internal Weapons Licensing staffing structure has been reviewed and realigned from a “task-of-staff” structure to a “service-of-staff” structure.</p> <p>By aligning staff to the services which they provide to stakeholders and clients, Weapons Licensing has been able to provide an increased level of service and consistency of advice.</p> <p>As a result of this realignment, Weapons Licensing has been able to provide more efficient service without an increase in resourcing allocations.</p> <p>Additionally, within the 2018-19 financial year, the process for distributing Permits to Acquire, the authorisation to take acquisition of a weapon for registration to a licence, was reviewed and transitioned to a new process whereby licensed Queensland firearms dealers began to receive these documents – when requested by an applicant – via electronic mail resulting in greater efficiency.</p>

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<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, and related primary and subordinate legislation, all of which are available publicly 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>In the 2018-19 financial year, Weapons Licensing has continued to demonstrate commitment to transparency and accountability in its actions as an administrative and regulatory unit.</p>