



Minister for Police; Road Safety Small Business; Women's Interests

Our ref: 45-04025

Mr Paul Peake
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Dear Mr Peake

Thank you for your correspondence concerning the increase in firearm licence fees.

Western Australian Police have advised that the fees and charges for firearm licences increased from 1 July 2013 to reflect full cost recovery to Western Australian Police for the expenditure involved in managing the firearm licensing system. In addition, examination by the Auditor General of Western Australian Police's licensing systems recommended that more work was needed to improve compliance with licensing procedures under the *Firearms Act 1973*. As a result, Western Australian Police has committed additional resources to these activities.

Previously, the fees charged for firearms licences did not reflect the actual cost to Western Australian Police for performing this function. In the case of an application for a new firearms licence, it only represented 65% of the full cost and for a noting fee for an additional firearm, only 44% of full cost. Further, in 2012/13 fees for most categories of firearm licences were not altered. Given the current financial environment and constraints placed on government agencies, Western Australian Police are no longer in a position to subsidise the cost of firearm licensing. Therefore without this increase it was expected that the average number of days to process new and additional licence applications would have increased significantly.

All increases in fees and charges are reviewed by the State Parliament to ensure that they reflect the administrative work required to process licences and maintain systems.

Over the past twelve months, Western Australian Police have been working with firearm interest groups, through a Consultative Firearms Working Group, to improve the levels of service in the firearm licensing area. Priority has been given to addressing the quality of advice provided to firearm licence applicants, timeliness of responses to applications and consistency of decisions made relating to applications.

This work is ongoing and is aimed at ensuring the systems and processes for the management of firearm licence applications and the firearm register meet expected standards.

In addition to this work, Western Australia Police will soon begin the development of a new firearm licensing computer system to replace the current aging system. The new system will overcome the deficiencies identified by the Auditor General in relation to the integrity of the firearms register. Western Australian Police will also conduct a three month firearm amnesty, beginning on 1 August 2013, enabling people with unlicensed firearms the opportunity to either hand them in for destruction or seek to obtain a licence, with immunity from prosecution. Further, a review of the *Firearms Act 1973*, will be conducted by the Law Reform Commission. This review will enable interested parties and the public in general to make submissions about the operation of the legislation.

A meeting has been scheduled with representatives of firearm interest groups to discuss these matters further.

While I acknowledge that any fee increase of this nature will not be favourably received, I can assure you that they are necessary to cover the costs for Western Australian Police to administer the firearms licensing system.

Yours sincerely



**LIZA HARVEY MLA
MINISTER FOR POLICE; TOURISM;
ROAD SAFETY; WOMEN'S INTERESTS**

8 AUG 2013