

Federal Firearms Licensing Doctrine 2026

Established pursuant to the Federal Firearms Licensing Act 2026 (Cth)

February 2026

Preamble

This Federal Firearms Licensing Doctrine (the Doctrine) is established pursuant to Section 11 of the *Federal Firearms Licensing Act 2026* (Cth) (the Act). It provides a comprehensive set of guiding principles for the well-regulated administration of firearms licensing in Australia, ensuring uniform application across all States and Territories.

The Doctrine emphasises a balance between individual liberties, public safety, and cultural considerations, in alignment with constitutional powers under sections 51(ii), 117, and the hypothetical 114A amendment recognising a right to bear arms.

The Doctrine is designed to achieve a “well-regulated liberty” by promoting responsible firearms ownership while minimising risks to society. It incorporates substantial nexus principles to federal powers, private agent compliance streams, and mechanisms for ongoing stakeholder engagement.

To ensure adaptability and accountability, the Doctrine shall be periodically reviewed by a diverse group of stakeholders, including firearms owners, dealers, rural and Indigenous representatives, and safety advocates. Reviews will assess effectiveness, address emerging issues, and refine principles to maintain relevance.

The Doctrine shall be readily accessible to the public and all stakeholders via the Federal Firearms Licensing Authority (FFLA) website, public repositories, and annual reports. Accessibility includes plain-language summaries, multilingual translations where appropriate, and digital formats compliant with accessibility standards.

1 Guiding Principles

The following principles form the core of the Doctrine and must guide all decisions, policies, and actions under the Act:

1.1 Principle 1: Uniformity and Congruence

- Licensing and regulation shall be uniform across Australia, eliminating fragmented State jurisdictions.
- Processes shall be congruent with State-ratified mechanisms, respecting concurrent powers while centralising administration under the FFLA.

- Emphasis on substantial nexus to federal taxation powers (section 51(ii)) to ensure constitutional validity.

1.2 Principle 2: Well-Regulated Liberty

- Recognise and reinforce the hypothetical constitutional right to bear arms (section 114A), balanced with regulations that promote safety and responsibility.
- Distinguish between lawful ownership (supported by proof of purchase, warranties under the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* (CCA), and preserved serial numbers) and illegal activities.
- Prohibitions, such as 10-year federal orders for illegal usage or serial number removal, shall include grace periods for demonstrated good behaviour to encourage rehabilitation.

1.3 Principle 3: Consumer and Dealer Protections

- Align closely with the CCA 2010 to provide enhanced warranties, record-keeping, and dispute resolution for firearms transactions.
- Dealers shall receive greater protections, including streamlined compliance guidance and reinsurance against operational concerns.
- Private agent streams shall facilitate compliant actions, allowing delegated administration where appropriate.

1.4 Principle 4: Cultural and Practical Exemptions

- Protect Indigenous cultural rights to landcare, hunting, and preservation, ensuring no licensing infringes on these rights.
- Extend equivalent protections to rural farm properties, recognising semi-automatic firearms' role in enhancing viability and ethical culling without urban-style licensing.
- Exempt antique or collectable firearms from licensing, acknowledging their non-military/law enforcement utility.

1.5 Principle 5: Safety and Education

- Prioritise public safety through targeted licensing for semi-automatic and full-automatic firearms in urban areas, with exceptions for special ventures or education.
- Promote firearms education programs, integrated into licensing where required, to foster responsible use.
- States retain prosecution powers for illegal usage, complementing federal oversight.

1.6 Principle 6: Fee-for-Service Administration

- Implement a cost-recovery model for licensing fees, ensuring affordability while funding efficient public law obligations.

- Fees shall be transparent, periodically reviewed, and adjusted based on stakeholder input to avoid undue burdens.

1.7 Principle 7: Transparency and Accountability

- All FFLA decisions, records, and policies shall be transparent, with public access to non-sensitive data.
- Annual reports on licensing statistics, compliance rates, and safety outcomes shall be published.

2 Periodic Review Mechanism

2.1 Stakeholder Review Panel

- (1) A Stakeholder Review Panel (the Panel) shall be established by the FFLA, comprising representatives from:
 - Firearms owners (nominated by peak owner associations);
 - Licensed dealers (nominated by industry bodies);
 - Rural communities (including farmers' representatives);
 - Indigenous groups (nominated by relevant cultural authorities);
 - Safety advocates (including public health and anti-violence organisations).
- (2) The Panel shall include at least 10 members, with balanced representation to ensure diverse perspectives.
- (3) Appointments shall be for 3-year terms, renewable once, with provisions for independent facilitation.

2.2 Review Process

- (1) The Doctrine shall be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if triggered by significant events (e.g., legislative changes, safety incidents, or stakeholder petitions with 1,000 signatures).
- (2) Reviews shall evaluate:
 - Effectiveness in achieving well-regulated liberty;
 - Alignment with guiding principles;
 - Impact on stakeholders, including any burdens or benefits;
 - Emerging technologies, cultural shifts, or safety data.
- (3) Public consultations shall be held, including online submissions, regional forums, and targeted outreach to rural/Indigenous groups.
- (4) Review reports shall recommend amendments to the Doctrine or Act, submitted to Parliament for consideration.

2.3 Accessibility for Review

- (1) The current Doctrine, review schedules, past reports, and submission guidelines shall be publicly available on the FFLA website and via government portals.
- (2) Stakeholders shall receive notifications of upcoming reviews via email registries, newsletters, and public notices.
- (3) Materials shall be accessible in formats suitable for all users, including audio versions and simplified summaries.

3 Implementation and Enforcement

3.1 Integration with the Act

This Doctrine is binding on the FFLA and all entities under the Act. Non-compliance may trigger administrative reviews or parliamentary scrutiny.

3.2 Amendments

Amendments to the Doctrine require Panel endorsement and FFLA approval, with final ratification by the Minister responsible for the Act.

3.3 Commencement

This Doctrine commences concurrently with the Act.

By establishing these principles and review mechanisms, the Doctrine ensures the firearms licensing regime remains dynamic, inclusive, and focused on a well-regulated liberty for all Australians.