

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

Group: 3

Program: 1.7

Question No. SBE15/040

Senator McKenzie asked the following question at the hearing on Tuesday 20 October 2015:

Senator McKENZIE: I have some questions around the review of the national firearms agreement. I understand that the department has received over 500 submissions from stakeholders with respect to the review of the NFA. Those submissions closed on 13 August. Can you tell me what stage of the process we are up to at the moment and whether you are still receiving submissions?

Mr Anderson: That is not correct. We asked for submissions from 31 specific stakeholder groups. We have received, I believe, 20 as at about 22 September.

Senator McKENZIE: Is that 20 out of the 31 you requested as of the—

Mr Anderson: I think it was about 20 September.

Senator McKENZIE: So there was no public avenue for comment around the review of the NFA?

Mr Anderson: We have certainly received a wide range of emails, but there was no public call for submissions as such, no.

Senator McKENZIE: How many emails have you received from the public on this issue?

Mr Anderson: I would have to take that on notice.

Senator McKENZIE: When you take that on notice, could you also summarise the issues raised.

Mr Anderson: I am not sure that that is actually going to be possible. There are quite a wide range of views in the community on email. Some of the emails are fairly pithy and not necessarily well expressed in terms of English and grammar. Some of them are quite threatening. Some of them are more comprehensively argued. To try to summarise all of that range of views would take quite a lot of resources.

Senator McKENZIE: Are we talking tens of emails, hundreds or thousands?

Mr Anderson: We are talking hundreds of emails.

Senator McKENZIE: So, for the hundreds of Australians who have taken time to contact the department on both sides of the NFA review argument, you are not bothering to actually consider those views?

Mr Anderson: We have looked at the emails to see what sorts of views were expressed.

Senator McKENZIE: Good.

Mr Anderson: Some expressed views that involved threats to my staff, so we certainly had regard to those.

Senator McKENZIE: No, I appreciate what you are saying, Mr Anderson, but I am sure that hundreds of the emails would not have been threatening your staff. I assume that you have read—looked at, as you say—hundreds of these emails and that you or your staff would have some rounded view of some of the issues, the top five issues, raised within those emails.

Mr Anderson: We could come up with the top five issues.

Senator McKENZIE: Could you give me the top five and the number of emails you received?

Mr Anderson: Certainly.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

The Attorney-General's Department (AGD) received approximately 600 emails from the public in relation to the National Firearms Agreement technical update.

The top five issues in the emails were:

- firearms owners expressing a lack of trust of government in relation to firearms regulation
- the desire to see a reduction in the number of illegal firearms in Australia
- opposition to any 'watering down' of Australia's current national approach to firearms
- concern over Australia's ability to host international shooting events, and
- firearms owners expressing opposition towards any new regulatory burdens on law-abiding firearms owners.