



ROBERT BORSAK

FIREARMS



For years, the Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party have been calling out the gross mismanagement of firearms regulation in this State by the NSW Firearms Registry.

The Coroner's inquest report into the Edwards shootings, released in April last year laid bare the utter incompetence of individual employees and the management of the NSW Firearms Registry.

As law abiding firearms owners, we are often the victims of grubby tactics by police and the media alike.

Everyone will recall the tabloids in New South Wales regularly running stories in newspapers about the number of legally owned firearms in each suburb.

The journalists who write those stories are regularly fed data on legally held firearms directly from State police forces. In New South Wales it is the NSW Firearms Registry.

In Parliament I have asked questions to the Minister for Police relating to the structure of the firearms registry, along with how certain appointments to the Firearms Registry Consultative Council have been made and the training that Registry staff receive and how decisions are landed on within these Departments.

These questions are important as the answers provided will assist legal firearms owners in their fight to be treated fairly in New South Wales.

SFF representation in Parliament remains of the utmost importance to New South Wales LAFOs.

We are under constant threat of changes to laws and policies. Parliamentary representation means that we can fight against reform.

Now, Western Australia is under threat we see how important SFF representation is.

Until 2021, Western Australia had SFF representation with Rick Mazza in the Legislative Council, fast forward a year, and the Government has announced a massive overhaul of the Western Australia's Firearms Act.

We all know what that means for Western Australia.

Already there are scaremongering stories in West Australian news including all the fear-inducing phrases like "Shocking new maps reveal the horrifying scale of gun ownership in suburban Perth," and "The number of licensed guns in WA has soared".

Without SFF representation it will be difficult to fight against the Western Australian firearms reforms.

Firearms issues will continue to dominate our legislative agenda, and we will continue our fight for law abiding firearms owners in New South Wales.

WATER TRADING INQUIRY

One of the biggest concerns about water trading is how to keep this resource out of the hands of foreign corporations and speculators who use it to gain market power.

To get to the bottom of this issue I have established an inquiry into and report on the status of water trading in New South Wales.

Rural and regional development depends a great deal on water, how much of it there is and how much of it is available when it is most desperately needed, like in droughts, which we regularly experience in NSW.

When water changes hands it can mean water entitlements are moved from one river to another, from upstream to downstream, from farmers to investors, and all with the stroke of a pen.



Our rural economies suffer when they must pay a high price to keep the taps on for themselves, their livestock and their crops.

This inquiry will look at the effects of water trading on the economy, the communities it impacts and the environment.

Also the effectiveness of water registration and disclosure in New South Wales. Playing the market, cornering the market, and fixing the market and any other related matters.

There have been considerable changes to water management law and policy over the last decade, but we are not there yet, it is my hope that this inquiry brings New South Wales a step closer to proper water management.

MARK BANASIAK

CATEGORY D FIREARMS AND APPEARANCE LAWS



The Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party has been raising the issue of feral pigs with the Government for many years.

Instead of responding to our calls in the immediate term to make modern, fit-for-purpose Category D firearms available to licensed vertebrate pest controllers and primary producers, NSW Firearms Registry staff have been found to undermine licensed Category D firearm owners who do not work for LLS or NPNSW.

The Government could respond to our call at the stroke of a pen by directing the NSW Firearms Registry to issue permits for fit-for-purpose Category D firearms under the provisions of Section 28 (G) of the Firearms Act.

Instead, the Government allows the bureaucrats in the NSW Firearms Registry to lead them around by the nose with its anti-firearm agenda.

You may not be surprised to learn that NSW Firearms Registry staff believe that, somehow, black firearms are more dangerous than pink ones.

The Government blindly follows the advice of registry staff, who largely have no prior experience in firearms.

A long-term solution to the problem of farmers and pest controllers is for the Government to amend Schedule 1 of the Firearms Act to remove the absurd restrictions that are based on appearances.

In Budget Estimates, I raised this very issue with the Minister for Agriculture and the Department.

Those suggested changes would not contradict the National Firearms Agreement.

If the Government takes the feral pig problem seriously, it should implement those actions to support land managers to cost-effectively fulfil their legislative obligations to control feral animal populations.

SOUTHERN FISH TRAWL

It is not often that commercial and recreational fishers are on the same page.

However, the transition of the Southern Fish Trawl to the Commonwealth has brought the two groups together.

The transition would mean that state waters would come under Commonwealth rules allowing trawling three nautical miles offshore which would be detrimental to fish stocks.

There are crucial fish nurseries for iconic fish species in these waters, close to the coastline



which would be destroyed by trawling.

Commercial fishers that have Southern Fish Trawl licences have approached the Government offering to sell back their licences, for fair compensation, in a bid to protect the fish nurseries.

Until recently the Government has rejected their offers.

In Budget Estimates, I asked the Minister for an update on the State and Commonwealth agreement and whether the Government is willing to back track and protect these iconic fish species.

I could not get a solid answer out of the Minister and I am continuing working with both commercial and recreational fishermen on this campaign.

PHIL DONATO

TEACHER SHORTAGE = EDUCATION CRISIS

Recently in NSW Parliament I brought to the attention of the Legislative Assembly some important issues, and none more so than the teacher shortage and emerging education crisis.

Earlier this year when questioned in Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education, which examined the proposed expenditure for the education and early learning, Nationals' Minister Sarah Mitchell went on the record denying a teacher supply crisis.



Having spoken to educators across rural and regional NSW, the reality is that there are many schools which are struggling to fill vacant teaching jobs.

As an example, the Canobolas High School at Orange has teacher shortages to the extent that it has resulted in 849 merged or uncovered classes in 2021, and as of last 29th March there have been a staggering 852 uncovered or merged classes for 2022, year to date!

The Friday before that the school had 15 classes merged into one at their school hall. Sadly, this is a frequent occurrence.

That's just one school in hundreds across Regional NSW which are experiencing significant teacher shortage and, worse, children going without teacher-led education.

Multiply those uncovered or merged classes by those affected students and the number of students negatively impacted with the loss of critical learning and development is shocking.

The period of a child's education and development is absolutely time critical.

A reasonable person would consider the teacher shortage at the Canobolas High School and other regional schools in a similar position, and the detrimental effect it is having on our children's education, would agree that the teacher

shortage and undelivered education most certainly meets the definition of a crisis.

The teacher shortage at the Canobolas High School isn't a suddenly emerging issue, I've already made the Minister aware of this last year and made reasonable suggestions for her to consider implementing to attract teachers to the school.

In response to the concerns I raised the Minister said, "The Government is currently reviewing the incentives used to attract and retain teachers to rural and remote parts of New South Wales."

Clearly the review hasn't translated to solutions, when the Minister says she's incentivising, it's just lip service.

The NSW Teacher's Federation has estimated NSW has a current shortfall of 2,382 teachers and that by 2036 we will need an additional 14,422 to 20,585 teachers just to cover the predicted enrolment growth. This number doesn't include natural attrition with teachers leaving the profession. The current Teacher Supply Strategy will provide only 3,700 additional teachers over ten years, so clearly the strategy isn't a solution. The problem isn't going to go away, and I'll continue to pursue the NSW Government on this critical issue.

MOBILE \$PEED CAMERAS

Contrary to the announcement by Deputy Premier Paul Toole on 17th December 2021 that a retractable double-sided sign will be installed on top of all mobile speed camera vehicles from February 2022, reports from across the region I'd received last month were that signage wasn't being used. The Deputy Premier failed to keep his word.

There's no deterrence in this covert practice, where drivers receive infringements in the mail up to a month after a speeding offence and left to potentially continue driving more than the speed limit.

The continued use of unmarked mobile speed cameras is a revenue raising exercise - plain and simple. I'm not opposed to drivers being fined when they do the wrong thing, but the covert practices on mobile speed cameras doesn't effectively modify driver behaviour in a timely manner to avoid potential serious collisions and subsequent road trauma. The best deterrent against speeding is driver education and overt police presence on our roadways, where a driver will be stopped and made aware of the infraction at the time and reminded to adjust their driving behaviour immediately.

I responded to the cascade of complaints I received by delivering a Notice of Motion in Parliament. Within days the Government's contractor Verra Mobility received a direction from the Government that signs were to be immediately installed and covert speed camera operations were to cease as a result of social media and political pressure.

It shouldn't take public shaming on social media and embarrassing the NSW Government in parliament for an elected public official, the State's Deputy Premier no less, to keep their promise. This is a great example of how SFF hold Government to account.



NURSES

The Regional Health Inquiry heard evidence from a long list of witnesses about the decline in health services, so the Government cannot deny there's a problem with health care delivery here in the regions. One of the issues is that there just aren't enough nurses.

In February, thousands of nurses and midwives across New South Wales resorted to strike action, which is an extraordinary measure which is rarely undertaken by them. Nurses are a pretty resilient bunch, they have to be to do the work they do. So, when they say enough is enough, then we all should take notice – most importantly, the Government.

The NSW Government have plenty of warning on this, in fact I tabled a petition in parliament back in 2020 which called on the Government to introduce mandatory nurse-to-patient ratios, such as Queensland Health have adopted. Sadly, the Health Minister's response to that petition indicated he was happy with the status quo.

Despite the Nationals' 2019 pre-election promise of delivering more country nurses, it certainly isn't being seen in our hospitals and multi-purpose services. Nurses are routinely, and, increasingly, overworked as a result of staff shortages. The Government were all too happy to pose for a pic with nurses for political opportunity when COVID erupted, but they've failed to tangibly support, compensate, or reward our nurses, who've been working in very trying conditions.

There are health care facilities in the Orange electorate which have continued operating only because of the good will of nurses, who've filled long-term vacant positions in the roster by doing overtime. This doesn't



surprise me, nurses do what they do because they care about their community. Unfortunately, their good will has been taken for granted and certainly hasn't motivated NSW Health to solve the problem.

Nurses deserve greater support, and the community deserve better health care delivery and outcomes. The introduction of mandatory nurse-to-patient ratios would greatly benefit us all.

As a side note, last year I happened to have a frank discussion with a Visiting Medical Officer doing locum work at a regional NSW hospital. That doctor was from interstate where nurse-to-patient ratios were mandated and working very effectively in managing nurse workload and patient care. He said that after working here that he wouldn't be coming back to work in NSW because of the extremely high workload which also translated to diminished patient care. I think that speaks volumes.

The Government have not yet responded to nurses' reasonable requests, verifying what we've suspected – the Liberal National Government really don't care about nurses being understaffed, overworked, and getting burnt out. For the Government, nurses were only good for a pic as a political opportunity.

To add insult to injury, every Nationals and Liberals MP in the Legislative Assembly voted to remove presumptive workers compensation rights for nurses and other workers who contract COVID-19.

ROY BUTLER

ANIMAL CRUELTY (POCTAA)

Last year a discussion paper was released by the government on the subject of possible changes to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (POCTAA).

Some of the changes discussed included a broader definition of the term "harm" to include psychological harm. This is a dangerous path to go down when it comes to animal welfare, making many normal interactions with animals in danger of being seen as cruelty. Things like yelling at a cattle dog to correct its behaviour or give it orders and the dog's tail drops down between its legs or putting a bit in an unwilling horse's mouth.

I sponsored a petition against the discussed changes, which garnered over 20,000 signatures, which meant it went to a debate in parliament. I argued that the concept of harm was far too broad, including ideas such as animals being "tormented, tortured, terrified or infuriated", all very vague.



This could mean that any normal interaction with an animal could be exposed to the subjective judgement of someone enforcing the animal cruelty laws. Farmers would need to be careful how they treated horses, cattle and even cattle dogs. Catch and release fishing would be very problematic given not only the trauma to the fish but also the worm. It really is a slippery slope for legislation.

In the debate speakers for the government included Justin Clancy, who used to be a vet, who admitted the discussion paper made the definition too broad and that more needed to be done to protect primary industries. However, Agriculture Minister Dugald Saunders threw dignity to the wind and claimed the SFF were indulging in a "scare campaign". He took off on a pointless tangent to use the occasion to take a cheap shot about Helen Dalton being "punted" from the party.

Hopefully the government will either abandon the idea of adding the concept of psychological harm or abandon the idea of changing the legislation altogether, given the backlash against the idea.

FUEL PRICES

Due to the problems on the other side of the world in the Ukraine, and the general mismanagement of how fuel is imported to Australia, fuel prices have soared.



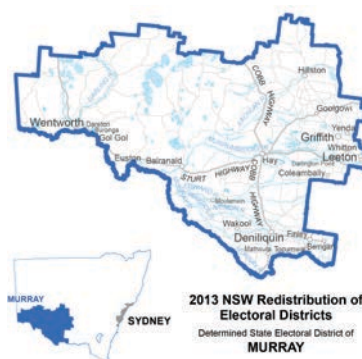
This has an impact on all Australians but can be particularly hard on people in regional NSW, who need this vital resource to travel long distances to get to work, school or to hospitals (I have been pursuing a promise from the Health Minister Brad Hazzard to review the IPTAAS scheme which gives subsidies to regional patients who need to travel for medical treatment).

Most people in the city don't realise the impact rising prices can have in the country, where the prices for fuel are usually already higher. But rather than just complaining about it, or bringing in band-aid fixes, like a temporary cut in the fuel excise, we need to start thinking about what other longer-term action can be taken.

There are two simple things that could be done to soften the blow of a spike in international prices: firstly, we should have more storage. Having fuel stored in Australia would help smooth out fluctuations; secondly, more capacity for scalable domestic production. In coming years many vehicles won't run on fossil fuels, but in the meantime fuel supply can be managed better.

SFF PART WAYS WITH HELEN DALTON

In March, the Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party NSW (SFF) and Helen Dalton MP agreed to part ways, with Mrs. Dalton formally tendering her resignation from the SFF Party, instead choosing to stand as an independent in the upcoming 2023 NSW State Election.



Despite Mrs. Dalton's pointed and extensive campaigning on farmers rights and water equity in the Murray, her position was no longer tenable within the SFF party given the inconsistencies with her own farming and water trading activities. This includes the sale and water trading, albeit fully legal, to large companies that Mrs. Dalton was criticising under the protection of Parliamentary privilege.

Her position was untenable and went against the principles of the party to use Parliamentary privilege to pursue your personal and commercial interests. The SFF Party belief is that the constituency comes first, not personal interests.

More concerning to the party was that at the same time Mrs. Dalton was rightly campaigning against large water traders

across the State, the abuse of floodplain harvesting, and a host of other issues – constituents close to her office and the party recognised the inconsistencies between what Helen was saying and doing.

Under the guise of supporting farmers and southern irrigators, and unknowingly to the Party, Helen continued to make hidden deals with Justin Fields and the Greens party over the past 3 years for environmental water to flow further south into South Australia.

This policy of appeasement and dealing with the extreme left, fly's directly in the face of what SFF stands for and what we promised to do for the people of Murray.

The SFF Party wish Helen the best in her career in politics without the party.

The SFF Party invested a significant amount of resources and trust in winning the seat off the Nationals, so it is a shame it has ended this way. However, the integrity of the party comes before any Member. We tried to reconcile this earlier and internally as you would expect, but Mrs. Dalton refused to budge.

The people of Murray deserve the best representation they can get, and we will continue to fight for them after being let down for years by both major parties.

It was a shame to see Helen investing more time outside of her electorate focusing on issues that had no impact on her constituents in Murray to try and bolster her attempt at running Federally.

The SFF will continue to run a select committee into the water trading inquiry and will rerun the Water Register Bill and negotiate its carriage in the lower house with the government.

We will be contesting the seat of Murray in the 2023 State Election with a different candidate. Pending some final vetting processes, we will announce this candidate in due course.

EVENTS COMING UP

Riverina Field Days

Where: Griffith

When: 13 May – 14 May

AgFair

Where: Broken Hill

When: 27 May – 28 May

Primex Field Days

Where: Casino

When: 19 May – 21 May

Dubbo Show

Where: Dubbo

When: 27 May – 29 May

Mildura Field Days

Where: Mildura

When: 20 May – 21 May

Mudgee Small Farm Field Days

Where: Mudgee

When: 8 July – 9 July

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