

NEW NATIONAL GUN AMNESTY

By Dixie Fitzclarence

The Federal Government is granting a three-month national gun amnesty from 1 July to 30 September 2017. This is the first national gun amnesty since the Port Arthur massacre 21 years ago and comes at a time when Australia has recently seen a number of significant incidents involving illegal firearms, such as a terrorism-related siege in Melbourne, and the fatal shooting of a Queensland police officer.

Speaking recently to the ABC, Justice Minister Michael Keenan said "Clearly the fact [is] we've got a deteriorating national security environment, we've got an environment where there has been five terrorists attacks on our soil and sadly in the vast majority of those cases it has been an illegal firearm that's been used."

During the three-month amnesty, anyone can hand in unregistered firearms or firearm-related items for

registration or surrender at approved drop-off points without penalty and without fear of prosecution.

In Australia, it is illegal to have an unregistered firearm. Outside of the amnesty period, anyone caught with an unregistered firearm could face a fine of up to \$280,000, 14 years in jail, and a criminal record.

The Amnesty is aimed at reducing the number of unregistered firearms in our communities. The Government hopes to get about 260,000 illegal guns off the street through the amnesty period.

The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission has 'conservatively' estimated there to be 260,000 illegal firearms in the community.

Deputy Commission for Metropolitan Field Operations, Jeff Loy; said NSW Police seized 13,500 firearms in the past 12 months, but 4,800 of those



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were returned to the owners. "We believe there's anything up to about a million firearms in NSW," he told reporters in Sydney.

Amnesty participants do not need to provide personal details if they surrender a firearm or firearm-related article for destruction. There is also no cost involved with handing in firearms or related items for destruction.

Information about individual state and territory requirements, including how and where to surrender firearms, can be found at www.firearmsamnesty.ag.gov.au or by calling 1800 909 826.

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