

Report on a page

If people access firearms to harm themselves or others, if they use firearms unsafely, or if criminals gain access to firearms, the community is at risk.

In this audit we assessed how well the Queensland Police Service (QPS) regulates the acquisition, possession, use and disposal of registered firearms. We concluded that the QPS could be more effective and that the community is not as well protected as it should be.

Put public safety first

The QPS's Weapons Licensing Unit assesses and approves firearm licences and permits, in accordance with legislative requirements under the *Weapons Act 1990*. But it sometimes grants firearm licences to individuals who have a history of offending behaviour. The QPS can strengthen its decision-making controls and guidance to staff to ensure it puts public interest and safety first.

The Weapons Licensing Unit has streamlined its licence application process and uses technology to help assess firearm licence applications and permits to acquire firearms. It could make better-informed decisions by gaining better access to relevant information held by other agencies, nationally and within Queensland.

Revise the role of the unit

QPS could be more proactive in monitoring firearm licence holders. Most firearm owners and licence holders are not audited or inspected.

The Weapons Licensing Unit provides little assurance that firearms are not in the possession of people it considers unsuitable.

The unit is largely administrative and is not providing the necessary management, coordination, and oversight of the firearm compliance program. It should use an intelligence-driven or risk-based monitoring system to ensure that adequate, consistent, and timely monitoring occurs across the state.

Seize firearms quickly

When QPS identifies non-compliance it often fails to perform the necessary follow-up to ensure the licence holder rectifies the non-compliance with licence conditions.

In many cases, QPS seized firearms from unsuitable people within its 28-day target. However, we found numerous cases where it was slow to seize firearms from people it deemed no-longer suitable, or where licence holders had died. Sometimes these delays meant that the firearms could not be located, and some are still unaccounted for. Consequently, QPS is ineffective in ensuring all firearms are accounted for.

Monitor dealers

The Weapons Licensing Unit does not proactively monitor licensed firearm dealers, who are responsible for the sale and transfer of firearms. It has inefficient processes for monitoring the movement of firearms, which creates a backlog and inhibits it from effectively monitoring the movement of firearms. It lacks automated real-time access to information to track firearms.

We made 13 recommendations for QPS to improve real-time access to information, public interest assessments, compliance monitoring, and tracking the movement of firearms.

