



Regulatory
Services
Department

LRD Message

Welcome to our first edition of the *Firearms Bulletin* for 2022!

The Licensing and Regulation Division (LRD) is constantly striving to improve our services. To ensure that we continue to achieve a high level of service delivery, this quarterly newsletter will be used to raise issues with you and assist you in resolution.

To stay up-to-date with current information, please refer to the [Victoria Police website](#).

Current Status of Applications

Please be advised that the Licensing and Regulation Division (LRD) application processing times for new firearm licence approvals and renewal applications are as followed:

- New firearm licence applications submitted 30 November 2021
- Firearm licence renewals submitted 18 December 2021

The above processing times are indicative only and complex applications or those with suitability concerns may take longer to process. To stay up to date you can also access the status of processing times on the [Victoria Police website](#) for firearms, which is frequently updated and will provide you with the most current information about your application.

Please also remember:

- Applications can take up to 28 days to process therefore we may not respond to requests if your application was received by our office within this 28-day period. This time frame is not applicable to individual applications that are incomplete or require further information from the applicant.

Handgun Participation

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted handgun participation over the past two years with Victoria being locked down on several occasions. As a result of the lockdowns the Chief Commissioner of Police endorsed a variation to handgun participation requirements for 2021. General Category Handgun Licence Holders were not required to participate in any handgun target shoots or matches for the 2021 calendar year.

Moving forward into 2022 and with the easing of restrictions, LRD has the expectation that all members meet their handgun participation requirements. Firearm clubs should therefore be encouraging the return of participation in shoots effective immediately meeting all current Covid-19 safety requirements.

Licence Special Condition 'N'

In response to the industry's request to clarify the special condition 'N' on a firearm licence holder's plastic card, LRD has change special condition 'N' to special condition 'NO'. When a licence reflects a 'NO' it indicates that the firearm holder has no special conditions attached to their licence. It is important to note that the firearm licence holder must still operate within the parameters of their licence.

If a firearm holder's plastic licence reflects special condition 'YES', that person has special condition(s) applied to their licence that must be adhered to. The details of the special condition(s) that apply to a specific licence are outlined on the carrier letter that the plastic licence is attached to. Licence holders are requested to retain their carrier letter so the nature of the licences special condition(s) can be ascertained.

Licence Renewals

The licensing and Regulation Division (LRD) currently sends out renewal applications to licence holders eight weeks prior to the licence's expiry date, with the intention to extend this period to 12 weeks in the coming months. This timeframe enables licence holders to submit their renewal application and have it successfully assessed by LRD within the 3 to 4-week processing time, from the date of receipt before the licence expires.

Recent analysis highlights that the majority of renewal applications are being received in the last seven days of the current licence validity period. This hinders LRD's ability to process and issue a new licence to licence holders before the expiry date.

The leading cause of licences expiring inadvertently is that licence holders are not notifying LRD of a change of address. This cause results in the following:

- **Firearms** – licensed firearm holders needing to dispose of any firearms in their possession to a Licenced Firearms Dealer for safe storage. The licence holder is then required to lodge a new application (28 day waiting period applies) and Permits to Acquire to take back possession of their firearms.

While the *Firearms Act 1996* allow for licences to remain current beyond the expiry date if the renewal application is being processed, an inability to produce a current plastic licence is often frustrating firearms holders.

To ensure that a renewal application is processed before the expiry date, LRD recommends the following:

1. Licence holders keep their address details up to date with LRD, information on how to change your details can be found [here](#). Please note that it is an offence not to notify LRD of any change of address.
2. Licence holders lodge their renewal applications as soon as possible.

Revised Phone Hours

Over the holiday period, between Monday 20 December 2021 and Friday 14 January 2022, LRDs customer service phone line will not be operating. There may however be further impacts due to Covid-19 affecting staffing within LRD. The situation will be closely monitored and any changes will be updated on our [website](#).

If you need to contact LRD, please direct your enquires via email to: lrd@police.vic.gov.au

Amendments to the *Firearms Act 1996*

Amendments to the *Firearms Act 1996* will commence on 30 August 2022.

Changes include:

- New firearm storage requirements for category A, B, C, D longarm and general category handguns.
- New requirement for firearm dealers to sight a valid firearm licence before disposing of a firearm to a licence holder.
- Introduction of a 30-day maximum period for the hire and loan of firearms by licensed firearm dealers with the possibility of extending the hire and loan for an additional 30 days following a written request.
- New labelling and tracking requirements for firearm dealers sending firearms or firearm parts by post.

There are also some minor changes to proof of identity documents, whereby the requirement to provide proof of identity will be in a manner that is approved by the Chief Commissioner. In addition, there will be a minor change that will allow Victoria Police to determine the manner in which handgun participation reports are to be submitted. Lastly, there will be an introduction by the Chief Commissioner to 'grandfather' temporarily or permanently reclassified firearms.

Licensing and Regulation Division will communicate more about any changes to processes in the future.

New firearm storage requirements for category A, B, C, D longarm and general category handguns

Current and future firearm owners will need (where applicable) to ensure that their firearm storage complies with these changes. Many current firearm owners will already have storage which will meet the updated standards, particularly if they have a purpose built, commercially manufactured gun safe.

Firearm owners are encouraged to check their current storage against the new requirements and prepare to replace or upgrade their arrangements before 30 August 2022.

From 30 August 2022, the following requirements must be met to ensure compliance with the law:

- Firearms must be stored in a purpose-built steel storage receptacle
 - The steel must be of a thickness of at least 1.6mm (which complies with Australian/New Zealand Standard 1594:2002).
 - If the receptacle weighs less than 150 kilograms when it is empty, it must be bolted to the structure of the premises.
 - The receptacle must be locked with a lock of sturdy construction when the firearm is stored in it.

What firearm owners must do

Firearm owners in Victoria must check their current storage arrangement against the new requirements. Their receptacle must be purpose built for firearm storage. This means that firearm storage must have been specifically built to keep firearms in.

People who are newly licensed or applying for a licence and plan to buy or acquire a firearm should consider the pending changes when setting up their storage arrangements.

We recommend that licence holders who need to upgrade their storage plan to do so as soon as possible as we are aware of the possibility of delays in shipments and availability of materials.

Materials

The new storage conditions mean that licence holders must not store firearms in receptacles built of hard wood. In addition, firearms must not be stored in receptacles built of steel that is less than 1.6mm in thickness.

Placement of firearm storage receptacles – category A or B longarm

This change brings the storage of category A and B longarm into line with the current requirements for category C, D, and general category handguns. This means that if the storage receptacle weighs less than 150kg (when empty) it must be bolted to the structure of the premises.

Locks for firearm receptacles

When firearms are stored in the receptacle it must be locked with a lock of sturdy construction. All references to locks in Schedule 4 of the Act will now use this language.

Firearm dealer requirements

Proof of current licence

Currently, when a firearm dealer is disposing of a firearm, they only must reasonably believe that the firearm is being disposed to a licensed person, another firearm dealer or otherwise exempt person.

From 30 August 2022, a firearm dealer must not dispose of a firearm unless the person can produce a valid licence to carry, use or possess the firearm.

This requirement is in addition to any valid permit to acquire that the person must produce.

Hire and loan of firearms

The hire and loan of firearms to licensed persons will be limited to a maximum of 30 days with the possibility to extend the loan by an additional 30 days with an agreement in writing.

The dealer reference guide will be updated with further instructions about how to manage the hire or loan of firearms. The updated guide will be given to all firearm dealers.

Minimum standards for licensed firearm dealers who send firearms or firearm parts by post

A licensed firearms dealer who sends a firearm or firearm parts to another licensed firearms dealer by post within or outside Victoria must follow requirements about packaging, labelling, transit and delivery of the firearm or firearm parts.

These requirements are:

- A licensed firearms dealer must ensure that any package holding a firearm or firearms parts is labelled in a way that does not identify the contents of the package.
- A licensed firearms dealer must also use a postal service or other courier service that electronically tracks the movement and delivery of the package.
- A licensed firearms dealer to whom the package is sent to must personally receive the package.

Communication of changes

Licensing and Regulation Division will be communicating with the firearms industry in the coming months about changes to processes or procedures. Please ensure your email and contact information is up to date and check the website for updates regularly.

COVID-19 Update

Due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, service delivery at LRD continues to be impacted. Areas of service delivery that have been impacted include, but not limited to, processing timeframes for licences and the Victoria Police fingerprint facilities due to capacity limits reducing the number of available appointments. Please note that LRD continues to work tirelessly to recover from the impacts associated with the pandemic and endeavour to have application processing timeframes return to normal levels as soon as possible. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we continue to navigate the complexities of the impact of Covid-19 related matters.

Remember

We are always open to feedback and encourage you to contact lrd@police.vic.gov.au if you have any suggestions.