

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

Program: 1.2 AGD Operating Expenses - National Security and Criminal Justice

Question No. AE17/140

Senator Watt asked the following question at the hearing on 24 March 2017:

Senator WATT: I thought it was interesting that this has been quietly uploaded to the minister's website with no media release, given the amount of public interest in this issue. Were you asked to prepare a media release about the finalisation of this agreement?

...

Ms Wells: The National Firearms Agreement was put before the Law, Crime and Community Safety Council and was agreed by ministers at that council.

Mr Moraitis: That was in October, last year. Is that correct—October last year?

Ms Wells: That was the last one, yes. The agreement was only reached in February this year.

Senator WATT: Right. I know that ordinarily, ministerial councils issue communiques when they have reached a decision about this type of issue. Is there any plan to issue a communique?

Ms Wells: Not to my knowledge, but I can certainly take that on notice.

Senator WATT: Has the department sought or received any feedback from stakeholders, including sporting shooters associations and gun control advocates about the updated firearms agreement since it was released?

Ms Wells: Not to my knowledge.

Senator WATT: Do you think that might be because they do not know it exists?

Ms Wells: We cannot comment on that.

Mr Moraitis: We assume that they would follow with interest.

Senator WATT: How is it expected that stakeholders, whether they be pro-gun or anti-gun, become aware of a new firearms agreement, if it is just quietly uploaded onto a website and no-one knows about it?

Ms Wells: We can certainly take that on notice.

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

All state and territory jurisdictions agreed to the release of the updated National Firearms Agreement (NFA), which occurred in February 2017.

The department was not instructed to prepare a media release about the finalisation of the updated NFA. The COAG Communique, issued following their meeting on 9 December 2016, made a reference to the updated NFA.

The department has received feedback on the updated Agreement.