

# News Release Deputy Premier John Rau

Attorney General  
Minister for Planning  
Minister for Industrial Relations  
Minister for Business Services and Consumers



Monday, 4 March 2013

## Serious Firearm Offenders 'do not pass go'

Offenders who use firearms can not expect to receive suspended sentences or bail after new laws come into effect today.

Attorney General John Rau said the creation of a new 'serious firearm offender' category sends a clear message to those who continuously use firearms and break the law.

"As of today, if a person commits serious offences involving firearms they will be categorised as a 'serious firearm offender'," Mr Rau said.

"This means that there will be a presumption against a suspended sentence for these criminals.

"For those charged with such offences there will also be a presumption against bail.

"As well as this, any person sentenced for an offence, firearms related or not, if released back into the community, will be subjected to the condition that they not possess a firearm or ammunition.

"They must also, if requested, submit to a gunshot residue test.

"These conditions will apply to every form of conditional release, such as probation, parole, bail, a release on licence or release on a suspended sentence."

The changes today result from last year's passing of the *Statutes Amendment (Serious Firearms Offences) Act*.

The Act strengthened penalties to up to eight years' imprisonment for discharging firearms to threaten either persons or property. This closed the gap on drive-by shootings, meaning it cannot be an excuse to say that the property was empty at the time of the shooting.

The Act also creates a new offence of shooting at a police officer, carrying a maximum penalty of 25 years' imprisonment. This new offence came into operation in October last year.

The laws are just one in a number of measures being undertaken to combat firearm related crime.

The State Government along with SAPOL recently announced an illegal firearm reward scheme to encourage members of the public to 'dob in' those carrying or using illegal firearms.

A three-month firearms amnesty was also held late last year. More than 2700 weapons were recovered in what was the biggest haul ever seen during an amnesty period.

"We are doing everything within our power to reduce the number of illegal weapons on our streets and put more serious firearm offenders in prison," Mr Rau said.