



in support of



Summary of Airsoft in the UK

A document for the Minister of Police, Western Australian Legislative Assembly

(prepared by the United Kingdom Airsoft Players Union)

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Dear Michelle Roberts MLA,

I am writing to you in support of the *Western Australia Airsoft Club* to put forward the case of legalising Airsoft within Western Australia.

Given how other sporting pursuits such as Paintball are permitted within Western Australia, I am understandably confused as to how Airsoft - a sport that is very similar to Paintball – cannot yet be practiced legally within this state.

Thus, I feel it would be the best course of action to explain all about Airsoft in the UK – a country that shares with Australia its culture, values and its use of Common Law.

History of Airsoft

Airsoft has been a popular sport in the UK since the early 90s – after Airsoft devices were introduced to the market in the late 80s from Japan. Fast-forward to today, the UK government has estimated that there are now 60,000 airsoft players, over 40 retailers registered with the *United Kingdom Airsoft Retailers Association* and somewhere in the region of 100 insured playing fields.

The sport is estimated to turn over £40 million a year, which results in the direct employment of hundreds of people nationwide.

Social inclusion

Our experience is that Airsoft can, and will, bring people together – even if they are total strangers to one another.

As Airsoft is a niche sport, everyone who participates in re-enactment activities will at the very least have a fair bit of common ground. As such, anyone who comes from any sort of minority group, be it via gender, sexual orientation or designation, race, religion or country of origin, should find themselves very welcome to participate in a game of re-enactment.

Tourism possibilities & Skilled labour migration

Every year in the UK, an event is held which attracts over 2,000 players. The majority of these are from the UK, however is a sizeable cohort from countries such as France, Netherlands and sometimes even the USA. If such an event were to be held in Western Australia, who knows what benefits it would bring to the local and state economy?

Additionally Airsoft could also bring skilled labour into Australia. I personally know of at least one airsoft player whose profession falls within the "Medium and Long-term Strategic Skills List" – a list of professions who are experiencing worker shortages in Australia, who has expressed a wish to move and work in Australia. However due to the lack of opportunities to play Airsoft in Australia, he has put on hold any plans to relocate.

Legality of Airsoft within the UK

Despite the law regulating Airsoft being rationalised recently, there is no one specific piece of legislation that regulates Airsoft.

As an example, the pieces of legislation that affect Airsoft within England and Wales are mainly the following:

- s.36 Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006
- s.57/s.57A Firearms Act 1968 (as amended)

The Violent Crime Reduction Act prohibits members of the public from purchasing realistic imitation firearms without having a defence to do so – but also allows certain types of imitation firearms (those whose dominant colour is non-realistic) to be sold to those over the age of 18.

The participation in insured Airsoft re-enactments/events can be seen as justification (or “defence”) to purchase realistic imitation firearms.

The amendments to the Firearms Act enshrine in law the maximum muzzle energies of Airsoft devices: any automatic fire capable Airsoft device is limited to 1.3J; any semi-automatic devices are limited to 2.5J of muzzle energy.

Thus, summarising both of these pieces of legislation, it is possible to create a legislative framework that both limits the power of airsoft devices as well as limits the people who are eligible to purchase airsoft devices to those who only play Airsoft.

We are supportive of such efforts to restrict the purchasing of Airsoft devices to those who qualify for the defence as this both keeps untrustworthy people away from having access to devices as well as re-enforcing the perception that these should only be used for airsoft.

Perceptions of links to Terrorism

A document authored by the “Firearm Policy Working Group” of the Australian Commonwealth Government has noted a concern being raised by certain communities that airsoft promotes violence - and potentially could be used for the training of people acting in the cause of terrorism.

On the contrary, this sport is a wonderful way to relieve oneself of stress in a safe and controlled environment. Participation in Airsoft would most certainly direct someone away from any interest in extremist ideologies or other unhealthy pursuits.

I would like to clarify that we have not encountered any issue to do with links to terrorism involving Airsoft in the UK – and additionally I would also like to draw a parallel to certain franchises of video games. These video games have content that is similar to playing at an Airsoft game; the video games themselves aren’t banned for having this content but merely restricted so only video gamers over a certain age can purchase said content.

Conclusion

I hope this document has put forward an insight of how Airsoft is legislated within mainland UK, what benefits it has for the economy – as well as the positive effects it has for social cohesion of people of all faiths (or lack thereof), ethnicities or sexual orientations.

Diverging from the topic of Airsoft within the UK for a brief moment, I’d like to put forward a show of support for the *Western Australia Airsoft Club*. We at UKAPU have been working with them for some time and are pleased with how well they are progressing – as well as their professionalism.

Yours sincerely,

David [REDACTED]
UKAPU Chairman