

Submission to the Department of Justice

Re: Regulation of Fireworks in Tasmania – Consultation Paper

From: RSPCA Tasmania

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Storage Capacity for Retailers

Q1. Should retailers be allowed to store more than 200 kg of fireworks during peak times, especially during periods of increased demand such as ‘Cracker Night’?

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not sure

Comment:

Increasing the stockpile sends a signal to the community that indiscriminate use of fireworks for celebrations is sanctioned by the government and community. Animal welfare organisations, including RSPCA Tasmania, are routinely tasked with managing the fallout after every fireworks event, and can testify to the suffering experienced by companion animals, livestock, and wildlife.

Q2. If storage limits are increased, what safety precautions do you think should apply?

See above. Additional storage poses unnecessary risk. No safety conditions justify increased volume when the use itself is detrimental to animals and the environment.

Q3. Are there environmental or community concerns that need to be addressed when considering larger retail storage volumes?

Yes – environmental risk from improper storage, fire hazards, and broader social impacts of increased availability.

Q4. How could these changes impact insurance, emergency planning, or local risk management?

Any increase in storage volumes would raise insurance risk profiles, complicate emergency response planning, and increase the risk of theft or misuse.

Firework Purchase Limits for the Public

Q5. Should members of the public be permitted to purchase more than 20 kg of fireworks for ‘Cracker Night’?

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not sure

Comment:

Calls to the RSPCA increase after every fireworks event. Animal owners fear for their missing pets. Animals have a natural fear of loud noises, and “bolting” is a typical response. This includes breaking through windows, screens, or fences in panic—resulting in injury, road trauma, or fatality.

An education campaign funded by the government, rolled out in the weeks prior to Cracker Night, could help mitigate harm.

Importantly, Cracker Night is already unmanageable in terms of unregulated dates and times fireworks are used. Increasing permitted quantities will only exacerbate the problem.

Q6. If you answered yes to Q5, then what would be an appropriate limit?

☐ 40 kg ☐ 60 kg ☐ 80 kg ☐ Other: _____

(Not applicable – RSPCA does not support increased public purchase limits.)

Q7. What safeguards could help ensure that larger amounts are used responsibly and stored safely?

None. Larger amounts should not be permitted. There is insufficient enforcement capacity or community awareness to manage the risk responsibly.

Consistent Firing Hours

Q8. Do you support changing the current firing hours to a single time window (e.g., 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm)?

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not sure

Comment:

A longer window for legal use prolongs animal stress and anxiety. Extending this period will only increase harm to animals and vulnerable community members.

Q9. Could this change help reduce disturbances to pets, wildlife, and sensitive members of the community?

No – it would worsen them by increasing the time and unpredictability of noise.

Q10. Additional comments on firing hours:

Enforcement of current time windows is already limited. Any extension undermines the intent of reducing harm and makes enforcement even less practical.

Low-Noise Fireworks Option

Q11. Do you support introducing a new category for low-noise fireworks?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Not sure

Comment:

There has been no evidence presented that extending hours or introducing a “low-noise” category would reduce harm.

Enforcement is already ineffective. Furthermore, low-noise fireworks can still reach 120 decibels—equivalent to a thunderclap or ambulance siren—both of which deeply distress animals.

Q12. What advantages or concerns do you see with low-noise fireworks?

Concerns: Public perception that they are “safe” could increase overall use, even though they still pose risks to animals and vulnerable people.

Use of Professional Displays

Q13. Should the list of approved events for professional fireworks displays be expanded to include weddings, corporate events, and other celebrations?

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not sure

Q14. Should there be flexibility within the regulations to allow additional fireworks displays if they are considered to serve a broader community or cultural interest?

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not sure

Comment:

The RSPCA is concerned by proposals to allow fireworks displays in rural or low-density residential areas, including wedding venues or private estates.

Low-noise fireworks may still reach 120 decibels. Allowing fireworks in areas close to native fauna and farm animals would degrade the natural environment and contradict Tasmania’s eco-tourism and conservation values.

Q15. If you answered yes to Q13/Q14, what event types should be added?

(Not applicable – RSPCA does not support event expansion.)

Q16. Should Tasmania adopt a model where the permit system replaces a fixed list of approved purposes?

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not sure

Final Thoughts

Q17. Do you have any other suggestions or comments regarding how fireworks are sold, used, or regulated in Tasmania?

The RSPCA does not support broadening the use of fireworks for any reason.

Current permission-based systems should remain in place as a deliberate barrier to widespread or indiscriminate use.

The long-standing evidence of harm to animals and the environment must be prioritised over entertainment.