

CARRYING AMMUNITION ON COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS AS CHECKED LUGGAGE

(Whether flying domestically within Australia or overseas)

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Introduction

Some confusion still exists amongst ACCA members on how to legally take ammunition with them on commercial flights. From the outset, it is important to understand that the term “ammunition” refers to small arms cartridges fitted with inert bullets. Anything else such as military ordnance or what could be considered special purpose cartridges (tracer, incendiary and so on) falls outside the scope of this article.

There are a number of rules and regulations to follow so I have prepared the following information as a guide for members, should they wish to take ammunition with them in their checked luggage on commercially operated aircraft. This article is therefore primarily focused at ACCA members who are flying around Australia who have cartridges or cartridge components with them. Domestic air travel will be used by many more ACCA members than international air travel, so the part on taking ammunition on internal flights, with the associated airline regulations that apply, is therefore the most pertinent and applicable aspect of this article. As you will soon see, taking ammunition on commercial flights is not a straightforward affair.

However, if you are considering flying overseas, perhaps to attend a cartridge collectors meeting in another country, you will need to consider many more crucial issues. There are quite a number of legislative requirements, at both the State and Federal level, to comply with when taking ammunition with you into or out of Australia. Admittedly, it is a little complicated and there are a number of steps you'll need to take to gain the necessary approval. So the second part of the article deals with Customs Regulations and the requirements of the State/Territory police Firearms Registries that apply to personally conveying ammunition into and out of the country.

This information only applies to the carriage of ammunition, NOT including firearms. Taking ammunition *and firearms* adds another level of complexity that I will not delve into at this time and any members wanting to export firearms at the same time will need to explore this separately. Freightage ammunition separately is also not covered in this article so should members wish to do this, whether within Australia or overseas, you will need to discuss this with the intended freight carrier as a number do refuse to carry goods considered dangerous, including ammunition. Members will again need to thoroughly research this aspect themselves with various freight companies and government authorities if this avenue is contemplated.

A final point – this information is meant as a guide and neither the author nor the ACCA presume it to be comprehensive for every situation. As always, individual members must take personal responsibility for their actions by ensuring that they have been thorough in their preparations before travelling by air, based on their own circumstances at the time.

Airline Issues

The most important consideration is whether the airline you are travelling with will allow travellers to take ammunition in their checked luggage. You will need to ascertain what the situation is with your intended airline *before* booking your travel if you wish to take cartridges.

There are no airlines worldwide, as far as I'm aware, that allow customers to take ammunition in cabin baggage for the obvious reason. In any case, this is prohibited by the International Aviation Transport Association (IATA) Dangerous Goods Regulations. My advice is never to take anything remotely ammunition related in your hand luggage. You are asking for grief if that odd looking reloading tool is identified on X-ray, or if that old powder flask or tin has a few grains of blackpowder still in it. It's recommended you put everything ammunition related in your checked luggage.

The fact you are carrying ammunition must always be declared to counter staff when you check your luggage in! Additionally, always give yourself much more time to check-in than you think is necessary. I'd suggest allowing at least ninety minutes for domestic flights and four hours for international flights. Additional security checks since the terrorist attacks in the USA can be very time consuming as anyone who has flown overseas in recent years can attest. If you strike problems, you certainly don't want the added pressure of your departure time looming whilst working it out with airline staff.

Never raise your voice with check-in or become overly argumentative, lest you be dragged off by security. Don't think I am being overly dramatic here as I am not. They have no sense of humour and they will not abide by behaviour they think is at all threatening or remotely abusive. Remember, even just saying the word “bomb” in an airport precinct will possibly get you arrested, so a similar fate may befall you if airline staff complain you are “acting strangely” whilst carrying ammunition. Always stay calm and speak quietly but firmly, even if the person you are dealing with is being unreasonable. Ask politely to see a supervisor in those instances.

Most commercial airlines, as far as I'm aware, are all signatories to the IATA Dangerous Goods Regulations, currently in its 51st edition (2010). This document of over 1,000 pages is prepared to give guidance and provide procedures and minimum requirements for companies conveying hazardous cargo by air.

The Regulations regarding cartridges appear in various sections of that document. In this part on air travel I have quoted some of the pages that are relevant. If you are a passenger travelling with luggage, it is summed up as follows:

[Page 14; section 2.3.2](#)

[Goods Acceptable with Operator Approval, as Checked Baggage Only.](#)

[2.3.2.1 Ammunition:](#) Securely packaged ammunition (cartridges for weapons, small arms) in Division 1.4S, (UN 0012 or UN 0014 only), in quantities not exceeding 5kg (11 lb) gross weight per person for that person's own use, excluding ammunition with explosive or incendiary projectiles. Allowances for more than one passenger must not be combined into one or more packages.

Some, but certainly not all airlines, allow the maximum of 5kg of ammunition, per person in your checked baggage. If travelling with your partner, the Regulations clearly don't allow you to take one 10kg parcel for both of you. Prepare two 5kg parcels if you wish to take advantage of the extra 5kg allowance for your travelling partner and pack these in each of your bags separately.

There are two matters to note from the Section quoted above. Firstly the term 'sporting ammunition' or 'for sporting purpose' has now been dropped. Secondly there is no requirement for 'original packaging'. The matter of original packaging has been

bandied about for a long time, but in reality there has been no such requirement as far as IATA are concerned. Some airline staff will tell you differently and it is undoubtedly due to their own internal rules for carriage of such items. Despite what the IATA Regulations state, airlines can and do make their own internal policies and rules on all sorts of issues, including carriage of ammunition. To avoid argument, just use new original factory packaging if you don't have the original.

Of course with collectable ammunition, often the original factory packaging is not available - I really wish I did have the original packet for those .32 calibre teal-fire or 14 gauge cartridges! Quite obviously, a pristine old paper string tied packet of .303 cartridges from 1902, despite coming from the factory that way, is not as well packed as a modern box with a foam insert and recess for each individual cartridge. So don't even bother arguing with airline staff that your packet of .303s actually are in their original packaging, the important issue for them is that the cartridges are all well supported, without movement. Use common sense and pack them all carefully, separated from other packets or cartridges with foam or other soft material.

For metallics, I suggest using a modern packet with a foam insert of a similar nominal calibre so each cartridge is well protected. Old shot shells could also be packaged in a modern box head to tail. If boxes aren't filled, firmly pack the remaining space with some sort of soft packing material like tissues or foam blocks. Whatever you do, don't have any cartridges loose in a plastic bag or packaged in some other unthoughtful manner. That will definitely raise the ire of airline employees if they ask to see them at check-in and they do - I have experienced this numerous times. They are well within their rights to refuse to carry them if it is considered they aren't packaged correctly.

For extra security, I personally use an outer wooden or steel box that is lockable as I have also experienced some troubles due to my checked luggage being of a soft type. If you don't use an inner lockable container, make sure your checked luggage is of a hard case type that is able to be locked. Remember to take some spare duct tape so you can easily reseal your internal box if an inspection takes place.

Page 89 of the IATA Regulations describe Hazard Classes, with Class 1 - Explosives including "Articles and substances presenting no significant hazard". It states: "Only explosives in Division 1.4, compatibility class S are permitted on passenger aircraft." Section 3.1.3.4 defines the definition of the letter S:

Articles & substances that present no significant hazard. This division comprises articles & substances, which present only a small hazard in the event of ignition or initiation during transport. The effects are largely confined to the package & no projection of fragments of appreciable size or range is to be expected. An external fire must not cause virtually instantaneous explosion of almost the entire contents of the package.

Note: Articles & substances in this division are placed in Compatibility Group S when they are so packed or designed that any hazardous effects arising from accidental functioning are confined within the package unless the package has been degraded by fire, in which case all blast or projection effects are limited to the extent that they do not significantly hinder fire-fighting or other emergency response efforts in the immediate vicinity of the package.

Page 709 defines Cartridges, Small Arms as:

Ammunition consisting of a cartridge case fitted with a centre or rimfire primer & containing both a propelling charge & solid projectile(s). They are designed to be fired in weapons of caliber not larger than **19.1 mm**. Shotgun cartridges of any caliber are included in this definition. The term excludes cartridges, small arms, blank which are listed separately & some small arms cartridges which are listed under Cartridges for weapons, inert projectile.

Interestingly, blanks are not included in the definition above. Page 141 has a list of Dangerous Goods which states that incendiary, smoke, tear-producing, smoke, white phosphorous etc are totally forbidden on passenger aircraft. Many are forbidden even on cargo aircraft. In essence this relates to ammunition without an inert projectile. So be very careful that you don't inadvertently pack cartridges fitted with explosive projectiles, tracer bullets and so on. Anything other than an inert bullet will undoubtedly be problematic. If in doubt, ensure you check and get written authorisation for anything that could be deemed out of the ordinary.

The following check list should cover most situations. Most of these have been touched upon but they are worth repeating:

1. You can carry in your checked luggage, suitably packed: All cartridges that are not larger than 19.1 mm in diameter or calibre (and that do not fall into the prohibited schedule), on the basis that they are small arms sporting cartridges with inert projectiles.
2. The airline concerned must give its consent (preferably in writing for your peace of mind) prior to flying. This consent can be sought by contacting the specific airline's Operations Manager at the airport where you are departing. It is strongly recommended that you write to this person, requesting the airline's consent.
3. Should you be travelling with your partner and two children, the IATA Dangerous Goods Regulations allow for the carriage of a maximum of 5kg of (UN 0012 or UN 0014) cartridges per person. If you have packed four 5kg packages, you may have difficulty explaining how your six month old daughter and two year old son are cartridge collectors however. Be sensible about this aspect.
4. There is an erroneous misunderstanding that a passenger may carry 5kg of cartridges in each suitcase that the passenger has with him. This is incorrect and a direct breach of the IATA Dangerous Goods Regulations, so don't even try.
5. The gross weight of the cartridges should not exceed 5kg (11 lbs). You may be asked to sign a document that contains a luggage tag. This signed luggage tag will be attached to your suitcase and is a declaration that you have done all necessary paperwork and that you are not exceeding the 5kg limit. Sometimes you may need to collect any luggage containing ammunition from your airlines oversize or special luggage area, not from the normal baggage carousel. Again, there seems to be no consistency here - I've had to collect my luggage from both the carousel and the special luggage area from the same airlines.
6. A sturdy container, preferably lockable should be used to pack the cartridges. Perhaps line it with bubble wrap and ensure there is no contact between individual cartridges or packets. Fill any space remaining with soft packing. This method has been found acceptable by airlines in the experience of those ACCA members who have done it that way. If the actual container containing ammunition is not lockable, the lid needs to be sealed down using duct tape. Keep a roll of tape in the suitcase to reseal it because if you are required to open the container for inspection, you have the immediate means to reseal it. If your ammunition container is not able to be locked, ensure your luggage is of a hard case type and lockable.
7. The cartridges/projectiles should never fall within the definition of prohibited, ie. containing explosive or incendiary projectiles etc.

8. Remember that you are carrying, or wish to take with you UN 0012 Cartridges for weapons, inert projectile(s), Class 1.4 S. You may or may not wish to add that these are sporting or safety cartridges, or even obsolete collector's cartridges.

9. You can expect your suitcase to be x-rayed more than once during its travel. If queried about cartridges in your luggage, have all your correct paperwork handy in your carry-on bag. Many domestic airports and certainly all international airports have explosive sniffer dogs. Should a well-trained dog go near your suitcase, it may pick up the scent of propellant, especially if you have been reloading or handling it recently. Traces of propellant may remain on your clothing or in your shoes. If your clothing is swab tested and reads positive for explosives, you will at the very least be delayed for some time whilst you explain this positive reading. This happened to me once and it took over an hour to sort out. Because I was at the airport with plenty of time to spare I didn't miss my flight. This is where your letter of acknowledgment from the airline will be very useful.

10. A new issue has now come to light. Many airlines now have to apply to fly through or over the airspace of other countries. Where the aircraft is carrying ammunition or firearms, the airline must seek permission (if required to do so) from the country concerned. Any person flying with cartridges should enquire from their airline well before departure whether or not any country that the plane is landing in, even if you are only "in transit, has a blanket ban on ammunition coming into that country. Failure to do this may well result in the airline refusing to carry your cartridges at the time that you check in.

One ACCA member who has regularly travelled abroad with ammunition states that when booking his flights overseas, if possible he tries to avoid arriving and departing on weekends or out of office hours. There is a much greater chance of striking problems with inexperienced or junior staff at those times. This makes sense but sometimes the flights you need may not mesh properly to allow that, especially if travelling on a number of legs. But if you have the option to leave and arrive during office hours on a week day, it is definitely worth considering.

To finish with this part on airlines, in my experience over the years taking ammunition with me on various flights and from speaking with ACCA members who have done so, you can have an easy run or a nightmare; it is often entirely dependent on the airline staff you are dealing with on that day. Despite the fact that it is obvious that airline staff and indeed many Customs employees (if flying internationally) could use some development and training in this area, that won't help you at the time. Also, pointing out this fact to staff will not endear them to you.

So whatever airline you end up using, keep the time, date, name and phone numbers from any individuals from their security or operations area that you spoke to and keep a copy handy of their regulations (or letter of authority granted by them) stipulating their requirements for carriage of ammunition. If you can produce this if asked, it should help when you strike an airline employee who is ignorant about this topic, which is unfortunately a common occurrence.

There is certainly a lack of any consistency in the quality and accuracy of the information given, even with employees from the same airline. This is why I stress that you should always keep the details of those officials you speak to. If you are given erroneous information, you will have far more credibility if you can say, "I spoke with a Peter Williams from your Security Section on the morning of Wednesday 5 March and he told me...." than just stating, "I spoke to some male staff member a few weeks ago and they told me..." Ensure you take all the necessary precautions and you will minimise the potential for experiencing problems.

If you feel you have done everything correctly but are still getting short thrift from airline counter staff, don't be afraid to ask to speak to someone higher in authority. Problems can usually be resolved if the counter staff are relieved of making a decision as someone more senior is then responsible.

This next section deals with the state and federal laws and regulations that apply to taking ammunition with you into and out of Australia. All of the aforementioned information regarding flying with ammunition will, of course, still apply in conjunction with the following.

Personally Taking Ammunition with you INTO Australia on a Commercial Flight

The following information was taken verbatim from the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service fact sheet titled "*Importing Ammunition and Firearm Magazines*", dated April 2009. It is a document available to the public from their website: www.customs.gov.au and as such I was given permission to reproduce it for this article. I have left out the section on magazines from that fact sheet as it is not directly or normally relevant to ACCA members:

The importation of ammunition (including components) and magazines is controlled under the *Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956* (the Regulations). Importers must obtain permission to bring firearms into Australia.

Ammunition and Components of Ammunition

To import ammunition and components of ammunition into Australia, importers must first obtain written authorisation from the police firearms or weapons registry in their State or Territory, the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department or the Minister for Home Affairs.

Ammunition for use with firearms, also known as rounds, bullets, and cartridges, is controlled under the Regulations. This includes ammunition for paintball markers, soft air (BB) pellets as well as ball or shot projectiles for muzzle loading firearms.

Components of ammunition include projectiles, cartridge casings, whether new or spent, and primers designed or adapted for use in ammunition are also controlled under the Regulations and require permission to import.

Police Authorisation

To import general purpose ammunition and components into Australia, the authorisation will be in the form of a *B709A Importation of Firearms – Police Confirmation and Certification Form* (B709A Form).

When imported with a long-arm that has also been authorised by the police firearms or weapons registry, the ammunition may be listed on the same B709A Form as the long-arm.

Please Note

The above information does not apply to specialised ammunition and components such as the following:

- Tracer
- Frangible

- Explosive
- Incendiary
- Armour Piercing
- Penetrator
- Saboted Light Armour Piercing (SLAP)
- Flechette
- Handgun ammunition that is designed, advertised or capable of defeating soft body armour or opaque, glazed or bullet resistant material.

To import these types of ammunition, permission must be obtained from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.

Attorney-General's Permission

To import special purpose ammunition and components into Australia, written permission must be obtained from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. The importation of such firearms must meet one of the following criteria:

- Government use (official purposes)
- For repair, modification, testing, training, government contract or certain other project or tender, or for use in the production of a film, for transshipment or for use by a foreign defence force in a defence-sanctioned activity (specified purposes)
- For use by professional rural pest controllers (specified person)
- The importer is a proved researcher or developer of firearms or related defence and law enforcement products and the article is being imported for the completion of a project or tender,
- Previously exported firearms returning to Australia (returned goods)

The original permission must be presented to Customs and Border Protection at or before importation.

[Author's note: I presume the word "firearms" in the second sentence under this heading is an error and should read: ammunition/ammunition components, or at least include ammunition and ammunition components.]

Ministerial Permission

Ammunition greater than .50" calibre (or 12.7mm) is controlled under Schedule 2 of the Regulations. To import these goods into Australia, importers must obtain written authorisation to import from the Minister for Home Affairs. This does not include ammunition for shotguns or black powder. See the *Importing Exporting Warfare Items* fact sheet about these goods.

Further Information

Penalty: The maximum penalty for importing these goods without import approval is a penalty not exceeding \$275,000, imprisonment for ten years, or both.

To export ammunition, components of ammunition, or firearm magazines, see the *Exporting Firearms and Related Goods* fact sheet.

Contacts

Contact details of the police firearms and weapon registries and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department can be found on the *Firearms and Weapons Information Contacts* fact sheet.

[Author's note: These contacts are reproduced from that fact sheet below, dated October 2008]

State	Phone	Email	Web address
ACT	(02) 6256 7747	ACTFirearmsRegistry@afp.gov.au	www.afp.gov.au
NSW	1300 362 562	firearmsenq@police.nsw.gov.au	www.police.nsw.gov.au
NT	(08) 8922 3541	firearmsregistry@pfes.nt.gov.au	www.nt.gov.au/pfes
QLD	(07) 3015 7777	weaponslicensing@police.qld.gov.au	www.police.qld.gov.au
SA	(08) 8204 2495	SAPOL.FirearmsBranch@police.sa.gov.au	www.sapolice.sa.gov.au
TAS	(03) 6230 2720	firearms@police.tas.gov.au	www.police.tas.gov.au
VIC	1300 651 645	licensing@police.vic.gov.au	www.police.vic.gov.au
WA	(08) 9223 7000	firearms.branch@police.wa.gov.au	www.police.wa.gov.au

Department of Defence

Defence Export Control Office (DECO)

Phone: 1800 661 066

Fax: 02 6266 2997

Website: www.defence.gov.au/strategy/deco

Email: deco@defence.gov.au

Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department

Firearms Unit

Phone: 02 6250 6730

Fax: 02 6250 5910

Email: firearms@ag.gov.au

For More Information

For information on any Customs and Border Protection matter, contact the Customs Information and Support Centre on 1300 363 263 or email information@customs.gov.au or browse the website www.customs.gov.au

Several final notes on importing: I once returned to Australia with ammunition but did not have time before I left to organise the police B709A form. Upon arrival I declared to Customs that I had a small amount of ammunition which of course was kept and

they issued me a detailed and itemised receipt. They will keep seized items for a period to allow you to arrange the necessary permit/s, but if this is not forthcoming, ultimately the items will be destroyed. I was able to arrange the paperwork later but my problem was that my ammunition was in Sydney, whilst I was in Hobart. Customs will send seized items to other capital cities, but at your considerable expense, not theirs! Fortunately I was able to retrieve the items on a return trip to Sydney within the six month time frame. As Melbourne or Sydney are the most common international departure points and most ACCA members don't live in those two cities, you will need to remember this if you return to Australia without the appropriate paperwork.

A second consideration for collectors is that most times we have no idea what we will be bringing back into the country. It is impossible to know ahead of time what we may find at a gunshow, or from another collector, at a cartridge collectors meeting and so on, so how can the B709A form be filled out correctly before we leave? Obviously this has the potential to create difficulties. Customs officials can be often quite pedantic and if you have 79 assorted cartridges with you; they will probably want to see your B709A form stating exactly what those 79 cartridges are.

In the past I have personally stated on my B709A form a generic description, such as "500 small arms sporting cartridges of various calibres, fitted with inert projectiles". This way I was able to return with a maximum of 500 cartridges - provided they weighed under 5kg of course! Ten packets of .22's will easily be under 5kg, but 500 big Nitro Express or 12 gauge cartridges certainly won't be! If you bring back say 600 cartridges (remember this is only two extra boxes of .22 rimfire), Customs will seize the surplus 100 cartridges and you will need to arrange another B709A form. So it is always best to overestimate what you intend returning with than underestimate. Therefore work out how many cartridges make up 5kg for your particular collecting interests and state that on the form, allowing a little leeway.

I have had Customs officials ask me why my B709A is so generic in description and they have to date been satisfied with my answer that as a collector, it is impossible to know ahead of time what I may find. They usually write on their paperwork exactly what you have as you pass through their checkpoint. I am aware however that other collectors have had difficulties with their B709A form only having a non-specific description; on those occasions the officials they dealt with required each cartridge to be listed in detail. If this happens to you, you will have to accept it and organise further paperwork from home.

Of course if you know you are only going to be bringing back say, one packet of old 12 gauge cartridges from a fellow collector, you can state exactly what they are. Otherwise the only alternative to recording a non-specific description is to complete the B709A paperwork when you get back from your trip because only then will you know exactly what you've brought back with you. That will mean, of course, that you can't take your ammunition home with you upon your return to Australia, with the associated issues of having possible accidental damage occasioned to sensitive or fragile items by a Customs officer, not to mention having to collect it later. If you live well away from your port of return, it may be an expensive exercise in time and money to retrieve it.

To complicate things just a little further, although the Customs information given above does not refer to this, if you are importing handgun cartridges (ammunition for category H firearms), you will need a **B709D form**. The B709A form is used for Category A, B and C firearms, parts, accessories and so on, but the B709D form is for handguns and things related to handguns. This will not be a problem if the cartridges you have with you are also chambered in Category A, B or C firearms (for example .22 LR, .44-40, .357 Magnum etc) as there are long arms chambered in these calibres, as well as in handguns. But if you have a packet of .25 ACP or obsolete .35 S&W for example, or any other cartridge that has only been chambered in a handgun (to my knowledge no rifle has ever been chambered in these two calibres), then you'll need to ensure you fill out the correct form.

Lastly, if you have an Import Permit in someone else's name and you are carrying that item/s, (as often occurs when bringing something back for another collector) you must have an *Authorised Agent* form signed by that person, otherwise Customs will not release that item to you.

Personally Taking Ammunition with you OUT OF Australia on a Commercial Flight

Critical Point: Research the requirements of the country you are travelling to!

Physically getting cartridges legally out of Australia is one thing but another vital consideration is: What are the applicable laws and regulations regarding taking ammunition into the country you are travelling to? It is not only the issue of taking them into that country from their national perspective, what about individual state or province laws regarding possession of ammunition by a foreigner whilst travelling? What do their laws state about security and carriage of the ammunition? There are numerous questions needing answers and these are well outside the scope of this article. It will vary widely all over the world so you will need to contact the embassy, consulate or mission of the country you are travelling to and find out what is required re permits and paperwork. Failure to do so will result at the very minimum of having your cartridges confiscated, and at the worst could result in you being charged, fined, or even gaoled! Ignorance is not a defence and many countries don't have a justice system anywhere near as accommodating as we have in Australia. Don't risk it!

I am aware that an ACCA member recently had trouble transiting in Singapore where he was merely changing flights and not even leaving the airport precinct or collecting his checked luggage! Many Asian countries have particularly stringent rules about possessing ammunition and you may strike difficulties, even if you are only stopping to refuel. It is important that if you are changing flights or landing in any country en route to your destination, you must check this situation with their embassy/consulate and the airline well before travel. It seems ridiculous that this is the case but it is futile to argue the merits of their laws; all you can do is obey them. If that sounds like it's too hard, then simply choose another airline that doesn't refuel or otherwise land in that particular country en-route to your final destination.

Again, the following information was taken verbatim from the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service fact sheet titled "*Australian Controls for the Export of Firearms*", dated January 2008. It is a document available to the public from their website: www.customs.gov.au and as such I was given permission to reproduce it for this article. Much of this information relates to exporting firearms as well but the same processes apply to exporting ammunition:

Exporting Firearms and Related Goods

The Australian Government monitors and controls the export of firearms and related goods. The legislative basis for controlling the export of such goods is Regulation 13E of the *Customs (Prohibited Exports) Regulations 1958*, made under the *Customs Act 1901*. Firearms, firearm parts, accessories and ammunition, regardless of the state, age, completeness or working condition, are subject to export controls

under Commonwealth legislation. To export an item subject to these controls, the exporter must first obtain authorisation from a delegated officer of the Australian Government.

Replica firearms, paintball firearms and air-soft (BB) firearms do not require authorisation to export. However, these are subject to import controls upon being re-imported into Australia and may be subject to import controls in other countries. This brochure outlines the procedures and requirements for obtaining an export permit.

EXPORT REQUIREMENTS

To take firearms and related goods out of Australia exporters must complete three main steps:

1. Register as a client with Customs using a Client Registration Form;
2. Lodge an Export Declaration; and
3. Obtain either a Restricted Goods Permit (RGP) or a Defence Export Permit.

STEP ONE – CLIENT REGISTRATION

All exporters must first register as a client in the Integrated Cargo System (ICS). To do this, exporters must complete a *B319 Registering as a Client in the Integrated Cargo System* Form. This form is available at any Customs office or on the Customs website. After lodging this form with Customs the exporter will be given a Customs Client ID (CCID) or their ABN will be registered with Customs. Exporters only need to complete this form once as they retain the same CCID or ABN for all subsequent transactions with Customs.

STEP TWO – EXPORT DECLARATION

Exporters also require an Export Declaration Number (EDN). To apply for an EDN exporters must complete a *B957 Export Declaration Form*. This form is available at any Customs Office or on the Customs website.

STEP THREE – EXPORT PERMITS

Exporters must obtain an export permit. There are two types of export permits for firearms and related goods:

- Restricted Goods Permit (RGP) – for the export by an individual of no more than four (4) firearms leaving Australia as accompanied goods; for example, in passenger baggage; or
- Defence Export Permit – for the export of any amount of firearms and related goods.

A RESTRICTED GOODS PERMIT (RGP)

When an RGP can be issued

An RGP is a permit issued by Customs on behalf of the Department of Defence to an individual to export lower-risk firearms for the purpose of:

- Taking part in overseas sporting shooters' events
- Hunting
- For protection in international waters against piracy
- Re-exporting a firearm that has been declared on import and where the individual is able to produce relevant import approval documentation

An applicant will not be issued more than one RGP to cover the export of more than four firearms. Lower risk firearms are those referred to as Category A, B and H firearms under state and territory legislation. For example, single-shot, double-barrel, lever-action or bolt-action shotguns as well as repeating action, single-shot and double-barrel centre fire rifles can be exported on an RGP. Semi-automatic pistols, revolvers and single-shot handguns can also be exported on an RGP. Firearm parts, accessories and ammunition may be exported using an RGP. Firearm parts, accessories and ammunition may be exported using an RGP but only when those goods are being exported with the applicable firearm(s).

Total quantities of ammunition per RGP are limited to the following:

- 4000 rounds for target shooting
- 300 rounds for protections in international waters against piracy
- 200 rounds for hunting.

An RGP may only include a reasonable quantity of firearm parts and accessories for use with the firearm(s) being exported. An RGP is only valid for 28 days from issue. Goods must be exported within that time otherwise a new RGP must be issued.

Circumstances where an RGP will not be issued

RGP's are not applicable for the export of goods under the following categories:

- Firearms not accompanying the owner on the flight or vessel they are travelling on
- Goods being exported for repair, return, sale or as a gift
- More than four (4) firearms
- Firearms classified as Category C or D under state and territory legislation
- Fully automatic firearms
- Firearms equal to or greater than 0.50" (12.7mm) in calibre except shotguns.
- **Firearm parts, accessories or ammunition where the goods are not accompanied by the principal firearm for which they are designed for use.**
- Firearms going to a destination that is subject to United Nations embargo (see http://www.dfat.gov.au/un/unsc_sanctions/index.html)
- Replica firearms, paintball firearms and air-soft (BB) firearms, these do not require permission to export.
- Commercial exports

- Consignments sent through post, air or sea freight
- Goods already described on a Department of Defence export permit or licence
- Re-export of a firearm that has been declared on import and where the individual is not able to produce relevant import approval documentation.

How to apply for an RGP

To apply for an RGP, exporters must complete a *DEC07 Restricted Goods Permit (RGP)* Form which can be obtained at any Customs Office or on the Department of Defence website. Exporters must then follow the procedure for lodging an RGP as discussed below.

Lodging an RGP

Lodging an RGP includes:

- Completing an Evidence of Identity check;
- Producing a current firearms licence; and
- Producing a Certificate(s) of Registration (proof-of-ownership documents) for the firearm(s) to be exported to Customs.

An Evidence of Identity check requires 100 points of identification for example, a passport, drivers licence, firearms licence or credit card. Presented identification must include at least one current photo ID and one signature ID.

Should the owner of the goods have a representative exporting the items on their behalf, such as in the case of a sporting team manager, the representative or agent must present the firearm owner's documents at the time of application. Once this process is complete Customs will process the RGP.

Lodgement and an Evidence of Identity check can be completed at either a Customs Client Service Counter or with Customs at the International Terminal on the day of departure. If departing on an aircraft and completing this process with Customs on the day of departure, allow an additional two hours prior to the check-in time required by the travellers/exporters airline. Never take any firearms or ammunition into any Customs Office other than the International Terminal on the day of departure.

If departing via sea, ensure the documentation is lodged with Customs at the same time the *Form 40 Application for Clearance and Guarantee to pay Duty* is lodged. Firearms remain on the exporting vessel to enable Customs to seal them on board.

The RGP is not valid until the firearms and any associated goods listed on the RGP have been physically examined by Customs on the day of departure as detailed below. An RGP is only valid for 28 days. Contact the Customs Information and Support Centre on 1300 363 263 to find the nearest Customs Client Service Counter.

Verifying exports on an RGP

After an RGP has been lodged and authorised by Customs, the goods cannot be taken out of Australia without Customs verifying the export. To do this, exporters must approach Customs on the day of departure and present the firearms and any related goods for physical inspection. If taking a domestic flight first, check with the airline to ensure that the firearms will be available for inspection by Customs at the airport of departure from Australia. Exporters must present to Customs their completed and authorised RGP and export declaration, along with documentation verifying ownership, registration and licensing of firearms to be exported. Customs will check the goods against RGP by signing it and escorting the passenger to their airline check-in, or if departing by sea, sealing the firearms on board the vessel on the day of departure. Customs will return the original copy of the authorised RGP to the passenger. Exporters should note that if goods presented to Customs for inspection do not match those described in the RGP, the RGP will not be validated and the export will not proceed.

DEFENCE EXPORT PERMIT

A Defence Export Permit may be used to export all forms of firearms and related goods including those where an RGP may be used. Permits are valid for twelve months from issue and are issued by the Defence Export Control Office (DECO), within the Department of Defence. There are certain circumstances for which only a Defence Export Permit can be used.

These include:

- Exports of five (5) or more firearms
- Unaccompanied exports; for example, goods being exported as cargo or by courier
- Exports of any amount of higher-risk or military firearms including their parts, accessories, and ammunition. This includes firearms referred to as Category C & D under State and Territory legislation, firearms over 0.50" (12.7mm) calibre and all automatic firearms
- **Any firearm parts, accessories, sights, ammunition, magazines, etc being exported without firearms**
- Firearms being exported for the purpose of repair, return, sales or as a gift.

To apply for a Defence Export Permit exporters must complete a *DEC01 Application to Export Controlled Goods* form which can be found on the Department of Defence website. Non sensitive applications for Export Permits are generally processed within 15 working days.

For further information about defence Export Permits contact DECO.

RGP QUICK GUIDE

Step One

Complete a B319 Registering as a Client in the Integrated Cargo System Form

Lodge the form with Customs

Obtain a Customs Client ID (CCID) or if applicable an ABN can be registered with Customs

Use the CCID or ABN for all subsequent transactions with Customs.

(Must be completed before an EDN can be generated)

Step Two

Complete a B957 Export Declaration Form

Lodge the form with Customs

Receive an Export Declaration number (EDN)

(May be completed anytime prior to export)

Step Three

Complete an RGP Form and provide a completed form, plus all relevant documents to Customs, including:

- Current Firearms Licence
- Certificate(s) of Registration for all firearms
- Evidence of identity documents

(May be completed up to 28 days prior to departure)

Step Four

Prior to export present your RGP form along with the goods to Customs for physical examination at the international port of departure.

EXPORT AUTHORISATION IS NOT VALID UNTIL AN EXAMINATION OF THE FIREARMS HAS BEEN COMPLETED

Penalties apply for exporting without valid authorisation

(Can only be completed on the day of departure at the international port of departure)

RE-IMPORTING FIREARMS

All exporters should retain a copy of their export permit (RGP or DECO issued Export Permit) as this may exempt firearms returning to Australia from having to undergo safety testing by Customs. All firearms returning to Australia must have import permission in order to be re-imported. Information and fact sheets on importing firearms are available on the Customs website.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Airlines have their own requirements and restrictions on carrying firearms and ammunition on aircraft. It is the exporter's responsibility to confirm these requirements and notify their airline that they will be transporting firearms and ammunition, before leaving Australia .

OVERSEAS IMPORT APPROVAL FOR FIREARMS

Travellers should be aware that approval from authorities of the overseas destination may be required to import firearms. Advice should be sought from the relevant country embassy or mission prior to travelling.

PENALTIES

Failure to obtain permission to export is an offence under section 233BAB of the *Customs Act 1901* and can attract a penalty of up to A\$275,000 and/or imprisonment for up to 10 years. Failure to correctly enter goods that require a permit for export is an offence under Section 113 of the *Customs Act 1901* and can attract a penalty of A\$5500.

CONTACTS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Defence Export Control Office

Telephone 1800 66 10 66

Facsimile 02 6265 4583

E-mail deco@defence.gov.au

Website: <http://www.defence.gov.au/strategy/deco>

Australian Customs Service

Telephone: 1300 363 263

Email: weaponspolicy@customs.gov.au

Website: <http://www.customs.gov.au>

APPLICATION FORMS

Application forms for a Custom Client ID and Export Declaration can be found at

www.customs.gov.au

The forms are identified as:

B319 Registering as a Client in the Integrated Cargo System Form

B957 Export Declaration Form

Application forms for an RGP or Defence Export Permit can be found at

<http://www.defence.gov.au/strategy/deco>

The forms are identified as:
DEC07 Restricted Goods Permit (RGP) Application
DEC01 Application to Export Controlled Goods

CONCLUSION

Some readers may have picked up in the aforementioned section under the heading: **Circumstances where an RPG will not be issued** (7th dot point) that a Restricted Goods Permit (RPG) will not be issued for "ammunition where the goods are not accompanied by the principal firearm for which they are designed for use". For collectors this will almost always be the case. Therefore the form that needs to be filled out is the **Defence Export Permit**. I point this out to avoid any possible confusion.

After reading all that, ACCA members could be excused for deciding not to bother taking ammunition in or out of the country! There are certainly numerous hoops to jump through, particularly when exporting ammunition. Importing cartridges is comparatively easier but the bottom line remains that if you wish to take ammunition into or out of Australia legally, then all the pre-requisite steps need to be followed. I do understand why some members, including myself I might add, prefer taking only empty boxes, packets and tins overseas as it negates all of the above mentioned red tape!

Despite what I have outlined, members will still probably have many questions of various government departments if they wish to travel abroad with ammunition. Take advantage of the contact details included in this article and speak to as many people as you need to. Again, it is so important to make a note of the time, date, names and phone numbers of any people you talk to for future reference. I also can't stress enough that you keep any written authorisations with all your other important travel documents such as your passport and tickets, including some spare photocopies of them kept separately.

Finally, remember that all the information provided here is a guide only. It is impossible to outline what you must do as each situation for ACCA members when travelling will certainly have many variables. The danger in outlining a rigid set of points to follow is that someone will follow the advice to the letter without making their own enquiries, then may be found to be wanting because of something not taken into account due to their individual circumstances. I'd rather not be the focus of their anger if their cartridges were seized or if they experienced some other undesirable outcome. What I have attempted to do in writing this article is to provide a broad framework for you to use as a starting point. Now that this has been outlined, the rest is up to you.

Acknowledgements

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