

Gun dealers to dodge bullet

By PETER HUNT

A KEY member of the Victorian Government's country caucus has stepped into the line of fire on controversial plans to raise gun dealers' licence fees by 650 per cent.

The Government's proposed Firearms Regulations 2008, which were released in February, call for dealers' licence fees to rise from \$965 to \$7209 and juniors fees to jump from \$39 to \$94.

At the time, country Victorian gun dealers warned the fee increases would drive them to extinction.

However, Ballarat East Labor MP Geoff Howard told *The Weekly Times* last week the Government would not be adopting the proposed



Geoff Howard

fee increases for dealers.

"It was an issue raised by all country MPs at our (country caucus) meeting," he said.

Mr Howard said he stood by an

email sent to a constituent on March 7, which stated Police Minister Bob Cameron did not plan to adopt the fee increases.

"I'm satisfied the Minister is fully aware of the outrage that this would rightly cause among smaller gun dealers in particular," Mr Howard stated in the email.

"I believe that the outcomes to be accepted by the Minister will be far more acceptable."

Mr Howard was briefed on the issue by the Minister's office in the last week of February.

Many country Victorian dealers, who are part-timers or sell guns as a side-line activity, have warned they would abandon the business if the Government raised fees.