



Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (Inc.)

PO Box 2520, Unley, South Australia 5061

Phone: (08) 8272 7100 Fax: (08) 8272 2945

Email: edmp@ssaa.org.au Internet: www.ssaa.org.au ABN 95 050 209 688

The Daily Telegraph
GPO Box 4245
SYDNEY NSW 2001
ATT: Garry Linnell, Editor

March 16, 2009

Dear Garry,

I write to you on behalf of the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) as its National spokesman and also as a journalist of 20 years experience.

My concern is in relation to a feature section titled 'Gun Crime' on your newspaper's website to be found at <http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/index/0,,5017955,00.html>

While we do not argue with the paper's right to publish gun crime related articles (hopefully balanced), the concern is that the feature publishes multiple photos of the perpetrators in aggressive, threatening poses, which, in effect, extends their 15 minutes of infamy and creates a resource for those that are mentally disturbed and contemplating violence and public harm. It is a sensationalist portal that could give rise to copy-cat killings.

Thankfully, mass murder by individuals around the world is rare. However, killers in Finland and the USA have been found to have enacted copy-cat killings and fed their revenge fantasies, which led to their criminal actions, through mass media stories, images and videos, particularly YouTube.

It is in the interest of the SSAA to work towards the reduction of violence, particularly when the perpetrators utilise a firearm, and to ensure firearms are kept out of the hands of the mentally-criminally ill. Likewise, where we perceive the media to be acting in a manner contrary to public safety, we will bring it to their attention.

When I first became a journalist, we were taught not to report on suicide as it could lead to copy-cat self-harm in the community. Suicide reporting appears to have become more prevalent nowadays. However, the voluntary adoption of public help phone numbers by the media when reporting on suicide is a step in the right direction. We would ask you to consider the reporting of mass murders by revenge-seeking psychopaths in the same manner.

In the near future, we will be discussing with the broader media:

- the methods used in reporting mass murder, with particular attention to the broadcasting of perpetrator's 'hate' videos,
- the limiting of the publication of their name (we believe this would remove some of the element of infamy they seek),
- a code on photographic publication where the photographs are taken by the perpetrator to enhance their public image, and
- the publication of a helpline number for those with mental illness issues when reporting on hate crime.

Immediately, however, we ask you to review your internet feature on gun crime and assess whether it is potentially damaging to public safety.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Bannister
SSAA National spokesman and media manager