



Handgun ownership myth busting

Often, those opposed to the shooting sports, such as the National Coalition for Gun Control and the Australian Greens, perpetuate the myth that 'single-shot' handguns could and should be used in competition.

Recognising these myths for what they are - just myths - the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA National) would like to make clear a few facts about the sport of handgun shooting in Australia.

There are many organised handgun competitions that cater for sporting shooters at the club, state, national and international level. In the SSAA alone, competitors are required to use multi-shot-capable revolvers and self-loading pistols to participate in the Action Match, Handgun Metallic Silhouette, Single Action and Target Pistol competitions. Within each of these competitions, there are many categories, matches and events, which cater to the different skill levels of its participants and there are thousands of competitors participating at each of these levels across the country.

Another myth regularly peddled by anti-firearm groups is that multi-shot handguns are not utilised in elite shooting competitions such as the Commonwealth Games. This is quite untrue. The Commonwealth Games 25m Pistol competition, for instance, includes a Precision and a Rapid Fire event, with each requiring 30 shots.

One of the world's most successful Commonwealth Games competitors, Mick Gault from the United Kingdom, too, is required to fire multiple shots to participate in his 25m Standard Pistol shooting event. He is his country's most successful Games athlete, boasting 15 medals over four successive Commonwealth Games.

Sporting handgun ownership in Australia has always been strictly regulated and continues to be so. In Australia,

only sporting shooters who belong to and regularly attend handgun clubs can maintain their handgun ownership outside of professions such as veterinarian, security and law enforcement agencies. For more information about handgun ownership in Australia and the strict regulations surrounding it, please go to www.ssaa.org.au/research/2007/2007-04-23_handgun-ownership-facts-in-australia.html

Finally, the Australian Greens leader Senator Bob Brown has previously stated that there are 300,000 'hand-machine-guns' in Australia, many of which are carried around or hidden in car 'glove boxes'. Senator Brown's figure is blatantly incorrect. In September 2008, the Australian Institute of Criminology stated that there were, in fact, 145,123* registered handguns in Australia.

Furthermore, in November 2008 when Senator Brown's asked when the Australian Government will ban handguns, Senator Penny Wong, on behalf of the then Minister for Home Affairs Bob Debus, stated that the Government considers the existing controls in place on firearms, including handguns, to be appropriate in striking a balance between the interests of those with a genuine need to have access to these firearms, such as sporting shooters, and the interests of the broader community to live safely and securely. And the SSAA rightly concurs.

For more information about firearm legislation in Australia and the SSAA's handgun shooting competitions, please order your complimentary copy of *A Journalist's Guide to Firearms and the Shooting Sports* from www.ssaa.org.au/media-centre ●

* This figure was originally incorrectly quoted as 172,422 handguns. However, the South Australian figure of 41,599 was found to be incorrect and was later quoted by the South Australian Police Commissioner Mal Hyde to be 14,599 handguns.