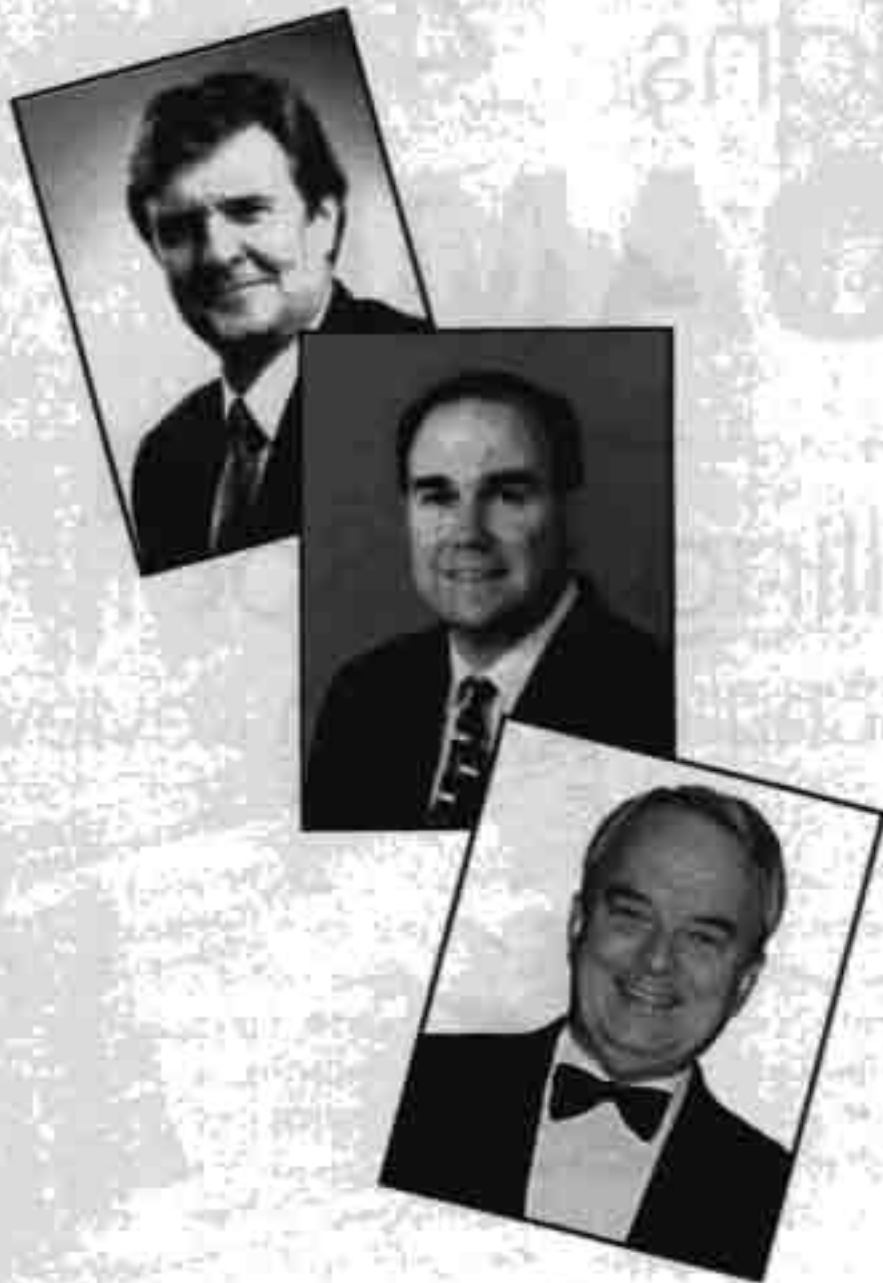


ASJ

AUSTRALIAN SHOOTERS JOURNAL

The political voice of the SSAA



**Do any of our
politicians give
a damn?**

INSIDE:

**KILLING FOR SPORT
The Schuller thesis
in review**

**Republican
time bomb?**



January/February 2000 Vol. 2 Issue 1

ASJ

AUSTRALIAN SHOOTERS JOURNAL

The political voice of the SSAA

Editorial policy:
to create a better environment and
community understanding of all forms of
hunting and shooting sports.

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A word from the President

When it comes to the shooting sports, good news has been thin on the ground over the past few years. While some of the heat appears to have gone out of the gun debate, firearm issues are still a long way from receiving anything like a fair go from either the media or the government. One important exception, however, was the recent opening of the new St Marys Indoor Shooting Centre in Sydney.

November's opening ceremony was attended by more than 100 guests. Chief among them was the Federal Minister for Sport and Tourism, The Hon. Jackie Kelly MHR, who unveiled a plaque commemorating the centre's inauguration. Unlike many parliamentarians who unfortunately couldn't tell the business end of a rifle from the back end of a bus, Jackie Kelly is a shooter, thanks to a seven-year stint as an officer in the Royal Australia Air Force.

In her address to the meeting Ms Kelly acknowledged the raw deal which the shooting sports and shooters generally, receive from the powers that be. She went on to point out that on the whole shooters were average folk who happen to enjoy firearm sports and as an athlete (Jackie Kelly represented Australia at World Championship level in rowing) she understood both the benefits and enjoyment which dedication to a particular sport could bring. Following the ceremony she went on to prove that all that RAAF training had not gone to waste by shooting a very creditable group on one of the centre's 50-metre ranges.

Jackie Kelly's participation in something as important as the opening of the St Marys centre is significant. It shows that at least some political representatives are prepared to listen to shooters' concerns. True, Kelly's background means that she is familiar with firearms and as such not given to the sort of the irrationality which seems to color many politician's views - the

Australian Democrats' official firearms policy being a good example. The fact remains, however, that as a Federal Minister she still took the time to attend and speak frankly about the issues.

The lesson for shooters is that sometimes simply asking one's local representative (or in this case local Minister) to attend a function can bear fruit. There is a real danger in painting all politicians with the same anti-gun brush. One of the most important things firearm owners can do to protect their rights into the future is to build better relationships with the people who ultimately make the laws. This means that political representatives must be given the chance to show their support for shooters and their interests. If a politician adopts a patently anti-gun stance then by all means the gloves should come off and every effort should be made to get them out of office. On the other hand, those who demonstrate a willingness to listen and work on behalf of shooters' concerns need to be supported.

The fact that Jackie Kelly agreed to open the St Marys centre is important. First, it gave the SSAA the chance to show off all the hard work that has gone into the new complex and just what shooters can achieve when they set their minds to it - all the money that went into the new range was raised without any help from the government whatsoever. Second, it gave shooters the opportunity to see that not all politicians are opposed to responsible private gun ownership and that some are even prepared to stand up and speak on their behalf.

Bill Shelton
National President

Do any of our politicians give a

DAMN?

by Jake Blackberry

In these post buy-back days, many shooters feel they are fighting the battle alone because of a serious lack of politicians willing to do the job for them. While this is understandable, it is not entirely true. Politicians in favour of private firearms ownership may be rare, but they are out there.

No matter which political party you support (with the exception of the Australian Democrats!) there are a few 'pollies' working to keep your guns and your future as a gun owner safe. Because these politicians are not in the majority, they need your support - before, during and after election periods.



John Tingle has been a leading advocate of shooter's rights in the NSW parliament since gaining a seat as a candidate for the Shooters Party back in 1995. Much to the chagrin of the anti-gun lobby, Tingle's election proved that when pushed too far, gun owners are prepared to organise themselves and support people willing to look after their interests.

Mr Tingle played a leading role in the formulation and passage of the recent NSW Home Invasion

(Occupants' Protection) Bill, which provides a measure of protection for householders forced to defend themselves and he has consistently lobbied on behalf of shooters, both inside and outside of parliament. Since taking up his seat a number of candidates and parties prepared to speak out on the question of sensible gun regulation have come along. The fact remains however, that Mr Tingle and the Shooters Party were the first.

While the effect of the Shooters Party has been profound, the impact has not been limited to legislative circles alone. In fact, the impact has probably been more pronounced among the major shooting organisations, especially the SSAA. Understandably, from time to time the SSAA and the Shooters Party have seen and done things a little differently. As a purely political organisation, the Shooters Party is subject to a different set of constraints. The

SSAA, on the other hand, is made up of supporters from a broad range of political persuasions. Nevertheless, both groups share the same overarching goals and the challenge is to continue working together to maximise their combined effectiveness.

Shooters in Western Australia should be happy to know that Independent Mark Nevill, MLC for the Mining and Pastoral Region, is willing to take up their fight. While he has never owned a gun himself, he says he is not opposed to gun ownership. According to Mr Nevill, a former member of the Labor Party, the main problem that Australia faces is the number of illegal guns still in the community, which he says are commonly thought to equal or exceed registered firearms. During the buy-back, he points out that only five per cent of the firearms turned in were held illegally, the rest were from law-abiding shooters. "John Howard's knee-jerk reaction to Port Arthur has empowered the



Federal Government to infringe on the rights of responsible licensed gun owners without tackling the problem of illegal firearms," he said.

Mr Nevill believes that the most objectionable part of the exercise was that many honest citizens were turned into criminals overnight, having been forced to hand in lawfully held firearms, some of which were family heirlooms, antiques or served a legitimate purpose, say, on a farmer's land. "I do not believe that legitimate firearm collectors should have had to hand in their guns if they were registered and unusable," he said.

Verifying the results of the buy-back throughout Australia has not been an easy task and it isn't any easier in WA. Mr Nevill said "I am informed...that the police service does not have sufficient resources to manually check how many illegal firearms were handed in during the gun buy-back." He went on to say that in 1997-98, WA's armed robbery was at an all-time high. A fact that causes him to wonder how many illegal firearms are still in the community in the wrong hands. Currently Australia's

states and territories do not have uniform gun laws, but Mr Nevill says, "I understand that eventually there will be a national firearms licensing and registration system that will be accessible to all states and territories." While he believes that some jurisdictions had lax legislation that needed to be amended, he feels that the \$300m spent on the buy-back scheme was "absolutely wasted".

New South Wales shooters have, among others, Malcolm Jones working on their behalf. Mr Jones is chairman and a Member of



Parliament for the Outdoor Recreation Party, which he formed in 1995. He believes that the current review of the Firearms Act in NSW is inadequate. Recently, when the review was itself under review, Mr Jones tried diligently to have the system changed but his efforts were cut short when an amendment was overruled by the Labor Party. "Firearms are an essential management tool for anyone on the land," said Mr Jones. "We need sensible gun laws, not reactive gun laws. The 1996 Firearm Act was a reaction to Port Arthur rather than an objective re-

form." While Mr Jones is not a shooter, he says that he is sympathetic to shooters and their plight.

Senator John Quirke, a member of the ALP in South Australia



for more than 25 years, has been a shooter since 1965 and is an honorary member of the SSAA Black Powder Association. When asked for his views on firearm ownership he said, "There are a lot of people that get a lot of fun out of the safe recreational use of firearms, but at the same time, the community needs to be protected from the proliferation of firearms to elements in our society that will use them for criminal activities, which the community would in no sense condone. Consequently, I believe in a regime of law that allows the legitimate

use of firearms and which encourages and obliges education in their use, storage and safe handling."

Senator Quirke admitted that support of firearm ownership in all sections of Australian political life has been in the minority and that the events of Port Arthur reduced that support still further. However, he also said that he frequently encounters politicians from all political persuasions who wish to know more about the shooting sports and who ask to be taken out to the range for some hands-on experience.

For a politician, making strides in the firearm issue is not an easy task. However, while a shadow minister in SA, Senator Quirke helped draft what he believes to be the most fair and effective gun laws in Australia. "While these laws for firearm

owners are not all that popular, they have attempted to strike a balance between shooters and proper lawful control," he said.

Since 1996, when those laws were drafted, Senator Quirke has made no apology for the fact that he has been a long-time shooter. "I have spoken widely to the firearm community about the need for making the community feel happy with legitimate sporting activities and comfortable with firearm ownership," he said. He points out that the SSAA has been extremely helpful in that area. "They have attempted to assure the community about firearm ownership and put correct statistical information before the legislature, the UN and the community at large."

In regard to the buy-back, Senator Quirke feels that while some of the changes in 1996 were important and led to a safer world, some seem to have been inconsistent and poorly thought out. He believes that a lot more consultation could have been done with those directly affected while still achieving the same goals.



One Nation's David Oldfield, says his party is the only one to have a complete firearm policy. "Since the beginning of the One Nation Party, we have advocated the right of responsible law-abiding citizens to own firearms," he said. An active shooter since the age of eight, he says that One Nation has always been clear on its stance towards firearms. "We never sit on the fence," he said.

As well as supporting honest law-abiding citizen's rights to participate in shooting sports, One Nation also supports the ownership of military-style fire-

arms for those in a military club and the use of firearms for self-defence. Mr Oldfield is a member of the SSAA and the Fire Brigades' Pistol Club. On November 6, 1999, he officially opened the SSAA Big Springs Range in Wagga Wagga, NSW.

Mr Oldfield argues that the people trying to take Australia's guns away are completely misguided. "There are no figures to back 'gun grabbing'; removal of firearms from law-abiding people has always been on the basis of a knee-jerk reaction that is not able to be sustained by any facts," he said. ABS data clearly shows that legal firearm ownership has nothing to do with crime. Despite the government's efforts to remove guns here in Australia, crime rates are increasing. Mr Oldfield referred to the proliferation of drive-by shootings in NSW within the past 12 months, as well as a recent shooting assault on a NSW police station. Mr Oldfield said, "Outlaw guns and only outlaws will have them. My point is, you can't legislate against criminals because they don't obey the laws."

While the views held by these and other firearm friendly politicians may be diverse, these 'pollies' have one thing in common: the belief that honest, law-abiding citizens are not criminals and that they should be able to possess and use firearms.

“Access for all” to public lands and parks

SINCE ITS FOUNDING, the Outdoor Recreation Party (ORP) has had a close relationship with shooters throughout NSW.

The Party was formed in 1995 with a principal policy promoting access for all Australians to public lands. Since 1995, the process of closing access to National Parks, public lands and declaring wilderness areas continues unchecked.

Following the outrage at the National Parks and Wildlife Service for digging up roads in the Wollemi National Park, attempts to lobby the government and bring about a change in policy resulted in indifference and inaction.

According to the ORP, the threats to outdoor recreation from the creation of new wilderness areas, national parks and marine conservation parks pose a bleaker future than has ever been expected.

Therefore, the Party believes it is crucial for all recreational groups - horse riders, shooters, fishermen and four-wheel drivers - to work together and forget past differences. There is a desperate need to create a united front that will support the common interests and rights of all recreationalists.

The Party's goal is to modify the excesses and bring commonsense back to the managing and planning of public lands.

The ORP believes that Australia's land is under threat. An agreement between the Federal Government and the states is said to be signed very shortly. This agreement, the Regional Forests Agreement, requires states to determine, now, the public lands it wishes to either log or conserve.

The ORP says that under the Comprehensive Regional Assessments (RACAC) areas in the west and the north are being

drawn up right now. The following areas of NSW have reached 'assessment' stage:

New Wilderness Areas in NSW North: Mt Ballow, Timbarra Plateau, Billilimbra, Banyabba, Bundjalung, Bindery, Mann, Chandlers Creek, Cathedral Rock, Styx River (South), Doyles River, Mummel Gulf, Limeburners Creek, Barrington, Yengo, Stockyard Creek and Brittle Gum Forest.

New Wilderness Areas in NSW South: Western Fall, Bogong Peaks Addition, Goobarragandra Additions, North Bimberi Additions, Tabletop, Indi, Byadbo Addition, Jagungal Additions, Wadbilliga-Tuross-Dampier Addition, Western Deua, Buckenbowra and the Brindabellas.

In March 1999 the ORP's candidate, Malcolm Jones, was elected to the NSW Legislative Council. Mr Jones says that he will use the privileges of Parliament to ensure that the public's input is not ignored by National Parks.

Mr Jones asks all recreationalists to put the effort into this campaign. The issue of continued access to public lands and parks is so crucial that it cannot be left to just club nights; we need to argue for change and we need to gain the support of our friends, neighbours, colleagues and relatives now.

Please contact Mr Jones' parliamentary office in Sydney if you would like to sign a petition that will hopefully stop the threat of the Regional Forests Agreement and allow all Australian's the right to public land.

The Office of the Hon. Malcolm Jones MLC, The Outdoor Recreation Party, PO Box 803, Crows Nest NSW 2065. Phone: (02) 9230 3545 and Fax: (02) 9230 2205.

Promotion Award 2000

The National Board has determined to continue the scheme instigated last year whereby recognition and reward is given to SSAA branches for their efforts in promoting the public image of the SSAA.

The winner of the 1999 award received a lump sum of \$5,000. In an effort to increase the response by branches and to share the rewards across a wider base, it is has been decided to divide the prize money into three divisions.

★ A cash prize of \$2,000 for the best promotion that encourages juniors to become members of the Association.

★ A cash prize of \$1,500 for the best television

coverage that promotes the ideals of the Association and/or an activity supported by the Association.

★ A cash prize of \$1,500 for the best print and/or radio media coverage that promotes the ideals of the Association and/or an activity supported by the Association.

Adjudication shall be made by an independent person familiar with the media.

All submissions must be submitted by 28 February 2000 to:

The Co-ordinator,
SSAA Promotion Award 2000,
PO Box 762, Kent Town, SA 5071



Keith Tidswell Executive Director Public Relations and International Affairs

On September 30, 1999 I attended an informal two-day workshop in Italy titled 'Technical and Manufacturing Aspects of Firearms Marking in the Context of UN Regulation Efforts'. It was hosted by World Forum on the Future of Sport Shooting Activities (WFSA) and was for the benefit of national government officials involved with drafting the UN Firearms Protocol. While many issues were discussed, firearms marking was reviewed in great detail.

The subject was examined from both historical and technical perspectives. Those attending the workshop heard from experts, government officials and inter-governmental officials involved with firearms marking and tracing. Adding to the appeal of the workshop were seven firearms manufacturers who each made presentations on numerous aspects of marking in relation to their manufacturing procedures. Their experience and knowledge of practical applications greatly contributed to the successful outcome of the meeting.

The workshop brought a lot of information to the forefront but the following were the more significant points that emerged:

- ★ Firearms marking is primarily a tool to be used in the tracking and tracing of firearms by law-enforcement agencies and enhances criminal investigations and prosecutions. As a minimum, marking should contain a serial number, name of manufacturer, place of manufacture and, if appropriate, the name of the importer.

- ★ Depending upon the legal requirements in the country of each workshop participant, relevant tracing information can be kept by manufacturers, proof-houses, commercial enterprises or national governments.

- ★ Firearm manufacturers attending the workshop have well-developed systems of marking and record keeping and they are highly regulated. There was concern about producers located in less regulated environments.

- ★ There was a consensus that there should be a requirement that all firearms be marked at the time of manufacture.

- ★ Further discussion among interested parties, including industry, regarding adequacy of marking, reliability of marking and effective response to tracing requests can be beneficial to crime control efforts.

In addition, there was also a discussion of the proposed requirement to mark firearms at import and re-export. Questions of technical feasibility and costs have yet to be resolved.

Those who attended the workshop felt that there should be an ongoing review of the possibility of future developments of techniques that may facilitate the marking and recovery of obliterated marks.

At the close of the workshop, it was agreed that the firearms industry would submit a comprehensive report on marking, especially the means of developing minimum international standards through co-operative efforts.

A meeting of firearm industry representatives in London on November 8, 1999 took a further look at the issue of marking standards. Their findings will be presented at the December meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee in Vienna.

The findings from the Brescia workshop were presented to the UN Ad Hoc Committee for the Elaboration of a Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime in Vienna at their October meeting. The Convention deals with many aspects of controlling transnational organised crime and the manner in which the nations of the world will tackle these problems, while the protocol on firearms deals with the illicit manufacture and trafficking of firearms and ammunition.

A paper on the subject of the definition of 'antique' firearms that was developed by a meeting of collector groups in September was also presented to the Ad Hoc meeting along with the 'marking' paper. Many different points of view have been expressed by delegates to the Vienna meeting and final wording has yet to be agreed upon.

It is proposed that 'antique' firearms would be exempted from the requirements of this Convention and Protocol. Some feel anything designed and manufactured pre-20th century and their replicas should be considered as antique, others are pushing for a date of pre-1870 and others believe that any design more than 100 years old should fit the category of 'antique'.





Could the same
republican
government have
passed its own gun
laws over riding state
regulations?

Republican time bomb?

AMID THE CLAMOUR of the recent republic referendum, a Constitutional amendment with potentially important ramifications for shooters almost completely slipped the debate. Section 126 of the Constitution concerns the Governor-General's power to appoint a deputy. However, under the proposed changes the entire clause was to have been scrapped and replaced with the following:

This Constitution, and all laws made under it by the Parliament, shall be binding on the courts, judges and people of every state and every part of the Commonwealth, notwithstanding anything in the laws of any state.

What was the point of such a profound shift? What operation would the new section have covered that is not already addressed in Section 109, which says that where a Commonwealth law and a state law are inconsistent the Commonwealth law prevails?

Some have argued that the High Court might have interpreted the change to mean the Commonwealth now had the authority to inhibit the exercise of certain powers and prerogatives within states. For instance, would a republican Commonwealth government have been able to draw upon Section 126 to appropriate things like revenues from state-controlled Crown lands or mineral rights? Could the same republican government have passed its own gun laws over riding state regulations? So far no Constitutional pundit has been able to say unequivocally, no they couldn't.

The fact that the republican model was defeated doesn't mean that firearm owners should relax; the question is unlikely to go away. From the shooter's perspective, whether or not Australia eventually gives up the monarchy may not be as important as the dangerous Constitutional changes that might make it in via the back door while we're busy listening to second-rate actors and has-been politicians. The devil, as they say, is in the detail.

- Paul Peake

Year 2000 Goods and Services Directory

The SSAA has a wide membership base throughout Australia. If you are a business owner and a supporter of private, lawful firearm ownership, we can list you in our National Directory of Goods and Services (GSD).

The Directory will be printed by March/April, 2000.

The only cost will be \$20, payable on application. This offer is only open to current members of the SSAA.

Please send details in the format shown, along with your membership number. Maximum is 35 words.

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ASJ Letters

Warning to gun owners

This is a warning to shooters. My family lost everything during the recent Gympie floods.

Because my firearms were under water for about a week, I had my handguns outside the safe for cleaning one day. I left the house for a short time and while I was gone the police turned up with a search warrant stating that I had an illegal .22 rifle (all my long and short guns are registered).

The police found my handguns outside the safe while I was not home.

Later I was charged with having unsecured guns. I pleaded guilty in court to the charge. The police prosecutor wanted the maximum penalties: gaol time, a fine and my licence and guns taken from me.

Thank God I had a good lawyer. The magistrate found me guilty and I was fined \$500 or 66 hours community work, which I did. The magistrate said I would not have a conviction recorded.

Some weeks later I received a letter from the Queensland Police Weapons Licensing Branch saying that I have a record and been convicted of an offence. I have recently surrendered my weapons and my licence to the police.

What good is a magistrate? I have everything in writing.

Douglas Ashurst, Monthar Mt via Gympie, QLD

The rest of the story

Sometimes we shooters become impatient because we feel that the whole story of the Port Arthur incident has not been told.

I wrote to my federal member and asked if we would ever see the result of the inquiry.

It seems that I have been mistaken. All of the facts were revealed in court and given freely to the media. Perhaps it is possible that we Brisbanites do not read very well, however I do not recall seeing any inquiry results about Port Arthur. We did see a lot of hearsay.

I wonder if the SSAA could find a copy of this wonderful report from the Tasmanian Government. Mr Groom says that the facts were given freely to the media. It seems to me that if he means what he says, he would have no objection to releasing a copy of the testimony.

If we do see a copy, we may find out if Bryant possessed a firearms licence as required and also how he came to possess the mysterious .223 that he is supposed to have used.

As to Bryant's mental capability, it seems to me that the police must have known that Bryant was an odd one and did not even possess a driving licence.

It is possible that what we saw in the newspapers was not correct. It seems to me that we will never know what testimony was made in the Supreme Court of Tasmania if we cannot see the court record.

Bryant is supposed to be confined for life. As the cost of imprisonment is about \$50,000 per year (in Qld), Bryant will cost the taxpayers about \$2 million if he lives another 30 years.

Surely the taxpayer is entitled to know what circumstances produced this terrible crime. Bryant has caused even more problems for the people of Australia than even the Kelly gang or the bandits Dugan and Meers about 50 years ago.

Raymond Roberts, Mansfield, QLD

A letter to the Honourable Mr J Howard

Dear Sir,

The recent television appearance of a member of the political arena indignantly reporting his disbelief that the general public didn't trust politicians has given me reason to pen this letter.

The last time my family spoke to our son, his words were, "Don't worry mum and dad, I have my bulletproof vest and my rifle. I will be okay", and with those words he sailed for Timor.

Firstly, I would like to say that my family fully supports Australia's involvement in the peace-keeping force in East Timor. Unfortunately, as history has shown, the freedom we enjoy in this magnificent country has at times had to be paid for with Australian blood.

Apart from being the honourable thing to do, I would like to think that our son's involvement in the peace-keeping force in some small way helps pay back the Timorese people who helped, for as long as they could, the Australian Independent Companies - especially the 2/4th - in which my father served when they reformed after Timor during the WWIL.

The one thing I will never accept is that the politicians that placed the automatic rifle in my son's hands and sent him off to Timor with 20 minutes' notice are the very same politicians who forced me to surrender his Browning A5 self-loading shotgun because he couldn't be trusted to have it.

So, you see, I don't trust politicians. I haven't trusted politicians since November 6, 1996 and I doubt if I ever will again.

Leon Wright, Yarrawonga, Vic

What an insult

The remarks by Magistrate Mr Michael Frederick (*River News* 1 September, 1999) "Guns are an instrument of death. I defy anybody to give me one good reason to have firearms in their home" and the headline "Magistrate issues warning over guns" is an insult to all law-abiding gun owners. As a gun owner, competitive shooter and recreational hunter for more than 50 years I have yet to see a gun pick itself up, load itself and then aim and fire itself. A gun is a tool and, like all dangerous tools, must be handled with respect and caution. Safe gun handling is an essential part of the requirements in obtaining a gun licence.

Organisations such as the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (100,000 members) plus all the other national shooting organisations place safety on the range and in the field as a priority. Guns held in the home have to be in a lockable steel cabinet that is attached to the building. This is the law. It is the base shooters of Australia that lift our Olympic and world champions to their gold medals. Competitive shooting of all disciplines demands as much training and dedication as any of our top athletes.

In the case in question, the defendant's guns were all registered and were legal. His stupid mistake was not to renew his gun licence, for which he paid the penalty.

The magistrate was giving a personal opinion that has no bearing on the case and showed that he is anti guns. All law-abiding gun owners in Australia have a legitimate reason to hold their guns in their homes and that is the law.

John Gordon, Waikerie, SA



Gary Fleetwood Executive Director Special Projects

Before Port Arthur firearm owners were floating along nicely, taking on the occasional issue that confronted them and relying heavily upon the success of the New South Wales Premier Barry Unsworth's dismissal as a performance indicator of their political strength.

After Port Arthur it was clear that the combined weakness of each state's financial situation was our undoing. Prime Minister Howard used his federal financial grant capacity to coerce compliance for his brand of gun laws.

Enough has been said on the issue and all firearm owners should now know where they stand with the Liberal Party and the recent CHOGM comments by Mr Howard on handguns. (See the web site details on CHOGM at www.abc.net.au/am/s66129.htm)

The only situation in which sporting shooters will not be held accountable for the next possible mass shooting is for us to create an environment that establishes goodwill and trust with the general public. Like squirrels and nuts, it is time for us to be creating a stockpile of public trust that can be used if and when required later.

Members, and in fact all firearm owners, should use the quiet times to gain the confidence and respect of their fellow non-gun owning Australians. Common sense will tell you how to behave - both at home and at the range. This forum is not the place to indicate the advantages of being socially acceptable over the disadvantages of being a moron.

By obtaining your firearms licence, by treading through the bureaucratic morass that spawned after the 10 May 1996, and by

coming out the other end licenced, you have shown that you are accepting the responsibilities that society now expects from those who wish to own and store guns. The days that we all remember are gone. Don't bitch about what was - about what you used to be able to do. I too carried a 303 on the bus. Get with the fact that today's world is full of people who hate guns, and more are being born every minute. There are new rules to abide by.

Use your energy to gain support from others for what you enjoy. Anger is not a symptom that finds sympathy among those who may feel some support for the way in which we were treated.

You can assist me by politically activating other gun owners to resist more of the Howard doctrine on gun ownership.

Some of us find that harder to accept than others. Being one of several people who seven days a week watch, respond, question, argue and agitate those in society who would see us all in hell, my job is not made easier by behaviour that gives the gun prohibitionists a free kick. If

the bikies wish to shoot themselves that's a matter for both themselves and the police. If, however you are aware of an SSAA member whose behaviour is bringing us all into disrepute then do something about it. It takes years for the public to forget about fools and their guns.

Finally, you can assist me by politically activating other gun owners to resist more of the Howard doctrine on gun ownership. His recent CHOGM comments have left gun owners angry and in despair. Has your pistol association contacted you about it?

Do not tolerate those who damage our public image.

Please feel free to contact me to discuss these matters. My mobile is 0407 616 218.

The Schuller thesis in review

by Dr David Carter

Dr David Carter is a Canberra-based ecologist with an extensive background in environmental management. He has recently completed a paper on recreational hunting in Australia. Here he reviews a recent thesis on recreational hunting put forward by Macquarie University's Catherine Schuller. Schuller's work received considerable coverage when it was released and swiftly became the centrepiece of the anti-gun lobby's push to have hunting outlawed.

Macquarie University's Catherine Schuller has written a thesis entitled 'Killing for Sport' which has earned her a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree from the University's Graduate School of the Environment. Despite the tabloid title, the work claims to be "a critical analysis of recreational hunting in Australia". It might be of interest to hunters to learn just what Schuller brings to a 'critical analysis' of their sport.

The university's Graduate School of the Environment states that its mission is "to find solutions to environmental problems". That seems fair enough. However, the environmental problems Dr Schuller sees are not particularly well defined, but it does seem to trouble her that recreational hunting is a popular pastime and that it can boast an extremely long tradition and that people seem to enjoy it. In addressing these 'problems' she sets out to "paint a realistic and vibrant portrait of recreational hunting because the debate is often weakened by a lack of correct information or a tendency to be overly abstract". She wants her readers to be aware of "what the hunter might feel or think at the moment he pulls the trigger". Beyond that, she wants her thesis to "be plausible to...above all hunters".

So how does she go about this? She certainly doesn't follow the conventional format of a scientific inquiry. Reading through the entire 260 pages there is no trace of an experimental design, no suggestion of a planned empirical investigation, no systematic observations, no surveys. She does not measure anything, nor collect samples, nor conduct a survey nor question anyone. The fact is, Schuller does not record an original datum of any description.

This is surprising in view of her stated intention of painting portraits and providing information. Nowhere in the thesis does she describe any first-hand experience of the subject. She cites no evidence that she has ever been hunting, that she has ever observed anyone doing it or that she has ever spoken to a hunter.

So how did such a practical sounding university department give rise to such an abstract body of work? A clue lies with the research interests of her supervisor Dr Ken Cussen, which according to the department's Internet blurb encompass moral theory, ethics and philosophy. He seems to be the odd one out, a head-in-the-clouds type of academic in a department of applied scientists.

Schuller's main technique is to express her personal opinions, quote some other writers who agree with her and then select some contrary work to criticise. She obviously spent a lot of time trawling through shooting magazines looking for snippets that fit the stereotype of hunters she was trying to create. Using anecdotal evidence is a common device in journalism but is invariably frowned upon in serious scholarship. The dangers are obvious. One cannot draw robust conclusions about the world by simply choosing a few examples. It is axiomatic that generalisations should be built upon reasonably large sets of data collected in an unbiased way.

Schuller routinely contravenes this axiom. The work amounts to a 260-page opinion piece mostly centred on the fashionable lecturing so familiar to hunters. However, one stance is truly unusual. Schuller argues that there is nothing wrong with killing animals in abattoirs. Why would anyone who moralises so passionately against hunting take such a line? Well, Dr Schuller is a qualified vet who has earned her living by working in slaughterhouses where "a thousand animals might be killed in a day". Many of them she tells us, she killed herself.

Schuller identifies four main areas of argument for and against recreational hunting: it is cruel; it is good/bad for the environment; it is natural and it is another violent macho sport we can do without. On the question of cruelty, she speculates for 30 pages about what animals might experience during hunting. She points to a report from Scotland where the blood biochemistry of hunted deer was studied. Researchers concluded that hunting by humans was unacceptably stressful to deer but being torn apart by wolves was fine because that was natural. The researchers had not sampled the blood of deer killed by wolves but that did not stop them, or Schuller for that matter, from concluding that human hunting is much worse than natural predators.

She devotes one page to what animals might experience in a slaughterhouse. This is merely a recital of the relevant legislation and guidelines with no attempt to evaluate the level of stress domestic animals might actually suffer. She did not collect blood samples to provide comparisons. Furthermore, she glosses over all the stressful procedures that domestic animals endure throughout their lives prior to the moment they are stunned at the abattoirs. It is hardly convincing to "put aside the avoidable

welfare costs of livestock transport and handling" as she does and compare only the moment of death in the hunted or slaughtered animal. A reasoned discussion of animal welfare in this context should encompass all the human impacts on the lives of both domestic and game animals.

Chapter two discusses animal welfare ethics. Most prominence is given to the work of animal liberationist Peter Singer and his colleague Tom Regan, the chief advocate of animal rights. Curiously, she regards both philosophers as her allies in condemning hunting, but she passes over the fact that both of them are also vehemently opposed to the slaughtering of domestic animals. Apparently oblivious to the inconsistencies, she ends by lamenting "the thousands of animals that fall to the hands of hunters each year" but says nothing about the hundreds of millions that fall to the hands of her colleagues in the meat industry.

The thesis does not show that hunting causes more suffering than other common uses of animals, such as farming, nor does it provide any persuasive evidence against the hunters' view that their sport is at least as humane, and generally more so, than any other method of obtaining meat.

The environmental effects of recreational hunting are discussed in chapter three. First Schuller deals with the past, raking over the usual historical material. Early settlers hunted native animals and introduced new game species from England. In common with other inexperienced commentators, she attributes virtually all the historic declines in the populations of native wildlife to hunting. She seems unaware of most of the authoritative literature on wildlife ecology, such as the works of Graeme Caughley, who observed as far back as 1977 that wildlife "populations are more vulnerable to a manipulation of their habitat than they are to a direct manipulation of their numbers". Or even Macquarie University's Mark Westoby, who remarked in a public lecture in 1984 that for the overwhelming majority of species it is practically impossible to drive them to extinction by hunting. Most ecologists regard the huge changes across the Australian landscape wrought by European settlement and agriculture as the primary detrimental influence on our wildlife.

Secondly, Schuller looks at present-day environmental issues such as feral animal control, the effects of hunting on game populations, lead shot and sustainable use. She bypasses most of the issues surrounding the management of pest animals and homes in on shooting as ineffective because pest animals still exist. However, no established pest species has been exterminated from the mainland irrespective of the control methods used. The truth is that we have very little hard evidence on the effectiveness of recreational hunting in reducing the damage caused by pest animals. Examples like the recent feral goat culls in the Flinders Ranges demonstrate however, that in a well-crafted management program hunters have much to contribute.

In discussing waterfowl, Schuller ignores the large body of work showing that hunting has no measurable effects on gamebird populations. She prefers sensational language, "startling declines" and a vague report of anti-hunting comments by a bird

enthusiast. The treatment of the lead shot issue has a similar alarmist flavour. Schuller offers no new findings or insights and tends to exaggerate the actual dangers.

Co-operation between hunting organisations and wildlife authorities has ameliorated the problem in the few places where it was a serious issue. Similar nationwide co-operation to phase out lead shot for waterfowl hunting has every prospect of dealing with the issue in the long term.

On the sustainable use of wildlife, Schuller offers the weakest of arguments such as "there is not universal agreement" against what is an internationally recognised principle of linking conservation with economic benefits. In the end she resorts to a sneering tone about "so-called sustainable use strategies". This leads into a philosophical chapter on whether or not hunters are conservationists. In Schuller's estimation, of course, they are not. Overall, the work's one-sided and simplistic treatment fails to

make the case that hunting is "bad for the environment". Schuller has little to offer in reply to the portfolio of evidence from around the world that managed hunting is a powerful modern-day incentive to conserve wildlife habitat.

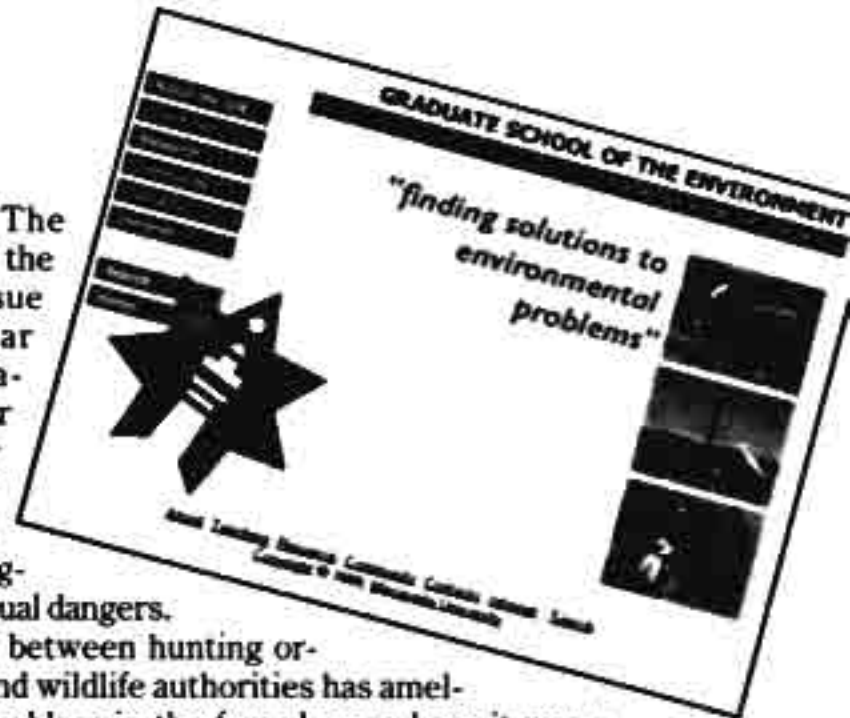
The last four chapters are devoted to the questions of whether hunting is natural and whether it is an undesirable "ma-

cho" sport. It is a predictable litany of arguments about blood, ritual sacrifices, sex, masculinity, power, religion, spirituality, instinct, psychology, etc, etc. No-one will be surprised to learn that an obscure branch of thinking called ecofeminism has most of the answers Schuller could ask for. It links hunting with rape, violence, aggression and the general domination of women and nature by men. By page 259 hunting has become "the most violent of all sports". It made me wonder how Schuller might characterise slaughter in abattoirs: an act of veterinary medicine perhaps?

The work is peppered with errors and silly remarks that emphasise the author's lack of technical knowledge, her blinkered views and her strange morality. Its greatest failure, however, is the lack of credible solutions or practical proposals. Schuller is aware that hunting is a popular activity yet the only alternative she offers is to ban the sport. She makes no attempt to consider the effectiveness of prohibition or the well-known risks of this draconian approach to public policy.

Many readers will find it difficult to see how the work meets the high standards of scholarship usually required of a PhD. More difficult to comprehend though, is how a person who so passionately rails against killing for sport seems to have no qualms about killing for money.

The work is peppered with errors and silly remarks that emphasise the author's lack of technical knowledge, her blinkered views and her strange morality.



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THE GOOD: Well, it may not be to everyone's taste but it gave us a laugh. This sticker was printed by Ravenshoe Welding and Engineering in Queensland to promote their 'Howardsway safes'. The sticker was sent in by SSAA member David Weston who said the safes were top notch.

THE BAD: According to an article published in *The River News*, a magistrate in Waikerie, South Australia recently fined a man for possession of improperly stored unlicensed firearms. Fair enough, the law is the law.

The problem is with Magistrate Michael Frederick's reported comments when issuing the penalty. Mr Frederick is reputed to have said, "Guns are an instrument of death. I defy anybody to give me one reason to have firearms in their homes."

It would be reasonable to wonder how any shooter might expect to get a fair hearing before Magistrate Frederick given the circumstances. The proper thing might be for judges to excuse themselves from cases about which they have strong personal feelings. Firearm owners are entitled to an objective and impartial adjudication should they find themselves before the bench. Imagine the scandal had similar comments been levelled at a defendant's background or religious beliefs.

THE UGLY: "I loathe guns and always have. To me guns are weapons of destruction that have maimed and killed thousands of innocent Australians." So began noted criminologist and outspoken anti-gun advocate Paul Wilson's recent article in the *Courier Mail*. Wilson, one of the anti-gun lobby's chief luminaries during the 'debate' that followed the Australasian Police Ministers' Council meeting in May 1996, was writing about the recent trial of Deborah Shyers and Daniel Mogg, victims of a home invasion which resulted in the death of the intruder, Lloyd Pennefather.

Wilson claimed the incident had made him "rethink" his position on guns. Don't get too excited though. After detailing the vagaries of the law and the features of the case in which Mogg was eventually convicted of Pennefather's murder, Wilson summed up his article with, "Well I wouldn't want to change the law and I am still glad that I don't own a gun. But if someone burst into my house armed like a Timorese militiaman then I suspect I would react with all the force and outrage that I could muster." React! What with - harsh language?

Wilson went on to declare, "Even if it meant breaking the law." But hang on a minute, wasn't he one of those clamouring for shooters to be prosecuted for not surrendering their firearms? Now he claims he'd be prepared to break the law in his own defence. Funny, that's just what thousands of gun owners said.

Bunny huggers and the branding iron

Some readers may be familiar with the infamous British animal right's group the 'Animal Liberation Front'. The organisation has been linked to several violent attacks on laboratories and animal husbandry operations around the UK. According to a report in the *Adelaide Advertiser*, however, the group recently kidnapped an investigative journalist, eventually burning the letters *ALF* on his back with a hot branding iron.

Award-winning reporter Graham Hall had been investigating the group's activities and had recently aired a documentary entitled 'Inside the ALF', which exposed the organisation's "terror tactics". He was subsequently kidnapped by the group and tortured, the ALF threatening to kill him if he went to the police. According to Hall, during his secret investigation, the animal right's group showed him how to make bombs and took him on a tour of potential targets. - Paul Peake

United we must stand

Shooters across the globe realise that their love of shooting, hunting and collecting is in jeopardy and that the only way to reduce the threat is to unite.

While most people know that various countries have organised shooting bodies, few realise that there is a world organisation; it is called the World Forum on the Future of Sport Shooting Activities (WFSA).

In an effort to keep up with the changing traditions in hunting and shooting and to ensure the future of shooting sports, two dozen diverse organisations have joined together to form the WFSA. The organisation's purpose is to further the study, preservation, promotion and protection of sport shooting activities in every continent.

The following are the guiding principles of the WFSA:

- To offer decision makers worldwide information, solutions and alternatives to problems and questions of common interests;
- To encourage the exchange of information and views among interested parties;
- To represent a substantial portion of the sport shooting community;
- To complement the ongoing activities of its member associations;
- To address problems and questions of common interest;
- To express itself in the consensus views of its members;
- To involve as many groups as possible which are active in hunting and sport shooting activities;
- To be a respected, credible international organisation conveying the views of all sectors of the sport shooting community.

Through this organisation, the future of sport shooting throughout the world has a realistic chance for survival. To learn more about the WFSA or for information on how to become a member, visit the SSAA web site at www.ssaa.org.au and click on the World Forum on the Future of Sport Shooting Activities link.

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