

ASJ

AUSTRALIAN SHOOTERS JOURNAL

The political voice of the SSAA

**Talk
is
CHEAP**

See page 12.



New pistol REGULATIONS

November 2000 Vol. 2 Issue 5
Members-only insert to the Australian Shooter



In this issue

The political voice of the SSAA

Editorial policy:

To create a better environment and community understanding of all forms of hunting and shooting sports.

PO Box 2066, KENT TOWN, SA 5071

PHONE: 08 8272 7100

FAX: 08 8272 2945

Internet: www.ssaa.org.au

E-mail:

AS - as@ssaa.org.au

SSAA - ssaa@ssaa.org.au

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CONTRIBUTIONS: Freelance contributions are welcome. Color slides and manuscripts may be sent to the address shown above.

CONTRIBUTORS: Bill Shelton, Paul Peake, Gary Fleetwood, Keith Tidswell, Dr Michael Brown, Terry Shulze.

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A word from the President

While the outstanding performance of Australia's shooting team at the Sydney Olympics did much to lift awareness of the sport, the sight of Prime Minister John Howard sitting in the stands raised the ire of more than a few shooters. Howard, sans the bulletproof vest, even managed to wend his way into a few media shots at Michael Diamond's gold medal presentation.

What are shooters to make of Howard's apparent new enthusiasm for the sport? Like the Apostle Paul, has the Prime Minister finally seen the light, or is it simply a matter of any photo opportunity is a good photo opportunity when you're in politics? Well, it turns out that while the PM was basking in the reflected glory of our shooting team's efforts, his Minister for Justice, Amanda Vanstone, was putting the finishing touches to a new set of importation regulations. The changes include empowering the Australian Customs Service (ACS) to hold onto all new handguns coming into the country until a dealer furnishes an end-user certificate and limiting the number of new pistols a dealer can hold in stock for demonstration purposes to ten units - all of which must either be on-sold overseas or destroyed when no longer needed.

Apart from being completely impractical from the dealer's perspective, the new regulations are likely to have a two-fold impact

on average shooters. The first could be a steep rise in the price of new handguns because of the added administrative problems and the second is likely to be increased delays in getting a new pistol given the ACS's reputation for inertia where firearm-related paperwork is concerned. The SSAA and dealers have been trying to negotiate some sensible changes to the new rules, but as this edition of the *Australian Shooters Journal* is being prepared, discussions appear to have hit an impasse.

It appears that John Howard has tried to pull off yet another smoke-and-mirrors trick where shooters are concerned - show up at a high profile international shooting event and give the impression you're right behind the sport, while your minions come up with new and interesting ways to penalise the law-abiding.

With 14 Coalition MPs on margins of less than 2.0 per cent, I can hardly wait for the next election.

Bill Shelton

Arming yourself WITH WORDS

Being able to use accurate quotations from both our leaders and opponents is a valuable tool to inform those around us of the true nature of the gun debate.

The following are reproductions of quotations that have been collected and placed on our web site at www.ssaa.org.au/quotes.html

Quickly identifying the source of any quotation you use is paramount and it is far better not to say anything than be found wanting when those you speak to demand a source. It is all about credibility.

Firearm buy-back quotations

by Gary Fleetwood

“John, it’s not working, it’s not working - it’s as people always suspected - that the good people would obey the rules and the bad guys would just continue on as always.”

Radio Station 4BC QLD - Queensland Police Association’s Merv Bainbridge on gun-related crime and the gun buy-back. 21/07/2000

“It may be politically expedient or socially palatable to ban [military-style weapons], yet such measures are destined to have little effect when reducing the incidence of firearm-related crime and injury.”

Reece Waiters, from the Institute of Criminology, was commissioned to do the study by the Review of Firearms Control, chaired by Sir Thomas Thorp in 1997, which recommended the ban on military-style weapons.

Evening Post - Wellington New Zealand 29/6/2000

“The continuation of buy-back programs is a triumph of wishful thinking over all the available evidence,” said Garen Wintermute, director of the Violence Prevention Research Program at the University of California at Davis.

Chicago Tribune 9/6/2000

At a US National Institute of Justice lecture delivered just weeks before Clinton’s grant announcement, University of Pennsylvania professor Lawrence Sherman, who headed a wide-ranging assessment of crime prevention programs, called gun buy-backs “the program that is best-known to be ineffective” in reducing firearms violence.

Chicago Tribune 9/6/2000

A Harvard University study of buy-back programs in Boston in 1993 and 1994 found that nearly three-quarters of the guns recovered were made before 1968. In Seattle, one-quarter of the guns collected were inoperable.

Chicago Tribune 9/6/2000

Even though pistols were banned under the Dunblane regulations, they are still the weapons of choice for armed criminals and were used in 1854 of the 3029 armed robberies in England and Wales in 1997.

UK Punch Magazine 16/5/2000

Superintendent Nigel Sutcliffe of West Yorkshire, in a Submission to Home Affairs 1999 -

“It is clear that the bans introduced in the Firearms (Amendment) Act in respect of handguns have not worked, in that for the first six months of 1999, 59 handguns have been used in West Yorkshire.”

“You know, prohibition never works but control does.” - Victorian Labor Premier Steve Bracks on gambling controls.

Radio 2BL 24/02/2000 Program: Sally Loane

“Gun buy-backs or exchanges do not reduce violent crime rates.”

Garen J Wintermute MD MPH - <http://jama.ama-assn.org/issues/v282n5/full/jco90051.html>

Dr Wintermute is director of the Violence Prevention Research Program, University of California.

“Gun buy-back programs were not effective if they saw guns as assets.”

Virginia Gamba - Institute for Security Studies 18/1/2000

Business Day Johannesburg

On crime prevention techniques -

“In a surprise triumph for the gun lobby, nor do gun buy-back programs seem to prevent crime.”

USA National Institute of Justice Report - Laurence Sherman author 31/5/99

On arguing for government funding to fight the tobacco industry -

“A total of \$500 million was spent on the semi-automatic gun buy-back when the massacres this was designed to prevent claim

fewer than ten victims a year, on average.”

Simon Chapman

The Australian 20/5/99 905

On Federal Government claiming that Victoria has watered down the gun laws -

“Under the National agreement, compensation is a matter for state and territories. This has not changed. The onus is on Victoria to finalize any outstanding compensation payments and then to seek reimbursement from the Commonwealth.”

Justice Minister Amanda Vanstone

Herald Sun 26/4/99

“Has the gun buy-back scheme been a success?”

No - 973 Yes - 24

Herald Sun poll - Melbourne 23/12/98

On how the buy-back will reduce crime in Australia -

“The simple answer to your question is that the first part of your question has nothing to do with the second part of your question.”

Senior Adviser David Kelly - Office of Deputy Prime Minister Fischer 16/12/98

On how the buy-back will reduce crime in Australia -

“The firearms buy-back scheme was an equity measure to compensate people who needed to surrender firearms as a result of the changed firearm laws.”

Senior Adviser David Kelly - Office of Deputy Prime Minister Fischer 16/12/98

On how the government-owned Australian Defence Industries sold its historical arms collection to the buy-back for destruction -

“Taxpayers were slugged hundreds of thousands of dollars so the Federal Government could buy-back guns it already owned.”

Sun Herald - NSW 7/12/97

Dr Christopher Walker told the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine conference at the Adelaide Festival Centre that gun-law reform undertaken in 1996 in response to the Port Arthur massacre was a government fraud. “It has been one of the greatest frauds perpetrated against the Australian taxpayer,” Dr Walker said.

The Advertiser - Adelaide 13/11/97

On the gun buy-back A105 -

“...It was all about draining the suburbs of Melbourne and Sydney of firearms.”

Tim Fischer - Deputy Prime Minister letter to SSAA Member 9/9/97

“The new legislation banning semi-automatic firearms will do nothing to prevent the vast majority of Australia’s gun deaths” - The Australian Institute of Criminology’s Dr Adam Graycar.

(Miles, Wayne L, ‘Armed Response - Gun Prohibition Spells Big Business for Australia’s Black Market’, Australian *Penthouse*, June 1997, p30.)

“It is clear that the gun buy-back scheme is out of control.”

Andre Haermeyer - Victorian Opposition Police Minister

The Australian 17/2/97

On claims of the Victorian buy-back program in chaos -

“There’s people who have an axe to grind and I suspect a lot of males in the gun trade and older police officers who don’t like seeing a young woman making a success of the scheme.”

John Crook - Gun Control Australia

Daily Advertiser - Wagga Wagga 17/2/97

On reports of rorts in the buy-back scheme run by Director Karen Cleave -

“What you have here is a moveable feast of looting, rorting, bungling and deceit.”

Andre Haermeyer - Victorian Opposition Spokesperson on Police

Sunday Herald Sun 16/2/97

“We are crushing the guns on a hydraulic press out the back but they are allowed to watch it being destroyed from a viewing area.”

Ian Lewis - Buy-back Project Manager, QLD

Gold Coast Bulletin 17/1/97

“This is a defining moment in Australian history and one which firearm owners, their families and the community can be very proud.”

Federal Attorney-General Daryl Williams
News Mail Bundaberg 7/1/97

Mr O’Connor received \$3950 compensation for three banned firearms, which he topped up to buy three under-and-over shotguns for \$7000.

‘Gun sales soar’ - *Herald Sun* - Melbourne 13/12/96

“Under the terms of the current amnesty on illegal firearms, nobody will be prosecuted for handing in unregistered weapons.”

Karen Cleave - Director Buy-back Victoria

Maryborough Advertiser 12/11/96

Australian crime quotations/ comments

AIC - Australian Institute of Criminology

ABS - Australian Bureau of Statistics

“Licensed gun owners are law-abiding citizens with legitimate reasons for owning the weapons they have.

“In over 90 per cent of firearm-related homicides the offenders are not licensed and the weapons are not registered.

“Not one handgun used in a homicide between 1997 and 1999 was used by a licensed owner.”

‘The Licensing and Registration Status of Firearms used in Homicides’ AIC Report - Jenny Mouzos, May 2000

“Therefore, if relative lethality is measured by the number of victims killed, a firearm is not the most lethal instrument of homicide.”

AIC Researcher Jenny Mouzos - ‘Homicidal Encounters: A Study of Homicide in Australia’, Australian Institute of Criminology. Pg 90 17/7/2000

The police commissioner said the new gun laws had worked in restricting access to guns but would not eliminate gun violence.

“Some criminals will always get guns, there’s no doubt about that,” Commissioner O’Sullivan said.

Police Commissioner Queensland Jim O’Sullivan

The Australian 2/5/2000

“The environment is more violent and dangerous than it was some time ago.”

Police Commissioner South Australia Mal Hyde

The Advertiser - Adelaide 23/12/99

Victoria is facing one of its worst murder tolls for a decade - and its lowest arrest rate ever. The growing number of planned, ambush murders this year has put added pressure on the homicide squad.

Herald Sun - Melbourne 12/11/99

“In regard to allegations that 3000 firearms are imported into Australia annually, officers of the Attorney-General’s Department have conducted extensive research of United Nations (UN) databases and have consulted with UN officials and it would appear that there is no evidence available to support these claims. On the contrary, the information

available reflects a low level of illegal importation activity in Australia.”

Andrew Kirk - Office of the Minister for Justice and Customs 1/11/99

More cases of murder, rape, robbery and aggravated burglary are being reported in Victoria...overall crime rate rising by 3.7 per cent in 11 months.

Homicide - Source: Police data, Crime Management Report

1996-97 136

1997-98 120

1998-99 176 (11 months only)

The Age - Melbourne 11/8/99

Australia's crime levels were on the rise and the growth in heroin use was largely to blame, a leading criminologist said yesterday.

Dr Don Weatherburn - NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

The Chronicle - QLD 17/6/99

Research paper issued by the AIC on the affect of the new gun laws -

National gun laws and the destruction of 640,000 firearms under the buy-back scheme appear to have done little to reduce the national murder rate says a new study.

The Age - 3/6/99

Fatal shootings in Victoria have increased despite the introduction of tighter gun laws in 1996, a (AIC) study has found.

'State's gun deaths rise' - *Herald Sun* - Victoria 3/6/99

The Federal Government will crack down on the availability of illegal knives after figures released yesterday showed they were the most common weapons used in homicides.

AIC Report

Sydney Morning Herald 12/3/99

In 1996-97, \$7.41 billion (equivalent to \$402 per person) was spent by the Commonwealth Government and the state, territory and local governments on public order and safety. Compared to 1995-96, this represents an increase of 10.6 per cent in total outlays, or \$34 more per person.

Australian Bureau of Statistics - 'Australia Now: A Statistical Profile' 25/2/99

To SSAA researcher Paul Peake after the SA AG's Department claimed that SSAA figures were wrong -

"I apologise for the error (in Attorney-General's letter to SSAA member) that was made in extracting the ABS figures."

Senior Legal Officer Dianne Gray - SA Attorney-General's Department 27/1/99

(NSW) statistics show that in 1997 less than 10 per cent of firearm possession charges (excluding offences such as attempted murder) resulted in imprisonment and about 50 per cent resulted in fines.

The Daily Telegraph - Sydney 6/1/99

Murders by firearms have actually increased (in Victoria) since the buy-back scheme, which removed 225,000 registered and un-registered firearms from circulation. There were 18 shooting murders in 1996-97 after the buy-back scheme had been introduced compared with only six in 1995-96 before the scheme started.

'Killing rise in gun hunt' - *Herald Sun* - Melbourne 23/12/98

On being issued a firearms licence with another person's picture upon it -

"A complete cock-up."

Bob Perry - South Australian Firearms owner

The Advertiser 30/11/96

Queensland Police Commissioner Jim O'Sullivan yesterday expressed "grave concern" as the number of armed robberies across the state took a big jump for the second year running.

Sunshine Coast Daily 13/11/98

The numbers of armed robberies which included a knife are now increasing at a much slower rate than those that involved a firearm.

Trevor Griffin - South Australia Attorney-General

The Advertiser 5/11/98

Crime involving guns is on the rise despite tougher laws. The number of robberies with guns jumped 39 per cent in 1997 while assaults involving guns rose 28 per cent and murders by 19 per cent. (ABS figures)

'Gun crime soars...' - *Sydney Morning Herald* 28/10/98

Robbery with a firearm increased nearly 60 per cent over the previous financial year.

South Australian Police Annual Report - tabled in State Parliament 27/10/98

Robbery with a firearm increased more than 13 per cent in NSW during the gun buy-back. NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics
Sun Herald 26/10/98

Chance of dying in a year at the population's average rate of exposure to the risk.

Owning firearms - 1 in 33,000.

NSW Department of Planning - Paper #4: 'Risk Criteria for Land Use Safety Planning'

Crime involving guns has soared despite tougher laws imposed after the Port Arthur massacre...the number of robberies involving guns leapt 39 per cent (ABS Report)...assaults involving guns jumped 28 per cent.

'Armed Crime on Rise' - *The Sunday Mail* - Brisbane 18/10/98

Bond University criminologist Robyn Lincoln said the increased use of guns in crimes last year...was "because (criminals) knew the weapon was going to be withdrawn, they may have wanted to use their firearms before they lost the 'privilege'," she said. "Because the penalties are greater and getting tougher, criminals are more intent on being successful and therefore using bigger and better weapons."

'Armed Crime on Rise' - *The Sunday Mail* - Brisbane 18/10/98

According to ABS figures, the number of people robbed at gunpoint in NSW rose from 827 in 1996 to 1252 in 1997.

Sunday Telegraph - Sydney 14/3/98 302

The number of Victorians murdered with firearms has almost trebled since the introduction of tighter gun laws.

Geelong Advertiser - Victoria 11/9/97

Gun deaths fell by 46 per cent during the last 15 years before tough new firearm legislation introduced after last year's Port Arthur massacre, according to figures released yesterday by the ABS. "The figures clearly show that the absolute numbers of (gun) deaths, and the rates of death, has been steadily declining before Port Arthur."

David Povah ABS - *The Australian* 27/2/97

New legislation banning semi-automatic weapons will do nothing to prevent the vast majority of gun deaths, according to Australia's senior crime researcher. "The legislation won't do it, nor was it designed to do it."

Dr Adam Graycar AIC
The Australian 9/12/96

"The homicide rate should fall under tighter gun laws provided they were adequately enforced."

Dr Don Weatherburn - NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics

The Australian 11/5/96

"Guns played a major role in the incidence of sexually violent crimes against women while pornography had no proven link."

Paul Wilson - criminologist
West Australian 28/5/93



by Paul Peake

New pistol REGULATIONS

On August 17, the Minister for Justice, Amanda Vanstone, announced a series of amendments to the Customs regulations concerning handguns. Under the new arrangements, the Australian Customs Service will hold all pistols imported into Australia until they are sold to an authorised end-user. Dealers will not be allowed to hold any more than ten new pistols for demonstration purposes and they will have to sell them overseas or destroy them when they are no longer needed. The new rules do not affect second-hand guns already in stock.

According to the Minister's press release, the changes have been implemented in response to the number of pistols finding their way onto the black market. However, the full story is a lot more complex. Rumours have been circulating for some time about a handful of dealers, chiefly in Queensland, deactivating large quantities of handguns that have invariably found their way into criminal hands. The guns have subsequently been reactivated and used in a number of shootings.

The process is simple. A dealer imports a large number of cheap pistols and then deactivates them to the minimum standard. The guns no longer require registration and can be sold to practically anyone. With a little knowledge and some basic machine tools, a buyer reactivates them and, hey, presto - unregistered, working handguns that are then on-sold at highly inflated prices to the criminal underworld. There are any number of anecdotes concerning deactivating pistols that retail for a few hundred dollars on the legitimate market being sold for three or four times their

actual value.

Fortunately, the practice appears to be confined to a small number of people. The overwhelming majority of dealers are principled folk just as concerned about the misuse of guns as the rest of us. However, the situation does highlight some inherent problems with the way deactivated firearms are treated in some jurisdictions.

Clearly the standard for rendering guns inert needs to be lifted and maybe some thought should be given to a separate licensing category requiring deactivated firearms to be registered - perhaps with reduced storage requirements.

From the shooter's perspective, the new regulations are likely to have a two-fold impact. The first could be a rise in the price of new handguns as importers and dealers struggle with the added administrative burdens. The second may be an increased delay in getting a new pistol as the paper trail between the end-user and the Australian

Customs Service gets longer.

On the upside, the SSAA and dealers have been negotiating with various government agencies to have the new regulations amended. Hopefully, the number of new guns a dealer can hold in stock will be increased and the ridiculous requirement that they be sold overseas or destroyed when no longer needed will be overturned.

It may be time that the shooting fraternity took a good, long look at some of bad apples that appear to be spoiling the barrel for the rest of us. Dealers who knowingly engaged in amoral (if not illegal) practices where deactivated guns are concerned have no place in the trade. Once again it seems that a handful of idiots may have done us all a disservice. ●



Animal Liberation

and Lord Howe Island

by Terry Shulze

Lord Howe Island, situated between Australia and New Zealand, is one of those island jewels of the South Pacific. Unfortunately, during the 1800s, goats were released upon the Island to provide food for mariners. The damage the goats caused led to calls for their eradication in the late 1960s. A portion of the island was cleared, but the hardy goats easily evaded hunters by retreating into the rugged southern part of the island.

The Island Board considered its options and decided that eradication was possible, but required a somewhat more sophisticated approach to the problem. ProHunt NewZealand was tasked with the job, using skilled hunters and dogs and a helicopter to access the goats on the cliffs and bluffs. The cull occurred between September 6 and October 30, 1999 and was an unqualified success - the goats are gone. However, beneath the success story was another story, one of disgruntled residents and the involvement of Animal Liberation.

Mark Pearson, a member of Animal Liberation, brought criminal charges of aggravated cruelty under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act against both the Board and ProHunt. The emotional campaign in support of Animal Liberation extended to Internet chat pages, for example:

These poor animals, who live in the southern mountains of the island, are being exterminated every night, using dogs who flush them out for shooters to blow off their legs, their jaws, often leaving them wounded and partially paralysed.

On the Animal Liberation web page there was this: *He knew what to expect. He had seen it all before - goats with shattered limbs, bulging intestines, jaws shot away. All this and more met his gaze as the sun rose. Perhaps most poignant of all was the sight of a pregnant nanny who had begun giving birth*

while in her death throes. If that sounds like it may be embellished, it was; there was no pregnant nanny. They made it up. However, anyone reading the script off the Internet would have no idea as to the veracity of the campaign.

When the matter came before the court, all that was to change - now Animal Liberation would have to put up or shut up. The result? Well, not only did they shut up, they paid ProHunt's legal costs. It is informative to consider how badly things went for the Libbers.

The charges were brought six months after the alleged incident. The cooling effect

proposed evidence: another resident of the island and a Board ranger. Further, this prosecution witness refused to assist the RSPCA inspector to view the scene or to make a written statement. However, when Animal Liberation showed up a week later, he made a statement to them. Not a very good key witness.

But the case gets worse. The 'expert' evidence was so flawed as to be worthless; it was based upon a series of photos shown to two 'experts'. A report by one expert allegedly having "shotshell ballistic research" experience stated, "A closer look at the photos will exhibit an orchestrated massacre. In no way can such a brutal slaughter be compared to any responsibly (sic) hunting procedure." There was no indication of how his opinion was related to his alleged expert knowledge, let alone how to identify the expertise he could bring to the court. The court would clearly have excluded that evidence.

The final forensic witness gave a report that was actually inconsistent with the prosecution case. The forensic witness noted "no visible injuries" on two of the three goats that the prosecution nominated as being the subject of "aggravated cruelty" and drew no conclusion on the third goat. That report would also be excluded as irrelevant evidence.

The fact that both the NSW Police Force and the RSPCA declined to prosecute should have raised alarm. Animal Liberation continued on and paid the price - both in credibility and costs. At the hearing on August 28, they had about 30 members present and all the major news corporations. Two weeks later, when it returned for the costs application, it was a lonely courtroom with just the Chief Magistrate and two barristers discussing points of law.

A very quiet end to a very noisy case. ●



of time should have allowed them to assess the case in a less emotive frame of mind, but they didn't. The RSPCA had completed a report in December '99, three months before the charges were laid. In the RSPCA report, which recommended no prosecution, all witnesses were interviewed, including both the prosecution and defence witnesses.

Significantly, the prosecution's key witness had actually tendered for the job of culling the goats, but had lost the tender. The Libbers should have given great scrutiny to his proposed evidence. As it was, two eyewitnesses to the cull contradicted his



Keith Tidswell
Executive Director
Public Relations and
International Affairs

The 2000 Sydney Olympic Games were a great success for the shooting sports and we can all be proud of our athletes. I consider myself privileged to have witnessed the excitement and struggle of competitors dropping points in the finals and then striving to psychologically and physically put it all back together and win the gold, silver or bronze.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard was present during the finals of the men's trap event and saw Michael Diamond win gold. The crowd had mixed emotions regarding his appearance but at least the man was there. During the finals of the men's double trap event, Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson saw Russell Mark take home the silver.

Of course there are people who support different political points of view and remember the buy-back, but life goes on and we need to work together so that shooting sportsmen and -women are informed and supportive of each other. The Olympic coverage helped bring about greater public understanding of our sport.

Annemarie Forder claimed bronze in the women's air pistol and the crowd gave her tremendous support. At just 22 years of age, this young lady could well be a gold medallist for Australia in the future. Only she knows how hard it was to refocus her mind during those last few shots - truly a magnificent performance.

Congratulations to all the competitors and may they challenge each of us as we also strive for excellence in our performances.

During the Games, Steve Price, radio announcer from 3AW, asked how anyone could compare Michael Diamond to Ian Thorpe, Cathy Freeman or Shane Kelly.

He said that he "can't celebrate an Olympic shooting gold medal" and "to pick up the *Daily Telegraph* here in Sydney...and see Michael Diamond holding aloft a cocked shotgun is sad". Most shooters, as well as a number of Price's fellow colleagues, found his words offensive. It is sad that Price does not understand that the gun was broken, ie, open and unloaded.

So, now that government funding for the shooting high performance manager and the coaches at the Australian Institute of Sport has been cut, what lies ahead for the shooting sports?

There will be funding direct to some of the shooting sports, but it is always a challenge to be independent and fund our own coaching

and competitive programs.

On the rumour mill out of Victoria is word of a potential buy-back of handguns and the SSAA is trying to accurately assess the magnitude of this problem. If the intention is to buy back illicit handguns, that is one thing, but if the intention is to focus on the shooting sports, that is something entirely different. The Victorian Minister for Police and Emergency Services Andre Haermeyer says that he is unaware of such a move by anyone in his department.

Why anyone would want to focus on the pistol sports makes no sense at all, as the 'Australian Institute of Criminology Paper #151' by Jenny Mouzos clearly shows that legal handgun owners do not engage in acts of homicide.

If there is concern about handguns finding their way onto the illicit market by theft from legal owners, it should be noted that this scenario is still being studied, along with other possible sources, such as smuggled handguns. In the meantime, I am sure that legal handgun owners take their responsibilities seriously and ensure that security is given the highest priority.

Let's hope that when we have run the source of this piece of intelligence to ground, we find that it was merely an inquiry aimed at reducing the inventory of illicit handguns to a minimum.

Recently, the Minister for Justice and Customs Amanda Vanstone announced a program where importers would only be able to import a total of ten handguns for the purpose of display and demonstration with a requirement that those ten handguns be exported or destroyed after use. It is impossible to service the shooting sports in Australia with this method.

Along with the National Firearm Dealers and Traders Council, the SSAA has made representations to the Attorney-General's Department, Customs and politicians about our concerns of continuing supply to the shooting sports.

We are asking you to watch this one closely and to let your state and federal politicians know of your concerns.

In closing, I would like to give special thanks to the Antique and Historical Arms Association of South Australia for its donation of \$1000 to the SSAA's work at the United Nations and other international forums to help find ways of combating international organised crime. ●

ASJ Letters

Where will it all end?

As suggested in the *ASJ* Vol 1 Issue 1, I wrote to the Hon Bob Debus and to Dr Hugh Wirth of the RSPCA in regards to duck hunting and received a positive reaction... sort of.

The Minister for the Environment's Assistant Private Secretary wrote to advise me that the Minister would respond as soon as possible. No response to date.

My letter to Dr Wirth, on the other hand, was a full page expressing how cruel a sport duck hunting is.

I am not a duck hunter as such - although I have shot the occasional black duck and tried to bake them as one would a muscovy duck with the result being I would much prefer the latter on my dinner plate - but I gained the impression from Dr Wirth's reply that the figures he quoted could be taken with a large pinch of salt.

After reading the latest *ASJ* article, *Out of Step*, I believe that to be the case. I am convinced there could be an ulterior motive behind the RSPCA's pressures to have duck hunting banned nationwide as the thin edge of the wedge to have recreational shooting banned altogether. But where then? A ban on the slaughter of animals for consumption because of the stress the animals suffer being put through a crush to meet their death? Then there is the suffering of battery hens that know no better? Ban them and push up the cost of egg production, then the next step is to stop the forced growing of cockerels for consumption?

And don't forget recreational fishing. The suffering the poor fish go through when hooked. It must cause extreme trauma because I've seen a small fish thrown back after being caught, with their tail clipped as a warning not to bite again, then being caught ten minutes later for the second time. The fish had a strange way of showing the trauma it had suffered from being caught. Commercial fishing with nets too. The poor fish first have to suffer the shock of being trapped in a net then hauled from the water to suffocate in the air. Definitely

something Dr Wirth should look into.

So, we can't hunt ducks or kill other poultry, sheep, cattle, goats, horses, kangaroos, rabbits and fish, they are all off the menu, which leaves us all as vegetarians. But plants are living organisms; how can we be sure they don't suffer when being harvested? So out with being a vegetarian, which leaves us living on the bacteria in the air we breath to live on. But bacteria are also living things! Where will it end - with the extinction of mankind?

Excuse my sarcasm, but it would seem that the good Dr Wirth is dead-set on

seeing an end to all recreational shooting and duck hunting is just the first step in that direction. I get the impression that Dr Wirth is over the top when it comes to cruelty to animals. If he spent the time to assess the attitude of hunters, I'm sure he would find the majority would side with him against cruelty, but life isn't always so neatly cut and dry. It would do a lot of good for a person like Dr Wirth to spend 12 months on a cattle or sheep station and witness life as it really is.

Keep up the fight to preserve our sport.

Gordon W Browne, Doyalson, NSW

Politicians wake up

I would like to express my disgust in the attitude the Federal Government has displayed once again to firearm owners by restricting the import/sales of sporting handguns to persons who are legally entitled to purchase, possess and use them.

Who in the hell do they think they are kidding with this ill-guided misconception and hair-brained idea? Do they think that this restriction will be the solution to all of society's troubles? Think again. Prohibition (or forms thereof) does not work.

The only ones that will suffer, again, are the sportsmen and -women in this country - men and women who conduct and participate in the weapons safety courses, who are licensed to possess and use a firearm, who are deemed suitable by criminal history checks to own a firearm, who keep people in the sport shooting industry employed by purchasing their products and who participate in the various disciplines of shooting.

I would be interested in hearing what consultation took place before this legislation was introduced. Bugger all I

bet. If there were any meetings, any ideas would have met with blank stares and fell on deaf ears that seem to be the genetic make-up of many bureaucrats.

Criminals will always have access to illegal firearms and use them whenever they want. They should be the ones paying the price, not the licensed firearm owners. It is about time that the state and Federal Government woke up, walked outside their sheltered little offices and precincts within the so-called halls of power and have a good hard look at what is happening to our country. Then they should sit down and use that grey matter that we pay them for to work out legislation that penalises those who have no respect for laws and give us a bloody fair go for once.

Australia is a great place to live, but I've had enough of the dictatorship of the individuals who appear more concerned about feathering their own nest, furthering their own cause and ignoring those for whom they work.

Enough said, thanks for your time.

Michael Hill, Emerald, Qld

Campaign of misinformation

A court-ordered injunction is a win for the suppliers of electronic dog collars in their struggle with the RSPCA. Many owners of sporting dogs will be familiar with electronic collars (e-collars) as a humane and effective solution to problem behaviour. Some states have banned the use of e-collars and the Australian Department of Customs defines them as an illegal import, along with hand grenades and rocket launchers. No information is available to show how the decisions were reached to make these laws.

Innotek Australia has been assembling and distributing our containment systems, No-Bark collars and remote trainers in Australia for about five years. During that period, the RSPCA has operated a campaign of misinformation about the harm caused by the use of e-collars, ranging from “burning dogs’ necks” to labelling the collars as “instruments of torture”.

We decided that enough was enough and that something had to be done about the constant campaigning from the RSPCA. We initiated legal action under the Trade Practices Act for damages and in the interim we applied for an injunction to put a halt to their campaign. The Application to the Court documented the media transcripts of all the RSPCA publicity and a number of scientific papers that showed that it was impossible for e-collars to cause the sort of harm referred to by the RSPCA.

The scientific reports included a paper from Westphalia University in Germany that states, “burns can be ruled out quite conclusively” and a New Zealand government document that showed a collar’s output to be 3000 times less than an electric fence, 50 times below the human threshold of pain and six times less than static electricity.

On September 12, in the Melbourne Federal Court, Mr Justice Weingold ordered an injunction against the RSPCA and their National President Dr Hugh Wirth, restricting them from making

representations about e-collars and their use, except in very specific circumstances.

In ordering this injunction, the Court had access to all the aforementioned scientific reports, plus affidavits of prominent Australian veterinarians and animal behaviourists. In particular, the Court was concerned with recent publicity from the RSPCA that has appeared around Australia and for which they had evidence that showed that the information released was false. Some examples include:

- ◆ A picture in the *Herald Sun* of a dog with an injury to its throat was of a dog from a case that the RSPCA lost and they were ordered to pay the owner’s costs. The patch on the dog’s throat was from an infection, not a burn.
- ◆ A picture of an RSPCA officer’s arm showing ‘burn’ marks had three marks coinciding with the three probes of a No-Bark collar. The fact that the centre probe is a vibration sensor, made of plastic that conducts no electricity, shows that the picture was not of burns.
- ◆ Stories of collars that flipped 60kg dogs into the air, sent them into epileptic fits and caused dogs to die could not be substantiated.
- ◆ Claims that e-collars were illegal in the state of Victoria were stated to be incorrect by Judge Weingold.

The Court Order takes immediate effect and may well allow time for Australians to learn about the real benefits of electronic dog collars, free of propaganda from the RSPCA. The decision by the Court will also be useful to lobby governments about repealing existing restrictions and to caution against making further restrictions on such false information. Obviously the current restrictions were introduced from a review of similar information to that which the Court has now deemed false.

I urge all dog owners who support the continued availability of e-collars to make sure our politicians don’t put through more laws against them.

**A John Holliday, Managing Director,
Innotek Australia**

Eye opener

The September *ASJ* was a real eye-opener to the way journalists are taught to report gun-related news items. We all knew it was happening, but it was a bit of a shock to see it so blatantly confirmed.

Thinking about this, I have realised how they get away with it. Almost everyone journalists refer to doesn’t have the right of reply. They are either dead, a criminal who has absconded or is locked up.

What we need is for faces to be added to the debate. We need the doctors, lawyers, accountants and business people who enjoy their shooting sports to stand up and be identified, to tell the public that they are licensed shooters and proud of it.

To be given a licence these days is something to be proud of. It says that you have done the training, passed the security checks and that the government of the day thinks that you are a fit and proper person to be entrusted with a firearm.

We need to make shooting sports more respectable and this can be achieved by linking respected persons of the community with the sport of shooting. The NRA in America has tried to do this with just one man. We need to do it on a national basis with many people - men, women and children. I see these respectable faces every week at my local pistol club. Bring them forward and present them to the public. Lift the sport’s profile. We will never get anywhere trying to fight politicians and the media. Win over the public.

If the SSAA went to a small town newspaper and tried to buy advertising space, it would probably be knocked back. If an accountant from the local community wished to do the same, the local paper would fall all over him. He is their bread and butter, the weekly advertiser that they wouldn’t like to lose.

Alan Thomas, Narangba, Qld

**Mail your letters to:
Australian Shooters Journal
PO Box 2066
Kent Town, SA 5071**

talk is CHEAP



by Paul Peake

An SSAA supporter in New South Wales recently sent the Association a copy of a motion he presented to the Liberal Party's State Convention this past October. It called on the Party to do more to support approved gun clubs and their members.

Apparently the proposal spurred Dr Brendan Nelson, Member for the Federal seat of Bradfield, to comment on the matter in the House of Representatives.

In his speech, Dr Nelson raised a number of points that should not go unanswered, as they highlight the sort of political dissembling that has done so much to undermine shooters' interests in Australia.

Hansard 07-12-99

Dr Nelson (Bradfield)(10.43pm) - *In April 1996, 35 people were tragically killed and others wounded in Port Arthur in Tasmania by a lone gunman, Martin Bryant. A month later, a meeting of Commonwealth, state and territory police ministers was convened, at which agreement was reached - under the political leadership of the Prime Minister, John Howard - that there should be restrictions on the importation, ownership, sale, resale, transfer, possession, manufacture and use of self-loading centrefire rifles, self-loading and pump-action shotguns and self-loading*

rimfire rifles. Agreement was also reached on a licensing and registration scheme for firearms in accordance with national standards. A buy-back was implemented to encourage firearm owners and dealers to surrender prohibited weapons, with the Commonwealth agreeing to meet the costs of compensation.

Like most Australians, I strongly supported these measures - as I certainly do now - but there is one consequence of our national determination and action that, in my opinion, is to be regretted. Perhaps more in perception than in reality, Australia's almost 200,000 members of registered gun clubs - legitimate shooters - feel a sense of vilification to which many have had trouble adjusting.

Even now, in my own suburban North Shore electorate of Bradfield in Sydney, I come across constituents at public meetings who are far removed from many high levels of gun ownership in other parts of Australia who still feel somewhat hurt and perceive that they have been targeted by those of us who were quite determined, as I say I continue to be, about gun control. As I say, it is perhaps more a perception than a reality.

Australian shooters have excelled in international championships, Commonwealth Games and Olympic Games, where medals in all classes have been won by proud Australians. The reality is that in 1997 gun deaths declined from 521 to 437, according to the Australian

Bureau of Statistics. That was part of a general ten-year trend. Most notably, suicide by gunshot declined from 382 to 330. It should also be noted that in this past year we had 62 fewer youth suicides than we had the year before. Most of those were suicide by gun.

Of all of the things that we did as a government - supported by the opposition and by almost all Australians - I think the most significant part of our gun-control measures was licensing requirements and the storage of weapons, perhaps more so than the banning of semi-automatic weapons and so on, which was obviously quite necessary. Simply having a gun less freely available for an impulsive action - particularly for suicide and, to a lesser extent, for use in domestic violence - has been a great step forward.

I urge Australians to maintain their support for national uniform gun control and at the same time to not set out to disenfranchise, in any hurtful or unnecessary way, the interests and good name of legitimate gun owners, the vast majority of whom have not ever broken a law, will not ever break a law nor intend to do so, but to some extent have surrendered some of their freedoms to see that we live in a safer society and that some people - who would not have done so had we not implemented these laws - will continue to live.

The vast majority of these clubs and the men and women who comprise their membership

28 Days

FEW OF the gun laws forced on Australia's states and territories back in 1996 have caused as much angst as the 28-day waiting period on the licensing of second and subsequent firearms. Western Australia ignored the proviso from day one - only first-time applicants are required to wait 28 days in the West. Similarly, several jurisdictions made the requirement discretionary, giving police authority to issue a permit without the delay where deemed appropriate.

You would think the logic was obvious. Someone who has a licensed firearm has already demonstrated that they are a 'fit and proper' person - otherwise the police wouldn't have issued a permit in the first place. Moreover, someone who intended to deliberately misuse a firearm is unlikely to go to the trouble of licensing another one when they already have one on hand. So,

if they can demonstrate a 'genuine reason' and an instant background check can show they have no charges or restraining orders against them, why make an applicant wait a month to license a second gun?

Well, apparently the logic is lost on the New South Wales Police Association. Trawling through the archives recently, we came across the following comment on reduced waiting periods in NSW: "These are safety matters for the police officers, they are safety matters for the community, they're safety matters for spouses and children who might be affected by someone who in the heat of the moment uses a weapon inappropriately."¹

Wasn't it Dickens who said, "the law is an ass"?

¹ Chikarovski creates rift with PM on guns. (1999, Feb. 6). *Weekend Advocate*, page 2.

are decent, disciplined, law-abiding people who have not broken the law but in fact do everything in their power to uphold it. I stand by my very strong support for Australia's gun-control measures, but at the same time I think it is extremely important that we do not in any sense - certainly deliberately and perhaps even unintentionally - do anything to make legitimate gun owners feel that they are lesser Australians than any one of the rest of us.

So what is Dr Nelson telling us? Well for a start, he says he supported, and continues to support, the Federal Government's edicts on gun control. However, he says he doesn't want shooters to feel disenfranchised - a bit hard when his government helped to foster one of the most disgusting vilification campaigns the country has ever seen, including 'made for media' shots of the Prime Minister showing up at a shooter's meeting wearing a bullet-proof vest.

He tells us that the vast majority of legitimate gun owners "have not ever broken a law, will not ever break a law nor intend to do so", yet his government wants to keep shooters' private details alongside those of convicted paedophiles and drug dealers on a national database collectively known as *Crim Trac*.

He insists that "it is extremely important

that we do not...do anything to make legitimate gun owners feel that they are lesser Australians than any one of the rest of us." Dr Nelson seems to forget that it was his government that forced shooters to surrender their private property under the threat of criminal sanction - how else should they feel?

If Brendan Nelson and the Federal administration really want to win the support of hundreds of thousands of justifiably aggrieved firearm owners the answer is simple. First, apologise for the gross mismanagement of the whole buy-back debacle, together with the waste of public money. Second, dismantle the Australasian Police Ministers' Council and throw out its misguided decrees and third, into the future make sure the government confines its public policy initiatives to its Constitutional mandate.

Nelson's platitudes bring to mind the rapist who insists on telling his victim what a great sport she's been. Shooters are sick of politicians paying them lip service after the fact. As they say, talk is cheap.

Contact:

Dr Brendan Nelson MHR
Suit 8/12 Tryon Road
Lindfield, NSW 2070
Ph: 02 9416 4044

E-mail: b.nelson.mp@aph.gov.au ●

Proven Ineffectiveness

THE INEFFECTIVENESS of the 1996 gun buy-back has been proven time and again by the steady rate of gun-related crimes and it has been further substantiated by the tragic shooting death of a 33-year-old Queensland police officer on July 20, 2000.

During a related radio interview between John Miller of 4BC Radio and Merv Bainbridge from the Queensland Police Union, the two agreed that the buy-back has not done what it was intended to do.

"...It just seems that once again we have a demonstration that if the aim at all was to reduce the incidence of violent gun-related incidents, for want of a better expression, then they have failed miserably," said Mr Miller.

Concurring with Mr Miller, Mr Bainbridge said, "...it's not working. It's as people always suspected - that the good people would obey the rules and the bad guys would just continue on as always."

It is regrettable that the failure of the buy-back is being validated through gun-related activities, but the facts speak for themselves.

How many more tragedies will it take to convince the public and its representatives that the 1996 buy-back did not work?



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The **POLITICIAN'S GUIDE** to the gun control issue

by Michael Brown, Professor of Political Science
Liberal Arts University of Vancouver
(Political satire by: Dr Michael Brown, who is actually an
optometrist in Vancouver, Washington who moderates
an e-mail list for discussion of gun issues.)

Soliciting votes from today's turned-off, apathetic voters is tough. Like mutating bacteria, voters are becoming immune to our favourite campaign tactics. If you want to win an election, you must return to the basics. The oldest weapons in the politician's arsenal are fear and hatred. They are always effective if applied properly. The principles outlined in this guide can be applied in many ways, but the perfect issue, as you will see, is gun control.

Your goal is to make voters fear guns and hate the gun lobby. These emotions can then be transferred to your opponent. We are dealing with emotions, not facts, because people are more easily influenced through their emotions.

To promote fear of guns you must be prepared to rapidly exploit appropriate shooting incidents. The media will make this easy for you, since they are already extremely anti-gun and prone to hysterical coverage of these events. Imagine surfing a wave. If you are smart, the wave does the work and you enjoy the ride.

Make a prior arrangement with friendly media people to appear before their cameras on short notice. To avoid wasting your time, make it clear that you are not interested in non-gun violence like stabbing, beating, or arson deaths.

Prepare a statement in advance deploring the way that easy access to guns has caused the crime that has just occurred. Leave the details out and fill in the blanks when the information becomes available. As soon as possible after the crime, read your statement on camera. Ideally the victims will be innocent people, and preferably children.

Unfortunately, most shooting incidents occur between members of rival gangs or involve police officers shooting in the line of duty. Worst of all are the cases where an armed citizen defends herself from a criminal. Be patient and wait for the right event.

Your statement should invoke as many

emotional images as possible, since you are trying to convince voters that this could happen to them. Use dramatic phrases like 'guns flooding the streets'. Of course you will say that we need to act 'for the children' at least two or three times. It is useful to say that gun lobby organisations have 'blood on their hands'. Demonising these groups is essential now, because later you will attempt to tie your opponent to them.

Arrange a tour of the crime scene as soon as possible. Political connections with the local authorities will pay off at this time. You and a few associates should walk around the scene looking shocked and saddened. Practise your facial expression and body language in advance. Do not allow any audio recording, since cynical comments are sometimes picked up by unnoticed microphones.

Fear is your friend. People usually fear what they don't understand, so direct your advertising at urban voters and women. These groups are least likely to have personal experience with responsible gun ownership. Even though gun crime is decreasing, saturation coverage by the media has convinced most people that it is increasing. If you can't stir up fear in this situation, you are in the wrong business.

Creating fear is not enough; you must also present yourself as a saviour. Have your staff draft at least one new gun control bill. The exact wording is not important, since these bills rarely make it past the initial committee hearings. Gun control bills are feel-good legislation, so choose a title with phrases like 'child safety' or 'public protection'.

You will be asked how your bill will reduce crime. A good response is: "It may not have a significant impact on crime, but if it saves only one child, it's worth it." If asked how your bill would have prevented a crime that you are exploiting, you can answer: "It may not have saved these innocent victims of gun violence, but it's a step in the right direction."

Gun control should be part of your regular stump speech. Use as many dramatic, emotional phrases as you have time for. Do not mention any inconvenient facts, such as the ineffectiveness of gun control or lack of enforcement of current laws. If anyone brings up inconvenient facts during a question and answer session, simply talk around the question and change the subject. If you feel that you can remember some numbers, there are several excellent propaganda statements available from friendly anti-gun groups.

One popular factoid says you are 43 times more likely to be killed by a gun in your home than to use it for self-defence. This is nonsense, of course, but tossing out a number, then quickly changing the subject, can often end a debate on a favourable note. If you are challenged later, you can say that you got the information from a reliable source.

The final part of the strategy is to tie your opponent to the gun lobby. One of the best tactics is to obtain photos or video of your opponent meeting with evil gun lobbyists. Also look for statements by the gun lobby referring to your opponent as a supporter of their misguided agenda. Pass this material to your friends in the media and stand back; they will do the rest of the job for you.

As you make use of these principles, beware of a serious problem that has embarrassed several politicians. Bodyguards have an annoying habit of flashing their guns or leaving them in inappropriate places.

This reminds people that you have armed protection and makes you appear hypocritical, so take steps to prevent this from happening.

Also, if you have ever used a gun for protection, deny it. We know that the elite can be trusted with guns, but voters may not share our enlightened view.

The truth has no place in politics. If you aren't willing to do what it takes to get elected, you don't deserve to hold an office. ●

Parting shots

The good:

In the August issue of the *Australian Shooter* we informed you of Manna Hill Resources' desire to mine magnesite deposits in the Gammon Ranges National Park, an endeavour the SSAA strongly opposed.

On August 29, Environment Minister Iain Evans visited the proposed mining area and said "major environmental concerns" led him to deny Manna Hill any mining rights in the Park.

"I am advised that disruption of the natural drainage pattern by removing large portions of nearby hills and construction of an access road along the creeks would represent an unacceptably high impact, with a real risk that the gudgeon [fish] would become locally extinct."

He also said the disruption to the area "would...cause disturbance... for the yellow-footed rock wallaby, which would be detrimental to its continued existence."

"If you look at all of the environmental values, whether it be the native animal species or the native vegetation, or just the sheer beauty of the place, in my mind there is no way you can allow mining there," said Mr Evans.

Tourists to the Gammon Ranges, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the SSAA were elated to hear of the Minister's decision.

SSAA SA president Greg Dodd said that the SSAA SA has "endorsed the actions of the Minister" and that "his move is to be applauded by all people interested in environmental preservation in the general sense."

Manna Hill Resources has questioned the Minister's decision and plans to write an environmental impact statement. The Minister said he is unlikely to change his mind as a result of such a statement.

The bad:

For a long time Western Australia has provided the yardstick by which the rest of the country's gun laws have been judged. Most of the measures forced on the states and territories in 1996 were already well established in WA - including a ban on semi-automatic centrefire rifles and the need to demonstrate a 'genuine reason' in order to licence a gun. WA still refuses to recognise out-of-state permits and the state's police service is notorious for hindering shooters trying to license additional firearms.

Given its draconian approach to gun control, you might think that WA would provide a good billboard for the 'fewer guns equals fewer crimes' theory - not so. According to WA Police Service figures, the number of armed robberies in WA has increased by two-thirds during the past five years, with more than 420 offences to June 2000 compared to 250 for the same period in 1995 - an increase of 67 per cent.¹

Last financial year there were more than 1160 armed robberies across the state, prompting several major retail companies to form 24-hour counselling teams just to service traumatised employees.

So much for the 40,000 firearms confiscated from WA shooters and John Howard's promise of a "safer community."²

¹ Harvey, B. (2000, June 16). Shop staff in terror as armed hold-ups spiral. *The West Australian*, page 4.

² Gordon, M. (1996, June 17). PM braves angry crowd. *The Australian*, page 1.

The ugly:

Most Australians were thrilled to see Michael Diamond win a gold medal in the men's trap event, but Radio 3AW's Steve Price was not among the majority. While on air, Mr Price said that he couldn't celebrate a shooting gold medal and that he was offended by the picture of Michael holding a gun in the "cocked" position. Price's colleagues were shocked by his comments, as were most Australians.

As a result of that broadcast, a number of SSAA members wrote to 3AW and expressed their disappointment regarding Mr Price's statements.

One such member wrote in and received this reply from Graham Mott, general manager of 3AW:

"The comments you refer to were broadcast on 3AW by Steve Price... Even though his comments may have offended some listeners it is sufficient to state that he was entitled to express his point of view.

Price also said that it was inappropriate for Michael Diamond to be seen on the front page of the *Sydney Telegraph* with a 'cocked' shotgun above his head. On this point Steve Price was wrong, the shotgun was not in a 'cocked' position and this was pointed out by his fellow presenters Ken Cunningham and Graham Cornes. Your correspondence makes no reference to the fact that the incorrect comment was immediately corrected on-air and was acknowledged by Steve Price. The action taken by Cunningham and Cornes was in accordance with the Commercial Radio Codes of Practice...

"It is clear to us that the information that was sent via fax and e-mail to members of the various firearms organisations throughout Australia and to our advertisers clearly misled the recipients in order to gain the maximum negative impact against Steve Price and 3AW. Dishonest behaviour such as this makes us wonder about the integrity of these people who would have the community believe they are reasonable and responsible people..."

SSAA researcher Paul Peake responded by saying, "The only information sent out by the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia Inc was a full transcript of Mr Price's comments on September 18 concerning shooting as an Olympic event."

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