

# ASJ

**AUSTRALIAN SHOOTERS JOURNAL**

*The political voice of the SSAA*



# Secure it or lose it

**Getting tough on  
unsecured firearms**

**Weapons  
under  
attack**

**The myth of a  
safer Britain**

**September 2001 Vol. 3 Issue 5**  
*Members-only insert to the Australian Shooter*



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## A word from the President

In July 2001 the United Nations wrapped up its latest conference on small arms. The Australian government's official position was summed up in a brief statement which included the familiar Howard doctrine "possession and use of firearms is a privilege conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety; and public safety will be enhanced by imposing strict controls . . ."

The conference reinforced what the shooting fraternity has suspected all along - tighter controls on international arms sales are being used as a smokescreen for a future treaty designed to force governments to comply with the UN's anti-gun agenda. The idea was clearly demonstrated in the conference's working definition of small arms, which included everything from revolvers and self-loading pistols to hunting rifles. As SSAA Special Projects Director Gary Fleetwood noted

in a press release on July 15 "revolvers haven't been standard military equipment for 40 years, so why have they been included in a definition supposedly aimed at military small arms?"

While the United States refused to accept some of the meeting's opening recommendations, it did eventually agree to another meeting in 2006, along with a program of action which includes research into a new UN agency for monitoring gun sales. Shooters can be sure that the anti-gun lobby will be redoubling its efforts over the next five years to guarantee that the next conference goes a lot further.

Bill Shelton  
National President

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PO Box 2066, KENT TOWN, SA 5071

PHONE: 08 8272 7100

FAX: 08 8272 2945

Internet: [www.ssaa.org.au](http://www.ssaa.org.au)

E-mail:

AS - [as@ssaa.org.au](mailto:as@ssaa.org.au)

SSAA - [ssaa@ssaa.org.au](mailto:ssaa@ssaa.org.au)

A MEMBER OF THE  
CIRCULATIONS  
AUDIT BOARD



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**CONTRIBUTIONS:** Freelance contributions are welcome. We do, however, recommend that potential authors contact sub-editor Jennifer Martens prior to story drafting. Color slides and manuscripts may be sent to the address shown above.

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Bill Shelton, Paul Peake, Gary Fleetwood, Jennifer Martens, Col Allison, Dr David Carter.

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# Weapons under attack

by Jennifer Martens

Within the past five years or so, South Australian police have reported seeing an increase in attacks with knives, batons, knuckle-dusters, nunchakus, sling shots and chains in downtown Adelaide and throughout the state.

Frustrated by the lack of control the laws gave police concerning knives and other weapons and the excuses people were giving for possessing them, SA police began lodging calls with the Attorney-General's office hoping for some changes.

"SA Labor has been concerned about the increasing prevalence and use of knives on our streets since early 1994," said State Labor Leader the Hon Mike Rann.

"Back then, the Hindley Street police were complaining of the increasing number of young people carrying knives. There were claims they were avoiding prosecution on the basis of lame excuses about carrying knives to peel fruit or even sharpen eyebrow pencils."

Mr Rann said he campaigned for years on this issue and finally forced the Olsen Government to act. In December 2000, the SA Liberal Government decided to revise and strengthen current laws regarding the possession, use and safe handling of 'weapons'.

The new changes took effect on December 17 but South Australians were given a two-month amnesty period in which to turn in any unlawful 'weapons'. During that time, more than 1000 prohibited items, mostly cutlery, were surrendered to the police.

With the new laws now officially in effect, persons found in possession of a prohibited item without a legal exemption face a fine of \$10,000, a two-year gaol term or both. SA Attorney-General Trevor Griffin said that even those that voluntarily surrender their 'weapons' after the amnesty period risk penalties.

According to Mr Griffin, the legislation clearly sends the message that certain weapons will not be tolerated in the community.

"This campaign has successfully removed

more than 1100 weapons from the streets, which must make the community safer and the police more confident of their working environment," he said.

Unfortunately, as was the case with the 1996 firearms buy-back, most of the items were probably turned in by law-abiding citizens - not criminals.

Mr Rann believes in the Liberal Government's new laws but feels more could be

**The cost of further imposing tighter restrictions on civilians has a familiar ring to it.**

done. "For instance, Labor has called for a ban on the carrying of knives in any licensed premises after dark. It's one thing to be legitimately carrying a knife while hunting or fishing. The law must not interfere with people using knives in those circumstances.

"But why should anyone be carrying a knife into city pubs or discos on a Saturday night?"

"We need to give police the power to deal with people who carry knives and who are clearly looking for trouble."

Currently, the laws classify 'weapons' into three categories: offensive weapons, dangerous articles and prohibited weapons. According to the legislation, it is an offence to:

1. Carry an offensive weapon without a lawful excuse;
2. Manufacture, supply, deal in, possess or use a dangerous article without a lawful excuse;
3. Manufacture, supply, deal in, possess or use a prohibited 'weapon' unless you are exempt.

The laws are clear on what is and is not prohibited and who and who is not exempt.

As well as protecting those with a genuine reason to use knives, exemptions can also serve as an escape route for those possessing a knife or other 'weapon' illegally.

Some of the legitimate exemptions include possession of a 'weapon' for business or employment; for a lawful and recognised form or recreation or sport; for providing lawful entertainment for others; for duty as a police officer; for religious purposes and for volunteer and paid emergency workers.

The campaign used to promote the laws was heralded by the slogan, 'Weapons Under Attack' and was brought to the attention of the public via television, newspapers and brochures. Informational forums on the new legislation were also being carried out in rural areas by the SA police department and a telephone hotline and web site were made available to inform those not able to attend the forums. According to the *Adelaide Advertiser* (15/3/01), more than 2100 calls about the new laws have been made to the Weapons Hotline and about 1540 hits have been made on the special weapons web site, with 23,000 pages downloaded.

The cost of the campaign to taxpayers has not been released and probably with good cause, as it is likely to have been several thousand dollars per knife or 'weapon' handed in.

These changes, which were supported by all parties in the South Australian Parliament, bring SA's laws more in line with New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and the ACT, according to the State Government's media machine.

The cost of further imposing tighter restrictions on civilians has a familiar ring to it. It is also interesting to note that the SA Police admit that it has always been illegal to carry a 'weapon' - be it a chunk of wood or a crossbow - in a public place without a good reason, let alone use it to commit an act of violence.

Since this legislation was introduced, the SA Parliament has also banned the possession of fireworks, again, for the same reason - for our own good. ●

# From the POLICE files

**B**efore the new South Australian 'weapon laws' were introduced, and as a result of our dealings with politicians concerning the gun buy-back, we decided to ask the SA police for details on the types of knives used in knife/machete attacks during 1998/99.

The SAPOL Statistical review for 1998/99 states that a knife/machete was used in 19 incidents during that period.

On November 14, 2000, we submitted a letter to the relevant Freedom of Information (FOI) Unit and on May 25, 2001 the FOI supplied the following information on the 19 incidents:

- Six of the files are under the control of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and are no longer in the possession of the SA Police. The DPP is exempt from the provisions of the FOI Act.
- Seven of the files do not contain photographs of the weapon used, as no weapon was located.
- For legislative reasons, one of the files was not released under FOI vide Clause 16 (1) (a)(iv).
- In one incident, photographs cannot be located. Both the investigative officer and the Criminal Justice Section advised they are unable to locate the photograph. That leaves us with the following four incidents for which photographs exist and were supplied:
  - Scene 1 is obviously a hunting knife
  - Scene 2 is obviously a hunting knife
  - Scene 3 is obviously a kitchen knife
  - Scene 4 is obviously a kitchen knife

The argument that further restricting the possession of 'cutlery' will lead to fewer incidents of violence appears unproven in this instance. Two of the four knives used in the crimes were common kitchen cutlery and the others appear 'unknown' or the records have disappeared or are privileged.

Scene 1



Scene 2



Scene 3



Scene 4

## Kitchen knife kills eight in Japan

**I**n an attack similar to the one committed in a school in Columbine, Colorado in the United States, Mamoru Takuma entered an elementary school in Tokyo armed not with a gun but with an ordinary kitchen knife and killed eight children and wounded 21 others.

The June attack, according to police, was sparked by an overdose of the drugs intended to keep Takuma mentally balanced. Just two years prior to this massacre, Takuma tried to poison teachers at a school where he worked as a janitor and handyman. Because he was suffering from psychological problems, the police refused to arrest him. Instead, Takuma was fired from his position with the school and sent to hospital for treatment. After a month, he was sent home with a cache of tranquillisers.

The 'weapon' used in Takuma's gruesome assault can be found in homes across the world - and is accessible to anyone. While the ban on 'weapons' in South Australia was instigated with the hope of making "the community safer and the police more confident of their working environment", a similar ban in Tokyo would have done nothing to stop Mamoru Takuma from committing such a terrible crime.

Other points to remember are that Japan has among the harshest gun control legislations in the world and extraordinarily high rates of suicide, despite the lack of firearms in the hands of citizens.

When a would-be murderer sets his mind on acts of violence, no amount of legislation is likely to stop him.



# Secure it or lose it.



A good safe is a good investment.

In 1920 a Select Committee on the Possession of Firearms was appointed by the NSW Legislative Council to report on firearm regulations. Storage requirements were one issue that was raised in the final report that resulted in the Gun Licence Act 1920 being passed by the New South Wales State Parliament.

Today's firearm owner faces far more stringent conditions than the sporting shooter of that bygone era when it comes to securing guns, and it seems that there will be no let-up by Government on the implementation of those conditions. The SSAA is aware of documents recently produced by a government department that identify security of privately owned firearms as an issue of concern to lawmakers. Accordingly, we have followed up the article in this month's *Australian Shooter* (page 7) with this additional information so that all firearm owners are aware of their responsibilities. Do not be found wanting in regards to this issue. Being convicted for failing to secure your gun may mean you will lose the ability to have a gun legally in your possession for a long time. Your laxity will also cause grief to the many hundreds of thousands of shooters who do the right thing.

The SSAA office receives the occasional phone call from firearm owners who have been located by police with an unsecured firearm. The police confiscate the gun and legal action is pending. What can the SSAA do? In all but exceptional cases - nothing. The onus is on you to ensure guns are secured and there is no excuse when a police officer locates a firearm under the bed or in the clothes cupboard.

Recently we heard of a firearm owner who left three firearms on the dining room table in preparation for a journey very early the next morning. A knock on the door at 11pm predated the entry of police doing a spot check on the security arrangements for his firearms. While it may have been easy for the owner to lie about why the guns were out of the safe, he told the truth. The resulting

court case left the owner with a criminal record and no guns. While some feel that there are circumstances other than cleaning, use or repair that should allow guns to be left out of the safe, the law sees it differently. One story doing the rounds concerns access to the gun safe by an unlicensed partner or family member. The story is that police ask the partner to open the safe in the absence of the owner. If he/she does so then charges are brought against the owner for failing to deny access to guns stored under his/her licence. We have yet to see proof positive of this occurring and would welcome documented evidence of such an incident.

## The May 10, 1996 resolutions

Resolution 8 formed the backbone of the National Firearms Agreement regarding the way in which firearms should be stored. This resolution clearly lays down the physical parameters required when storing firearms.

### RESOLUTION

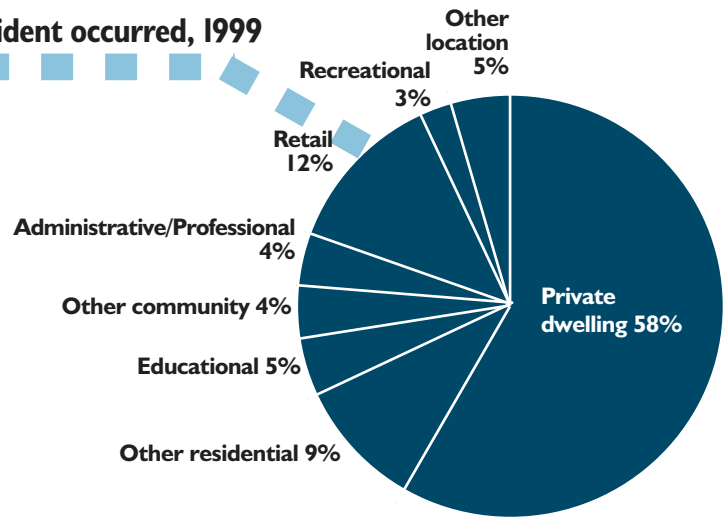
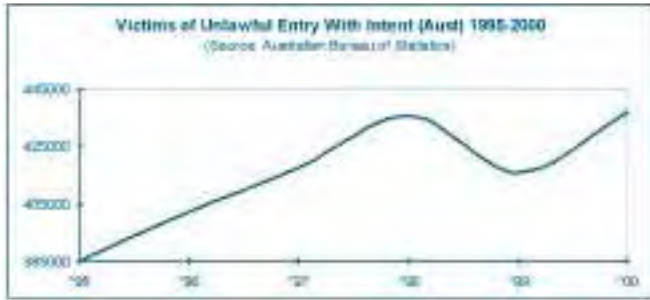
Council resolved that all firearms and ammunition be stored in secure conditions as follows:

- It should be a precondition to the issuing of a new firearms licence (and on each renewal of licence in respect of existing licence holders) that the licensing authority be satisfied as to the proposed storage and security arrangements;
- Legislation should have the effect of making failure to store firearms in the manner required an offence as well as a matter that will lead to the cancellation of the licence and the confiscation of all firearms;
- Measures should be indicated in legislation for the storage of firearms that are specific and clear so that firearm owners and possessors know their obligations and the following minimum basic standards should apply:
- Licence Category A and B: storage in a locked receptacle constructed of either hard wood or steel with a thickness to ensure it is not easily penetrable.
- If the weight is less than 150 kilograms the receptacle shall be fixed to the frame of the

## Unlawful entry with intent, by location\* where incident occurred, 1999

\*Excludes unspecified location (n=8 150)

<b>Residential</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>Community</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>24%</b>



Facts and figures taken from AIC Facts & Figures 2001.

floor or wall so as to prevent easy removal. The locks fitted to these receptacles shall be of sturdy construction;

- Licence Category C, D and H: storage in a locked, steel safe with a thickness to ensure it is not easily penetrable, bolted to the structure of a building; and all ammunition must be stored in locked containers separate from any firearms.

- Should a firearms owner or possessor wish to store firearms through measures other than those indicated in legislation, he or she would have the burden of persuading the firearms regulatory authority that he or she can provide the level of security not less than that required by the relevant approved practices;

- In order to govern safekeeping when firearms are temporarily away from their usual place of storage, legislation could provide a statement indicating reasonable precautions to take to ensure the safekeeping taking into consideration situations most likely to be encountered. A basic standard that should be included in the statement is that the holder of the licence “must take reasonable care to ensure that the firearm is not lost or stolen and must take reasonable care to ensure that the firearm does not fall into the hands of an unauthorised person”;
- The firearms safety booklet to be distributed to all new licence applicants prior to attending a course of instruction should also feature clear and precise information on the obligations as regards storage of firearms;
- A reminder of safe storage responsibilities should be on the licence itself;
- Security at gun dealer premises will require the dealer meeting such additional requirements as the firearms regulatory authority deems appropriate having regard to the type of activity of the dealer;
- Where approval has been given for the possession or use of a firearm for a limited purpose such as film production (see 3.3), the person authorised must meet such requirements as the firearms regulatory

authority deems appropriate having regard to the type of activity for which possession has been authorised.

- Council agreed to implement its resolution via the following action plan:

### I. All jurisdictions to develop a standard approach to the storage of firearms and ammunition.

## Break and Enter Figures

The AIC monitors the number of thefts from “private dwellings”. In 1999, there were 415,600 incidents of “unlawful entry with intent” (UEWI) recorded by the police in Australia, of which 322,913 involved the taking of property from a structure. The rate of UEWI in 1999 (2,192 victims per 100,000 population) decreased by 5.8 per cent compared to its level in 1998. Fifty-eight per cent of UEWI occurred in private dwellings in 1999. In 1998, 67 per cent of UEWI was in private dwellings<sup>(1)</sup> From these figures it is clearly seen that there is a distinct possibility of an unsecured firearm being stolen from your home. This situation is not missed by some politicians and gun prohibitionists who seek any excuse to remove guns from homes.

## Consequences

Other than the legislative penalty for not securing your firearm there is a broader consequence applied to all firearm owners. That is the perception by the wider community, fuelled by social commentators, that the average firearm owner cannot be trusted to secure the firearm they possess. Theft of firearms will only promote further legislation that tightens the controls on firearms kept and stored by individuals within the community. This legislation may require community armouries, restrictions on how many firearms can be stored on private premises or perhaps the storage of club firearms at club premises. All this would be initiated in the name of community safety,

**“The ALP will not create a central repository or storage place to house your guns”**

John Cain Victoria ALP *Ballarat Courier* 10/3/82

**“I wish to advise that there is no intention to place firearms in suburban armouries in Tasmania. I consider the storage provisions of the Firearms Act 1996 to be sufficient to ensure the majority of firearms are held safely.”**

David Llewellyn Tasmania Police Minister December 1998

**“The Government does not support the establishment of central armouries.”**

Paul Whelan Police Minister New South Wales 9/2/99

and may be supported by the facts and figures that both the police and the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) compile on firearm theft. The AIC have been liaising with state registries in relation to the number of firearm thefts and their report should be out at the end of this year after it has been submitted to the next Australasian Police Ministers Council (APMC) meeting in November.

Whilst some politicians have been rejecting the idea of central armouries, the gun prohibitionists will promote further restrictions using data which may indicate that gun owners cannot be trusted to lock up their guns. The May 2000 AIC report Trends & Issues #151 - The Licensing and Registration Status of firearms used in Homicide indicated to the community that “licensed firearms owners were not responsible for the majority of firearm-related homicides”. Perhaps a future Trends & Issues paper will indicate that the majority of thefts of firearms come from what some government agencies are now calling “domestic sources”. It is up to all firearm owners to ensure that this is not the case.

(1) AIC Australian Crime Facts and Figures 2000 Page 41

## Penalties

### Australian Capital Territory

#### FIREARMS ACT

##### SECT 62 - Safe Keeping of Firearms

Individual \$2,000

Body Corporate \$10,000

##### SECT 63.

Safe Storage of firearms

Category A and B licence requirements

Individual \$5,000

Body Corporate \$25,000

##### SECT 64.

Safe Storage of firearms

Category C, D and H licence

requirements

Individual \$5,000

Body Corporate \$25,000

### South Australia

#### FIREARMS ACT 1977

##### SECT 21

Breach of conditions, etc.

A prescribed firearm or a class C, D or H firearm \$10,000 or imprisonment for two years in any other case \$5 000 or imprisonment for one year.

### Northern Territory

#### FIREARMS ACT

##### SECT 46

Storage and safe keeping requirements

A person in possession of a firearm must comply with the storage and safe keeping requirements under this Act that apply to the firearm.

Penalty: \$5,000 or imprisonment for 12 months.

### Victoria

#### FIREARMS ACT 1996

##### SECT 121

Storage of firearms under longarm and handgun licences

Category A or B

Penalty: \$6,000 or 12 months' imprisonment.

Category C or D or H

Penalty: \$12,000 or 2 years' imprisonment.

Category E

Penalty: \$24,000 or 4 years' imprisonment.

### New South Wales

#### FIREARMS ACT 1996

##### SECT 40

Category A and category B licence requirements

Maximum penalty: \$2,000 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months, or both

Category C D & H

Maximum penalty: \$5,000 penalty units or imprisonment for 2 years, or both.

### Queensland

#### WEAPONS ACT 1990

##### SECT 60

Secure storage of weapons

A person who possesses a weapon must securely store the weapon in the way prescribed under a regulation when it is not in the person's physical possession.

Maximum penalty \$6,000 or 1 year's imprisonment.

### Tasmania

#### FIREARMS ACT 1996

##### SECT 85

Category A and B firearms licence requirements

Fine not exceeding \$2,000 penalty units or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, or both.

##### SECT 86

Category C, D and H firearms licence requirements

Fine not exceeding \$5,000 penalty units or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years, or both.

### Western Australia

#### Firearms Act 1973 - SECT 23 (9)

Penalty \$1,000

# Points to Remember

## Ensure your security meets legal requirements.

Failing this basic requirement means you do not have a leg to stand on if your premises are inspected by police. You will face prosecution.

## Lock your guns up when not using them.

If your guns are found outside the security arrangements required by law without lawful excuse, police will have no choice but to charge you with an offence against your local firearms Act.

## Store your bolts (if possible) separate to the firearm.

Not having a bolt makes your gun much less attractive to thieves. Time is of major importance to burglars who often seek expensive items of opportunity. Opportunities are greater when time is available so it makes sense to make the thieves spend time searching the house for the bolt. This will reduce the chance that your gun will be taken.

## Store your guns with a dealer if leaving your home for an extended period.

Make the effort to take your guns to a reputable dealer for safekeeping if you go away on holidays. Whilst your home security may be adequate under normal circumstances, a thief who has unlimited time may breach those security arrangements. Offer to pay the dealer for his service, and we would also suggest you take the time to send a quick letter to the local firearm registry notifying them of your actions.

## State Firearm Registry contact details

Visit our web site <http://www.ssa.org.au/lawindex.html> for further registry information.

### State phone/fax numbers:

ACT	02 6245 7405	02 6245 7259
VIC	03 9247 3227	03 9247 6485
TAS	03 6230 2720	03 6230 2765
QLD	07 3364 4416	07 3364 4863
SA	08 8204 2512	08 8204 2314
NSW	1 300 362 562	02 6670 8558
WA	08 9223 7024	08 9223 7029
NT	08 8922 3541	08 8922 3540

### Safe retailers:

#### MAGNUM IMPORTS



Phone: 08 9385 4688 Fax: 08 9385 6568

Web site: [www.magnumimports.com.au](http://www.magnumimports.com.au)

#### FOXSAFE

Phone: 02 9744 9900 Fax: 02 9744 9854

Mobile: 0418 248 870

Web site: [www.foxsafe.com.au](http://www.foxsafe.com.au)





# UN update

by Paul Peake

July 21, 2001, saw the conclusion of a two-week long United Nations conference in New York on the 'Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects'. Ostensibly, the meeting was called to address the question of illegal arms trading. However, the anti-gun lobby saw it as an opportunity for the United Nations to extend its influence over private gun ownership.

Australia's official position at the conference was outlined in a three-page statement delivered by the government's delegate Ms Penney Wensley. The declaration emphasised the Howard government's line that "possession and use of firearms is a privilege conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety; and public safety will be enhanced by imposing strict controls on the import, possession and use of firearms and other related materials." When coupled with the UN's working definition of small arms, which includes everything from revolvers, self-loading pistols and hunting rifles through to sub-machine-guns and rocket launchers, it doesn't take a Rhodes Scholar to see the implications.

The plan is simple. Get UN members to sign up for a non-binding agreement that includes a definition of small arms wide enough to take in practically every level of private firearms ownership. Include a set of proposals for controlling the illicit gun trade, but make sure they contain clauses that extend to civilian possession and use. Next, begin working towards an enforceable treaty that gives the United Nations effective control over who can own, trade and manufacture firearms.

The notion that the UN and its supporters in the anti-gun movement have more up their sleeves than simply tackling the illegal gun trade was clearly illustrated by some candid comments from United States anti-gun campaigner Senator Dianne Feinstein in an interview with the *New York Times* on July 18. Speaking about proceedings at the conference Feinstein told the paper "Many of the 189 member nations represented here want an agreement that would make tracing small arms from pistols to grenades and light missiles easier and more reliable. They would also like at least an admonition against the unrestricted sales of weapons to civilians."

Clearly, the idea of clamping down on illegal arms sales is nothing more than a stalking-horse for the anti-gun lobby's real agenda, which is to eventually get a binding international agreement that can be used as leverage to force national governments to toe the line on gun control - a line that would of course be drawn by the anti-gun movement under the cloak of the UN.

One of the few bright lights throughout the conference was the United State's complete rejection of any proposals likely to affect the Constitutional right of US citizens to "keep and bear arms". The US also rejected proposals limiting arms sales strictly to governments, as opposed to dissidents seeking to overthrow dictatorial regimes. Ironically, some of the strongest advocates of restricting arms deals exclusively to state entities (apart from the anti-gun lobby) were Third World governments, many of whom came to power via coup d'état involving rebel forces armed to

the teeth. Obviously, the anti-gun movement doesn't have a problem climbing into bed with notorious human rights abusers in order to further its cause.

The conference eventually reached agreement on a 'Program of Action', including measures to ensure licensed manufacturers apply appropriate markings, that confiscated small arms are destroyed unless another form of disposal has been officially authorised and that states strengthen their ability to co-operate in identifying guns.

Ominously, it was also recommended that the UN undertake a study into the feasibility of setting up an international instrument for tracing all small arms - no prizes for guessing which organisation would have ultimate control of the system. A recommendation was also put forward calling on the UN's General Assembly to convene another conference no later than 2006, in order to review the progress made in implementing the Program.

While the United States' firm stand helps ward off some of the worst features of the conference's initial proposals, the struggle is far from over and the lead-up to the 2006 meeting is sure to see the anti-gun lobby redouble their efforts. The fact is the issue of international arms trading is too good a vehicle for them to ignore in their push to undermine private firearms ownership. Shooters need to be speaking to their local representatives and making it clear that they will not tolerate any politician who supports an expanded role for the UN in domestic gun control issues - either directly or indirectly. ●

## SSAA meets Federal Police Commissioner

SSAA RECENTLY MET in Canberra with Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty regarding comments reportedly made by him in the *NSW Daily Telegraph* on July 23, 2001. We wished to demonstrate to Mr Keelty that the SSAA promoted involvement by all licensed firearm owners in assisting the police in dealing with gun-related crime. The SSAA stolen firearm search function on our web site was one example, whilst our efforts working with Ansett in advising our membership of the requirements for travelling with firearms as

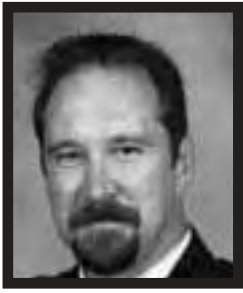
baggage was another. Our work at the Non Government Organisation (NGO) level at the United Nations dealing with the criminal use of firearms was also discussed.

This meeting resulted in an acknowledgment by Mr Keelty that obviously the sporting shooters in this country are not the problem when it comes to gun-related crime. Mr Keelty made the comment that firearm owners in this country need to be active in advising the broader community of activities they are undertaking to reduce the negative attitude to firearms and their sporting use. He suggested

that we also need to be more vocal in rejecting gun-related violence by way of more media releases.

Whilst this short article cannot accurately describe the complete conversation, we are confident that any further comments by Mr Keelty concerning the illegal gun trade shall also include support for those who pursue a sporting pastime that is regulated like no other.

If you have any queries about this issue please ring Gary Fleetwood on mobile 0407 616 218.



# The myth of a safer Britain MK II

by Paul Peake

Back in December 1998 in an article titled 'The Myth of a Safer Britain', the *Australian Shooters Journal* looked at a report prepared by Cambridge University criminologist Professor David Farrington and statistician Dr Patrick Langan on behalf of the United States Department of Justice. Farrington and Langan's 110-page review labelled Crime and Justice in the United States and in England and Wales 1981-96, showed that serious offenses such as assault, robbery and burglary are considerably higher in England and Wales compared to the US and that the notion of a largely disarmed and apparently safer Britain is a complete myth.

The report looked at crime-victim surveys and police statistics over a 15-year period and found that crime rates across a range of major offences fell in the United States during the review period while those in England steadily increased. According to the report the robbery rate in England and Wales, including muggings, was 40 per cent higher; while the assault, burglary and automobile theft rates were nearly double those of the US.

The findings raised considerable doubts about harsh firearm laws and their efficacy in reducing serious crime. Between 1981 and 1996 the number of US states which allow firearms to be carried for self-defence increased from a handful to more than 30. At the same time, however, British shooters had to endure some of the most draconian anti-gun laws in the developed world, with further restrictions on handgun ownership

imposed in 1996. Yet between 1981 and 1996 the homicide rate in the US went down significantly while in England it increased. British police figures released shortly after the report came out in 1998, showed an alarming 26 per cent increase in the murder rate in London alone.

Three years after the release of Farrington and Langan's findings it appears that the situation in Britain has worsened despite the forced surrender of 200,000 legally owned handguns. The international news gathering service Reuters published an article in June 2001 showing that gun-related murders in London tripled in April and May compared to the same period in 2000 (AAP, 13/6/2001). The figures

reinforce information released earlier this year by Lord Bassam on behalf of the British Home Office. Responding to a question in the House of Lords, Bassam tabled data showing that handgun-related crime grew by nearly 30 per cent in 1999/00 compared to the previous 12 months - notwithstanding a total ban on private pistol ownership.

Despite the evidence that penalising legitimate shooters has little impact on serious crime, anti-gun groups in Australia continue to call for more restrictions on private firearms ownership - including a ban on semi-automatic pistols. The facts however, speak for themselves. With the Home Office's data as a guide, the outlawing of handguns has clearly failed to make Britain safer. ●

**Notifiable offences recorded by police in which handguns were reported to have been used by offence group (England and Wales)**

Year	All offences	Homicide (1)	Attempted murder and other acts - including wounding and endangering life	Other	Robbery	Burglary	Other offences excluding criminal damage	Criminal damage
1990	2,537	22	114	58	2,233	56	47	7
1991	3,430	19	199	75	2,988	76	50	23
1992	3,997	28	193	90	3,544	78	47	17
1993	4,202	35	270	88	3,605	114	67	23
1994	2,981	25	267	82	2,390	134	72	11
1995	3,118	39	230	150	2,478	120	79	22
1996	2,956	30	235	157	2,316	116	80	22
1997	2,648	39	249	234	1,854	161	95	16
1998/99	2,687	32	310	261	1,814	150	103	17
1999/00	3,685	42	310	407	2,561	204	142	19

(Source: Figures adapted from Hansard, 15th January 2001 - [www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk](http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk))  
 There was a change in counting rules for recorded crime on 1 April 1998. Figures before that date cannot be directly compared.  
 (1) Year ending March



Dr David Carter

# Review of open seasons for waterfowl in NSW

In November 2000 the NSW Environment Minister released the report of the Scientific Panel Review of Open Seasons for Waterfowl in New South Wales. The panel had spent several months reviewing scientific data, receiving submissions and conducting public hearings. Its three terms of reference concerned the impacts of hunting on game and non-game species as well as the likely distribution of hunting pressure if the ban was lifted.

Many interested parties sought to broaden the range of issues to be considered. The panel accepted and discussed additional material on animal rights, animal welfare, cultural and social views, economic ramifications, lead shot, management of hunting, pest control, quail hunting, research and waterbird conservation.

Quite reasonably, the panel chose not to make a finding for or against the ban on duck hunting. A scientific review, no matter how detailed and credible, is only one of the inputs for what is ultimately a political decision.

The resulting report is undoubtedly the most important policy document on gamebird hunting to emerge in more than a decade. Its value lies partly in the thorough overview of the science, the review of recent history of the hunting ban and the fair-minded consideration of the issues associated with recreational hunting of native gamebirds.

A particular strength of the document arises from the wide range of public submissions. Pro-hunting submissions varying in length from one to 85 pages were sent in by 165 individuals. A further 62 submissions varying from one to 31 pages were put forward by hunting organizations, farmers groups, landowners and local councils.

The anti side was upheld by 16 submissions from organisations (mostly one or two pages but one ran to 137), 150 from individuals (one to five pages), about 3000 postcards and a petition with 24 signatures. These submissions provided a wealth of extra material to assist the panel in evaluating the effectiveness, and unforeseen consequences, of existing policy.

I regard this aspect of the report as the

most important of all. It gives us a chance to see how the policies of the anti-hunters work in the real world. Animal liberationists and environmental activists have been asserting endlessly that theirs is the correct philosophy, that they occupy the high moral ground and that if only governments would enact their protectionist/prohibitionist policies the environment and our wildlife would be safeguarded. In 1995, the NSW Government did what they asked and ever since these groups have been lauding the NSW policy as the model other states should adopt.

This policy experiment had run for five years when the review was conducted. Surely that has been ample time to demonstrate the promised benefits.

Begin with this simple question: has hunting stopped in NSW? The panel found that "Legal shooting of ducks for pest mitigation, illegal shooting for pest mitigation and illegal poisoning have continued since the ban. Illegal hunting is likely to continue on private lands even if the ban remains in place."

How about the welfare of game birds? Above all, we should expect this issue to show the most dramatic improvement as a result of these policies. "The scientific panel was particularly concerned by the extent of reported cases of poisoning of waterfowl and, after reading submissions from hunters and rice growers, was left in no doubt that this was a widespread practice. It in part reflected the desperation of some landholders when they could not effectively deal with their pest problem due to lack of recreational duck hunters..." What a great step forward.

How has the conservation of waterbirds been advanced in the past five years? Long-term population estimates for all waterbirds from aerial surveys of eastern Australia (Qld, Vic, NSW and part of SA) show three distinct periods. From 1983 to 1985 estimates of populations were high; from 1986 to 1995 they were relatively stable and from 1995 to 1999 - when the hunting ban was in force in NSW - populations were generally declining. The panel found: "The cessation of legal hunting in NSW did not result in any increase in waterbird numbers."

What if we look at the data on game ducks? The population estimates varied greatly between years and between species but the overall trend was stable or declining. The panel concluded: "The [NSW] ban was not followed by any major increase in game bird abundance."

Let's see what happened to the conservation of waterbird habitats. The panel wrote: "Wetland loss continues to be the major conservation problem affecting the survival of waterfowl and other waterbirds in NSW." It seems conservation in NSW continued to go backwards in the five years the ban was operating. The panel noted that "economic and social values derived from hunting were sometimes invested in wetland conservation...on private lands."

Given that this policy is applied in country areas (would any non-hunter in Sydney have noticed the slightest effect on their lives?), how does the rural community view it? "The ban on open seasons has adversely affected at least five rural towns and [surrounding] communities." As far as I can tell, not one submission or comment from a rural organisation or individual supports the hunting ban and many described the costs and losses they have borne. All the main farming stakeholders and rural councils have called for the policy to be overturned.

By every conceivable measure, the policies of the anti-hunters have failed to deliver improvements or benefits to people, wildlife or the environment and, in most cases, things have gone backwards. The NSW experiment stands as a salutary lesson about the wisdom of imposing simplistic solutions on the bush, however much they may appeal to city folk.

It always takes time for reports like this one to percolate through to a review of policy. It will be curious to see whether the government is willing to heed the polite but crystal-clear message from hunters and country constituents.

The report can be obtained by phoning 1300 361 967 (NSW callers), 02 9253 4600 (interstate callers) or viewed on the Internet at: [http://www.npws.nsw.gov.au/wildlife/open\\_season.html](http://www.npws.nsw.gov.au/wildlife/open_season.html) ●





# The fear of public outrage

Col Allison reports on a public scandal

The dingo cull was in full swing on Fraser Island as I sat in the hall at Dural (Sydney) with a strong sense of déjà vu - a seasoned journo taking notes at his umpteenth memorial service. This time for another little boy tragically killed. There was not a dry eye around me. Everyone in the capacity crowd of 1200 family, friends and mourners hung on every word as a grief-stricken Ross Gage addressed the throng.

His words brought a lump to my throat. "A little over an hour ago we buried our wonderful little boy, Clinton Troy," Mr Gage said slowly in a voice quavering with emotion. Drawing support from his wife, Annette, beside him on the rostrum under a huge projected photo of their smiling son, he expressed the simple hope that "with your care and God's grace, we will somehow be able to face our lives again."

At these words, grown men wept openly and women hugged their grieving children. Sobs echoed around the hall beside the Baptist Church where the Gages, then locals, worshipped when Clinton was born before moving to Queensland.

Clinton, Mr Gage said, "came into our lives on the eighteenth of July a little under ten years ago." The child was mauled to death by a pair of dingoes near Waddy Point on Fraser Island a few days earlier. His seven-year-old brother, Dylan, adored by his older brother, was also injured by the rogues.

The word 'dingo' was never mentioned at the service, but thoughts of Clinton's death at the hands of a starving and fearless pair of native dogs were heightened by the attendance at the service of Michael Chamberlain, his wife Ingrid and their young daughter Zara. I've known Michael for years. It's not well known but he goes shooting occasionally. His brother, Peter, is a hunting guide in New Zealand - one of the best.

The man who, with previous wife Lindy, lost his tiny daughter, Azaria, to a killer dingo at Uluru in 1980 told me, "We're here for just one reason, to offer support and comfort." He wrote to the newspapers later that he'd warned the Queensland Government two years earlier that Fraser Island dingoes could kill. The signs warning against dingoes being fed as pets were inadequate. Of

all those present at the memorial, Mr Chamberlain alone knew of the intensity of grief, the sheer horror and disbelief that must have wracked the Gage family after the chilling attack on their very core at the northern holiday resort.

Mr Gage concluded his address by saying, "Finally, to our little man Clinton - Mr C.

But, sensibilities aside, I'll bet London to a brick the reason the dingo concentration on Fraser Island wasn't thinned out progressively earlier, was fear of public outrage.

Thanks mate for all those wonderful memories. For the immense pleasure, the pride you've given us. You will always be in our hearts."

Musing after the service, I grew quite angry. It was not difficult to feel injustice had been dished out to the starving dingoes of Fraser Island, 30 of which died of lead poisoning. It's arguable they paid an inordinate price for man's poor management.

Now don't get me wrong. I'm not an animal-rightist bleeding heart. I was a deer culler in New Zealand in my youth and have shot heaps of animals on pest-control in subsequent years, but I hate native animals being killed senselessly and I have a high regard for dingoes (though occasionally I've taken one for a rug where they're pests).

I'm appalled at the terrible fate that was Clinton Troy Gage's. But the dingoes don't entirely deserve the blame. They are wild creatures doing what came naturally: hunting prey in groups.

A grazier I know with a property near Charters Towers, Queensland, loses about

one-third of his 1000-strong feral herd of Indian spotted deer each year to packs of dingoes. Graziers in the Brisbane Valley red deer range readily talk of packs of dogs attacking young stock and feral game, but no farmers encourage dingoes around the farmhouse with meat scraps - especially during drought. And knowing their land can only carry so many animals, they do the sensible thing when native dog numbers grow too high - they shoot off the excess.

That's what the authorities on Fraser Island obviously should have done years ago when the dingoes started doing it tough for tucker. Cull them. Not let them continue to breed up, growing unafraid of humans who toss them tidbits. The May cull, which decimated their numbers or worse, was simply too little, too late.

After Clinton Gage's untimely and needless death, we learnt that attacks on humans on Fraser Island were commonplace. They had stalked other children during the years and attacked and mauled many adults, including backpackers. What did the authorities do? Not much. And, dare I say it, maybe played it all down. So, belatedly, they did shoot off the dingoes - one or two in full view of TV cameras, scribes and shocked tourists. The authorities never seem to learn.

But, sensibilities aside, I'll bet London to a brick the reason the dingo concentration on Fraser Island wasn't thinned out progressively earlier, was fear of public outrage. Look at what happened when the authorities culled 606 starving brumbies in October, 2000. The aerial shoot in Guy Fawkes National Park, inland from Coffs Harbour in northern NSW, was undoubtedly necessary, as the nags had eaten out their fire-ravaged range, but it was a public relations disaster. Not every animal was killed outright, which gave rise to the screaming banner headlines: NPWS sued for horse culling cruelty. The same thing happened before in the Top End with buffalo.

So ever since the feral horse shoot, animal culls have been no-nos in the east - until Clinton Troy Gage, 'Little Mister C', was mauled to death. Now, it's the dingoes' turn.

And finally, anyone caught feeding wild dogs on Fraser Island can be fined up to \$3000 and ejected from the island. Michael Chamberlain was right. ●

# Diary notes

**August 1, 2001**

## **Bush Administration Backs Away From Deal with Smith & Wesson**

By GARY FIELDS

*The Wall Street Journal*

WASHINGTON -- The Bush administration has backed away from the government's landmark deal in which Smith & Wesson Corp. last year agreed to step up gun-safety efforts in exchange for relief from costly lawsuits.

**August 6 2001**

## **Calif. high court finds gunmaker not liable**

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug 6 (Reuters) - In a major defeat for gun control advocates, California's Supreme Court ruled on Monday that firearms manufacturers cannot be held legally responsible for the criminal use of their weapon.

**August 5 2001**

Sunday *Herald Sun* Melbourne

Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson will reapply for a shooter's licence in a move that could help ease tensions between the National Party and shooters. He said states such as NSW needed to ease strict interpretations of laws in relation to sporting shooters and farmers. "I want to say to sporting shooters that I understand their sport and see it as a legitimate sport" he said.

**August 2 2001**

Animal Liberation Newsletter New South Wales

Animal Liberation Victoria's ongoing investigation of PACE FARMS over the past six weeks has saved 34 hens. The Action Animal Rescue Team uncovered damning evidence of abandonment, neglect and gross cruelty to animals. PACE FARMS (the largest producer of eggs in Australia) exploits battery, barn-laid and free range hens at their South Morang Enterprise, north of Melbourne. The barn-laid division is endorsed by the RSPCA under the 'LIBERTY BARN-LAID' label (RSPCA receives royalties for each egg sold).

**July 27 2001**

*The Times* - UK

## **Police to wear bullet-proof vests openly** BY STEWART TENDLER AND RICHARD FORD

POLICE on the beat in London will openly wear flak jackets amid fears that increasing gun crime could lead to the death of an officer. Some 700 officers on the capital's most dangerous streets will be affected.

**July 25 2001**

## **Gun Hunt**

*West Australian*

Ben Harvey

WA Police have launched a gun crackdown to flush out thousands of illegal weapons. The operation will target the State's 85,000 gun owners and their 200,000 weapons. Gun owners will have to go to their local police station to present some identification, their gun licence and hand over their weapon to be inspected.

**July 23 2001**

## **UN Arms Conference Reaches Consensus**

By EDITH M LEDERER

The Associated Press

The United States, whose constitution guarantees an individual's right to own guns, made clear from the outset it would oppose any U.N. plan that even hinted at interference with that right. In the final make-or-break negotiations, the United States said it could not support consensus unless a call to governments "to seriously consider legal restrictions on unrestricted trade in and ownership of small arms and light weapons" was dropped.

**July 19 2001**

ABC North Coast NSW

Compere Fiona Wyllie

Bishop Phillip Huggins, Anglican Bishop of Grafton.

WYLLIE: What would you say to those who believe that the right to own a gun is almost a sacred thing?

HUGGINS: Well, I wouldn't call ... the word "sacred" is a beautiful word speaking about our relation with The Divine; I don't think you can use that word in relation to owning a gun.

**July 18 2001**

*The Toronto Star*

## **FBI loses hundreds of guns and laptops**

The FBI, the U.S. law enforcement agency plagued by recent blunders, has discovered 449 of its weapons and 184 of its laptop computers have been stolen or lost, officials said yesterday. The unaccounted-for firearms ranged from handguns to rifles to sub-machine.

**July 7 2001**

AAP Reuters

## **US throws down gauntlet to UN small arms meeting**

By Evelyn Leopold

John Bolton, the U.S. undersecretary of state for arms control said too many provisions would impinge on legal sales. "We do not support measures that would constrain legal trade and legal manufacturing of small arms and light weapons. The vast majority of arms transfers in the world are routine and not problematic."

**June 13 2001**

## **AAP -London gun murders tripled in 2001**

LONDON, June 13 (Reuters) - Gun murders in London tripled in April and May this year compared with the same period in 2000, police said on Wednesday. "In April and May of last year there were 33 murders, and for the same period of 2001 there were 42. Thirteen of this year's were firearms murders...for last year the figure was four," a spokesman for Scotland Yard told Reuters.

**June 13 2001**

David Oldfield New South Wales

52nd Parliament - Firearms Amendment (Trafficking) Bill - 06/06/2001

There is no difficulty drawing the line between legal and illegal gun owners. Illegal gun owners have guns illegally by virtue of not having a licence and not having a proper purpose to have them, and they commit crimes with them. Legal owners own their guns for a good purpose. They are members of clubs and they shoot under the auspices of that which is recognised as legal, reasonable and fair. I support this legislation. I have to say in closing that it seems particularly clear that the Democrats would ban guns and legalise drugs. That is a situation we will not have to endure in our lifetime, if ever, because whoever will be in power it will never be the Democrats.

**June 4 2001**

*Sydney Morning Herald*

Gun Control Australia president John Crook said the teen years were a high testosterone period for young men who should be kept away from anything that promoted violence.

**May 30 2001**

Radio 2SM Sydney

BOB CARR: I'm not going to see a condition of lawlessness in this state with people, criminals taking it for granted they can use hand guns. If they've got a handgun and it's found on them, bang, in jail, 14 years. That's how tough our law is getting.

# Arming yourself WITH WORDS

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

## Labor Party quotations on firearm ownership

"If the states and territories refuse to rule out crimping, then the PM should do the right thing and call a referendum."

Labor Justice Spokesman Nick Bolkus - *The Advertiser* - 17/7/96

"We're opposed to a gun register because it simply wouldn't work. It's hard enough to get people who've got guns to take out a licence. To persuade them to register each of their firearms would be just as big a difficulty."

NSW Premier Robert Carr - January 1996 - *'Gun Control - the facts'* - SSAA June 1996

### On a television ad campaign aimed at unregistered firearms -

"It's a powerful message to get guns out of the cupboards and from under the beds and into the hands of the people who ought to have them - into the hands of the police."

NSW Premier Robert Carr - *The Australian* - 22/9/95

## United States crime quotations

"Low employment has to be considered the major factor," said Joseph McNamara, Research Fellow in Law Enforcement at Stanford University's Hoover Institution.

US Crime drops for eighth year in row - *The Age* - 9/5/2000

"We are supposed to have the toughest gun prohibition in the nation and yet our streets are flooded with guns," said District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams.

Reuters - Vicki Stamas 20/1/2000 - Washington DC

# ASJ Letters

## Fair go!

On reading a report in the *Sunday Mail* (June 10) 'Battle Ground', a thought struck me. Nowhere in the report was it revealed whether or not the instigator of this crime was or was not in legal possession of his firearm. Surely if reporting this 'whether or not' in each of these needless tragedies was the norm or even mandatory, our point as legal shooters would be painfully obvious.

Maybe it's time to approach the media and demand this information be revealed in each case. Then, maybe the critics, media and the anti-gun lobby will finally realise what we're on about.

People who use firearms to kill people are not shooting enthusiasts, they are murderers and should be treated with the contempt they deserve as the law-abiding, and in many cases, upstanding members of the society that 99 per cent of us are. Fair go!

Katri Lahtinen, Mount Isa, Qld

## Make sure your brain is loaded

This is the first time I've contacted a magazine and I just had to congratulate you on a great read every month. The ads are always interesting and the hunting stories make you feel like you are right there in the bush.

I've tried hard to get a few new members signed up to get a crack at that Polaris four-wheel bike, which I have a good look at it every time I go for a shoot at St Marys indoor centre. I've got the property to give it a good home.

On a serious note, I was totally enraged by the bleeding hearts protesting in Martin Place in Sydney by putting crosshairs on passing pedestrians and displaying it on a large screen. I, like other responsible SSAA members, would never take aim at another human being. Their excuse was to shock people into banning all handguns in Australia. I'm stunned at their utter stupidity; they should adopt the motto most legal firearm owners live by: before you shoot your mouth off, make sure your brains are loaded.

Keep up the great work on the magazine.

John Bennett, Sydney, NSW

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# Parting shots

## The good:

### Gun safety video

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the gun safety video, which was sent to the Longreach Police Station and shown to more than 180 children from Barcaldine State Primary School and Saint Josephs Primary School. The video was utilised by the local police on a Children's Safety Day held recently in Barcaldine. The message it contained, 'if you see a gun, don't touch it', was well accepted by the children and parents in attendance.

I was personally impressed with the quality of the video and the way in which this simple but important message was strongly conveyed to a young audience.

Once again, I thank your Association for the loan of this video.

Peter M Kelly, Queensland Police Service



## The bad:

The cosy relationship between the anti-gun lobby and advertising giants Saatchi and Saatchi is well known in Australia. Who could forget the Coalition For Gun Control's two-page spread in the September 98 edition of *Rolling Stone*, which featured a particularly hokey-looking bullet wound and the caption "Before you disagree with gun control laws consider both sides of the story." According to an article in *The Australian* shortly before the ad came out, Saatchi and Saatchi happily "undertook the \$35,000 campaign pro bono" (*The Australian*, 19/8/98).

Given Saatchi and Saatchi's generous support for things anti-gun, you can imagine our surprise when we happened upon the following in one of Ansett Airlines' recent *Panorama* magazines. The feature titled 'Love that Brand' profiled Saatchi and Saatchi chief executive Kevin Roberts, who apparently has a fondness for military hardware. According to the article "Roberts once annihilated a Coca-Cola vending machine with a machine-gun to celebrate Pepsi becoming the top selling cola brand in Canada" (*Panorama*, May 2001).

Much like Australian Democrats Senator Natasha Stott-Despoja's penchant for violent films (*Woman's Day*, 21/12/98), her party's 'Peace and Disarmament' policies notwithstanding, the irony of Saatchi and Saatchi's chief executive destroying a soft drink dispenser with a machine-gun is no doubt lost on the anti-gun movement.

## The ugly:

### Forced to remain in his home

A number of shooting enthusiasts in Tasmania get their firearms from the home of Stuart Woods - one of Tasmania's largest gun dealers.

Stuart has been successfully operating Antique and Modern Firearms from his home for the past 18 years. With more than 1000 registered firearms in stock and little room to store them, Stuart recently purchased a house and an old butcher shop down the road with hopes of turning one of them into a sporting goods store.

With a move in mind, Stuart headed down to the city council to see if there would be any problems turning one of his two new properties into a sporting goods store. Having been told by the council there would not be, he collected the necessary forms and took them home to fill out.

Before he had even submitted the paperwork to the council, *The Mercury* ran an article saying that Stuart was planning to open a gun shop. This came as quite a surprise to Stuart, who had made no mention of a gun shop when he made his inquiry. Apparently, as one of the largest gun dealers in Tasmania, Stuart is well known and as far as he can figure, someone on the council informed *The Mercury* that he had picked up a Change of Use form.

After the story ran in *The Mercury*, Stuart's request was denied.

Not long after these events took place, Stuart found out that the then elder and current Lord Mayor of Hobart, Mr Valentine, resided only a few blocks from the shop he wanted to convert into a sporting goods store. Mr Valentine called Stuart and told him he could buy any building in town and turn it into a gun shop but that he couldn't do it with either of his two properties, which, incidentally, are not far from where Stuart currently operates his business.

It has gotten to the point where Stuart has even had to apply for a Change of Use to store his own registered firearms, his private property, in the old butcher shop he recently purchased.

With all that has transpired within the past few months, many would suggest Stuart just give up and admit defeat, but he is still planning to move his business into a bigger and better equipped facility.

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