

ASJ

AUSTRALIAN SHOOTERS JOURNAL

The political voice of the SSAA

The BIG question

“So, is the UN trying to take away private ownership of firearms?”

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In this issue

ASJ

**The political voice
of the SSAA**

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the **BIG** Q uestion



The SSAA and the WFSA: Working to keep private firearm ownership a choice

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia has many functions. One of the lesser known functions takes place within the World Forum on the Future of Sport Shooting Activities (WFSA). The role within this establishment is to speak in favour of private firearms ownership on behalf of Australian shooting organisations and clubs, firearms dealers and businesses and individual shooters.

What is the WFSA

The WFSA is an educational and scientific association founded in 1997 by more than two dozen existing associations and organisations. The member organisations represent a substantial portion of the sport shooting community. The WFSA is a pro-active advocacy organisation, working in concert with international bodies, national governments and regulatory authorities for the worldwide promotion and preservation of sport shooting activities. Chartered under Belgian law, the WFSA has a noble purpose: to further the study, preservation, promotion and protection of sport shooting activities on every continent. This objective has been fostered by a passion to preserve for future generations shooting's cherished heritage.

According to the WFSA, the world is changing and the traditions

of hunting and sport shooting are not immune to the shifting tides of the global political environment. Therein lies the impetus behind its current activities.

The WFSA holds its Annual General Meeting in March each year at Nuremberg, Germany, at the Internationale Waffen Ausstellung (IWA). This is the premier meeting-place in Europe, bringing together the world's sport shooting family - including the SSAA.

SSAA representation within the WFSA and the international arena

Currently, the SSAA has three members who regularly attend or work with overseas groups and conferences in various areas and roles: National President Bob Green, South Australian President Dr Jeanine Baker, and former SSAA International Affairs Executive Director Keith Tidswell. When major issues arise, additional SSAA officers may also attend WFSA events.

In October 2005, SSAA National President Bob Green represented the SSAA at the United Nations' Second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects. There he had an opportunity to

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discuss with firearm opponents, specifically the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), issues that often cause disputes between the two sides. In addition to that, as National President and via his role at WFSA meetings, he is working to strengthen all international ties the SSAA currently has. Locally, he understands the important role the average shooter can play in the future of the shooting sports and encourages shooters to introduce people to the sport and talk about the benefits of firearms ownership.

In addition to her duties as SA President, Dr Jeanine Baker also monitors and takes part in international activities. In July 2005, Jeanine attended the Papua New Guinea Gun Summit held in Goroka, Papua New Guinea (PNG). She was invited to speak on behalf of the SSAA and Australia regarding data on homicide, suicide and accidental firearm death as well as the influence of the 1996 National Firearms Agreement. She urged PNG to look at the factors that actually minimise the risks related to firearms misuse without initiating knee-jerk reactions.

After years of service to the SSAA in Australia, Keith Tidswell has taken his passion for the sport to Europe, where he now lives and works. There he serves as the First Vice President of the WFSA. He also assists the SSAA in its representation at international firearms-related conferences.

The WFSA and the SSAA are both accredited Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Having NGO status gives both groups the right to be heard at the UN. To understand what SSAA representatives do within the WFSA, it is important to understand how the United Nations operates.

The 'big question' to WFSA representatives

Officers representing the SSAA are often asked if the UN is trying

to ban the private ownership of firearms. With all the publicity given by the print media in most countries to what they frequently refer to as the 'scourge of small arms and light weapons' this is a very understandable question. Nobody wants to think influences outside their own country are having an effect on their affairs.

Many believe that the UN is trying to take away people's ability to own firearms, but it is not as simple as it sounds. The truth of the matter is complicated because there is no single, united entity that speaks for all nations or that brings all countries together to act in unison.

The United Nations

The body known as United Nations is a collection of governments from around the world. The sovereign states all have their own concerns and interests and widely diversified experiences. Their histories, cultures, resources, trade, finances, economics, security, politics, and relationships with other countries are all looked at and weighed by their representatives. Each will ask what is in the best interests of their own countries, some will ask about the best interests of other countries as well, and some may even be concerned about the best interests of mankind.

Issues at the UN go through a chain of development. Usually, an issue starts with someone, somewhere, writing a letter detailing their concerns. If the issue gains enough momentum via the exchanges that take place, expert groups may be set up to carry out studies and present reports. This may then lead to the call for a series of preparatory meetings, which, in turn, can result in a conference and then more meetings and further conferences. As a product of this chain, and in order of severity, a protocol, a convention or a treaty may result. If a treaty is called it is binding upon all countries. This year a treaty is expected to be signed about the ownership of firearms. The outcomes will affect Australia and all other countries.

As matters develop, countries may call regional meetings to raise awareness and concern, educate, and to seek support for their respective positions. In some cases, the costs of attending these meetings incurred by the poorer nations are met by richer countries.

Knowing a bit about the workings of the UN, it should now be clear that there is no single person or office to which an interested party can approach to easily lodge a case. Nevertheless, by watching the local news it is apparent that the UN appears to be taking an increasingly anti-gun stance. There are so-called amnesties and gun buy-backs and there are more and more government-sponsored events held in partially developed or undeveloped countries where guns are ritually burnt. There is no shortage of high government officials ready to lend their presence to a media event aimed at getting guns off the streets.

The anti-gun bandwagon

It is fair to say that there are government officials joining the anti-gun bandwagon and looking for publicity while helping disadvantaged nations remove firearms. To understand this phenomenon we need to look not at the government officials who are grandstanding but rather at those people standing beside them.

Individuals within the government are faced with increasing complexities. Not only do they have budgets to meet, they are beset by

Other anti-gun groups

There are other very powerful anti-gun groups working internationally and becoming involved in the affairs of any country where they can get a foothold. One such is the Geneva Forum (www.geneva-forum.org) which lists contributors to their work as being The Ford Foundation, the Government of Norway (Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the Government of Switzerland (Department of Defence), the Government of the Netherlands (Ministry for Foreign Affairs), The Ploughshares Fund, the Government of Sweden (Ministry for Foreign Affairs), the Government of India, the Government of Canada (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade), the Government of the United Kingdom (Department for International Development), the Government of Ireland (Department of Foreign Affairs), The Carnegie Corporation, The J A Clark Charitable Trust, and Avon Co, Ltd (courtesy of Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi, Japan).

competing demands from opposing pressure groups and even their own parties' history. When there is sufficient pressure, and very often when there is a ready-made set of opinions disguised as facts, these bureaucrats, governmental advisers and politicians often think they have good reason to succumb to the requests of pressure groups.

The advocacy and special-interest groups that used to influence governments have grown and grown, finding new levels of power and influence. These non-governmental organisations have long been referred to by the UN as NGOs. More recently, these NGOs have started calling themselves 'civil societies'.

These 'civil societies' have become experts in raising funds. They have offices all over the world and are becoming increasingly linked. They are notorious for massaging the facts and they gain patronage from some of the most powerful people and bodies in the world.

The answer to the 'big question'

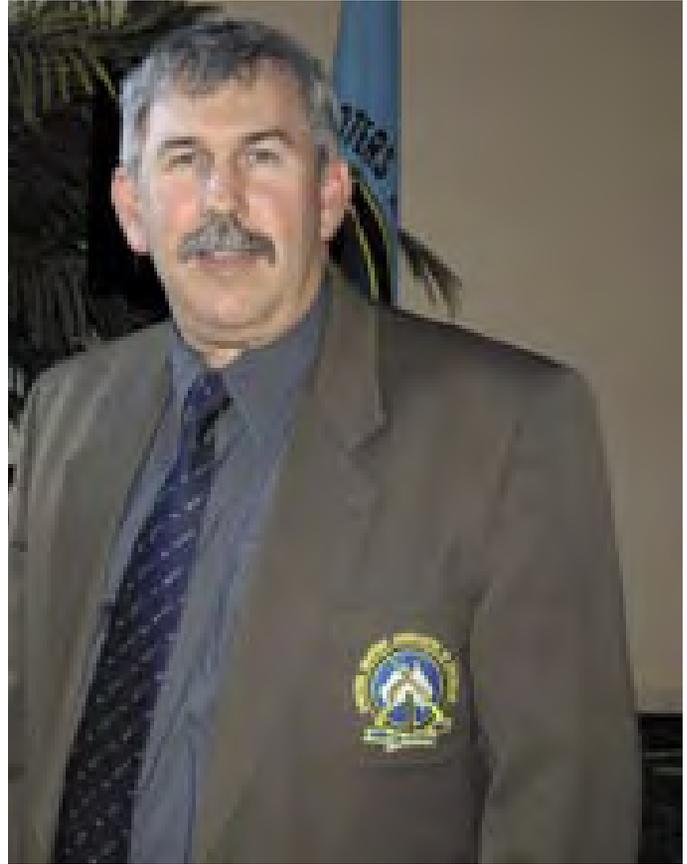
So, is the UN trying to take away private ownership of firearms? No. It's not true to say that the UN as a group is trying to take firearms away from private owners. However, it certainly is true to say that there are NGOs that have this objective high on their agenda. Not only do they want to diminish the number of firearms throughout the world, but some of the more extreme organisations would love to see firearm ownership completely abolished in every country.

Many NGOs share information, compare and combine strategies, and work their way into influential positions. They buy expert opinions and very often they shamelessly distort the facts to suit their purposes.

There are many anti-firearm organisations throughout the world and they are increasingly forging links with a few central organisations, the chief of which is the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA). The activists in this group keep a close eye on pro-firearm organisations and report their findings back to their officials.

Anti-firearm NGO funding

There is no doubt that NGOs opposed to the private ownership of firearms are very well-funded, in some instances by governments. On its own website, IANSA boasts about its funding [www.iansa.org/about.htm#funders] from sources including the governments of the United



Currently, the SSAA has three members who regularly attend or work with overseas groups and conferences in various areas and roles: National President Bob Green, pictured above, South Australian President Dr Jeanine Baker, bottom left, and former SSAA International Affairs Executive Director Keith Tidswell.

Kingdom, Belgium, Sweden and Norway, as well as organisations such as the Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Compton Foundation, Ploughshares Fund, MacArthur Foundation, the Open Society Institute, Samuel Rubin Foundation and Christian Aid.

Anti-firearm NGO research

These anti-firearm NGOs are involved in government-funded research. This is particularly important because research is the basis of all governmental moves, especially in democracies. Unless they are certain of the votes in it, governments tend not to take the chance of bringing in reforms based on little or no scholarship. They refer endlessly to experts, usually drawn from academic circles, who circulate in loosely formed committees dealing with the subjects of the day. The anti-gun NGOs have shown incredible levels of patience, which is as substantial as their skill of worming their way into groups that influence governmental advisers in many different policy areas - foreign affairs, justice, economics, criminology, and, more recently, in peace and women's studies.

An important example of an internationally funded influence extending worldwide is the Swiss Small Arms Survey, based in Geneva. A list



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of countries contributing to the maintenance of this group is available at www.smallarmssurvey.org/about_us/Contributing%20partners.htm It includes countries as diverse as Switzerland, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Finland, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Within these countries there are large government funding pools that contribute to projects internationally. The Small Arms Survey says it has also received support from the Geneva International Academic Network, the United Nations Development Programme and the South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

The Small Arms Survey is a full-time body funded sufficiently to have 19 staff. This group is constantly releasing publications. Its website [www.smallarmssurvey.org] shows the ever-growing list of titles it has overseen. This is not the only publishing outlet against firearm proponents. Anti-firearm NGOs are publishing a large number of books that are written by activists with the aid of foundation and government money.

The anti-gun activist Wendy Cukier of Canada has a new book, *Global Gun Epidemic: From Saturday Night Specials to AK47s*, that was published in 2005 by the academic publisher Praeger. The International Action Network on Small Arms is also putting out the second volume of its book, *Implementing the Programme of Action: Action by States and Civil Society*. This was specifically designed to be presented to the United Nations second Biennial Meeting of States in July, 2005. Such full-length works are coming thick and fast and they are not being countered by any independent international groups. There are more than 30 such books in print now. It is time that the pro-gun argu-

Wilbur Smith (left) receives the Inaugural Sport Shooting Ambassador Award from WFSA Vice President Keith Tidswell.



ment took over the arena.

Firearm laws

In the end the government of each country will make its own laws on matters relating to possession and use of firearms. These laws may be in conformity with international standards as set out in a document like the UN Firearms Protocol or some further document that may emanate from the UN Small Arms and Light Weapons Program of Action.

Each country, however, can choose to make laws that are stricter than those called for by these protocols. And at the elbows of the authorities in most nations, there are anti-gun people now thoroughly embedded as advisors. In many countries, the impact of their deeply held anti-gun philosophies is now being felt. They have been patient, working throughout the past decade or more to take an ever-increasing hold. Providing ready-written legislation against private gun ownership and circulating pseudo-scholarship, they have succeeded in establishing a strong and sometimes evangelical belief that all guns are bad. This belief is quickly sweeping through governments.

What needs to be done?

In order to put a halt to the anti-gun fraternity, a few things need to start happening. Firstly, it is crucial that wherever there are decisions to be made, firearm enthusiasts must be there - hence the SSAA's representatives to the WFSA. Secondly, firearm advocates must be armed with facts, and thirdly, they must have credibility and influence. If firearm advocates are not there, they will not be heard - the opposition will be.

Facts are critical in refuting the often less than scholarly research that is presented as fact by anti-gun NGOs and other organisations. To be armed with the facts and to make use of the good reputation painfully built up by the WFSA at the UN, the firearm fraternity needs funding. This is vital to support research and publishing. The case for firearm ownership is good, but that case is not being put to officials effectively and certainly not often enough or with the necessary consistency.

The facts saying that private gun ownership is a completely separate issue from criminal activity support our cause. But our opposition, the activists, wish to suppress our case. Working through the WFSA our side of the argument can be placed in the hands of people involved in the processes.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that every country is going to be under extreme pressure to make changes. It is also highly probable that these changes will affect the freedom and use of firearms that is enjoyed by people in countries which, until now, have been relatively unaffected. To say the WFSA is beyond your scope is erroneous. The SSAA is acting on your behalf and is working with the WFSA to keep firearm ownership an option for private citizens.

There will be differing levels of changes to gun laws in individual countries. The results will depend on how well organised and how active the gun associations are in putting people forward to match the research and lobbying done by the anti-gun activists. To properly combat these groups, we need funding and employees. So far our side is gravely lacking both. ●

"Boys should get back to nature - crabbing, fishing, hunting, hiking, water sports, camping etc. Innately within boys and men is the hunter/gatherer instinct, and anthropologists from around the world state categorically that this will continue for the next five thousand years."

Ian Lillico 2000, *Boys and their Schooling*.

Photo by Alex Tibbels

Exposing the hunter within

by Warren McKay

One of the major issues in education at the present time is the falling rate of achievement by boys. Boys are under-achieving in many areas and of serious concern is their literacy. State Education Departments and individual schools are concerned and are looking at ways to address this problem. To this end there are discussion papers, seminars and conferences.

One of the acknowledged experts and a consultant on the education of boys is Ian Lillico. Mr Lillico was invited by the combined schools in our area to address teachers and put forward ideas and strategies as a starting point to improve the outcomes of the boys in our schools.

As part of his consultancy work Lillico has a number of booklets he promotes to teachers. I was reading one titled *Boys and their Schooling* when my eyes lit up. Lillico puts forward an important concept, familiar to most of us, but one that has been lost by the urban majority.

"Boys need to get the sand between their toes, and experience the fulfillment and success of providing a catch for the table - of learning how to fish and crab and hunt. If boys are taught these basic recreational skills, they have a much better chance of surviving adolescence and early adulthood because they know they can do something and are useful."

The hunter within

Anthropologists have put forward various estimates of when mankind, as we know it, evolved into its present form. Without scientific justification I am going to pick an arbitrary date - 250,000 years ago. Now for the past 249,900 years, if man didn't hunt and fish, he went without meat. Some may wish to argue whether it has been 100 or 200 years since the majority of the world's population either kept their own animals for

slaughter or hunted for their meat but the fact remains that it is a drop in the ocean compared to the length of time man has hunted and fished to obtain his meat. (We don't have to go back very far to a time when many households kept chooks in the backyard and the only way to get a roast chicken dinner was first catch your rooster.)

The anti-hunters in society claim that hunting is no longer necessary to our 'civilised' way of life and want to forcibly push their ideology onto the whole of the community. Anthropologists will confirm that you cannot erase 250,000 years of essential survival instinct in a few short generations.

A little personal history to illustrate my point

As a child, up until the age of 10, I lived about a mile outside the small northern NSW town of Urbenville. My dad drove the school bus and the truck that took the cream cans to the Killarney butter factory. I still have vivid memories of the day when I was big enough to drag one of the half-size cans to the back of the truck.

We lived in the country but Dad didn't shoot, nor did anyone else that we knew at the time. In all my memories I cannot recollect him, or anyone else, hunting with a gun of any sort. He did have one - an old single-shot .22 but the only time it ever got used was to put a cow out of its misery after a gum tree limb fell on it during a storm.

Nobody we knew hunted the local rabbit population, yet on my walks over the hill behind our house I developed a great desire to 'get me a rabbit'. I found a guttering spike, the ones like a giant nail that went into the fascia board to hold up the gutter. Working the metal tab backwards and forwards I broke it off then sharpened the spike by rubbing it on the cement path out the back. I acquired a long, relatively straight stick and

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using string bound the spike on to make a spear.

I spent many an hour up on the hill 'hunting' those rabbits. I cpeit and snuck and hid and threw that spear countless times. Up on that hill I was a mighty warrior, a hunter.

Where did that instinct come from? By rights I should have been perfectly happy playing with my toy trucks; after all, that was what I was familiar with but I wanted to hunt those rabbits. In my whole life experience up to that stage there was nothing to even plant the idea of hunting. So where *did* it come from? Innate instinct - that's where.

"Innately within boys and men is the hunter/gatherer instinct, and anthropologists from around the world state categorically that this will continue for the next five thousand years," writes Lillico.

I guess that, like most instincts, it is stronger in some people than in others.

Another book I recently read was *Gazehounds: the Search for Truth* by Constance O Miller. In a chapter on the use of dogs by humans in the pursuit of hunting I came across the following, which the author quoted from *The Importance of Hunting in Human Evolution 1966* by WS Laughlin. As it gave no publishing details and had a specific style of writing, I assumed that it may well have been taken from a university thesis. It is not the easiest piece of writing to comprehend so I have printed the strategic sentences in bold.

"Hunting is the master behaviour pattern of the human species. It is the organising activity which has integrated the morphological, genetic and intellectual aspects of the individual human organisms and of the populations who compose our single species. **Hunting is a way of life, not simply a 'subsistence technique',** which importantly involves commitments, correlates and consequences spanning

the entire bio-behaviour continuum of the individual and of the entire species of which he is a member. **Man evolved as a hunter, he spent over ninety-nine percent of his specie-history as a hunter and he spread over the entire habitable area of the world as a hunter."**

Miller continues, "Despite anti-coursing letters in *Gazehound* (magazine) that find an innate 'joy of hunting' quite incomprehensible (due to empathy with the prey rather than the predator), numerous anthropologists and sociologists have noted a world-wide compulsion of contemporary man to re-create a hunting past, from a lazy afternoon's fishing, to risky and very-expensive African safaris.

"Lionel Tiger in *Men in Groups* (1969) agrees with Laughlin but insists the truism is, in reality, far more stringently applicable to men - individually or in groups - than women as the latter, throughout deduced history, have been more socially tied to gathering and agriculture near the home base, than to the hunting bands.

"The hunting drive can take many sublimation forms, providing a spectrum of release from inactivity frustrations, and some degree of inner satisfactions. 'Capturing' animals by camera, sporting events where teams (often named for predatory animals) compete, and all contests in which either physical skill or pot hunting are involved, are obvious substitutes. But in the beginning, these substitutions were in inventions of restless men."

We as hunters do not have to apologise to anyone. We are just aware of and sensitive to an inner reality that others try to deny (or provide a substitute for) in their lives. Humans have a biological drive to hunt. While we no longer *have* to hunt to provide food for the table, deep within our human psyche we feel *valued* when we can carry out our role as a provider and protector of our family group. ●



Photo by Geoff Thorpe

This case and legislation is NSW specific. Please note that as a result of this case the legislation has been amended.

Photo by Stephen Elliot

Caught on middle ground

by Jennifer Martens

Imagine that you are busy doing your job - earning an honest living for your family. You are focused and minding your own business. Your attention is aroused when the police interrupt. You've always been a law-abiding citizen, so immediately you wonder which of your co-workers is the desperado. When they confirm it is you they are there to see, your life flashes in front of you as you try to assess the reason for such an unexpected visit. A few instances come to mind from your younger days but within seconds you are confident that you haven't broken any laws.

The 'crime'

Jamie Hardman experienced this scenario in June, 2001. As a professional kangaroo shooter, he had been given permission to spotlight on a property with no homestead 80km west of Moree, New South Wales. Despite the low-lying fog, it had been a good night's work. He had successfully culled 20 kangaroos and 10 pigs on the north side of the property. At 1am, he crossed the road to get to the southern paddock, where he was sure there would be more work. As soon as his wheels hit the road, he could see the unmistakable red and blue lights cutting through the fog.

"To this day, I don't know why the police were out there," said Jamie.

A police vehicle that far from the city at that time of night was unusual. Adding to the intrigue was the presence of a meat officer from Sydney. While the police officers questioned Jamie, the meat

officer checked all of his carcasses to make sure they had the proper tags. Clearly the officers had planned the surprise inspection.

While a friend operated the spotlight, Jamie drove the paddocks looking for kangaroos. He kept his Ruger .223 lying across the dashboard for quick and easy access, which is his routine when spotlighting. At the moment he was pulled over, there was an empty case in the chamber and live cartridges in the magazine of his firearm.

"When I was young I was taught to keep an empty case in the chamber after a shot and I always do that, especially when I am in a vehicle bouncing around because the bolt could get knocked back into place," Jamie said.

The police were specific in their search and they wasted no time in inspecting the .223. After opening the bolt and ejecting the empty case for the officer Jamie handed over his firearm. He recalls one of the officers saying that the gun contained a live round in the chamber. He based that belief on the noise the ejected case made when it hit the seatbelt mount. According to the officer, it "sounded live". The Ruger was then confiscated.

Repercussions

In NSW, it was (and is) an offence to have a loaded firearm in a *public* place. Jamie never thought he was doing anything wrong, as he was hunting in his vehicle on *private* property. His interpretation of the law meant that his car was a *private* place. He never thought about the three seconds it took him to cross the four metres of public road

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that separated the paddock. He never considered that he might be in violation of the law.

This is where the story gets tricky.

Unfortunately for Jamie, his interpretation of the law was not the same as the local police that night. He received a summons a week or so later with his court date. He was facing charges of possessing a loaded firearm in a public place and a conviction would mean he would serve a 10-year firearms licence revocation. For him, that meant a sentence of unemployment. He contacted a group of solicitors in Moree. The solicitors suggested that Jamie plead guilty. Forfeiting his livelihood and career wasn't an option.

Recalling an ad he had seen many times in the Shooter's Gallery section of the *Australian Shooter* magazine, Jamie called solicitor Tom Morgan of Woodgate Morgan Solicitors. They planned their strategy through a series of phone calls. Mr Morgan, a lifetime shooter, well versed in the specifics of the NSW Crimes Act 1900, was confident. He knew that as the law stood, a crime had not been committed.

The defence

Mr Morgan based the defence on the NSW Crimes Act 1900, which indicated that if a person had a firearm in a private vehicle that was being used for private purposes, then the vehicle was considered a private place. That is exactly what Jamie thought to be the case and exactly why he couldn't explain the late night encounter. The Crown argued the vehicle was a public place because it was on a public road. More than a few people have been convicted under that interpretation.

Mr Morgan's defence, which relied on information from the Summary Offences Act, specifically the description of a vehicle as a private place, struck a chord with the judge and the case was thrown out. Having had some runs on the board with their interpretation of the law, the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP) was less than happy with the result. They made an appeal to the third umpire, Judge Carol Simpson of the NSW Supreme Court.

In the Supreme Court, the DPP won their appeal but Mr Morgan and Jamie weren't finished. Swinging from the back foot, they lodged an appeal.

According to Mr Morgan, he was the first to dispute this section of the NSW Crimes Act 1900 in 80 years.

In front of the full bench of three judges, Mr Morgan argued the case.

"After considering the facts and applying the written law they fully agreed with us," said Mr Morgan.

The state had based its case on Section 93G of the NSW Crimes Act 1900, which related to possessing a loaded firearm in a public place. The court determined that section of the law was not applicable, given the facts of this case.

Because the outcome of this pivotal case affected so many shooters in NSW, the SSAA NSW branch saw fit to assist in the defence. It was very supportive of Jamie and Mr Morgan and helped where possible.

"SSAA NSW will always help members defend their legal rights, especially where there are implications for the broader membership," NSW SSAA Executive Director Roy Smith said.



"Firearms legislation can be very complex and this case highlights the fact that members need to be careful and know what the law is," he said.

In October of 2003, the NSW Government changed the law to state that it was indeed illegal to have a personal loaded firearm in a private vehicle for private purposes if in a public place.

The DPP still pressed on so not long after October they considered making another appeal to the High Court of Australia. In the first step of that process, the leave court indicated that the law had been changed and the original case was closed.

Having won the case the defence filed for reimbursement of all the expenses accrued through the appeals process. The Supreme Court found in their favour and Jamie was reimbursed all costs incurred.

It should be pointed out that Jamie's shooters licence was never revoked during the two years he spent fighting the charges. Eight months into the case his gun was returned to him so he could continue working. Thanks to Mr Morgan and the SSAA, today he continues to work as a professional kangaroo shooter.

"I could not have won my case without the SSAA and I recommend that all shooters become members," Jamie said.

The SSAA reminds sporting shooters that they have a duty to know the laws that govern their sport - not only for their benefit but for the benefit of sporting shooters throughout the country.

Note: Anyone serving a 10-year licence revocation under section 93G of the NSW Crimes Act, which started before December 2004, might have reason to re-examine the facts of their case. ●

Democrats' Bill would see the end of recreational fishing

Australian Fisheries Minister Senator Ian Macdonald has recently warned that the Democrats' private Member's Bill, the *National Animal Welfare Bill 2005*, would effectively outlaw recreational fishing.

The Bill, introduced by Democrat Senator Andrew Bartlett, proposes to outlaw the "capture and killing of wild animals for the purpose of entertainment and sport", which would effectively ban recreational fishing as well as other outdoor sports such as pig shooting.

The Bill is before the Senate's Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee, who are due to report back to the Senate by the last sitting day in June 2006.

Written submissions to the Bill had formally closed on November 30, 2005, but the Committee continued to accept submissions until the end of January this year. Senator Macdonald said that he urged all recreational fishermen to voice their anger at the Democrats' Bill. The Committee was also expected to hold public hearings in the coming months.

"Recreational fishing is one of our most loved national pastimes and a great family activity, which is threatened by the Democrats' stupidity," Senator Macdonald said.

The \$3.3m National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey, primarily funded by the Australian Government, showed that almost 20 per cent of Australians aged five years or older go fishing at least once a year - that's 3.5 million Australians wetting a line annually.

The study also showed that recreational fishermen spend \$1.8 billion on fishing-related equipment and activities annually, much of this in regional areas, providing a vital cash injection to regional communities.

"The Government is opposed to the Democrats' proposed ban as it would be a kick in the guts for millions of recreational fishermen and destroy thousands of regional jobs," Senator Macdonald said.

"This Bill demonstrates once again how out of touch Democrats are with ordinary Australians, and why their Party's support base has collapsed in recent times," said Senator Macdonald. The Howard Government strongly supports recreational fishing and has provided unprecedented support to recreational fishermen through the Government's \$15 million Recreational Fishing Community Grants Programme.

AusPost update

Australia Post will no longer accept international postings containing firearms, including all firearm components, or items of weaponry.

Items of weaponry include grenades, mortar shells, canisters, or items which resemble these articles (including replicas) for carriage to or from Australia.

Australia Post defines Firearm and Firearm Parts to mean the contents of an article where:

1. the description of such contents appearing on the face of the article includes those words or other words which could reasonably be construed as meaning a firearm or a part thereof; or
2. it is otherwise detected during the course of post that the article contains a matter or thing which in Australia Post's opinion is a firearm or firearm part not including a firearm part which in Australia Post's opinion would not impact:
 - a) Australia Post's operations; or
 - b) The safety or security of persons or property.

For the purpose of this definition Australia Post advises that the following items, are deemed to be firearm parts and are therefore prohibited from International carriage by Australia Post:

- a gas piston, friction assembly, action bar, breech bolt or breech block
- a firearm barrel
- an assembled trigger mechanism
- a receiver
- something, other than a complete firearm, that includes 1 or more of these items
- any other matter or thing the carriage of which would contravene a law of a State or Territory or which is prohibited by Australia Post pursuant to the Australia Post Terms and Conditions including those items excluded from carriage in the Australia Post Dangerous and Prohibited Goods and Packaging Post Guide.

Permits

Customers with import or export permits should be advised that their permits are still valid but that Australia Post will no longer carry these items.

Exclusions from the definition of "items of weaponry"

Australia Post will continue to carry items such as knives, daggers, swords, and axes, which have a valid import or export permit where required and are legally permissible to carry into Australia (if inbound) or into the country of destination (if outbound). ●

OUTBACK HOUSE

How sad that the politically correct commissars that have invaded every section of our society, have now made their presence felt in the television industry, especially in the recent TV series *Outback House*.

It was said to be set in the 1860s, yet not at any time was a muzzleloading firearm shown. You would have to be a dope not to know that in those days any homestead would have had at least several pistols and about three muzzleloading shotguns, as the people relied on game such as duck, kangaroo, rabbit and so on to supplement their rations. On top of that, they had to contend with foxes and dingoes, especially at lambing time.

In my files I have a sketch showing the interior of one room of a two-room hut in the bush in 1851. On the walls a Scottish dagger, a naval dagger, five single-shot muzzleloading pistols and four double-barrel muzzleloading shotguns can be seen.

Didn't the production crew of *Outback House* do any research at all? If they did, they would have depicted the men from the house out procuring meat for the table. But can you imagine the screams from the animal liberation mob if the cast had been shown eating kangaroo meat (as everyone in colonial bush Australia did)?

What a shame that the commissars have stuffed up another attempt at depicting our exciting wild colonial days.

Edgar Penzig, NSW

LICENSING

Firstly, I must say how much I enjoy reading your fine magazine. As a rank beginner all the articles are of interest. History, techniques, equipment, hunting ethics and bushcraft all show that there is a lot more to these sports than merely punching holes in things. I commend you on putting out there a view of our sports that is both responsible and in the case of conservation shooting, a real service to the community.

My work requires me to move interstate every few years. Up until last year the transfer of firearms licences was a fairly simple affair, but no more! Soon, when I move interstate, I will be required to reapply for my licence in the new state. That's right - I'll have to start from scratch, including another safety course, a three-month cooling-off period prior to buying my 'first' rifle, the job lot. So I ask, since the advent of national gun laws, why is this now necessary?

I am fortunate in that my employer gives me access to an armory in which I can store my firearms for the time it takes all this red tape to be processed. However, it made me think about those other folk out there who could be placed in a situation where they are in possession of a firearm while being unlicensed, if only for the period of time the paperwork is being processed and while they are waiting for a safety course.

Realistically, with moving house, a three-month cooling-off period, awaiting courses being held, and just finding the time, all this could take six months before I am able to take to the range again.

The only purpose for this change in interstate licensing that I can see is to make owning a firearm so hard that people just give up.

Greg Pierce, NT

THE FIREARM DEBATE

The firearm debate is just one of many areas in which we are being increasingly encouraged to think with our hearts, not our heads. We are shown graphic pictures of traffic accident victims, for example, to support changes to the traffic legislation. The same is true with respect to the firearm legislation controversy. These ads target our emotions rather than our reason.

Governments know that emotional thinkers are very easily propagandised since there is no coherent support structure of facts underpinning the conclusions they draw.

With good reason, emotional thinkers are the darling of governments everywhere.

Robert E Johnstone, Qld