

ASJ

AUSTRALIAN SHOOTERS JOURNAL
The political voice of the SSAA

Stop the
Greens
from grabbing
your firearm
FREEDOMS



2007 Vol. 9 Issue 1

Members-only insert to the *Australian Shooter*

www.ssaa.org.au



In this issue

SSAA National approached all of the major parties to supply a statement regarding their position on recreational shooting and hunting. We undertook not to change the statements and while there are many comments and statistics that we disagree with, we have allowed them to be published predominantly unchallenged. We leave it to you, our members, to interpret the information supplied by these parties and form your own opinion and vote accordingly.

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See back issues of *ASJ* online at www.australianshooter.com.au

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**The political voice
of the SSAA**

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Stick to your guns - make your vote count

Bob Green - National President SSAA



Let me start this *ASJ* editorial by telling you I am not going to advise SSAA members which of the major parties to vote for to govern our country. Who you vote for, either the ALP or Liberal/National Coalition, is your business.

We, of course, have a difficult track record with the Liberal Party, but there are genuine members among the Coalition, as there are in the ALP, who support recreational shooting and hunting. With the announced step down of Prime Minister John Howard some time during his term should he win it, shooters could hope for more intelligent treatment than they have received in the past.

Likewise, the Federal Labor Party under the leadership of Kevin Rudd has signalled a closer, more understanding relationship with shooters. Mr Rudd is no stranger to the shooting range and has not shied away from the media about his support of the shooting sports.

Both parties have issued a statement to the SSAA, which you can read in this edition of *ASJ*.

With that said, as the National President of the SSAA representing more than 120,000 members, I will ask you to think very carefully about how you vote for the Senate. Why? Because despite both major parties offering some level of support to shooters, there is a very real chance that the Greens could hold the balance of power in the Upper House. The Greens could manipulate their position to blackmail the government of the day to legislate against private firearm ownership and hunting. Make no mistake, the Greens are no friend of the sporting shooter or outdoorsman. Already they are pushing for a ban on all semi-automatic handguns and their irrational and childishly simplistic belief that only the police and defence force should have ownership of any kind of firearm is well known.

Anglers and four-wheel drivers will also be in for a rough time by the Greens, with more restrictions and lockouts from public land and marine areas promised. It is essential we keep the ambitions of the Greens in check by making sure our preferences in the Senate do not trickle down to them. We need to limit the number of

Senate positions they win and ensure shooter-friendly parties and members are elected in the Upper House to neutralise their influence on the government.

Three main parties running for the Senate that have supportive policies of the shooting sports are the **Australian Shooters Party**, **Australian Fishing and Lifestyle Party** and **Family First**. Not all of these parties have candidates in each state, so you will need to identify who is running in your state *before* going to the ballot box.

Should you wish to vote for a different party or candidate in the Senate, check where their preferences are going. Preferably, take the option to fill out the complete Senate paper, remembering to number all squares, making sure parties like the Greens and Democrats are definitely allocated last.

Certain individuals are worthy of a special mention for their demonstrated support of the shooting sports and I would like to single out the Liberal's **David Hawker** in Victoria, Labor's **Dick Adams** in Tasmania and Queensland Independent **Bob Katter**. They have supported us in the past and I would encourage members in their areas to do the same to them. SSAA (Vic) has asked its members to visit the Combined Firearms Council of Victoria website (of which they are the largest body member) at www.cfcv.org.au for updates on the Election and 'preferred' candidates.

I would finally like to reiterate that the Greens are by far our greatest threat. It is imperative that we act as a group to inhibit their potential success.

Even if the Australian Shooters Party, Australian Fishing and Lifestyle Party and Family First parties are not all successful in gaining seats in the Senate, your vote for them will keep the preferences out of the hands of the Greens and help ensure the future of our chosen recreation.

Finally, for updates on the Election campaign and released policies relevant to shooters, visit our website at www.ssaa.org.au and click on the 'Federal Election 07' banner.

Stick to your guns and make your vote count this Federal Election. ●

SSAA response

SSSAA National approached all major parties in the lead-up to the Federal Election and asked them to submit a statement regarding their position on 'recreational sports shooting and hunting'. As the peak sports shooting and hunting body in Australia, we are duty bound to address some of the comments made in these statements to our members.

All parties, even the Greens responded, although they declined to submit a formal statement and instead directed us to their website.

While it is unsurprising that parties such as the Greens and the Australian Democrats have quite clear anti-firearm ownership policies, it was disappointing to see the Coalition Government avoid altogether any mention of hunting in its statement.

Of our 120,000 members nationwide, 90 per cent consider themselves hunters. All forms of hunting whether it be feral animal control, meat for the table or trophy hunting of exotic species, play an invaluable role in preserving Australia's native fauna and flora. Regulated hunting such as duck hunting in some states of Australia pours money back into the environment to assist in the development of wetlands necessary to sustain bird life. In fact, ironically, in this ASJ you will see a letter written by the Liberal's House of Representative Speaker David Hawker who states that "there is ample evidence to show that hunters are an important part of that [ecological] balance. Evidence from many parts of the world acknowledges the positive role hunters play in conservation".

It would cost hundreds of millions of dollars to annually control Australia's feral animal population by professional hunters, should private hunting be banned. Currently, sporting shooters do it because of their strong commitment to conservation and the love of the outdoors, rather than the dollar.

We also need to take to task the Coalition Government's '\$1.6 million annual funding'. The reality is that none of this money goes to the SSAA and its members. Most of the funding is directed specifically towards elite Olympic shooters, rather than the sporting events or hunting and conservation activities our members are involved with.

The Nationals, however, have been upfront about their position on hunting in Australia and it is encouraging to see their support of both hunting and recreational sports shooting in writing. One must realise however that they are the junior partner of the Coalition. The Nationals also stressed that critics of firearm laws would do well to focus on law enforcement rather than law-abiding licensed firearm users.

The Australian Labor Party's statement has come out strongly in support of sporting shooters and the hunting and conservation activities of Australia's 750,000 licensed shooters. Opposition leader Kevin Rudd has previously publicly indicated an appreciation of the shooting sports.

SSAA National has held discussions leading up to the election with both major parties and regularly attends meetings in Canberra with government departments discussing domestic and international issues as they affect the law-abiding shooter.

In addition, recent meetings with Shadow Minister for Justice, Customs and Territories Arch Bevis has been constructive and positive towards the position of recreational shooting and hunting. ●



Labor leader Kevin Rudd

Australian Labor Party statement

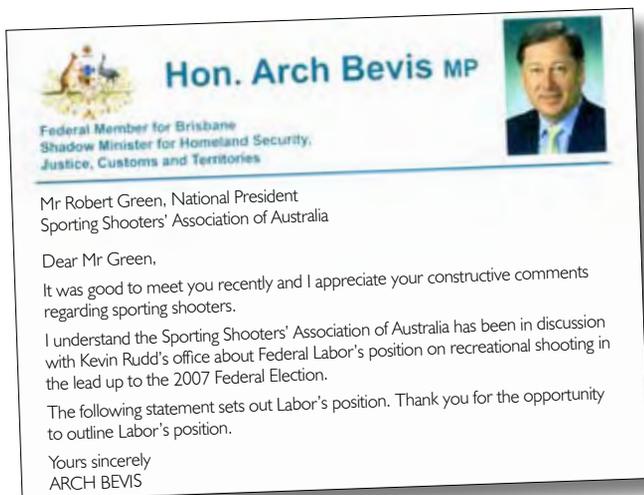
The Australian Labor Party supports and encourages sporting activity throughout our community. It recognises the legitimacy of the shooting sports, from local clubs through to the elite level of the Commonwealth and Olympic Games.

Federal Labor values the role that recreational firearms owner associations play in contributing to active sporting engagement, to the economy and to Australia's successes at the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, together with World Championships and other competitive activities.

Australia has in place stringent national and state firearms legislation designed to protect the rights both of our law-abiding sporting shooters and those of the wider community. The Federal Labor Party encourages ongoing dialogue between the member-based sporting organisations, legislators and law enforcers to maintain a safe community where legitimate sporting shooting can flourish.

Labor also recognises the important role of the conservation movement within the sporting shooters in protecting this country's native animals against threats from introduced feral species. Ethical hunting too, has a long history in Australia.

Labor supports the roles of the shooting organisations in passing down the knowledge and skills to new participants, necessary to educate them in the appropriate methods to ensure stringent ethical standards in the field. ●



The Coalition Government's position on the use of firearms (statement)

The Coalition Government has always acknowledged the importance and legitimacy of shooting as a sport. In fact, in recent times, Australia has enjoyed great success on the international sports shooting stage. Our funding of sporting shooters through the Australian Sports Commission highlights the Coalition's firm commitment to growing the sport and encouraging even greater success into the future. The Coalition Government now provides funding of \$1.6 million annually, which is a vast increase on the funding available in 1996.

The Coalition Government's approach to firearms policy has always sought to strike a balance between the interests of sporting shooters and primary producers who have a genuine need to have access to firearms and the interests of the broader community to live safely and securely.

The 1996 National Firearms Agreement (NFA) signed by all state and territory police ministers and endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), has set a clear path for appropriate regulation of firearms, including who should be permitted to access and use firearms. This agreement was a response to the terrible events of Port Arthur and we have gradually moved towards more consistent and uniform firearms laws. We have made significant progress in providing national information on owning and transferring firearms.

In 2002, the Howard Government established the Sporting Shooters and Firearms Advisory Council. For the first time in Australia's history, sporting shooters were given a direct line of communication to the Government. The Sporting Shooters and Firearms Advisory Council provides invaluable advice in the development of firearms reforms and the views of this Council will continue to be sought. They have worked closely with the Government to ensure the balance is maintained in providing sporting shooters with the freedom to enjoy their sport, whilst also ensuring the community is safe.

It is understandable that some shooters are disappointed by the introduction of tighter national controls on access to certain firearms; however these measures have been taken to ensure the safety of all Australians - a core responsibility of the Coalition Government.

Under the agreement, licence applicants should be aged 18 years or over and there must be a 'genuine reason' for owning, possessing and using a firearm. A 'genuine reason' includes sports shooting activities and the business of primary production, but expressly disregards personal protection as a genuine reason. While state and territory legislation allows minors to use firearms by way of permit systems, this use is required to be supervised use at all times. It is important to remember that permit rights do not equate to licensing rights. Minors cannot purchase or legally acquire a firearm through holding a permit.



Prime Minister John Howard



Australia has come a long way with gun control since 1996. In the decade prior to the Port Arthur massacre, 112 people were killed and 52 wounded in 11 mass shootings¹. In the 10 years since the 1996 gun buy-back initiative, no mass shootings have occurred in Australia. Firearms murder has also decreased from 99 victims and 31.7 per cent of all murders in 1996 to 46 victims in 2006 and 16 per cent of all murders². Robbery with a firearm has decreased from 1585 victims and 9.7 per cent of all robberies in 1996 to 1192 victims in 2006 and 6.9 per cent of all robbery victims³. Firearms-related deaths have decreased from 521 in 1996, to 238 deaths in 2004⁴.

Current firearms laws in Australia are based predominantly on the resolutions agreed upon by Australian police ministers and compiled in the National Firearms Agreement. This is a carefully considered agreement that has improved firearms laws in Australia to benefit and protect the community. As a result of this agreement, we have introduced a number of measures, which include:

- Establishing a multi-jurisdictional taskforce to examine the scope and nature of firearm trafficking
- Tightening border controls to target the illegal importation of guns
- Introducing two cross-border firearm trafficking offences that carry a substantial maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment or a \$275,000 fine
- Introducing state of the art X-ray facilities and improved intelligence gathering.

The Coalition Government has got the balance right with gun control. There is no single measure or package of reforms that can prevent firearm crime or improve safety overnight. We fully support the legitimate use of firearms by sporting shooters and the interests of sporting shooters has been well considered in the development of firearms reforms.

A long-term strategy is needed and the Coalition Government is committed to pursuing a range of measures to control firearms and their criminal misuse, while also maintaining the interests of sporting shooters. ●

Notes:

¹ Sydney University School of Public Health Report 2006.

² ABS 2007 Recorded Crimes-victims, 2006.

³ ABS 2007 Recorded Crimes-victims, 2006.

⁴ Unpublished data, ABS causes of death data series.



Deputy Prime Minister and
Nationals leader Mark Vaile

The Nationals statement



The Nationals in Government understand there are many people who have a right to own and use firearms.

The Nationals consider recreational sports shooting and hunting to be legitimate, genuine and justified use of firearms.

These sports are important to the fabric of regional Australia and The Nationals understand the important environmental role played by hunters.

The Nationals' approach to firearms policy seeks to strike a balance between the interests of those with a genuine need to have access to these firearms, such as sporting shooters and primary producers, and the interests of the broader community.

The Nationals recognise the outstanding work sporting shooters' organisations are playing in enforcing a code of ethics, which promotes the safe use of firearms, adherence to laws and regulations and most importantly, the skills of secure firearms ownership.

Firearms control legislation remains the Constitutional responsibility of state governments and in particular, state police ministers.

Amendments to state firearms control legislation will not form part of any new policy developed by the Federal Nationals.

In any matters relating to firearms, it is the view of The Nationals that due recognition should always be given to the thousands of law-abiding and responsible sporting shooters who want to ensure their sport is both safe and respected.

In the wake of any firearms crime that receives media attention, it is the desire of The Nationals to ensure that all legal firearms users be protected from feeling that they are being victimised by proxy.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Nationals leader, Mark Vaile, when interviewed in the media on violent crime involving firearms, maintains that existing laws are adequate and that critics should focus on law enforcement rather than law-abiding licensed firearms users.

The establishment by the Howard/Vaile Government of an advisory council involving sporting shooters ensures that firearms users are able to present themselves to the general public and to the government as a responsible element.

After all, The Nationals understand that it is the shooters and the shooting clubs who have the greatest interest in seeing that their sport is properly controlled and administered, and holds public respect.

The Nationals are the only party that only seeks to represent in the Federal Parliament the 7.5 million people who live outside the capital cities.

As such, our organisation is best placed to act as advocates to ensure the views of sporting shooters are represented faithfully in our nation's government.

The Nationals' values are based on three principles: security, individual achievement and strong representation for local communities.

We believe in security for the nation, local communities and families.

We believe in private enterprise, a fair go and a balance role for Government.

We believe in Members of Parliament who are strong local advocates, champions for their regions and come together to act as a team.

The Nationals is a private enterprise organisation. It provides a vital balance, ensuring the interests of people living beyond the capital cities have a voice in Parliament. Without The Nationals, government policy would be determined by a substantial majority of city-based parliamentarians.

It upholds traditional values and fights for a better quality of service, opportunity and life for all people, from remote inland communities to major regional and coastal centres.

The Party has been a major influence of policy and is responsible for many landmark initiatives for Australia and we will continue to represent the interests of sporting shooters and hunters. ●

Amendments to state firearms control legislation will not form part of any new policy developed by the Federal Nationals.

The Australian Fishing & Lifestyle Party



Unless, like a fortunate few, you are sitting by the campfire on Fraser Island or Cape York without a TV, radio or newspaper, it is impossible not to know an election is in the air.

While so many of us who enjoy an outdoors lifestyle do so to escape the pressures of modern life, politics included, it is depressing that we can no longer ignore the fact that it now intrudes into our lifestyles, as well as our day-to-day lives.

This year, when you vote for the major party you want to lead this country into the future, you will be asked to make a second vote - a Senate vote. The mathematical facts are that none of the major parties (Labor, Liberal or National) will control the Senate after this election.

Until the 2004 Election, no major party had controlled the Senate since 1975, and with the current mix, no party is likely to do so again into the future. The Senate will be controlled by minor parties and the biggest and most well resourced of these is the Greens.

With the ever-probable demise of the Australian Democrats, the Greens are poised to take control of the Upper House (the Senate) and, once again, will hold an incredibly strong negotiating position with the elected Government.

This will allow them to pursue their own policies with absolute vigour! The elected Government will have no choice, but to trade with the Greens to pass important legislation.

For those of us who enjoy fishing, camping, hunting, four-wheel-drive use and other outdoor recreation, this should ring alarm bells. They will trade your lifestyle - that is a fact!

On top of the widespread introduction of no-fishing zones across the country, to a point where Australian now has more than 30 per cent of all the no-fishing zones in the world, we have seen a Greens Senate Candidate make the comment that "any person who owns a 4WD is ignorant", the Greens call for "increased taxes on 4WDs" and "closing down the coal industry in five years". Combine this with new calls by the WWF for the entire Coral Sea to be made a no-fishing zone. We are faced with ever-increasing restrictions on foreshore camping, national park access and beach closures and we are rapidly moving towards a future where the experiences our kids get of the Great Outdoors will be on Discovery Channel.

This election, a vote for a Labor, Liberal or National candidate in the Senate will not make any difference. The Greens will win the balance of power if you vote for one of the major parties as their preferences will trickle down to the Greens. There has to be a viable alternative.

We believe our organisation is that alternative. The Australian Fishing and Lifestyle Party offers a sensible, balanced approach to managing our parks and waterways and includes human interaction in a reasonable and sustainable manner. The Greens choice just locks us all out.

When we stood for the Senate in Queensland at the last Federal Election as The Fishing Party (Qld), we stopped the Greens winning the last Senate seat. Now, with a new name, a wider focus of all outdoor lifestyles and more experience and profile, we are poised to do the same again in at least two states. This will be enough to deny the Greens the power their leader Bob Brown so desires - power to pursue a radical environmental and social agenda and the power to devastate our lifestyle choices. It's happening now; it will get much worse.

To a degree, this Election for us is not about being political; it is just about the maths. A minor party will control the Senate after this election; that is an undeniable mathematical fact. A vote for Labor, Liberal or National in the Senate cannot stop that happening.

The question you need to ask yourselves is who do you want to control the balance of power? Which minor party will protect your rights to continue to enjoy the cultural connection Australians enjoy with our outdoors lifestyle?

Make your vote count.

The Australian Fishing and Lifestyle Party is the only sensible alternative to a Greens-controlled Senate.

AFLP statement on the shooting sports and hunting

The Australian Fishing and Lifestyle Party supports the legitimate ownership and responsible use of firearms within the Australian community with due regard for public safety.

Shooting and hunting have strong connections with Australia's modern history and heritage as legitimate recreational pursuits and as such, the rights of Australians to pursue these activities lawfully should not be hindered by unnecessary or intrusive legislation or unjustified limitations of access.

The AFLP also recognises that educational and conservation programs promoting ethical shooting and hunting have a major role to play in the development of these pastimes as a positive and valuable part of our broader community.

Fishing and hunting have a rightful place as part of our natural world. ●

Shooters Party goes national

Reprinted from the SSAA NSW November 2007 newsletter

Members are encouraged to throw their support behind the Australian Shooters Party (ASP), the Federally-registered offshoot of the Shooters Party, which will be contesting the upcoming election.

After winning an additional seat at the New South Wales State Election earlier this year, hopes are high that the Shooters Party's Federal counterpart will enjoy similar success.

The ASP will be running for a seat in the Senate and in NSW will be running on a joint ticket with the Australian Fishing and Lifestyle Party (AFLP). The two groups, share many common objectives, most notably, an opposition to the irrational attitude of the Greens when it comes to the shooting sports, angling and the environment.

Of course, one of the main aims of the ASP is to stop the Greens from securing an extra seat in the Senate, which could prove disastrous for almost anyone who enjoys any form of outdoor recreation.

Sporting shooters remain an obvious target for the Greens, who continue to push for a national ban on all semi-automatic handguns. Anglers and four-wheel drivers, too, will be in for a rough ride under a Greens regime, with more restrictions and land/marine lock-outs on the cards.

The Shooters Party has a proven track record in countering the Greens and their efforts in the NSW Upper House over the past 12 years and combined with its recent victory at the State Election, has severely limited the Greens power.

Members are reminded that they will have two votes on November 24. One for the local candidate they would like to see in Government (House of Representatives) and the other for the Senate, which reviews legislation passed in the House of Representatives.

Using your second vote, in the Senate, for the Australian Shooters Party and other likeminded groups such as the Australian Fishing and Lifestyle Party will help ensure that the future of your sport is secure and that the Greens are kept well in check.

Vote 1 above the line on the large ballot paper for the Australian Shooters Party and restore some balance in the Senate. ●

Sporting shooters remain an obvious target for the Greens...

Democratic Labor Party

The Democratic Labor Party plans to field Senate candidates in most states and Lower House candidates in Victoria. The DLP has stated that they will place the Greens last on its how-to-vote cards and list of preferences. The Party has said that it will take a rational approach to regulating firearm usage that takes account of the ordinary needs of the farming community and responsible sporting pursuits.

Further details of the DLP's policies can be found at www.dlp.org.au ●

...it will take a rational approach to regulating firearm usage that takes account of the ordinary needs of the farming community and responsible sporting pursuits.

Family First statement



Family First leader Steve Fielding

Family First believes Australia's rich and extensive state parks, marine areas and forests should be open for families to enjoy. Ensuring the community has access to our natural treasures will give Australians a greater appreciation and respect for nature and their environment.

- Family First supports the use of public lands for:
- Recreational fishing, shooting and hunting
 - Open access for community enjoyment ●

Australian Democrats statement



Australian Democrats leader Lyn Allison

The Australian Democrats' policies are formulated by a ballot of party members. The Democrats do not have a balloted policy regarding firearms; however, our policy on firearms is summarised below.

The Democrats advocate a comprehensive approach to firearm regulation to reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in Australia.

The Democrats acknowledge that the majority of crimes involving firearms are committed by individuals who are not licensed gun owners. However, examples such as the Monash University shootings in 2002 show that this is not always the case. Moreover, research suggests that theft from licensed owners sustains the illegal trade in firearms.

For these reasons, the Democrats advocate a general reduction in the number of firearms within Australia, but with a particular emphasis on guns in the hands of unlicensed owners.

The Democrats consider that further reform of firearms laws is required to reduce the number of guns in circulation in Australia. However, such reform must be based on credible research regarding the efficacy of previous reforms and existing firearms control laws.

The Democrats are concerned that a lack of credible research and statistical data means that it is unclear whether the Federal Government's 1997 National Firearms Agreement and gun buy-back scheme has achieved its fundamental objective: to limit the number of guns in circulation in order to reduce the use of firearms in fatal accidents and violent crime.

Available research tends to send mixed signals. In April this year, an Australian National University study claimed gun laws led to about 35 fewer murders and 247 fewer suicides annually since 1997. However, an earlier study in the *British Journal of Criminology* claimed firearms agreements had no effect on death rates. NSW and Queensland both reported in 2007 that they failed to dent the gun tally, with gun ownership continuing to climb.

Notwithstanding, several incidents involving firearms this year suggest that continued efforts at gun control are warranted. Examples include a schoolgirl from Ballarat's Loreto College making threatening remarks on a website; two students accused of plotting a high school massacre in southern NSW; and two Victorian school boys foolishly taking two sawn-off guns and ammunition to a school camp for rabbit shooting.

Accordingly, the Democrats support further initiatives to reduce the potential misuse of guns in the commission of crimes or other events, particularly in relation to young people. Such initiatives could include:

- Returning firearms reform to the Agenda of the Standing Committee for Attorney-Generals and Australian Police Ministers Council, which would enable work on a scoping audit to ensure each state is complying with the spirit of the 1997 Firearms Agreement

- The examination of new technologies to enhance gun safety, including the mandatory fitting of childproof locks on firearms
 - Revising customs and import laws in relation to firearms
 - Comprehensive policing of firearm storage requirements
 - Broadening the current ban on automatic and semi-automatic firearms, and
 - Implementation of a National Firearms Management System, including a national ballistics intelligence database
- The Democrats consider this represents a responsible approach to firearm regulation, which emphasises community safety, but which does not unduly infringe upon the rights of licensed firearms owners. ●

Democrats support further initiatives to reduce the potential misuse of guns in the commission of crimes or other events, particularly in relation to young people.

The Greens



While the Greens declined to issue a written statement to the SSAA, they did suggest that we look at their website as an indication of their policies regarding private firearm ownership.

At www.greens.org.au you can find details on the Party's call to ban handguns such as 'sports shooting must not excuse these guns being more widely available within the community' and their desire to 'progress gun law reform'.

The Greens are no friend of the sporting shooter, hunter, fisherman or outdoorsman, with calls on locking out public use of parks and marine areas. ●

Taking up the cause

Dick Adams

- Federal Member for Lyons (Tasmania)

Dick Adams grew up on a dairy farm and like many thousands of boys in those days, grew up using a gun for hunting and around the farm. His story is much like many country people.



“I must have been about 14 when I was taught how to use a gun. We were taught gun safety from an early age as guns were part of our culture; hunting rabbits, wallaby and then deer was part of normal life. Safety was stressed continuously by my grandfather and my father and such principles as unloading the gun when you were finished with it in the field and breaking a shotgun when walking became second nature because of the way you were taught.

“I remember being visited at Cressy High School on several occasions by police officers who gave us advice on gun safety also. I can remember them stressing never stand a gun up against a post when getting through a fence, guns should be laid on the ground before climbing through or over the fence to stop accidents and most of my friends at the time had similar instruction.

“Like everything, learning the right way to handle a gun early is always the most successful and proper way of handling gun safety with young people. I think they should be supervised in all the learning stages to ensure that safety and respect of firearms is totally understood. Like a motor vehicle, guns are not toys and should be treated with utmost respect or they can kill accidentally.”

Dick said that like many others in the country, his family have supported the responsible use of firearms even for youngsters and he is concerned when country people get the blame for the illegal use of guns.

It was this understanding that made him go into battle for the sending of gun parts through Australia Post. It seemed

quite extraordinary to him that this ban was suddenly imposed without any reason given apart from the additional work of checking such objects by postal staff. As most orders have to go through extremely stringent customs regulations, it seemed quite bizarre that Australia Post should impose a ban.

Dick took it up over much of 2006. He organised Senator Conroy to take it through the Senate and ask a number of searching questions of the Minister, Senator Coonan, and the result was that she has taken the issue up with the states and has sought national uniformity in legislation to allow Australia Post to continue carrying firearms under the same stringent customs regulations as before. ●

...he is concerned when country people got the blame for the illegal use of guns.

Contributor and SSAA member Dick Eussen spotted Federal House of Representatives Speaker David Hawker's letter to the editor in a recent issue of *Wingspan*. Below is an edited version of that letter.

I wish to congratulate you on publishing an article on the impact of hunting on Australia's birds (*Wingspan* vol. 17, No. 1, March 2007). Given today's climate, I would like to highlight the positive contribution hunting continues to make to our birdlife, particularly waterbirds.

In Victoria and south-east South Australia, the majority of wetlands are on private property. For a significant number of these landowners, the right to legally harvest a small percentage of the production on a sustainable basis is the reason for maintaining

these wetlands. There is little doubt that removing that right would jeopardise the future of many of the wetlands.

As many experts have acknowledged, the biggest threat to many waterbirds is the draining of wetlands.

To suggest it [hunting] will 'die out' could well lead to the dying out of many species, not just gamebirds, due to the loss of habitat that would go with the loss of hunters.

Nature is a complex balance. There is ample evidence to show that hunters are an important part of that balance. Evidence from many parts of the world acknowledges the positive role hunters play in conservation.

Australia and Australian birds would benefit from continuing responsible hunting.

THE HON. DAVID HAWKER, MP
*Speaker of the House of Representatives
and Federal Member for Wannon.*

Firearms regulation

The Australian Government Attorney-General's Department is responsible for developing Australian Government policy on firearms and pursuing national consistency among state and territory approaches to firearms policy and the control of prohibited firearms.

The Department serves a number of functions in pursuit of this aim, including:

- Processing applications for permission to import firearms, for consideration by the Minister for Justice and Customs.
- Secretariat and Australian Government representative on the Australasian Police Ministers' Council (APMC) and the firearms Policy Working Group (FPWG). The FPWG includes senior policy representatives from each state and territory, with experts from the Australian Institute of Criminology [AIC], the Australian Crime Commission [ACC], the CrimTrac Agency and observers from the Australian Customs Service and the Australian Federal Police. (*Note: Assistant Secretary, National Law Enforcement Policy Branch chairs this forum.*)
- Secretariat and Australian Government representative on the Minister for Justice and Customs Sporting Shooters and Firearms Advisory Council (SSFAC). The SSFAC includes representatives from peak firearms bodies and other industry members, including the Sporting Shooters'

Association of Australia (SSAA), the National Dealers and Traders Association, Pistol Australia, the security industry, the film industry, firearms manufacturers, importers and exporters and the National Farmers Federation. (*Note: The Minister for Justice and Customs chairs this forum.*)

- Presenting Australia's firearms policies in relevant international forums, including United Nations discussions on controls on firearms, including: the UN Protocol Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, the UN Small Arms Programme of Action, and the United Nations Marking and Tracing Instrument.

Activities of focus for the Department currently include:

- Development of a national approach to firearms safety training.
- Development of a nationally consistent approach to the regulation for firearms manufacturers and film armourers.
- Funding AIC theft research to identify characteristics of firearms theft that will help in reducing incidences of firearms theft.
- Pursuing a national firearms registration system that will help to streamline firearms registration and licensing processes for firearms owners, and will assist in preventing diversion of firearms into the illicit market. ●

**Taken from the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department webpage.
Information correct at time of publication.**

THERE IS A RADICAL APPROACH TO CONSERVATION



OR THERE IS A BALANCED WAY

If we don't protect our rights we will lose camping, fishing and 4WD access.

There are those who would shut down our rights to enjoy National Parks on land and sea forever. That means big restrictions on our enjoyment of the great outdoors. The Australian Fishing & Lifestyle Party advocates the responsible management and preservation of our precious National Parks and all wildlife. They should always remain ours to enjoy.

In the coming election, vote for the Party of your choice in the House of Representatives, but in the Senate, support the Party that protects your lifestyle.

Find out more at www.fishingparty.com.au

VOTE 1 IN THE SENATE



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How the Australian Fishing & Lifestyle Party have appealed to voters.