



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

SSAA Members Will Do the Right Thing in Extraordinary Times

Geoff Jones

28 April 2020

COVID-19 - gun shops closed and hunting banned. It didn't take long for the sanctimonious few to show their true bias, clearly looking for any excuse and opportunity to demonise and disadvantage legitimate firearms owners and shooters - occupational or recreational - ostensibly the most regulated and trusted group in the country.

Decrees made totally oblivious to the perfectly valid claims to have highly regulated firearms-related activities continue in the current crisis, albeit with the compliant and well-managed restrictions already being observed by shooting organisations, groups and individuals.

You could reasonably assume there are serious political agendas at play here given the states which have been pre-eminent in restricting our specific activities, even making quite pointed but unsubstantiated announcements implying firearms owners were an increased risk to public order and of contributing to domestic violence, clearly fear-mongering and politicking. I implore you to identify your state's position in relation to firearms owners and remember this when your next state election comes around. The Federal Government has not made any such decrees, just several states to a greater or lesser degree.

Thanks to the mammoth efforts of your respective SSAA organisations, quite a number of concessions and adjustments to these decrees and existing regulations have already been made and this has been achieved, not by rattling around in the empty tin can of Facebook and online forums, but by sensible representation and negotiation on behalf of our members. But even then it may not be enough to pay the bills to keep a legitimate gun shop open

and viable even with reduced capacity and costs. Nevertheless, SSAA will continue to represent its members and supporters at every opportunity. Of course, SSAA and its members understand and appreciate the seriousness of the current health crisis in Australia and at the risk of sounding patronising, I call on all members to "do the right thing" and comply with all reasonable directions. I'm confident that we as responsible citizens are already doing just that, as frustrating as the side play is. Be assured, SSAA has already made all the necessary adjustments to protect its staff and continues to provide all of your benefits as SSAA members including continuing membership services to provide genuine reason for firearms ownership, member insurance, firearms insurance, publications production, SSAA social media updates and legislation lobbying as is currently applicable. If you notice a slight delay in receiving any SSAA service I ask you to bear with us, as continuing a full service as we are does require some juggling.

I'd suggest this might be a great opportunity to catch up on your reading and research through the Australian Shooter, Australian Hunter, Women's Shooter, Junior Shooter and Great Australian Outdoors, apart from the myriad of video segments and research articles available through the SSAA website and associated links.

You'll notice that Women's Shooter and Junior Shooter will be only available online during the current crisis in order to contain costs and of course Australian Shooter is always available online to members for your convenience.

Any shooting range openings are at the direction of the branch or club responsible for adherence

to non-essential gatherings and social distancing restrictions as need to be managed. Please be patient with those responsible. In the absence of active shooting I'm sure we all have firearms cleaning, maintenance or reconfiguration to be done apart from reloading and preparation for a return to the range or bush.

The most important thing for all of us in these extraordinary times is to show that as SSAA members we are responsible, will abide by the rules as frustrating as they might be and, most importantly, stay safe.

POLITICS

SSAA Calls Out Prejudice

30 April 2020

As toilet paper and food started disappearing from supermarket shelves, authorities were also reporting a spike in applications for gun licences.

NSW cryptocurrency trader John Nguyen is one of many Australians who after seeing the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, decided he wanted to purchase a firearm.

When COVID-19 began killing large numbers of people in China, Mr Nguyen began investigating purchasing property in remote parts of New Zealand so he could independently support himself and harvest food.

The decision to apply for a gun licence was solidified in February, after he watched overseas news coverage of US President Donald Trump deliver what Mr Nguyen describes as a "shambles" of a response to the virus.

Despite assurances from Australia's Prime Minister that our food supply was secure, Mr Nguyen de-



SSAA edited excerpt from
Yahoo News Australia
Michael Dahlstrom

decided he wanted to learn how to hunt in case local supply chains did get interrupted.

"Watching people go insane over toilet paper is just like, how did this happen?"

"Something that always stuck with me is society is only three missed meals away from total anarchy.

"We're not all that different from animals, at the end of the day, we still require protein of some source and if supply chains start breaking down the sh** will hit the fan."

'We've been made a cheap scapegoat': Gun lobby

While gun control advocates have welcomed government firearm sales restrictions, and urged other states to follow suit, shooting groups say the measures are discriminatory.

Sporting Shooters Association of Australia CEO, Tim Bannister, told Yahoo News Australia that gov-

ernment measures unfairly singled out shooters.

"Again, we've been made a cheap scapegoat to be kicked in the guts," he said.

"We of all people are probably the most legally and socially responsible in Australia, we have to be by law."

*“In some states you can **go fishing** in a solitary sense, in other states you’re **not allowed to, but you can play golf.**”*

Gun ownership laws are vastly different in America to what they are in Australia.

Mr Bannister added that there has been an increase during the past 20 years in people wanting to provide food for themselves.

“There are certainly members who have expressed frustration at not being able to hunt because a firearm is an ethical and humane way of harvesting your meat for the table,” he said.

“In some states you can go fishing in a solitary sense, in other states you’re not allowed to but you can play golf.”

“I’m not saying we expect everyone to get it perfect, but we would like common sense utilised and for there to be scientific health reasons, not prejudicial reasons or politically correct reasons.”

‘Reactionary step’: Call for calm amid pandemic restrictions

Gun Control Australia’s Piers Grove told Yahoo News Australia that while he understands the coronavirus has got people “very spooked”, now is not the time for Australians to be building their firearms arsenals. While Mr Grove doesn’t argue against an Australian owning a firearm to hunt for their own food, he doesn’t think now is the right time to start learning to shoot.

“It’s a very reactionary step – most people who

have a firearm licence have a firearm, and for those who don’t it seems like a very perverse time to be going about that,” he said.

“We have extraordinary food security in this country, we produce three times what we need as a population, I just do not see there is need to be bringing more firearms into our community in such an uncertain time.”

Gun applicant changed forever by pandemic

While Mr Nguyen waits for his gun licence application to be approved, he has a cupboard stocked full of canned goods to keep him fed.

He is confident in the reasoning behind his choice to buy a weapon, as in his eyes the world has changed for ever.

While he expects the food supply chains to hold up during the current pandemic, he fears a future recession and wants to be well prepared.

“(The gun) is not for self-defence purposes but for hunting to ensure I have a source of food there for the future just in case,” he said.

“It’s almost sacrilegious to talk about that right, like the whole breakdown of society.”

“No one knows how far that could potentially go, but no one wants to be unprepared for that either.”

*“(The gun) is not for self-defence purposes but for hunting **to ensure I have a source of food** there for the future, just in case..”*

Reports of surge in firearms sales

As coronavirus restrictions were implemented, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia all placed additional restrictions on firearm sales for sporting and recreation purposes.

On March 31, Victorian police minister Lisa Neville said the measures were to keep “the community safe,” saying there had been a doubling of attempts to access certain firearms and ammunition.

“We know there are pressures around family violence and also around work and people spending a lot of time together,” she said.

“We’re also concerned about making sure we don’t have additional firearms and ammunition in our community that criminals may also access.”

Gun Safety Alliance spokesperson Stephen Bendle said government figures were concerning, adding it’s important to ensure that all new gun acquisitions are for legitimate reasons and not self-protection. “It’s certainly a concern that people would want

to start accessing firearms for reasons other than recreation and appropriate reasons,” he said.

“We don’t know the reasons why (there was an increase in sales), but one concern that we have is there are many within the gun lobby who continue to push for self-protection as a reason to own a firearm.”

“At a time of a pandemic or a crisis, that is a time when people get concerned, and we would be concerned if there was an increase in people trying to acquire firearms for self-protection.”

FIREARMS IN FOCUS

Home-Made Gun Trade Alive and Well

John Maxwell

28 April 2020



When criminals can’t find the firearms they want on the black market, or the prices are simply too high, some still manage to lay their hands on home-made guns. These account for just a small number of guns seized by police across Australia but turn up often enough to indicate they’re a genuine problem - and that some crooks are willing to take substantial risks.

Those risks come in two areas. Most of these are not firearms manufactured in modern factories using quality materials and precision machine tools, they’re made in backyard workshops using basic tools which can make them as dangerous to the user as to the intended target. Secondly, making illegal

firearms attracts heavy penalties - in NSW that’s 10 years’ jail rising to a maximum of 20 years for manufacture of a prohibited firearm or handgun.

With the advent of 3D printing, concern was expressed in some quarters that criminals or anyone else could use this new technology to start turning out their own Glocks and Uzis but that reflects limited understanding of firearms and 3D printing, referred to in the industry as additive manufacturing. In traditional manufacturing, material is removed to create the finished component, whether by use of a file or CNC milling machine. In 3D printing, material is added layer by layer according to a computer program to create the finished product.

3D printers are readily available with basic units costing a few hundred dollars. These use a plastic filament which is melted and applied to create the finished item, clever technology which has far reaching implications for manufacturing and much more. But can it make guns? The answer is yes, sort of. In 2013, US anarchist and gun rights activist Cody Wilson released plans for a single-shot handgun in .380 ACP which could be made on a 3D printer. He named this the Liberator after the single-shot handgun the US Office of Strategic Services planned to distribute to resistance forces during World War Two.

This created quite a sensation and plans were downloaded more than 100,000 times before US authorities pulled the plug (just how many guns were actually made will never be known). Media reports at the time suggest those who tried were mostly experimenters and reporters curious to see if it would really work. Wilson's design might have had greater success were it not for their tendency to blow up, sometimes on the first shot. Plastic barrels and even lower power handgun cartridges are not a good mix. High-end 3D printers used in the aerospace industry to make precision metallic components could do better but these are priced well beyond the reach of your average backyard gunsmith. That's not to say the risk of 3D printed firearms is trivial and Australian law enforcement is aware of the potential but assesses the threat as low.

In its 2016 report on Illicit Firearms in Australia, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) said this technology did not commercially enable mass production of printed components which matched the reliability and cost-effectiveness of factory-made firearms. ACIC noted that one Australian police agency had created and tested a 3D

single-shot pistol which would shoot a single round but was also found to be unreliable and potentially dangerous to the user.

"Since instructions to produce a 3D printed firearm were published online, the ACIC has identified only three attempts to manufacture such firearms in Australia," it said in the report. "Of those identified, none were functioning when detected by police.

"3D printing technology is improving rapidly, with new materials in use and commercially available. However, at this time the capabilities of 3D-printed firearms are limited and, in the short term, this

production method is unlikely to be a significant source of illicit firearms. As technology improves and 3D printing becomes more affordable, the threat of this manufacturing method is likely to increase." ACIC said over the same period it traced almost 1000 factory-made handguns, demonstrating that conventionally made guns continue to be more readily available at this time. And there are other types of home-made firearms. ACIC said items such as single-shot pen guns, key-ring guns and submachine guns were still believed to be illicitly made in Australia but remain in small numbers

compared with factory-made guns on the black or grey markets - only 1.7 per cent of the illicit firearms traced by ACIC's Firearms Trace Program in 2015-16 were of this type.

However, in 2014 the head of NSW Police Firearms and Organised Crime Squad said 10 per cent of guns they seized were home-made. "A lot of them are very crude and dangerous, especially to the user. They misfire, don't fire at all or even explode in the user's hands," he said.

Home-made firearms continue to be found in police raids and arrests - often in connection with drug busts - in the hands of people who figure

*"A lot of them are **very crude and dangerous**, especially to the user. **They misfire**, don't fire at all or even **explode in the user's hands...**"*

they have need of a gun, any gun. Images of these devices have been released by police media departments, indicating they range from the downright crude (and surely dangerous) to some which resemble factory-made firearms.

In January 2016, Queensland police seized a home-made single shot .22 calibre pistol after a three-year-old girl was shot in the leg and seriously wounded. That apparently wasn't intentional but a man and woman were subsequently charged with causing grievous bodily harm and unlawful possession of an improvised handgun.

As ACIC noted, single-shot pen guns continue to be made and in 2014 NSW police arrested a man who had created something of a cottage industry in these highly dangerous and illegal devices by modifying metal work centre punches. Queensland police have also seized a number of home-made revolvers in 38/357, one in the possession of a 22-year-old woman along with drugs. These appear to be reasonably well made and the fact they're popping up in Queensland suggests a common source.

ACIC also reports that home-made sub-machine guns (SMGs) are also popular with criminals. In January of last year, police raided a house in Toowoomba and found a home-made .22 calibre SMG along with various machine tools, gun components and methamphetamine and last May police on the Gold Coast raided a home and seized a handgun, drug stash and a pair of home-made SMGs.

That followed an earlier bust in Queensland in January 2016 in which a police raided netted a meth lab and makeshift SMG manufacturing facility and three finished firearms which appear to be based on a design by British gun rights advocate Philip Luty, a kindred spirit of Cody Wilson who believed in unrestricted access for everyone.

Luty published a number of designs for SMGs which could, in theory, be made by anyone with basic tools and skills though even the best made Luty guns are regarded as nothing special, with marginal reliability and dismal accuracy. In line with Luty's DIY philosophy the barrel is smoothbore, as rifled barrels are generally beyond the capability of most backyard armourers. Luty died in 2011 but guns based on his plans continue to turn up in the US, West Bank, South America, Europe and

*“Organised crime is **exploiting the rapid development of technology** and its increasing availability to users worldwide. Criminals are likely to exploit new and emerging trends **to acquire and traffic illicit firearms.**”*

Australia. One was used by a right wing extremist in an attack on a synagogue in Germany last October in which two people died. Reportedly the gunman experienced multiple stoppages and reverted to an improvised shotgun.

So home-made guns in criminal and terrorist hands is a global problem. In countries such as Brazil, criminal groups turn out functional SMGs in well-equipped workshops, Indian police have seized home-made rocket propelled grenade launchers from insurgent groups and police in PNG regularly seize home-made firearms from bandit gangs, the basic operating mechanism a hardware store regular.

The US would appear to have sufficient handguns available legally and illegally that criminals just don't need to make their own, although it still

happens, an emerging trend seemingly for crooks to convert their Glocks from semi-auto to full-auto through the addition of an illegal selective fire conversion kit. These are made in China and marketed on the internet for as little as US\$15.

Home-made guns in Australia mostly aren't the product of curious hobbyists and turn up in the hands of serious criminals, especially drug dealers and outlaw motorcycle gangs, media reports even suggesting biker gangs have sought to recruit those with metalworking skills to become their armourers. The ACIC report said Australia's illicit firearms market was driven in part by outlaw motorcycle gangs, Middle Eastern organised crime groups and others engaged in trafficking illicit commodities such as drugs. "A wide range of criminals acquire and use firearms to conduct their business, protect their interests, intimidate others and commit acts of

violence," it said. "Organised crime is exploiting the rapid development of technology and its increasing availability to users worldwide. Criminals are likely to exploit new and emerging trends to acquire and traffic illicit firearms."

The extent of the firearms black market and grey market (guns not surrendered in the buybacks) remains unknown and potentially large but police have achieved considerable success in cracking down on illegal guns. One indicator is the high prices charged, especially for handguns for which a criminal could pay upwards of \$10,000, and unsurprisingly some will seek to acquire guns elsewhere. All of which puts paid to an oft-repeated claim by anti-gun groups such as Gun Control Australia that all guns in criminal hands start out as legal. Clearly they do not.

HUNTING

Level 3 rules for hunting confirmed in NZ

28 April 2020

The New Zealand Government has reduced its COVID-19 restrictions back one step to Level 3, meaning hunting in the country can now resume under certain conditions. The Coalition of Licensed Firearms Owners in New Zealand (COLFO) said while this is a U-turn from the Government's previous decision to continue to restrict all hunting, the conditions will still leave many people disappointed.

From the COLFO Facebook page:

As you may have seen in the media, in the last few hours the Government has announced that hunting can resume under Level 3 with conditions.

In short, while this is a major U-turn from the Government, it's still a mixed bag and a lot of people are going to be disappointed. We have yet to see the formal legal terms of the restriction. They'll be what actually rules. This note is



Thomas Tabor

based on the media release.

At Level 3 hunting will be allowed but only on private land (with the landowner's permission) and this must be within your region and bubble. Overnight trips are not allowed and hunting must be done on foot, excluding the use of helicopters, quad bikes and other motorised vehicles.

I have copied the link at the end of this mes-

sage to the Ministerial press release so you can work out from the horse's mouth what they might intend.

Before I go into our specific concerns, I want to stick my head out and thank New Zealand First's Hon Winston Peters, NZDA, GAC, F&G and the ACT Party for their work behind the scenes over the last few weeks. I know there will never be a universal view on these matters, and many will be upset that this doesn't go far enough, but I can say with confidence that had it not been for all of their hard work behind the scenes, we would be facing an even longer lockdown on hunting – with no change under Level 3. Go back and read my email from just a week ago – when the message from Wellington was simply “hunting is banned under Level 3”. Remember too that the Government this afternoon promised Level 2 will see a full return to hunting as we know it.

But I admit that I'm gutted my balloted hunt is now cancelled, and while the news is certainly better than a total ban it seems arbitrary that hunting on DOC land is not allowed, but hunting in the private forestry block next door (with permission) is fine. If the Government was thinking solely in safety terms (and reducing animal pressure on the bush through winter)

they would want hunting pressure more spread out.

I think it's probably a reflection that tramping, camping, cycling etc in the DOC estate is still not allowed under Level 3, so they are trying to be consistent.

And for those who don't have access to a private property for hunting, it feels like a raw deal.

Many of those people would normally be filling up the freezer right now during the roar, so this announcement won't help them, so no wonder many are feeling excluded and unheard.

Duck shooters face a longer wait. Opening weekend will be the second Saturday after return to level 2. There are signals that the season will be extended to compensate.

There is still one gaping hole though – and that is the status of ranges. I know that many hunters will need to head down to a range to sight in their firearms before they can safely head out. Their status is still unclear, so we'll keep plugging away at that and keep you updated.

Stay safe.

Nicole McKee
COLFO Spokesperson

Read the article here - [Level 3 rules for hunting confirmed](#)

HUNTING

VIC one-year license extension

23 April 2020

The Victorian Government has announced that recreational game hunters will be compensated for lost hunting opportunities with the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Jaclyn Symes, announcing a one-year extension for all current game licenses.



From the SSAA Victoria Facebook page:

Advocacy Delivers Results

Recent discussions between SSAA Victoria, Field & Game Australia (FGA), Australian Deer Association (ADA) and senior State Government advisors have delivered significant results, and we expect further progress in the near future. Coordinated efforts by SSAA Victoria, FGA and ADA have achieved positive outcomes. These achievements include the removal of restrictions on pest control activities, the 12-month extension for all hunting licences and the ability to provide members with ammunition sales for pest control activities.

What these results show is that working with senior Government advisors and Victoria Police delivers better outcomes for shooters. The State Government has detailed the pre-requisites for the potential easing of some of the current restrictions. It is the expectation of SSAA Victoria, FGA and ADA that restrictions on our members will be lifted.

Conversations with senior Government advisors have been very promising. SSAA Victoria, FGA and ADA welcome these indications and look forward to further discussions.

Relevant Ministers and authorities have shown that they genuinely appreciate the cooperation that has been shown by the licensed firearms community and we are very hopeful there will be a positive outcome in the near future for the

sector. This is made possible because of the efforts of all parties involved in working with the measures currently in place.

There has been much conjecture about legal options and avenues that could be pursued. SSAA Victoria, FGA and ADA would like to reiterate that under advice from expert legal opinion, the best way to proceed is to continue with direct conversations with senior Government advisers and authorities.

Each Association has an obligation to deliver the best results possible for their respective membership and to allocate available funds responsibly. Neither SSAA Victoria, FGA nor ADA will waste resources on exploitative activities that promise much but in reality, deliver little. We need to remember that all sectors of Australian life have been impacted by COVID-19. Many people and businesses are experiencing tough times. SSAA Victoria, FGA and ADA will do all that is possible to protect the rights and interests of our members and the activities of licensed firearms dealers across Victoria. Together, we look forward to the quick resumption of sporting and recreational shooting activities. While SSAA Victoria, FGA and ADA strongly disagree with the restrictions that were put in place, the Associations acknowledge the role of State Government and authorities in facilitating a review of current restrictions with the aim of a swift resolution.