

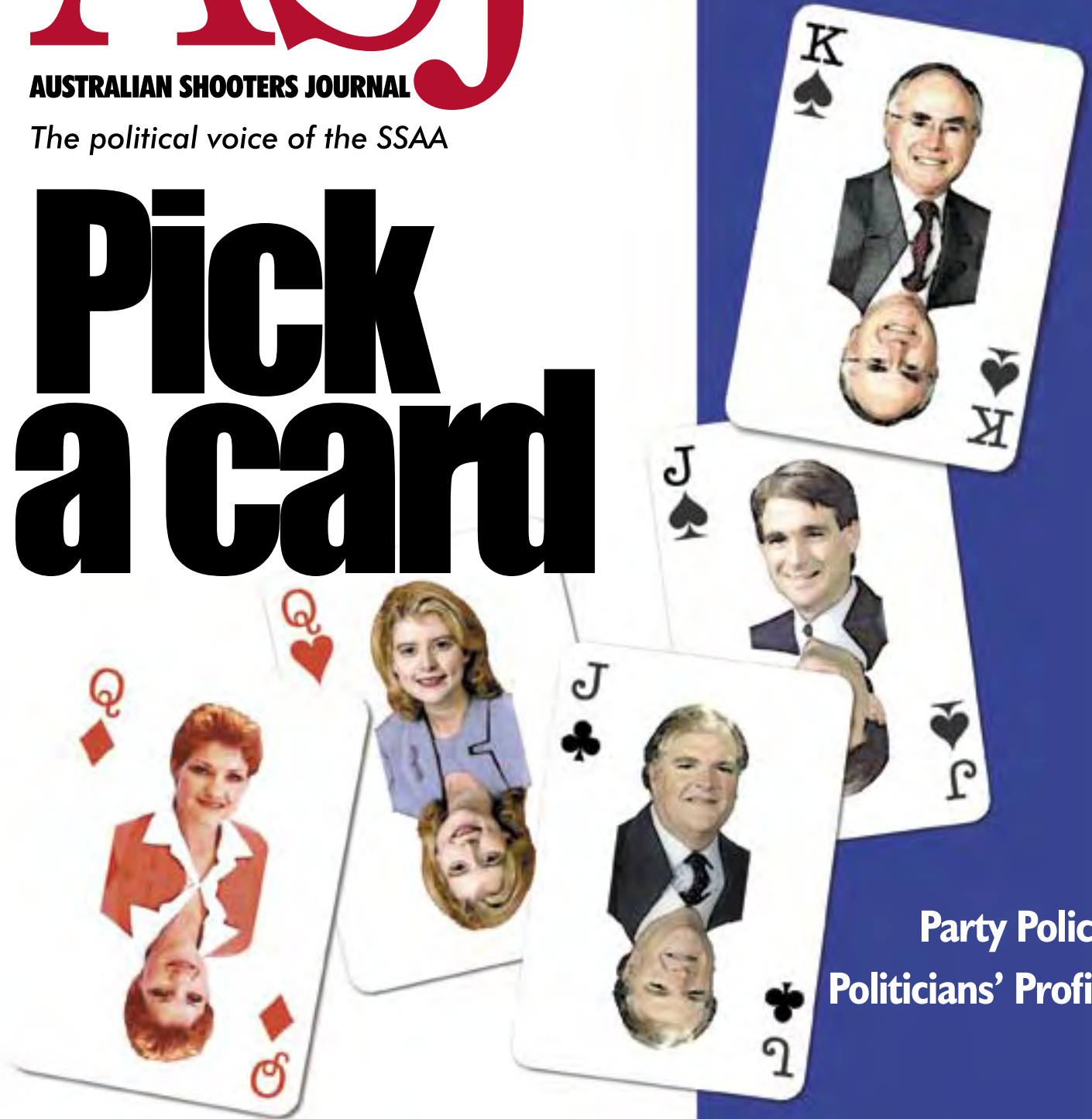
# ASJ

AUSTRALIAN SHOOTERS JOURNAL

*The political voice of the SSAA*

# Pick a card

# SPECIAL ELECTION ISSUE



Party Policies  
Politicians' Profiles

November 2001 Vol. 3 Issue 6  
Members-only insert to the *Australian Shooter*



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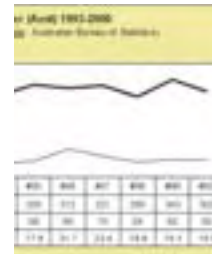
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## A word from the President

This November Australians go to the polls to decide who will govern the country for the next three years. For shooters, elections invariably raise the question of firearm policies and just who to vote for. With this in mind, the Association has put together an overview of the various parties and their platforms, together with a few highlights from some noteworthy candidates.

After some serious state election defeats during the past few years, politicians from both sides have begun to see the light on gun control. There has been a good deal more consideration shown for shooters' legitimate concerns on recent issues such as amendments to the Customs regulations and the maintenance of Australian Defence Industries (ADI) facilities. At the same time however, the Australian Democrats and the Greens have maintained a persistent anti-gun outlook, which is reflected in their respective policy statements.

While it is not the SSAA's role to tell members who they should vote for, as National President I would urge all shooters to seriously consider where they place their support - especially when it comes to the Senate. The more pro-shooting politicians there are in parliament, the stronger the voice in favour of gun-owners' rights and the harder it is for the anti-gun lobby to pursue its agenda of abolishing private firearms ownership in Australia. The chance to have a direct impact on government only comes around once every few years and shooters need to take full advantage of the opportunity to make a difference.

Bill Shelton  
National President

# ASJ

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of the SSAA

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## Party Policies

by Paul Peake

**A looming federal election raises the question of political parties and their various firearm policies. The following overview provides a basic guide to the different groups and their positions on private gun ownership.**

### Pauline Hanson's One Nation

One Nation has a comprehensive pro-firearm policy that recognises shooting as a legitimate sport. The party supports the principle of self-defence and maintains that disarming law-abiding Australians is not in the national interest. One Nation's platform contains a number of sensible proposals, including the following points taken from the Party's web-site ([www.onenation.com.au/policies\\_firearms.htm](http://www.onenation.com.au/policies_firearms.htm)):

#### Register of Prohibited Persons

To enable an instant record check to ensure those persons ineligible to own a firearm can be quickly identified, we shall establish a register of persons prohibited from firearm ownership. Prohibited persons: ie, those convicted of a violent offence.

#### Shooting Ranges

Security of tenure; In the interests of safe and responsible firearms use, we will

actively assist by increasing access to appropriate facilities with additional shooting ranges. Existing ranges shall also be granted security of tenure. Self-funding and cost recovery of such facilities shall be strongly encouraged.

The repeal of federal legislation prohibiting the use of military-style firearms by civilians in approved military rifle clubs under the provisions of the Defence Act.

### Shooter's Party

The Shooter's Party supports the right of law-abiding citizens to own and use firearms. It also supports the principle of self-defence and seeks to promote recreational hunting.

The following are the Party's policies as published on its web site ([www.shootersparty.org.au/policy.htm](http://www.shootersparty.org.au/policy.htm)):

#### Firearms

The Party asserts the right of the law-abiding citizen to own and use firearms.

We support the right of firearms dealers and others with legitimate reasons to have the right to carry a pistol for self-defence and public safety.

#### Hunting

The Party supports and will promote all forms of legitimate recreational hunting.

### Liberal Party

At the time of writing, the Liberal Party does not have a formal firearms policy. The Party was nevertheless responsible for the gun laws forced on the various states and territories in the wake of the Australasian Police Ministers' Council meeting in May 1996. Following the announcement of the APMC's resolutions,



the Liberal Government initiated a 'Buy-back' scheme that ultimately saw the confiscation of hundreds of thousands of privately owned firearms. Under the heading 'Highlights of the Government's Achievements' the Party openly boasts about its confiscation program ([www.liberal.org.au](http://www.liberal.org.au)):

"The Firearms Buy-back and Uniform Firearms Laws:

The Coalition provided the leadership to achieve uniform national firearms control legislation as well as a buy-back of firearms in the community. This has resulted in more than 640,000 dangerous firearms being surrendered under the firearm scheme. The Coalition has made Australia a safer place, particularly for women and children."

## Australian Labor Party

At the time of writing, the Labor Party does not have a formal firearms policy. However, the ALP has consistently supported the anti-gun measures initiated as part of the Liberal Government's 1996 'Buy-back' confiscation scheme. Additionally, Labor's Shadow Minister for Justice, Duncan Kerr, has said that a future Federal Labor Government may seek to limit private handgun ownership exclusively to models used in Olympic-style events. Conversely, party leader Kim Beazley has given a written assurance that Labor does not intend to put any additional restrictions on the possession of handguns.

## National Party

The National Party has been a keen supporter of the Federal Liberal Government's anti-gun measures during the past five years,

including its 'Buy-back' confiscation scheme. The following policy statements are taken from the organisation's web site ([www.nationalparty.org](http://www.nationalparty.org)):

"The National Party believes people who have the legal right and legitimate need to own and use a firearm should not be unreasonably restricted by Government regulation or bureaucratic interference.

The right of individuals to own firearms should not extend to anyone who has any record of instability, violent crime, the unsafe use of weapons or drug or alcohol dependency.

Priority should be given to eliminating the causes of crime and the social and economic conditions which have led to rising crime rates. Attention must be given to the influence of the visual media and its depiction of both violence and the irresponsible use of firearms and other weapons."

## Australian Democrats

The Australian Democrats are outspoken supporters of the anti-gun lobby. The Party's platform contains a number of dangerous anti-gun policies, including the following examples taken from its web site ([www.democrats.org.au](http://www.democrats.org.au)):

"The Democrats do not believe that Australia's current gun laws go nearly far enough.

We are still strongly committed to handing the power over gun control laws over to the Commonwealth via a referendum of the people of Australia and we would like to see all firearms in houses in urban areas banned."

### The Democrats' policy is to:

Initiate an open public process that allows for public input, decision making and appeal, before any licences are issued for such practices as the killing of animals;

It's worth noting that before the 1996

federal election, the Australian Democrats released Peace and Disarmament Policy No 41, which called for a complete ban on all firearm related publications, including magazines such as the *Australian Shooter* and the *Australian Shooters Journal*.

## The Australian Greens

When it comes to private firearms ownership, the Australian Greens are ideological first cousins to the Australian Democrats. Like their Democrat counter-parts, the Greens are keen supporters of the anti-gun movement and back many of its initiatives, as evidenced by the following policy statements taken from the Party's official web site ([www.greens.org.au](http://www.greens.org.au)):

"The Australian Greens will support policies to:

- a) Ensure that Australia will not produce weaponry or components for export...
- d) End arms trade fairs in Australia and coordinate with neighbouring states on similar measures...
- f) Work to develop alternative regional and UN-sponsored disarmament initiatives with a capacity for binding verification...
- c) Support initiatives including legislation, to make gun control an issue for the Commonwealth; and
- d) Support laws which phase out the keeping of guns in urban homes."



## Politicians' Profiles

The events of 1996 certainly raised the level of political awareness within the shooting fraternity. With this in mind, the SSAA has consistently endeavored to keep members up-to-date on the activities of both pro and anti-gun politicians. With a federal election on the way, the following profiles have been assembled to guide your voting selection.

### Australian Capital Territory

#### Margaret Reid Liberal Party



Margaret Reid is Liberal Party Senator for the Australian Capital Territory. She is also Patron of the SSAA ACT Junior Development Section that seeks to allow our young shooters to fully

explore the potential they have as athletes and teach them about the contribution they can make to the environment through their activities.

Margaret is also a strong advocate of the safety programs conducted by SSAA. She has opened a number of shooting events and has closely followed the work of the Association in its international efforts. Margaret has been the Leader of many Parliamentary delegations to overseas countries and she is also the President of the Senate.

### New South Wales

#### Tony Windsor Independent



Along with Peter Cochran, Tony Windsor has consistently supported firearm owners in NSW. Tony marched and spoke at the Macquarie Street rally in 1996 and he

also attempted to introduce legislation in 1997 to allow for the use of self-loading military rifles at NSW rifle ranges.

### New South Wales

#### Peter Cochran Independent

Phone: (02) 6284 3368  
E-mail: [petercochran@bigpond.com](mailto:petercochran@bigpond.com)

Peter Cochran is the former NSW Parliamentary Member for the seat of Monaro. He has been an outspoken advocate on behalf of firearm owners in NSW for more than ten years. He argued against both the Federal Government's 'Buy-back' scheme and the subsequent changes to the State's gun laws and has undertaken to champion shooters' interests in Federal Parliament.



## Northern Territory

### Nigel Scullion Liberal Party

Liberal Party endorsed candidate for the Senate



Nigel is committed to the sustainable use of wildlife and has an extensive history of promoting habitat protection for the wildlife of Australia. Nigel

has been a commercial fisherman for 20 years and operates a charter company that incorporates fishing and guided hunting tours. Chairman of the Northern Territory Fisheries Industries Council, Nigel is also a member of several management advisory committees on fishing and environmental issues. Married with two children, Nigel and his family spend a great deal of time camping, fishing and hunting.

## Queensland

### Bob Katter Independent

E-mail: [Bob.Katter.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Bob.Katter.MP@aph.gov.au)  
Electorate Phone: (07) 4061 6066

Bob Katter is one of the few politicians in Australia prepared to express his views publicly without fear or favour. He has immense local support in return for absolute loyalty to the people of his electorate. Ever supportive of gun owners throughout the country, Bob's concerns about unjust gun laws are kindled by his own collection of rifles and shotguns. Now an independent, Bob Katter will no doubt have the support of many SSAA members throughout his large electorate of Kennedy.



**Bob Katter took time out to view a training session with D Company of the 51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment, at the Mt Isa Rifle Range earlier this year. He was supervised on the 5.56mm Steyr rifle, which is the Army's standard issue small arm. He was able to fire the rifle by day with an enhanced optical scope and by night with the aid of a night vision device. Left: Mr Bob Katter (Member for Kennedy), Right: Major Martin Skin (Officer Commanding D Company)**

## Queensland

### Kevin Rudd Labor Party



**Kevin makes the effort to set aside time to read - firearm books hold a special interest.**

Member for Griffith  
E-mail: [Kevin.Rudd.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Rudd.MP@aph.gov.au)  
Electorate Phone: (07) 3899 4031

SSAA members, particularly those in Queensland, will be aware that the Belmont range in suburban Brisbane is one of the biggest and most diverse in the country. The range hosts facilities for more than ten shooting organisations. It is also slap bang in the middle of Kevin Rudd's federal electorate of Griffith. Kevin makes no apologies for being a long-standing supporter of shooters' rights. He has participated in a number of celebrity events at the Belmont range throughout the years, along with former South Australian ALP Senator John Quirk, who serves as a patron for a number of shooting organisations.

Kevin also officially opened the

2000 International Metallic Silhouette Shooting Championships hosted by SSAA in Brisbane, which attracted some 190 participants from 16 countries around the world. He is also a patron of the Australian Shooting Games held at Belmont and is a regular presenter of awards at the 'Queens Prize' - one of the premier shooting competitions in Queensland.

Apart from all that, every now and then Kevin finds the time to improve his clay target skills. Asked about his prowess with a shotgun, Kevin simply replies, "I've got a very, very, very long way to go. Michael Diamond can rest easy for quite a while yet."



## Queensland

### Warren Entsch Liberal Party

Member for Leichhardt

E-mail: Warren.Entsch.MP@aph.gov.au

Electorate Phone: (07) 4051 2220



Warren Entsch has the support of the Cairns SSAA Branch and other firearm owners in the area for his work on gaining access to property for the establishment of a range

facility adjacent to the Wangetti Big Bore range. Whether it be a state or federal issue, Warren will intervene to lend a hand to those shooters who need assistance.

## Victoria

### David Hawker Liberal Party

Member for Wannon

E-mail: D.Hawker.MP@aph.gov.au

Electorate Phone: (03) 5572 1120

A keen clay target shooter and hunter, David's tireless work is acknowledged by many shooting organisations. David chaired the Coalition Government's Committee on gun laws, which worked hard to convince the Prime Minister to allow the crimping of shotguns. Although John Howard eventually rejected the proposal, David has continued to encourage his colleagues to work with shooting organisations. The SSAA's Special Projects



section is especially appreciative of David's assistance in building bridges between the government and the Association.

## Queensland

### De-Anne Kelly National Party



#### De-Anne Kelly on cadet firearm training:

Mrs Kelly said that Dr Brendan Nelson, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence, was to be commended for his far-sighted view of cadet training.

"For many young Australians, participation in cadets brings rewards in the areas of leadership, discipline and personal development, and for others it is a first voluntary step towards a career in the Australian Defence Forces as a

Member for Dawson

E-mail: De-Anne.Kelly.MP@aph.gov.au

Electorate Phone: (07) 4957 6411

**De-Anne Kelly presenting an Australian flag to the SSAA Mackay Branch at a ceremony to award two members with the Australian Sports Medal.**

regular or a reservist," she said.

"I am particularly pleased that the review recommended that consideration should be given to using local ranges and shooting clubs for firearms training and firing.

"This has the potential to use the facilities and services of organisations like the Sporting Shooters' Association and to draw on the wide experience of their members in the safe and expert use of firearms."

## South Australia

### Senator Jeannie Ferris Liberal Party

E-mail: senator.ferris@aph.gov.au

Adelaide Office Phone: (08) 8237 6840



Jeanie Ferris is a Senator for South Australia. She has been consistently supportive of the shooting sports, particularly hunting and conservation. Jean-

nie has been impressed by the efforts of hunters where feral animal control is concerned and has keenly followed the efforts of the SSAA in the Flinders and Gammons Ranges. She has a strong background in rural and regional affairs, agriculture and the environment. Jeanie also maintains a shooting library in her federal parliamentary office for the benefit of her colleagues and others who visit her in Canberra.



## Victoria

### Simon Crean Labor Party



Member for Hotham  
E-mail: [S.Crean.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:S.Crean.MP@aph.gov.au)  
Electorate Phone: (03) 9545 6211

Simon Crean (left) has shown support for SSAA activities and has indicated an ability to differentiate between the activities of legitimate sporting shooters and the criminal misuse of guns.

## Victoria

### Sharman Stone Liberal Party

Member for Murray  
E-mail: [S.Stone.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:S.Stone.MP@aph.gov.au)  
Electorate Phone: (03) 5821 5371



Sharman has been very supportive of firearm owners and the conservation work done by shooters, particularly Field and Game. Sharman recently opened the Pine Grove Gun Club pavilion development.

The ceremony took place before the club's monthly '50 Targets Off The Gun' shoot. Sharman's position as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment & Heritage Minister Robert Hill means he is well placed to keep up with the important contribution hunters make to conservation.

## Victoria

### Fran Bailey Liberal Party



Member for McEwen  
E-mail: [Fran.Bailey.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Fran.Bailey.MP@aph.gov.au)  
Electorate Phone: (03) 5962 1255

Fran is a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade and was instrumental in the recent signing of an agreement to upgrade the ADI facility at Mulwala. A staunch supporter of a strong defence capability, Fran has worked tirelessly with the SSAA in achieving a positive result for the people of Mulwala and those SSAA members who use ADI sporting propellants.

## Western Australia

### Wilson Tuckey Liberal Party

Member for O'Connor  
E-mail: [W.Tuckey.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:W.Tuckey.MP@aph.gov.au)  
Electorate Phone: (08) 9325 4077



Wilson Tuckey has on many occasions indicated his objection to major aspects of the firearm legislation package introduced in 1996. Wilson attended a pro-gun rally in Perth organised by the firearms fraternity, at which he outlined his concerns. He also publicly stated that the Howard Government would regret the decision to not allow the crimping of shotguns.

## Western Australia

### Graeme Campbell One Nation Party

Campaign Office Phone: (08) 93619388  
Web-site: [www.waon.net](http://www.waon.net)



Graeme Campbell is the former Member for the seat of Kalgoorlie. At the forthcoming election he is standing at the top of

## Victoria

### Stewart McArthur Liberal Party

Member for Corangamite  
E-mail:  
[Stewart.McArthur.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Stewart.McArthur.MP@aph.gov.au)  
Electorate Phone: (03) 5243 8766



Stewart is a licensed shooter and keen hunter whose family runs sheep grazing properties in the district around Camperdown. He has hunted with David Hawker and is a close friend and shooting companion of Tom Austin, chairman of the Hunting Advisory Committee in Victoria. Stewart has never backed away from supporting firearm owners and he has the support of shooting associations in Victoria.

## SSAA Meets with Downer

**O**n September 18, Keith Tidswell and Gary Fleetwood from the SSAA and Tom Mason, Secretariat of the World Forum on the Future of Sports Shooting Activities (WFSA), met with Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer. The purpose of the meeting was to clarify Australia's position with regard to the private ownership and the recreational use of firearms. The Minister provided a letter (opposite) outlining Australia's position and he gave reassurances that recreational shooters were not under threat.

While a 'program of action' was adopted at the recent United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms held in New York in July, the problem is that no clear definition of small arms was agreed upon. While many delegates were firmly of the opinion that military-style arms were the focus of discussions, there was considerable pressure from hard-line anti-gun groups to have all types of firearms included.

Hunting and shooting groups voiced their legitimate concerns about the fact that many common civilian firearms have their origins in military models. This is especially true of hunting rifles, which are based on the German Army's 1898 Mauser design. Likewise, due to common design characteristics, there is little differentiation with regards to 'military' or 'civilian' categories when it comes to handguns.

The World Forum held a meeting with firearm manufacturers, small arms experts and government representatives in London in April at the Imperial War Museum to try and come to grips with the problem of a practical definition. The consensus was that firearms in the context of 'military small arms' and 'light weapons' should be clearly limited to "lethal weapons of war, which are capable of full automatic fire." SSAA and the WFSA are continuing to work with industry and governments on the issue.



Alexander Downer Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs is flanked by Tom Mason, Secretariat of the World Forum on the future of Sports Shooting Activities (left), and Keith Tidswell, Executive Director of Foreign Affairs and Public Relations SSAA.

# ALP's stand on illegal gun activity

Gary Fleetwood

In the past few years, Australia has seen a marked increase in the use of illegal handguns in crime - with pistol-related homicides up from 13 percent in 1995 to 42 per cent in 1999.<sup>1</sup> Most politicians acknowledge that the use of illegal guns has very little to do with the legitimate activities of licensed shooters.

With the support of the SSAA, Queensland Premier Peter Beattie recently introduced legislation to ensure that deactivated firearms remain on the system and can be accounted for. NSW Premier Bob Carr has also introduced the 'Firearms Trafficking Bill', which significantly increases the penalties for dealing in illegal guns.

Both the NSW and Victorian Governments have rejected calls for a total ban on handguns by Greens Senator, Bob Brown<sup>2</sup>. A letter sent to the SSAA by the Victorian Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Andrew Haermeyer, stated, "There is no proposal to prohibit all semi-automatic handguns in Victoria."<sup>3</sup> Even outspoken media identities such as John Laws and Alan Jones acknowledge the futility of banning legal handguns when criminals will simply ply their trade as normal.

"I just see it as being totally unworkable and were it brought in all it would do would be to drive what there is further underground and make the black market for handheld firearms even greater," said John Laws.<sup>4</sup>


And this from Alan Jones, "Much has been said in recent days about the issue of illegal handguns and that inevitably has led to the rather foolish call to ban semi-automatic handguns."<sup>5</sup>

The comments are supported by recent figures available from Britain's Home Office, which clearly show that the 1997 ban on private handgun ownership in the UK has not stopped a dramatic rise in handgun-related offences<sup>6</sup> - a fact which is not surprising given the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) Trends and Issue paper #151 that clearly showed that licensed firearm owners are not an issue when it comes to gun-related homicides.<sup>7</sup>

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Kim

Beazley, was keen to assure shooters in a recent letter that the ALP's policy focus is centred exclusively on illegal firearms and that the Party has no plans to ban handguns. While the SSAA certainly welcomes the statement, only time will tell if the ALP is prepared to stand by its commitment.

1. *The Australian* 30/4/01
2. *Sydney Morning Herald* 30/4/01
3. Vic PolMin letter to SSAA 13/6/2001
4. John Laws 2UE 30/4/2001
5. Alan Jones Today Show 2/5/2001
6. [www.ssaa.org.au/ukcrime.html](http://www.ssaa.org.au/ukcrime.html)
7. [www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi151.html](http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi151.html) See Page 4.



**LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION**

**MESSAGE FROM THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, THE HON KIM C BEAZLEY MP**

**TO THE SPORTING SHOOTERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA**

Labor wants to make the community safer, a goal shared by you and your members and supporters. That means tackling the criminals, not legitimate recreational, sporting and competitive shooters.

Labor's position therefore is clear: we will support any effort necessary to crack down on the criminal use and supply of handguns.

But rest assured, Labor will not move to crack down on regulated and lawful recreational, sporting and competitive pistol shooting, as undertaken in pistol clubs.

This is a matter in which the Commonwealth needs to work closely with the States and Territories given the shared jurisdictions involved. Federal Labor has no plans to amend present firearms laws and I could see no reason why a future Labor Government would need to pursue their tightening insofar as the current satisfactory arrangements covering legitimate recreational, sporting and competitive shooters are concerned.

The only measures I would contemplate with my State and Territory colleagues would be related to cracking down on the criminal use and supply of firearms. Any measures to tackle the criminals should be, and would be, the subject of consultation with interested parties such as yours.

**Perth**  
**September 2001**



## Howard signs off on ADI propellants

by Gary Fleetwood

On July 9, 2001, the Howard Government announced a commitment to upgrade the Australian Defence Industries (ADI) factory in Mulwala, securing more than 300 jobs and ensuring that Australia can produce its own propellants and explosives. The news was announced by Parliamentary Secretary for Defence, Dr Brendan Nelson, and was reported in the August edition of the *Australian Shooter*.

On September 18, 2001 the SSAA was invited to Parliament House by Dr Nelson to meet with ADI Managing Director Jean-Georges Malcor, after the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Federal Government, represented by the Under Secretary for Defence Material Mr M J Roche, and Mr Malcor. The importance of supply of sporting propellants to some one million shooters in Australia was not lost on Mr Malcor, who also expressed his thanks to the SSAA for their positive involvement in this issue.

Article 5 of the document made a mutual commitment to the effect that "The Department of Defence and ADI will work together, as a matter of high priority, to develop and finalise a proposal for the modernisation of the Mulwala site, and long-term supply of munitions."

In August, the Howard Government announced it would sign a MOU with the Mayors of Moira, Corowa and Delatite Shires underwriting the upgrade. Accordingly, on September 21, 2001, representatives from Moira, Corowa and Delatite Shires signed the agreement along with Prime Minister John Howard. The SSAA was given the opportunity to attend and share in a moment that ensured jobs for rural Australia and guaranteed sporting shooters continued access to the world's best sporting propellant.

SSAA members should write or e-mail the office of Dr Brendan Nelson MP, Member for Bradfield (NSW); Mrs Joanna Gash MP, Member for Gilmore (NSW); Gary Nairn, Member for Eden-Monaro; Fran Bailey, Member for McEwen and Mr David Hawker MP, Member for Wannon (Vic) for their efforts in securing a very positive outcome for both the local Mulwala community and sporting shooters alike. ●



Gary Fleetwood (left), and Gary Nairn Lib (Eden Monaro) acknowledge the results of a successful campaign.

The buck stops here - signature of the Prime Minister John Howard.



Left to right: MJ Roche for the Defence Department, Dr Brendan Nelson and Jean-Georges Malcor for ADI at the signing of the MOU.



# Media influence

by Gary Fleetwood

**The recent events in the USA and the subsequent verbal and physical attacks on sections of Australia's Moslem Community spark memories of a disastrous incident in 1996 that resulted in draconian changes to Australian gun laws - changes in which one million firearm owners had no say, not so the media.**



## Mass Murder

The consequences of the recent attack on the World Trade Centre may eventually impinge upon freedoms enjoyed by enlightened communities across the globe. Catastrophe often initiates change and this catastrophe has certainly initiated a change in the way the civilized world sees acts of mass-violence. Many countries have set aside their differences in order to form a coalition dedicated to achieving a common goal - a world free from terrorism. Knives are now banned on US flights and travelers must undergo comprehensive screening before being allowed to take their seat on an aircraft. Shares in the gun industry have risen, while more than a trillion dollars<sup>1</sup> has disappeared from the value of other US stocks. Australia was one of the first countries to agree to a united approach in pursuit of a safer world, with the Prime Minister warning the nation there may be a cost in the form of Australian casualties.

## The Strategy

While Prime Minister Howard has often

'stuck to his guns' when taking divisive decisions, his 1996 gun reform strategy certainly did nothing to assist the Coalition during the last federal election.

This (1998) election, with the ballots of 88.3 percent of Australia's 12 million enrolled voters counted, John Howard is still 1,090,845 votes short of the sweeping victory that made him Prime Minister 31 months ago...the Howard Government had the dutiful distinction of having polled the worst Coalition primary vote since Menzies founded the Liberal Party more than half a century earlier.

Alan Ramsay Staff Writer - *Sydney Morning Herald* 14/10/98

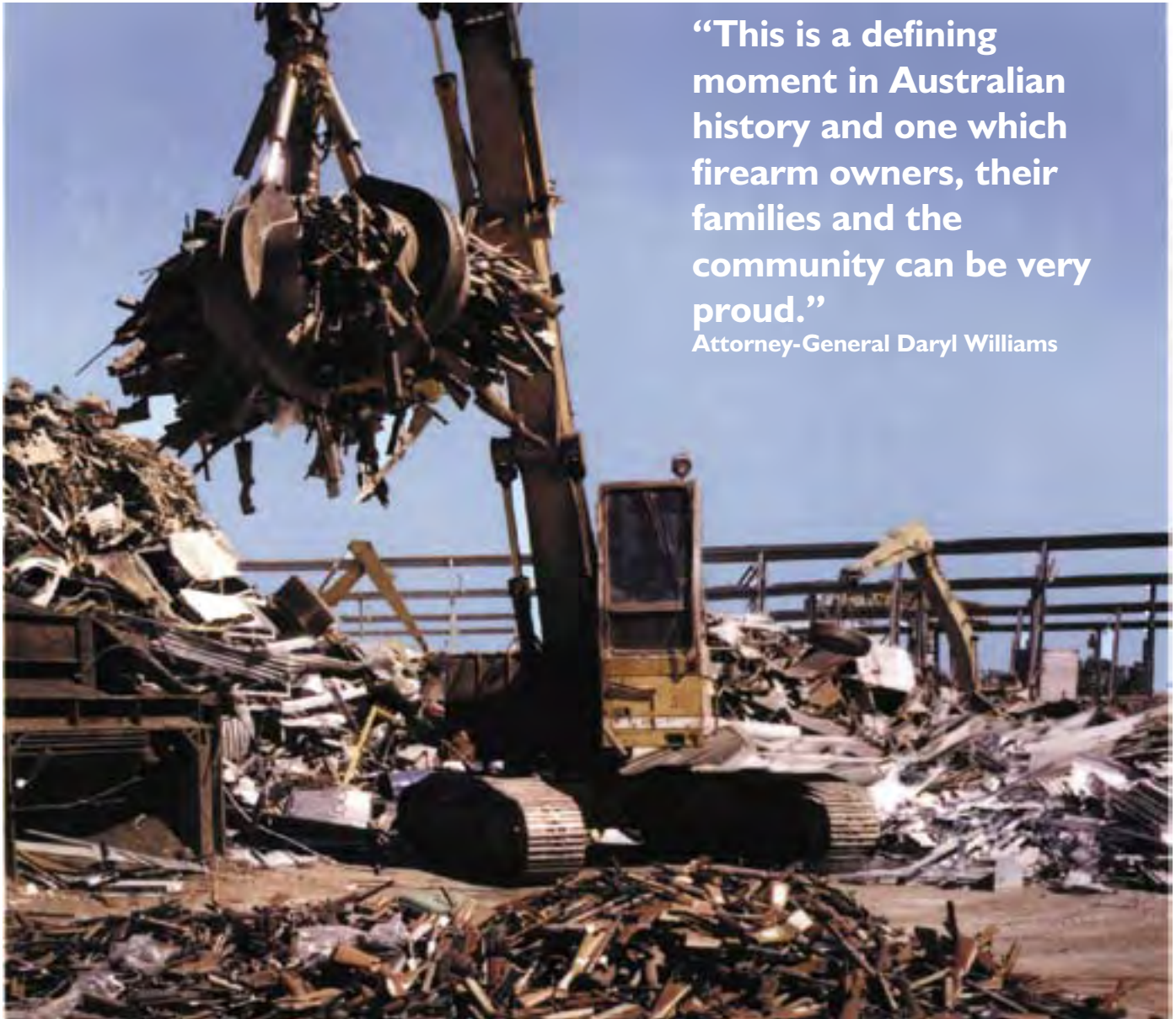
The recent arrival of one too many boats carrying illegal immigrants and the recent attack upon the United States created an opportunity for the government to increase its electoral stocks. The Prime Minister has read the current mood far better than his

counterparts. With a firm stance on people smuggling and a decisive commitment to assist the US, the government has boosted its popularity to a possibly election-winning level.

Almost four out of five Australians support Prime Minister John Howard's response to the United States terrorist strikes, which includes sending Australian troops as part of an international force against terrorism. A poll, conducted by Newspoll exclusively for *The Sunday Telegraph*, shows that voters have swung behind Mr Howard and almost half the electorate believes that the Coalition will win the election, due by the end of the year. The key reason for the boost in Mr Howard's standing was his stance on asylum seekers and his refusal to allow 435 people aboard the Tampa to land in Australia.

*The Sunday Telegraph* Sydney 23/9/01





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

Attorney-General Daryl Williams

## Intended Unforgivable Consequences

While hundreds of thousands of firearm owners shared the country's horror following the terrible events at Port Arthur in 1996, the anti-gun movement and the media quickly launched the most outrageous mass-character assassination the country had ever seen. The victims? The shooting fraternity across the board.

Bashing gun owners plumbed new depths of editorial mischief. Take for instance the headline 'Joy for shooters on day of massacre'<sup>2</sup> in which *The Australian* detailed an

announcement by the Queensland Government that it would underwrite a new rifle range. The headline implied that shooters were somehow joyful on the second anniversary of the Port Arthur tragedy. The Australian Press Council subsequently ruled in favour of the Sporting Shooters Association in its claim that *The Australian* had breached the APC's code of conduct.

There was more.

The Press Council wishes again to draw attention to the need for care in reporting statistics and extreme care in trying to

interpret them. 'Lies, damn lies and statistics' ring all too true.

It makes these comments in upholding parts of a complaint against *The Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, over a December 3, 1997 report of the use of now banned guns in murders in Australia. The Press Council finds that the report and headlines were misleading and the newspaper made insufficient effort to correct an error when it was drawn to their attention.

The introduction to the *Telegraph* story accurately stated that the statistics



showed that “nearly half the gun murders in the past seven years involved firearms now prohibited or restricted.” However, the statistics also show, on careful reading, that only 10 per cent of all homicides (involving all weapons, including knives, other weapons and bare hands) were caused by now banned firearms.

The main headlines: ‘Banned guns big killers:’ was thus misleading and the secondary headline, ‘50pc of murder weapons now illegal’ was wrong; it should have read ‘gun murder weapons.’ Later the story went on to say incorrectly that an institute study had shown that “46 per cent of the more than 2200 murders committed between 1989 and 1996 involved weapons now prohibited or restricted.” In fact, the total of “homicide incidents” given in this study was 2220, only 21 per cent of those involved firearms of all types; and guns now prohibited or restricted were involved in about 48 per cent of that 21 per cent.

Any reader who followed the figures given by the paper would assume that in this period about 1020 murders involved now-banned guns, whereas the real figure, according to the study’s percentage, was 215 “incidents.”

*The Daily Telegraph Sydney 6/3/1998*

Similarly, many thousands of moderate, law-abiding Australian Moslems may now be subject to persecution fanned by media reports of extremist activities in far-away places. After Port Arthur, sporting shooters across the country suffered at the hands of a media quick to emphasize the extremists, while leaving moderates right out of the debate. Understandable when seen against the anti-gun lobby’s furtive strategies. As Simon Chapman points out in his book *The fight for Public Health*, “The Coalition for Gun Control in Australia generally refers journalists to these more extreme groups for comment.”<sup>3</sup> The situation was made even more perverse by the support of religious factions such as the Uniting Church.

The Uniting Church leadership yesterday called for “all people of goodwill” to strongly resist attempts by the pro-gun

lobby to force the Federal Government to water down its plan for strict new gun controls.<sup>4</sup>

What exactly is the implication - that people who disagree with the government’s draconian approach are not of goodwill?

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) stepped into the fray and demanded that firearms be classified as a “health issue”. “Anything that kills 500-plus people a year is a very legitimate cause for doctors to be involved in,” said AMA South Australian President John Emery.<sup>5</sup> A bit rich coming from a profession that sees “between 10,000 and 14,000 Australian patients [die] in hospitals from preventable causes each year.”<sup>6</sup> The facts speak for themselves - you may be a lot safer on an SSAA range than under a surgeon’s scalpel at your local hospital.

Anticipating a backlash against the local Moslem community as a result of the war on terrorism, a recent *Daily Telegraph*<sup>7</sup> article noted, “But it is wrong to take the conduct of a small minority and use it as justification for the persecution of an entire group.” Very selective morality indeed from an outlet that demonized firearm owners for months following the murders at Port Arthur. The admonishment of then Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer notwithstanding, “Law abiding shooters had been ‘unfairly besmirched’ in the media after the Port Arthur massacre.”<sup>8</sup>

Sporting shooters sought words of support from other elected representatives following Port Arthur. Most requests, however, were answered with either terse letters parroting the party line or outright contempt:

Ted Drane flew into Canberra on Monday

**We are unashamed  
in reminding our  
critics that it is safer  
on an SSAA firearm  
range than it is  
under the knife in a  
hospital.**

expecting an audience with the Prime Minister. He got as far as John Howard’s chief political adviser, Grahame Morris, before being turned back. This rebuff for Australia’s most prominent gun lobbyist was an important, symbolic pointer to the way John Howard has fought his crusade over this past fortnight for gun law reform.<sup>9</sup>

Add the disastrous public relations episode at Sale in Victoria, which saw the Prime Minister address concerned firearm owners while sporting a bullet-proof vest and you begin to realise why the ramifications of the whole sorry episode continue to endure.

Many shooters are still understandably angry at having their property confiscated while receiving paltry lip service from politicians like Attorney-General Daryl Williams:

“This is a defining moment in Australian history and one which firearm owners, their families and the community can be very proud.”<sup>10</sup>

“I want to take this opportunity to again applaud firearms owners who have shown goodwill and common sense.”<sup>11</sup>

“The Commonwealth knows that, with the bipartisan support of the opposition parties, its plan (on firearms) reflects the feelings of civilized Australians everywhere.”<sup>12</sup>

Five years into John Howard’s ‘safer Australia’, the forthcoming election will no doubt see many shooters reflecting upon the government’s track record and the political alternatives. In light of the current crisis, if there is to be any legacy at all from the tragic events at Port Arthur, let’s hope that it means honest Australians, whatever their hue, will never again be forced to endure the sort of intolerance heaped on gun owners. ●

1. Foreign Correspondent ABC 26/9/01
2. *The Australian* 29/4/98
3. *The Fight For Public Health* Chapman Luton Pg 158
4. *The Chronicle* Victoria 14/5/96
5. *The Advertiser* Adelaide May 1996
6. Professor Ken Hillman *The Advertiser* 25/5/96
7. *The Daily Telegraph* 8/9/2001
8. *Mackay Daily Mercury* 6/6/96
9. *Herald Sun* ‘Howard’s Personal Mission’ undated. Copy held SSAA
10. *News Mail Bundaberg* 7/1/97
11. *Southern Highlands News* Bowral 20/11/96
12. *Sunday Times* WA 23/6/96

## Ammunition to lobby by

by Paul Peake

Most of us have been there; you're out with friends, maybe at the pub or perhaps talking with a local politician and someone passes a comment about guns that you know is right off the mark - if only you could remember that quote or all-important statistic. The following has been put together so the next time your stuck for the figures, you'll have a handy one-page reference point. The intention is to provide updated information so you can build up some basic 'ammunition' to fire back next time you need to put someone straight about the facts.

### Hunting

Hunting forms an important part of modern environmental management strategies around the world. Every year hundreds of thousands of hunters in Australia work to control feral pests, while the money raised from hunting licences and fees aids in the maintenance of important natural habitats.

**"It is my firm belief that if you take hunting, shooting and fishing out of the vital mix of conservation management, the result would be catastrophic."**

- Professor David Bellamy

Carter, D. (1999). *The Future of Recreational Hunting in Australia*. Kent Town: SSAA Inc.

**"Hunting has considerable potential to assist with conservation objectives. Ironically, this is often so for areas of land which are perceived to have little other economic value (such as swamps and wetlands)."**

- Senate Committee Report

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee on Commercial Utilisation of Australian Native Wildlife.

**"Game licence fees in Victoria have raised more than \$20 million since 1958 and have been used to purchase wetlands for inclusion in public game reserves."** -

Dr David Carter

Carter, D. (1999). *The Future of Recreational Hunting in Australia*. Kent Town: SSAA Inc.

### Crime

**"An analysis of the licensing and registration status of firearms used in homicide between 1 July 1997 and 30 June 1999 reveals that the overwhelming majority of these firearms were not registered and the offenders of homicide were not licensed firearm owners."**

- Australian Institute of Criminology

Mouzos, J. (2000). No. 151, *The Licensing and Registration Status of Firearms Used in Homicide*. Australian Institute of Criminology: trends & issues in crime and criminal justice.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the percentage of murder victims killed with guns was higher in 2000 (19.5%) than in the two years prior to the Federal Government's 'Buy-back' scheme. Similarly, in 2000 the number of attempted murders involving guns stood at an eight-year high. The forced confiscation of 640,000 firearms has not made Australia safer. ●

