

ASJ

AUSTRALIAN SHOOTERS JOURNAL

The political voice of the SSAA

**More
ammunition
for firearm
discussions**



**The future
is in our hands**

March 2002 Vol. 4 Issue 2
Members-only insert to the *Australian Shooter*



In this issue

ASJ

The political voice
of the SSAA

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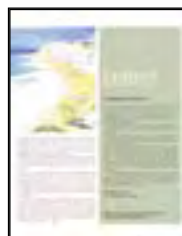
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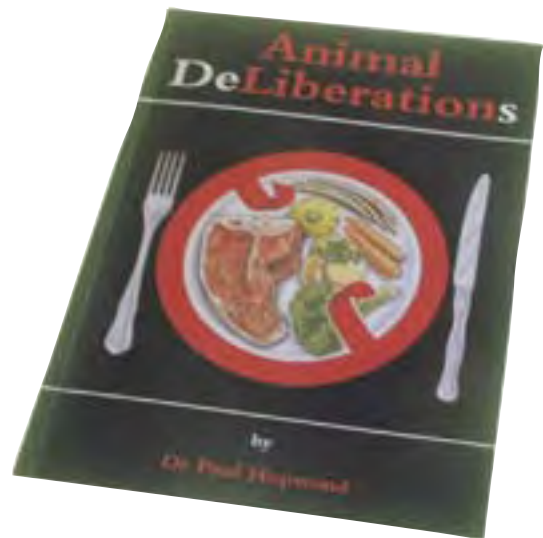
A word from the President

From their efforts to have cruel practices such as organised dog fighting banned to pressing for legislation to ensure that livestock are treated humanely, animal welfare groups have, for more than a century, been responsible for much good work. While the majority of their achievements are certainly praiseworthy, there is nevertheless a dark side to the movement in the form of a philosophical offshoot known as animal liberationism.

For the most part, liberationists differ from the mainstream in their belief that practically any use of an animal is both exploitive and immoral. The concept received a significant boost in 1975 when noted philosopher Peter Singer published his now famous tome *Animal Liberation*. Liberationist ideology has gone on to fuel a host of radical organisations, including the Animal Liberation Front, which has been linked to violent attacks on laboratories and animal husbandry projects across Britain, as well as the kidnapping and mutilation of award-winning journalist Graham Hall.

This past year, the SSAA was given an opportunity to review a new book titled *Animal DeLiberations* written by Dr Paul Hopwood, Associate Dean Teaching, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Sydney. *Animal DeLiberations* sets out to deconstruct some of the animal liberation movement's most fundamental arguments, while raising crucial questions about liberationist philosophy and the principles that underpin it. Dr Hopwood, who has been a practicing vet as well as a consultant to the New South Wales Health Department, the New South Wales Meat Industry Authority, the Meat Research Corporation and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, is no stranger to controversy when it comes to tackling animal liberationists head-on.

After examining the original manuscript, it was felt that that the SSAA should help publish Dr Hopwood's book. To date,



complimentary copies have been sent to every sitting state and federal politician in Australia, with plans currently underway to distribute it to university bookshops and public libraries. There is no doubt that *Animal DeLiberations* is destined to have a major impact on the animal welfare debate in Australia, especially where the issue of feral pest management is concerned. Every recreational hunter interested in the future of the sport should take the time to read what is unquestionably the most important critique of liberationist doctrine yet written.

Bill Shelton

Ammunition Mk II

by Paul Peake

Back in November 2001, we presented a new column called ‘Ammunition’, which was designed to provide readers with updated information they can use when discussing firearm-related issues. In this edition we’ve addressed some of the recent claims by the anti-gun lobby concerning the effectiveness of changes to Australian gun laws.

“There was a decrease of almost 30 per cent in the number of homicides by firearms from 1997 to 1998.”

While there was a reduction in the number of murders involving firearms between 1997 and 1998, a review of Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Recorded Crime data reveals that aggregate firearm-related offences subsequently increased in 1999 by nearly 13 per cent, as did the total number of murders (see Figure 1). In 2000, the number of firearm-related offences was still 8.5 per cent above the 1998 figure.

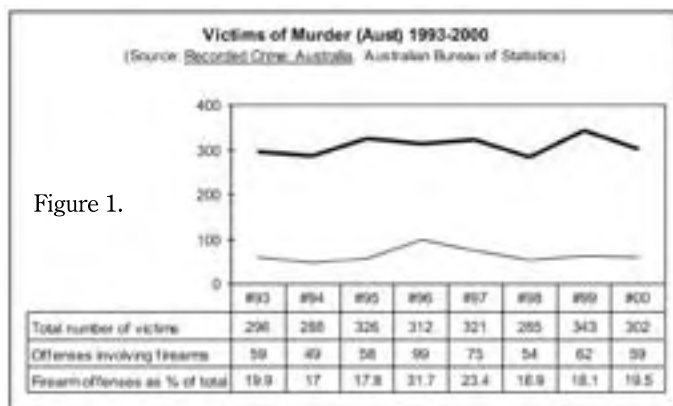


Figure 1.

“In 1999, the percentage of homicides committed with a firearm continued its declining trend since 1969.”

While there was a reduction in the percentage of murders involving firearms between 1996 and 1999, in 2000 the ratio of firearm-related murders (as opposed to ‘homicides’, which the ABS defines as a combination of murder, attempted murder, manslaughter and driving causing death)¹ increased to almost exactly the same rate as in 1993 (19.5 per cent vs. 19.9 per cent), with the same number of victims. At the same time, the number of attempted murders involving firearms reached an eight-year high - the ratio of firearm-related offences being 4.4 per cent above the average for the three years before the government’s ‘buy-back’ program (see Figure 2).

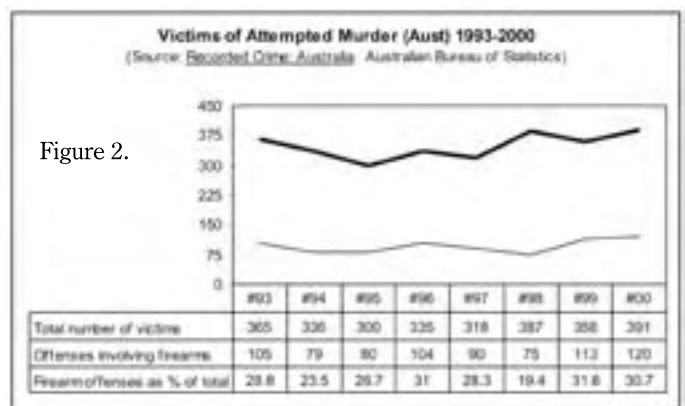


Figure 2.

“The US firearm homicide rate remains more than 13 times higher than that in Australia.”

The quote is misleading. It implies that the homicide rate is consistent across the United States, when in fact there are very substantial differences along demographic lines. There is a large amount of empirical evidence that shows that firearm-related murder in the US is often an urban phenomenon associated with ethnic gangs involved in the illicit drug trade.² A study undertaken by the US National Institute of Justice found that while African-American males aged 18-24 made up 1.2 per cent of the population of Tampa, Florida, they comprised 28 per cent of the city’s homicide victims.³ Similarly, the recent increase in firearm-related offences in Britain⁴ has been clearly linked to increased ethnic gang activity. The fact is there are large areas of the United States with considerably higher ratios of private firearms ownership than Australia that, nevertheless, exhibit comparably low murder rates.

“During the two-year period in which most of Australia’s new gun laws came into force, the country’s overall rate of homicide dropped to its lowest point since 1989. In 1998 there was a nine per cent decrease from the rate in 1997.”

According to the Australian Institute of Criminology’s (AIC) Australian Crime: Facts and Figures 2000 edition, the number of

recorded homicide victims subsequently increased by 15 per cent between 1998 and 1999.⁵

“There was a 12 per cent reduction in the number of murder victims in Australia from 1999 to 2000.”

As Figure 1 notes, while the total number of murder victims declined between 1999 and 2000, the ratio of firearm-related offences actually increased from 18.1 per cent to 19.5 per cent.

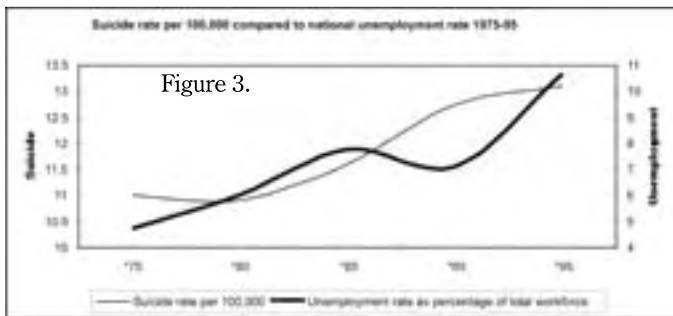
“In Australia, the proportion of suicides committed with a firearm is lower than it has ever been and at 8.8 per cent is about one-third the proportion that prevailed during the 1950s. The rate per 100,000 population of suicide deaths by firearm is also lower than it has ever been.”

The quote hints at a common argument put forward in opposition to private firearms ownership - namely, the misuse of guns in suicide. The usual approach is to overstate the connection between firearms and self-harm while exaggerating the efficacy of particular gun-control policies. While the ratio of firearm-related suicides has been declining in Australia for some time, the overall number of deaths attributed to suicide has increased by about 24 per cent during the past decade.⁶

There is a considerable body of evidence that suggests that as access to firearms becomes more restricted, those intent on harming themselves look to alternative methods. In their study of suicide rates in Queensland following the introduction of amendments to the Weapons Act in 1992, Cantor and Slater found the results in favour of tougher gun laws inconclusive. Overall rural suicide rates “showed no convincing decrease in any age group or either sex”. While in metropolitan and provincial areas there was a considerable increase in methods other than firearms “with significantly greater use of drugs and hanging.”⁷

While a clear connection between the availability of firearms and the aggregate number of suicides is hard to find, there is evidence to suggest a strong link between self-harm and unemployment (see Figure 3).

Figure 3.



Source: Figures for unemployment rate 1975-95 adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data published in Langmore, J. and Quiggin, J. (1994). *Work for all: Full Employment in the Nineties*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press. Unemployment data for 1994-95 ABS. Suicide data ABS (Cat. No. 3309.0).

The idea of a correlation between suicide (especially among males) and high rates of joblessness has been given a significant boost recently with Japan’s economic downturn. Despite the fact that in all but the most exceptional circumstances private firearms

ownership is effectively banned, the country experienced a 34.7 per cent increase in suicide between 1997 and 1998 as rising numbers of “middle-aged salary men”⁸ lost their jobs.

It’s worth noting that there has been a large increase in the suicide rate in Australia throughout the past 15 years among teenagers and young adults aged 15-24. This group has some of the highest rates of unemployment (and lowest ratios of gun ownership) with figures showing the level may be upwards of 25 per cent in some parts of the country. While suicide is a complex phenomenon with no single explanation, whether or not people have meaningful work (as opposed to access to firearms) seems to have a substantial bearing on the problem.

“Although armed robberies increased by nearly 20 per cent, the number of armed robberies involving a firearm decreased to a six-year low.”

As Figure 4 shows, while the ratio of firearm-related offences has declined, the overall number of armed robberies has risen by more than 78 per cent during the past seven years, with the largest increase (about 44 per cent) following the government’s 1996 ‘buy-back’ program. The ratio of offences involving weapons other than firearms appears to have grown in tandem with the fall in gun-related crimes.

One could argue that while access to firearms has become more difficult for opportunistic offenders (as opposed to professional criminals), there has been a corresponding decrease in the likelihood of encountering an armed victim. The net effect has been a significant rise in the number of armed robberies with a simple shift in the type of weapon used.

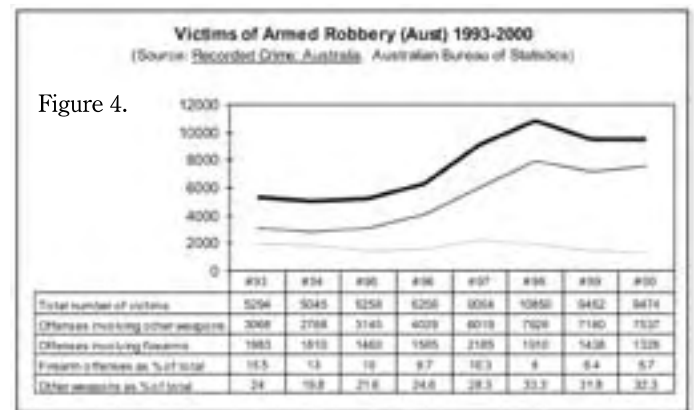


Figure 4.

“In the fiscal year 1999/2000, 28 of the 59 firearms identified in gun homicide (47.5 per cent) were handguns.”

While the paper the quote is taken from does not provide information on the registration status of the 28 handguns identified in firearm-related homicides in 1999/2000, the AIC found that between July 1997 and June 1999 “not one handgun used in homicide was registered”.⁹

“Eleven of the 44 identified perpetrators of gun homicide (25 per cent) used firearms registered in their own name.”

Taken in isolation, the quote is misleading. The AIC paper that the statement is drawn from notes that there were 65 firearm-related homicides in the period 1999-2000,¹⁰ but only 44 offenders were linked to a particular gun and of these 11 perpetrators (25

AMMUNITION MARK II

per cent) used a firearm registered to them. It is entirely possible that the remaining 21 offences did not involve licensed firearms, in which case the overall ratio of homicides involving legitimate owners would be closer to 16 per cent. This would be more in line with the findings published in the AIC's work on the status of firearms used in homicide. The study found that between July 1997 and June 1999, only 9.4 per cent of firearm-related homicides in Australia involved licensed owners with registered guns.¹¹

"The number of murders with handguns [in New South Wales] has remained stable from 1995 to 2000."

According to the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research, 55 per cent of all handgun-related shootings in NSW in 2000 took place in just two statistical subdivisions (Canterbury-Bankstown and Fairfield-Liverpool). The Bureau also noted "the increase in firearm offenses has been most pronounced in areas of Sydney where drug trafficking is a problem."¹² The findings raise the question: Is the rise in handgun related 'shoot with intent' offences in NSW really a gun-control problem or one more properly centred on the state's burgeoning drug culture?

"The rate of robbery with a firearm in NSW is about one-sixth of that in the United States..."

While the rate of firearm-related offences is lower in NSW compared to the United States, the overall robbery rate is considerably higher. According to the ABS's Recorded Crime data for 2000, the state recorded a robbery rate of 206.2 victims per 100,000¹³ persons compared to 150 per 100,000 for the US.¹⁴ The possibility of being confronted with a firearm during a robbery may be lower in NSW compared to the United States; however, the chances of becoming a victim are substantially greater.

"A declining firearm suicide rate, a declining firearm assault rate, a stable firearm robbery rate with a declining proportion of robberies with a firearm and a declining proportion of damage to property offenses committed with a firearm suggest that firearm regulation has been successful in Tasmania."

The above statement is misleading. While the misuse of firearms has declined in Tasmania in a number of offence categories, ABS Recorded Crime figures reveal¹⁵ that the aggregate assault rate has continued to climb during the past five years from 430.5 victims per 100,000 in 1995 to 577.8 victims per 100,000 in 2000. Similarly, armed robbery offences have risen from 9.5 victims per 100,000 persons in 1993 to 16.6 victims per 100,000 persons in 2000. In 2000, Tasmania's murder rate was 0.3 victims per 100,000 persons above the average for the three years before the government's 'buy-back' initiatives.

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Licensing and Registration

Where do the firearm fees collected in South Australia go?

by Andu Drysdale

Gun control advocates keep reminding the firearms owner that firearms should be treated like cars and, like cars, licensing and registration are useful tools to prevent irresponsible ownership and use. So, what happens to the fees collected from licensing drivers and registering cars?

According to an Royal Automobile Association (RAA) spokesperson, the fees collected from licensing and registering drivers and cars goes to the State Government. The 'but' is that once the cost of running the Motor Vehicles Department (ie, the keeping of records, stamp duty, administration and the like) have been taken out, all monies must be spent directly on providing safer roads for users and their vehicles within the state the fees are collected in. On the other hand, fuel tax, fines from speed cameras, etc, goes to general revenue, to be used as the Federal or State Governments see fit.

Following the same rationale, it could be asked where the revenue raised from licensing individuals to use/own firearms and from the registration of firearms goes? Unfortunately, most of the information required to clarify the questions can only be obtained via the 'freedom of information' trail, but using the assumptions outlined here, some idea of where the monies go can be achieved.

Firstly, how much revenue are we talking about? According to the South Australian Police Commissioner's Annual Report for the 1999-2000 fiscal year, the annual income obtained from firearms licensing and registration averaged \$2.788 million. Presumably, this goes into the state revenue to be allocated within the overall budget. If the same approach applied to the revenue from licensing drivers and registering cars is taken, then it must be assumed that the first claim on the monies is to the firearms division. They have the responsibility of ensuring that only fit and proper persons can be licensed or own a firearm, just as they have the responsibility for maintaining the firearms database.

While information on the average annual operating budget of this division is unobtainable until a request via the Freedom of Information Act has been considered, the acting officer-in-charge has supplied some information. This information was as follows:

- The cost of supplying a license (ie, administration, posting and the like) is \$2.70/unit.
- There are three sections within the division. These consist of registration, which manages the computer database (six staff), investigation/operations (12 staff) and adjudication, which deals with appeals (14 staff). Firearms Division is also responsible for handling the appeals relating to items designated under the Offensive Weapons Act. These include swords, double bladed knives, etc.

Back to the SA Police Commissioner's Annual Report and data available from the Australian Institute of Criminology (<http://www.aic.gov.au>) and the South Australian Police web site (<http://www.sapol.sa.gov.au>) for the year 1999-2000. Note: these figures are for South Australia only.

[//www.sapol.sa.gov.au](http://www.sapol.sa.gov.au)) for the year 1999-2000. Note: these figures are for South Australia only.

- The number of licenses issued 28,993;
- Murder: by firearm - eight, by knife - five, by hands/feet - ten, by blunt object - one, by other - two;
- Attempted murder (all categories) - 47;
- Robbery by firearm - 78;
- Robbery by other - 430;
- Firearm/weapons offences - 2746, of which 402 were firearms offences (see p.5 of 26 of the SA Police Commissioner's Annual Report: Service Overview).

Leaving the firearm to other offences ratio for the moment and what it implies, some estimate of average annual costs can now be made. An average of \$50,000 per year in salary for each individual employed by the Firearms Division has been used in the following calculations. These are:

• Cost of licences (28,993 x \$2.70)	\$78,281
• Salary for 32 employees	\$1,600,000
• Operating budget	not available
• Total estimated costs:	\$1,678,281

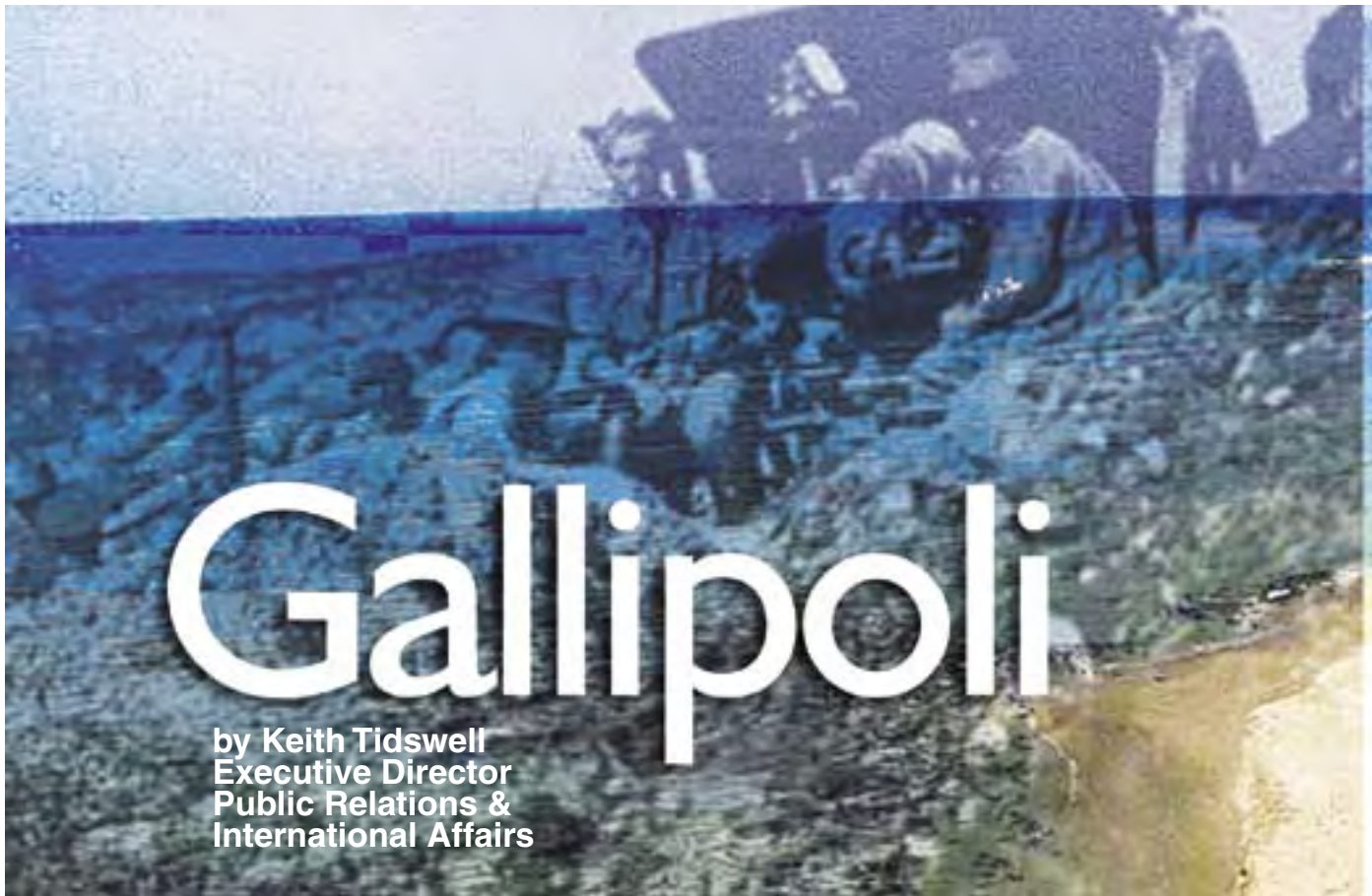
This leaves \$1.1 million from the licensing and registration revenue. It is possible the estimates for salaries and operating for the Firearms Division is underestimated and the income from licensing and registration goes in funding this Division.

If so, the funding of an entire police division, including the 12 investigating officers, by the sporting shooters is something they should be proud of. The Australian Institute of Criminology has already produced data to show that firearms homicide almost always involves an illegal firearm.

Sporting shooters show a high level of personal commitment to responsible firearms ownership via training and financial investment in safe storage facilities. It appears they also fund 12 special police officers that work purely in investigating all categories of offensive weapons crime. What other sport funds law enforcement to such a degree?

However, the final questions are: 1) Do politicians recognise sporting shooters' commitment to community safety and 2) What happens to any monies left over?

If firearms are to be treated like cars, does this not mean that any remaining revenue from licensing and registration should be returned to the sporting shooters to provide safe facilities for competition and/or practice around the state? Perhaps this is a question our politicians from each state/territory would care to answer. ●



Gallipoli

by Keith Tidswell
Executive Director
Public Relations &
International Affairs

Standing on the cliffs of Gallipoli (Gelibolu as the Turks call it) above ANZAC Cove, I can see the white, sandy beach stretching out below me interspersed with patches of small, round rocks and pebbles. These ancient shores have seen Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and the ANZACs trek across their beaches. The water is clear and the air is hot, just as it must have been in 1915. As I stand here, I can see young Australians and New Zealanders mingling with Turkish families - all visiting what was once a battlefield but now is an important national park, holding deep significance for both Turks and ANZACs.

Thousands of Australians, New Zealanders and Turks lost their lives in this cove and elsewhere on the peninsula and for many a visit to this place is a deep spiritual experience. There is a sense that those lost in battle are trying to communicate with you to tell you more about the war and the great sorrows.

Les Carlyon's new book *Gallipoli* tells the story about what happened here in 1915 from the letters of young men at the time. Some of the letters were mailed home but others were written in the trenches, never posted and were sent back to families with their personal effects. Les has researched government documents as well as the diaries and autobiographies of people who served on this battlefield and his research highlights the way in which losses were hidden from the Australian public.

Often the autobiographies reveal just as much from what the writers leave out as from what they record. The belief that the British Navy could force the Dardanelles, the lack of planning, the wrong landing place, inadequate maps and lack of artillery support meant greater losses and caused much pain. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who was the colonel of the Turkish troops here in 1915, was a gifted leader and founded the modern Turkish Republic and became its first president. One of his most frequently quoted statements was, "Peace at home. Peace in the world."

As president of Turkey, Ataturk paid tribute to those who had fallen:

"Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives....You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country; therefore rest in peace.

"There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours...

"You, the mothers who sent their sons from far away countries, wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace after having lost their lives on this land; they have become our sons as well."

Gallipoli reminds me that the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (SSAA) and all the other international shooting groups, which together make up the World Forum on the Future of Sports Shooting Activities (WFSA), are participating in meetings around



the world. These meetings discuss small arms and light weapons, ammunition, definitions of weapons of war as they pertain to firearms, uniformity of regulations regarding transport of firearms as baggage on airlines and any other issues that may affect our participation in our chosen sport of shooting.

We believe that the work we participate in will contribute not only to the international efforts against transnational organised crime but also to a greater understanding between nations so that peace can prevail.

Millions of dedicated people around the world participate in the shooting sports, just as they do in tennis and golf, generating friendship, peace and goodwill among all peoples. Sporting shooters teach safety, responsible use, the fundamentals of marksmanship, hunting ethics and conservation of vital habitat and wildlife. International competition develops friendships that last a lifetime.

I stand on these cliffs with a Turkish friend, watching all these young visitors from Australia and New Zealand who have come to pay their respects to all those who fought and died here in 1915. There is a strengthened sense of motivation to make the word of the SSAA heard as we seek to find practical solutions to real problems in order to contribute to peace. We are a voice that is being listened to. We do make a difference. ●

Letters

Niggling newsagents

I would like to backup J A Borg of Redbank Plains, QLD, regarding anti-firearms in the Jan/Feb 2002 issue of the *Australian Shooters Journal*. My grief was when I went into Brisbane CBD. I was chasing the hunting magazines for my husband. I went to four newsagents and one bookshop. I was looked upon as a criminal myself and some of the comments I received were unbelievable. One newsagent in Fortitude Valley was the same. They could not get me out of these shops quick enough. I was in total shock, as I believed newsagents stocked all sorts of magazines - including magazines for the sporting shooter. I finally got what I wanted at a small newsagent at Spring Hill, Queensland. If people have this attitude towards firearms and sporting shooters, why are they in business? Do these businesses realise how many sporting shooters there are, not only in Queensland but worldwide. Not everyone is criminally minded. Wake up. Come and try it before you knock it.

Editor's Reply: We know how you feel. Some newsagents' 'selective' attitudes of righteousness don't stop them from stocking pornographic magazines. I guess money talks louder.

J M Smith, East Brisbane, Qld

**Mail your letters to: Australian Shooters Journal,
PO Box 2066, Kent Town, SA 5071**



By Alex Smith, TV news journalist, shooter and TV voice of shooting at the Sydney Olympics.

There's nothing like an Olympic gold medal or three to color society's attitude to the shooting sports. Atlanta was just what the doctor ordered after 1996 and another three shooting medals at the Sydney 2000 Olympics cemented our cultural shooting rights forever, right?

Wrong.

The future of the shooting sports in this country has never been more vulnerable for the simple reason that ordinary shooters and the leaders of some of our high profile competitive shooting organisations have become dangerously complacent. Those who have seen their roles as being of more puritanical sporting origin have often dismissed the lone voice of the SSAA as grubby political indulgence. Well guess

what? The shooting sports have to wake up to the modern media-driven reality of tomorrow if our children are to have any hope of adopting the same pastime enjoyed by their forebears.

What happens when we no longer have a Michael Diamond sweeping all before him? Do we hope that society will remember his feats in perpetuity and allow us to indulge in our pastime forever? Do any of us seriously believe that? Might it instead be a little smarter to apply that age-old saying: Make hay while the sun shines?

Like all of us, I admire the people who volunteer for office in our shooting organisations and I certainly don't desire to offend or lecture them, but my unique blend of experience as an Olympic commentator, senior television journalist, public relations

practitioner and shooter qualifies me to provide advice. This article is designed to be just that, advice. Not only to the hierarchy of our shooting organisations, but perhaps more importantly, advice to all dedicated shooters who should be charged with the energy to drive the future of their sport, discipline and a way of life.

Recent history serves as a valuable backdrop to the point I seek to make. Shooters everywhere, this one included, were delighted by the television coverage afforded to the shooting sports at the Sydney Olympics. What every shooter needs to know (and this one can't forget) is that the coverage in Sydney didn't happen by some obscure right or accident, it was the end result of seven years of monotonous lobbying.

The saga of the Sydney Olympic shooting events started at the Australian Clay Target Shooting DTL Nationals in Brisbane in 1993/94. With the assistance of then Seven Sport Brisbane cameraman, Anthony George, I convinced the producers of Channel Seven's 'Sportsworld' program



in Sydney to run a four-minute story on clay target shooting and Australia's future Olympic prospects.

As a shooter, it was a golden opportunity. Camera technology allowed for unprecedented views of both the target and the shooter, but more importantly, our sport had a whiff of status thanks to the Barcelona Olympic Games. Russell Mark had finished a creditable ninth in Barcelona and was confidently predicting great things in Atlanta. The Olympic flavour gave my 'Sportsworld' story immediate credibility. The eventual five-minute piece was broadcast without alteration.

At that point, lobbying began to cover the shooting sports in Atlanta. I made it clear to anyone who would listen that we had good medal chances. The bottom line is that I was ignored, much to Channel Seven's eventual embarrassment. Seven missed Michael Diamond's looming victory and scrambled just in time to get the last few shots of the final and the medal ceremony to air. It was a disgrace and I went to work to make sure everyone

in the Network knew that producers had been warned of the chances of success in shooting. Brisbane sports cameraman, Anthony George, was in Atlanta working on the Olympics and rubbed the salt in as well. The Olympic production unit got the message loud and clear and was determined to ensure such embarrassment would not be repeated in Sydney. In 1998, I was appointed shooting commentator for the Sydney Games, but the battle to properly cover shooting was only just beginning.

In its desire to cut the burgeoning cost of covering the Sydney 2000 Olympics, Seven decided that I would commentate the shooting events from a television monitor at mission control in the International Broadcast Centre at Homebush and not live in front of the action at Cecil Park. Seven wanted all 17 shooting events covered in full for pay-TV, but was not prepared to pay \$80,000 for two commentary positions at Cecil Park, one on the shotgun range and the other in the indoor finals range for all pistol and rifle events.

I was in revolt, determined to convince the powers-that-be that commentary off a monitor would not be satisfactory. I had been sent VHS tapes of the monitor feeds from Atlanta and was convinced that the visual information on the television feed was not adequate to inform a large television audience what was going on. The transfer of scoring information from the shooting computer systems to television graphics generators is something that no-one has ever bothered to perfect and without it, I could not call the events off a monitor.

The task ahead of me was simple. Just two weeks out from the Olympics, I had to convince Seven Network management to pay up for commentary spots at Cecil Park. There was no alternative, but how? Fortunately, I was not the only shooter working on the Games coverage and the team went to work.

Seven was just the Australian rights holder for the Sydney Olympics and not the host broadcaster, a job that has become too large for any television ►

THE FUTURE OF SHOOTING - IT'S UP TO US

network anywhere in the world. The International Olympic Committee pulls its own unit together to provide the base coverage (pictures and natural sound) for all rights holders.

In Sydney, the IOC host broadcaster unit was called SOBO, Sydney Olympic Broadcast Organisation, a massive television machine that dwarfed the combined resources of every television station in Australia. I was expecting SOBO to have an impressive array of equipment at Cecil Park, but what I hadn't counted on was the organisation's good sense to hire several knowledgeable shooters as advisers. I was aware of one, my good friend and former representative Australian shooter and fellow member of the Warwick Gun Club, Greg Newey. We had known for months that he would be giving advice to the television director, but I was pleasantly surprised to discover shooters in several key positions, including the manager of SOBO at Cecil Park, Bob Perry.

With the help of Bob Perry, Greg Newey and a number of other shooters from Australia and America, I managed to begin convincing Seven executives that the shooting had to be called from Cecil Park. Thanks to my shooting contacts in SOBO, we were able to negotiate a big discount for Seven on a commentary position, but there was a catch. While there were commentary positions available in the indoor range, all the shotgun commentary positions were booked. I grappled with a huge dilemma. Would I have to race between Cecil Park and Homebush to call indoor events at the range and shotgun events off a monitor? The scenario was madness. So began some more bending of the rules, thanks to my shooting mates in SOBO and those officiating in the shotgun events.

With the aid of Seven Network Olympic badges and microphone flags for the American technical crew, SOBO agreed to allow me to do what had never been done before and commentate the shotgun events standing on the sidelines. It was a difficult task because I would be flying blind without a television monitor to show me what viewers were seeing at home. But out of adversity comes improvisation and we developed a system whereby the

If we fail to unite and fail to begin dedicated and professional promotion of our pastime, our children will not have the opportunity to decide whether or not to participate.

producer back at Homebush would tell me when there was a picture that I should refer to or explain. Despite all sorts of technical difficulties, the coverage worked a treat and no-one would have been aware of the mad scramble that had preceded the first event by just hours.

The saga of the Olympics serves to graphically illustrate the point that shooters are in control of their own destiny. We can keep shooting in the public spotlight by aggressively and professionally providing the media with shooting news it can use.

Without proactive media management the shooting sports will die at the hands of an ever-evolving society. As devotees of both a sport and a way of life, we must regularly engage society with our achievements and our views if we are to rebuild social acceptance and guarantee the cultural legitimacy of our passion.

The positive presence of shooting in the media cannot be confined to once every four years. It must be determined and sustained in the national and local media so that all Australians, including politicians, become accustomed to and not surprised by news of our achievements.

If we fail to unite and fail to begin

dedicated and professional promotion of our pastime, our children will not have the opportunity to decide whether or not to participate.

All the shooting sports must come together under the Australian Shooting Association to fund a permanent professional media officer for the shooting sports. The appointee would mainstream shooting stories direct to radio outlets around the nation with the exploits of shooters from across the spectrum. These days, radio scripts and sound can be dispatched cheaply and efficiently by e-mail and the radio stations love it.

The 'if it's free we'll run it' approach is also part of the TV landscape these days. The Australian Rally Championship, drag racing and the Billabong surfing championships are good examples. They shoot, edit and distribute all their material themselves and there's no reason why shooting can't achieve the same result. There is also scope to negotiate the inclusion of foreign network television coverage of world cups, etc on the international news feeds that supply Australian networks. Resources permitting, the media officer would also produce professional video presentations for specialist promotions and sponsorship deals.

Thanks to technology, the modern promotions office need consist only of laptop computer, camera, phone and briefcase. The operation would not replace the activities of our existing representative bodies, but would complement and assist them.

It would be expensive, possibly up to \$200,000 per year depending on the seniority of the media officer, but the total cost would be borne by the shooting fraternity only until sponsors could be engaged (eg, Billabong and surfing) to cover the cost. The sponsorship would be the direct consequence of an elevated media profile and in time, the ratio between media office cost and sponsorship should be no worse than revenue neutral.

We can't afford to put this issue in the 'too hard' basket. Let's act now through our clubs, regions, state bodies and national head offices to get the ball rolling before it's too late. ●

In the Media

Radio ABC 7ZR Tasmania 10/1/2001

Compere: Annie Warburton

Interview: Tasmanian Opposition Leader
Bob Cheek

Bob Cheek: Now, the Tasmanian firearms legislation contains an unintended consequence that requires existing firearm owners who wish to purchase a firearm to undergo a cooling-off period as though they were first-time firearm owners. Now, we support the value of the cooling-off period, I don't want anybody to make any mistakes about that and we'll do nothing to lessen the protection, but the fact is that the person already owns a firearm, there's no public benefit to be gained by asking them to wait 30 days before acquiring another one.

So really, just changes that are quite out of kilter with the rest of Australia and we believe that we support the existing gun laws as introduced by Tony Rundle, so it's just two anomalies being corrected.

Radio ABC 7NT Tasmania 13/12/2001

Guns and Rural Family Relationships.

Interview: Clemencia Barnes, Family
Therapist

Barnes: But the relationship between men and their sons is a worldwide issue at the moment only, I think, because there's a consciousness-raising that it's really important for boys to have that contact and that modelling with a male parent. Guns, I think, may be a side issue to that. But certainly, in rural areas, what happens is that there is that healthy sense that fathers teach their sons the safety and the non-safety of using weapons...

The Sunday Mail - Adelaide 16/12/2001

Call to study Bryant's DNA

DNA from Port Arthur gunman Martin Bryant has been taken but will not be studied for genetic clues to his murderous behaviour. Bryant, like all criminals in Tasmanian prisons, submitted DNA for the

new CrimTrac database. Leading Australian criminologist Paul Wilson said he would support moves to study Bryant for clues to why a person would do such a senseless act.

"Especially with DNA technology advances, there is a big argument for looking at Bryant, it's a unique case," Professor Wilson said. The Bond University criminology professor said genetic predisposition to crime was a new and expanding area of research. "There's a lot of interest in the whole area," he said.

The Chicago Tribune 21/12/2001

City to get a dubious title: No. 1 in murder
Eric Ferkenhoff, *Tribune* staff reporter
With less than two weeks left in the year, Chicago is poised to overtake New York for only the second time on record and log the most homicides of any city in the nation.

Chicago had recorded 648 slayings through Wednesday. New York, with three times as many residents, had 619 killings. Equally troubling is that Chicago homicides are up this year - there were 629 killings in 2000 - after falling every year since 1994.

Kyodo News Service 21/12/2001

Police seize 890 guns in January-
November
Tokyo, Dec. 21 (Kyodo) - Police forces seized 890 guns nationwide from January to November, 34 more than in the same period last year, the National Police Agency (NPA) said Thursday. The agency also said in a report on firearms that there were 207 reported shooting incidents during the period, almost double last year's figure. Seventy-one cases were gang-war related.

Proceedings of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance 21/11/2001

Canada's Firearm Registry Cost
Ottawa - Senator Stratton: For my final

question, I return to an old question I have asked you before on numerous occasions. When will we quit spending money on guns? What are we at now as a total number? You are now asking for a staggering sum of \$158.6 million in new appropriations. The minister responsible at the time - the Minister of Justice, Mr Rock - sat in that very chair and promised us that it would be no more than \$85 million. What are we at now?

Treasury Board Richard J Neville, the Deputy Comptroller General now of the Comptrollership Branch, responded, "The total at this point is \$689,760,000."

Saf-T-Hammer Announces Improved Second Quarter Results 20/12/2001

Scottsdale, Arizona

Saf-T-Hammer Corporation

OTC Bulletin Board: SAFH, the parent company of Smith & Wesson Corporation, today announced financial results for its second fiscal quarter ending October 31, 2001. In a quarter-to-quarter comparison, (Q1 2001 versus Q2 2001) sales for the second quarter of \$19,918,682 increased 77 per cent over first quarter sales of \$11,236,069.

The increase is attributable to significant cost-cutting measures implemented by management, a renewed positive public sentiment and patriotism and the general resurgence of the Smith & Wesson brand due to its being returned to US ownership. "As we enter the 150th year of Smith & Wesson's existence, we are confident that we will see continuation of the current positive trend in both sales of our products and corporate profitability," said Robert Scott, president and CEO of Smith & Wesson.

Gun Crime Rise in London 21/12/2001

Join Together Online

A report from Scotland Yard shows that gun crime in London, England, has increased by nearly 90 per cent, This is London

IN THE MEDIA

reported on December 19. According to the report, gun murders in London increased by 87 per cent in the first eight months of 2001 compared with the same period last year. In addition, armed robberies increased 53 per cent, from 435 during the first eight months of 2000 to 667 this year.

Kangaroo Quota

8/1/2002

Kangaroo Industries Association of Australia (Inc)

Kangaroos numbers highest ever

It can hardly be more official; kangaroos are not in any way endangered. In fact, the latest population estimate released by the Federal Government puts their numbers at 58.6 million. That means there are more than twice as many kangaroos in Australia as there are cattle. It also means the total kangaroo population is a little more than half that of the Australian sheep population and it's a long time since any credible source considered Australian sheep or cattle to be at all endangered.

The Associated Press

9/1/2002

Mobile Phone Shootings Shock Britain

Handguns were outlawed in Britain in 1997 after the massacre of 16 children and a teacher at a primary school in Dunblane, Scotland. Some 160,000 handguns were surrendered to police. Dave Rodgers, vice chairman of the Metropolitan Police Federation, said the ban made little difference to the number of guns in the hands of criminals. According to a recent survey, the number of crimes in which a handgun was reported increased nationally from 2648 in 1997-1998 to 3685 in 1999-2000. "The underground supply of guns does not seem to have dried up at all," he said.

The Associated Press

11/1/2002

Suit vs. Gunmakers Dismissed

Philadelphia (AP) - A federal appeals court rejected the city's lawsuit against the gun industry Friday, saying gunmakers aren't required to protect citizens from misuse of weapons. The 3rd US Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a decision by federal Judge Berle M Schiller, who had dismissed the lawsuit.

Canberra Times

12/1/2002

Roo culling is humane slaughter

By Simon Grose

In 1985, an RSPCA report found that "if achieved correctly, kangaroo culling is considered one of the most humane forms of animal slaughter.

"An animal killed instantly within its own environment is under less stress than domestic stock that have been herded, penned, etc," the report said. According to national president of the RSPCA, Dr Hugh Wirth, humane killing is achieved by a "single bullet, placed in the brain of an unsuspecting animal."

Canberra Times

15/1/2002

Kenyan police top gun deaths

Nairobi: Six out of every ten Kenyans shot dead in the past five years were killed by police, a newspaper quoted a confidential study by medical and legal experts as saying.

NSW Police Media Unit

18/1/2002

Hurstville Firearms Arrest

Two people have been charged following a lengthy police investigation that resulted in the seizure of a number of firearms yesterday. Police from Crime Agencies' Firearms Trafficking Unit seized 11 handguns with a street value of approximately \$50,000 as well as small amounts of cannabis and ecstasy during a search warrant on a house in South Hurstville yesterday afternoon.

Herald Sun Sunday

20/1/2002

Fearful youth in knife rise

By Shelley Hodgson

One in six Victorian youths have carried a knife, according to new research. In 2000-2001 there was a further 16.5 per cent increase in the number of offences involving weapons, with knives used in 45.6 per cent of cases. But researchers say they have found that youths are not carrying weapons to be aggressive - about 80 per cent do so out of fear.

The Advertiser - Adelaide

20/1/2002

Pay to go fishing plan

South Australia's 400,000 amateur anglers will have to buy a recreational fishing licence as part of controversial plans to save dwindling fish numbers. The SA Recreational Fishing Advisory Council (SARFAC) said the introduction of a fishing licence was "inevitable" and is urging the state government to take action this year.

Seattle Times - USA

16/1/2002

Gun-control advocates should change their tune

By Matt Rosenberg

Another oft-stated concern is accidental gun deaths. The National Safety Council's 'Deaths Due to Unintentional Injuries, 2000' report sheds some light here. It shows accidental death rates for all ages combined are far greater from motor vehicles, drownings, fires and burns, falls, poisonings by solids and liquids, and suffocation than from firearms. For youths and teens, the rates are dramatically higher for cars and drownings than for guns and somewhat higher for fires and burns than guns.

The Advertiser - Adelaide

22/1/2002

Defamation damages for Chapmans

By Mark Steene

The Conservation Council of South Australia and three of its senior officers have been ordered to pay developers Tom and Wendy Chapman almost \$150,000 in damages after being found guilty of defaming the couple. Justice Williams was particularly critical of the council's senior officers and co-defendants, Professor David Shearman, Margaret Bolster and Richard Owen, who were responsible for the publications. "The dominant motive of each defendant was to damage the standing of Tom and Wendy Chapman in order to influence them and others to withdraw support for the building of a bridge to Hindmarsh Island," he said. Justice Williams said all three were substantially discredited in the witness box during the trial. He said in fixing damages

he had regard to the important position of influence occupied by the Conservation Council.

The Daily Telegraph - NSW
22/1/2002

Knives are replacing guns as the weapon of choice for armed robbers, according to a recent report. The Australian Institute of Criminology said while people continued to be most concerned about the use of firearms by bandits, the nature of armed robberies in Australia was changing. "The use of firearms in armed robberies has declined," the AIC said. "At the same time there has been a dramatic increase in the use of other weapons, particularly knives."

Warren Truss MP - Acting Minister for the Environment and Heritage
24/1/2002

Commonwealth Committed to Tackling Feral Foxes

The acting Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Warren Truss, today reaffirmed the Commonwealth Government's commitment to addressing the threats posed by feral foxes throughout Australia. "Whilst the control of feral animals is a state responsibility, the Commonwealth Government has demonstrated its commitment to address the problems through the provision of over \$4.4 million from the Natural Heritage Trust. There has been a strong emphasis on projects for fox control," Mr Truss said.

The Mercury
28/1/2002

Fox on the rise

By Sue Bailey and Danny Rose

The call for a \$10,000 bounty for every fox caught in Tasmania is gaining momentum, as the fox population continues to explode. Since the first fox was sighted at the Burnie wharf in June 1998, there are now as many as 30 foxes in Tasmania - with some estimates doubling that figure. Tasmanian Conservation Trust director Michael Lynch, who first suggested a \$10,000 reward last week, said it was a small price when compared with the irreparable damage the growing fox population could wreak. ●

A Question of Balance

by Paul Peake

A recently released Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) report, titled *Weapon Involvement in Armed Robbery*, found that while the ratio of armed robbery offences involving firearms declined in Australia between 1993 and 1999, the proportion of crimes involving other types of weapons increased by 18 per cent.¹ Significantly, the recorded armed robbery rate grew sharply during the same period from about 30 victims per 100,000 population in 1993, to 50 victims per 100,000 in 1999.²

The figures come as no surprise given that firearms have traditionally ranked behind knives when it comes to armed robbery. What is noteworthy are some of the quotes the report's authors chose to include in the text. While no-one would describe the AIC as pro-shooter's rights, unlike some organisations engaged in the gun-control debate both here in Australia and in the US, the Institute's approach has become increasingly more balanced in recent times. The fact is reflected in a number of important statements that have found their way into a series of AIC reports and papers throughout the past couple of years:

- "...licensed firearms owners were not responsible for over 90 per cent of firearm-related homicides. Most (over 90%) firearms used to commit homicide were not registered and their owners not licensed."³

- "...while legal controls may have some effect on the slippage of guns into the black market, they are not likely to have a dramatic impact on reducing the use of guns in robbery..."⁴

- "...those who commit homicide in Australia are individuals who have circumvented legislation and will be least likely to be effected if further restrictions on firearms ownership are introduced."⁵

- "...those who engage in firearm-related

violence in Australia are least likely to register their weapons or comply with appropriate licensing procedures..."⁶

While such statements may seem a long way from the sort of full and frank discussion the government's anti-gun policies warrant, they are a vast improvement over the sort of close-mindedness that typified the debate in 1996. It's refreshing to see that at least one government agency is willing to acknowledge that measures aimed exclusively at law-abiding shooters are unlikely to have much impact on the misuse of firearms or serious crime generally. At the very least they should give lawmakers reason to pause and consider the facts before thinking about any further restrictions on private gun ownership.

References:

¹Mouzos, J and Carcach, C (2001). *Weapon Involvement in Armed Robbery*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, p. 20-21.

² *ibid.*, p. 2.

³ Graycar, A (2000). *Crime, Safety & Firearms*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

⁴ Gill (2000, p. 84) as cited in Mouzos, J and Carcach, C (2001). *Weapon Involvement in Armed Robbery*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, p. 8.

⁵ 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. p. 5.

⁶ *ibid.*

