

ASJ

AUSTRALIAN SHOOTERS JOURNAL

The political voice of the SSAA

**a greenie
with a gun**



**Street
Theatre**
gets mixed
reviews

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In this issue

ASJ



Street theatre gets mixed results

- 3** A word from the President
- 4** A rare British politician speaks out
- 5** Importing soft air (BB) firearms into Australia
- 6** ABS Update 2002
- 8** April Mania
- 9** Travelling with Qantas
- 10** Street theatre gets mixed reviews
- 11** SSAA endorses NSW police call for public assistance
- 12** Greenie with a gun
- 15** In the Media

The political voice of the SSAA

PO Box 2066, KENT TOWN, SA 5071
PHONE: 08 8272 7100
FAX: 08 8272 2945
Internet: www.ssaa.org.au
E-mail:
AS - as@ssaa.org.au
SSAA - ssaa@ssaa.org.au

A MEMBER OF THE
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CONTRIBUTORS: Bill Shelton, Paul Peake, Gary Fleetwood, Keith Tidswell, Brian White.

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A word from the President

On occasion Gun Control Australia's John Crook has found himself in court. In a 1995 defamation case brought against him by the SSAA's Victorian branch, the presiding judge had some interesting things to say about the man -

"In his opening for the plaintiff, Mr Wilson described Crook as a zealot - a description I regard as being only slightly exaggerated. In the considerable time he spent in the witness box, Crook gave the impression of being particularly dedicated to, and almost obsessed with the subject of gun control."¹

While some of Crook's musings have landed him before the beak, others could only be described as completely off the planet -

"Our logic is that shooters are the most ill-disciplined group... That's what attracts them to guns. It's a state of mind... They are usually poorly educated, they have never had success at school and were never very good at sport... Guns to them represent something they have never been able to achieve."²

In a media release on April 8, 2002, titled 'Hail Carr, Hail the Great Pretender' Mr Crook finally went too far with a claim that the SSAA had "produced" a person convicted of a firearm-related manslaughter in Victoria.

We're pleased to announce that after corresponding with the SSAA's lawyers, Mr Crook has subsequently apologised unreservedly for any misunderstanding and agreed to meet the Association's legal costs. Further, Mr Crook has also agreed to forward a copy of his apology to everyone who received the original media release.

To borrow from Confucius - "We should be careful indeed in what we say."

1. 1995 judgment by His Honour Judge Shelton, in the matter of the SSAA (Vic) vs. Gun Control Australia, as cited in Tobin, T. K. & Sexton, M. G. (1990). *Australian defamation law and practice*, Sydney: Butterworths p. 43,442.

2. DeBelle, P. (1997, 16 July). Taking aim at new gun laws. *Adelaide Advertiser*.

Bill Shelton
National President

Secure your gun Secure your sport



A rare British politician speaks out

by Keith Tidswell, Executive Director Public Relations and International Affairs

The English Parliament has very few people speaking in defence of lawful gun owners. The Blair Government banned pistol shooting and now fox hunting to hounds faces the same fate. This anti-conservation move will be disastrous for the ecology, but it is proceeding anyway.

British Labour Party politician Kate Hoey was one of the few who voted against the total British handgun ban of 1997. Keynote speaker at the World Forum on the Future of Sport Shooting Activities, Mrs Hoey addressed a gathering at IWA, the trade and arms show in Nuremberg, Germany in March. The SSAA was present.

In her speech she said her party came to power in England after 18 years in the wilderness and decided almost immediately to ban handguns in Britain. This is similar to the Howard Government in Australia. A parallel exists in the way that in both countries, the aim of the introduced gun bans was ostensibly to lower crime rates, but in both countries it has been a complete failure, as foretold by shooting groups. And further, neither government is admitting this fact.

Britain has always been prominent in shooting, a fact demonstrated at the Sydney Olympics. The Commonwealth Games are important to Britain and shooting is important to the Games. Under the current total handgun ban, technically the Games could not be held there in August 2002. The government, in a bind, went so far as to offer weak concessions, by which guns could be brought to the Bisley shooting ground in armoured cars.

Overseas shooters will be going to Britain to compete, but British pistol-shooting competitors are unable to train on their own soil and must travel to places as far away as Switzerland to train. It's ridiculous.

This near-to-lone politician believes that at least there should be shooting practice allowed at Bisley. Mrs Hoey's awareness of the fact that the laws have done nothing to lower rates of gun crime is sharpened by the fact her own constituency is actually showing a massive increase of it. The handgun ban did nothing to defeat any of the problems of criminal gun use.

Government departments there, as in Australia, continually bring forward proposals highly unfavourable to legitimate gun owners. Mrs Hoey said that following any successes in banning fox hunting to hounds, there will be attempts to ban game shooting and then fishing. If this progression is to be avoided, the alliance of these three activities is essential. They have common interests and if they don't work co-operatively, legislation will be passed against all three pursuits.

The murder of political candidate Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands was widely reported as being carried out by an animal rights activist. The dark green movement rising in Europe is a serious matter. Glad



**Kate Hoey MP
with World Forum
President Carlo
Peroni.**

to say, we in Australia have not yet had to suffer this level of activism, but Kate Hoey was clear: either we who believe in the sustainable use of wild animals should be more unified or we face further loss of rights. Gun ownership is only part of the wider issue. These words have come from an English perspective, but they should ring true with SSAA members also.

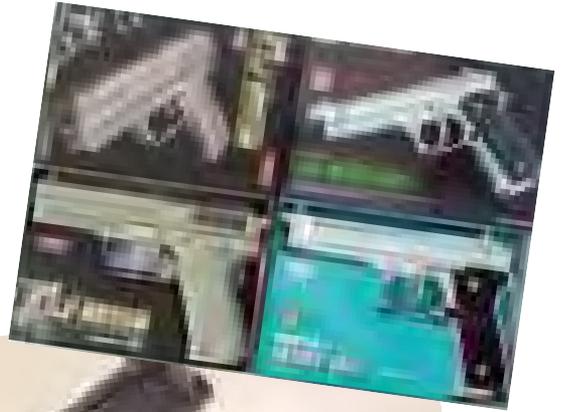
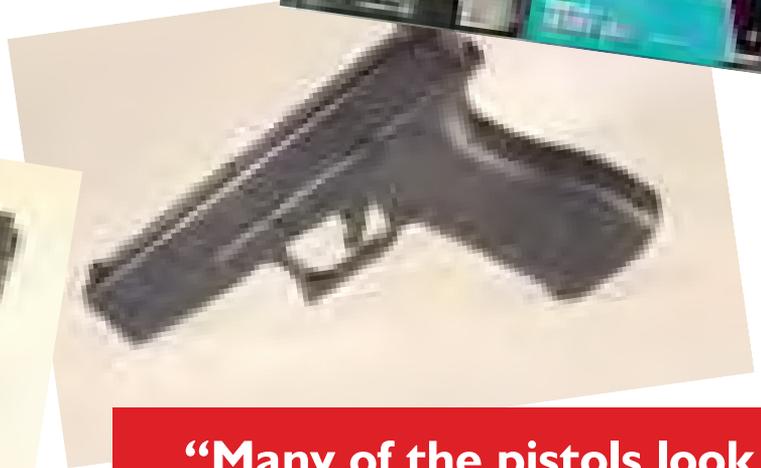
Mrs Hoey did say there is one element of change now emerging in Britain and if it appears in Australia it will be welcome. Some media interest is beginning to circle the civil liberties aspect of the debate. The Burns Report, government-commissioned, found largely in favour of fox hunting. This has not influenced the British Government, but at least the media have taken some notice.

Mrs Hoey strongly supports the World Forum. She concluded her speech by hoping Britain will not always be the country first to introduce yet another futile ban. We in Australia have had plenty of bans and we could echo these sentiments.

The World Forum is important to us in Australia because it is a round-table where international groups assemble to discuss their firearm-related concerns. Kate Hoey was invited to provide the keynote speech because she is a forthright person who judges a case on its merits. She has had serious bomb threats as a result of her views. Last year, her name was found on a fanatical animal rights hit list, the police warning her to continue checking her motor vehicle for bombs before starting it. Another sad note is that other British Labour Party politicians have told Mrs Hoey that they support her stance on fox hunting but they are too afraid to speak out publicly.

How many Australian politicians and lawmakers have suffered the same kind of pressure, even when their common sense has told them that our hunters and other gun owners have a very good case but are being overridden by unfair treatment?

Importing soft air (BB) firearms into Australia



“Many of the pistols look so real they could be used as de facto weapons.”

Senator Amanda Vanstone

On July 16, 1998, amendments were made to the Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations in regard to firearm controls. Included in those changes were definitions that soft air rifles and soft air handguns were going to be treated in the same way as air rifles and air handguns. That means they are now firearms. In 1999 Customs officials seized 3744 plastic air pistols similar in appearance to the Glock and Smith and Wesson handguns.

At the time, the then Minister for Customs Senator Vanstone said, “Many of the pistols look so real they could be used as de facto weapons in robberies. In the wrong hands, [they] have the potential to cause a lot of fear on the streets.”

In September 1999, a 12-year-old boy in Brisbane had his birthday present confiscated by Customs at Brisbane airport. Officials found a soft air handgun in a parcel posted from New Zealand by the boy’s grandmother. A Customs spokesman in Canberra said that because imported firearms were classed by their mechanism and the boy’s birthday presents partially used compressed air, it was irrelevant that it was a toy.

The SSAA recently had a phone call from an individual whose

wife had just returned from Asia with two toys she had purchased at a cost of \$A4 each. The toys were in fact plastic soft air pistols that fire a small plastic bead some 30cm. The items were located in her luggage and she now has been charged with failing to declare them, which carries a fine of \$250,000 or imprisonment for ten years or both.

We wish to bring to your attention the legal requirements if you intend to bring back these toy firearms into Australia. You need to declare them, obtain a B709A or B709D from your local police and ensure that the toy firearm has a unique serial number applied to it in accordance with your state requirements. You will then be required to obtain a ‘Permit to Acquire’ to take possession of it. Failure to abide by the legal requirements involving these toy firearms could bring you unbelievable hardship as a firearm owner. We ask that you bring these facts to the attention of any of your friends who intend to travel and may have an interest in soft air guns.

For more information on this subject, visit the Australian Customs Service web site (www.customs.gov.au/bizlink/IMPORTS/Index.htm) or go to the SSAA web site (www.ssaa.org.au) and click on the Importing Firearms link. ●

ABS Update 2002

by Paul Peake

In 1996 Prime Minister John Howard promised Australians a “safer community”¹ in exchange for his \$500,000,000 gun buy-back program. With the PM’s assurances in mind, over the past five years the *Australian Shooters Journal* has published a regular series of updates focusing on the Australian Bureau of Statistics annual Recorded Crime report.

This year’s ABS summary which covers the period January 1 to December 31, 2001, shows that despite the government’s confiscation scheme, rates for many serious offences continue to rise.

While there was a slight decline in the overall number of murder victims in 2001 compared to 2000, attempted murders rose by 17% to reach a nine-year high. The total

number of offences involving guns mirrored the general increase with 132 victims.

The number of armed robberies in Australia also increased in 2001, rising by 14% compared to the previous year with firearm-related offences growing by 0.6%.

Assaults followed the upward trend with the total number of victims climbing by more than 13,000 and the number of firearm-related

VICTIMS OF ATTEMPTED MURDER (AUST) 1993-2001

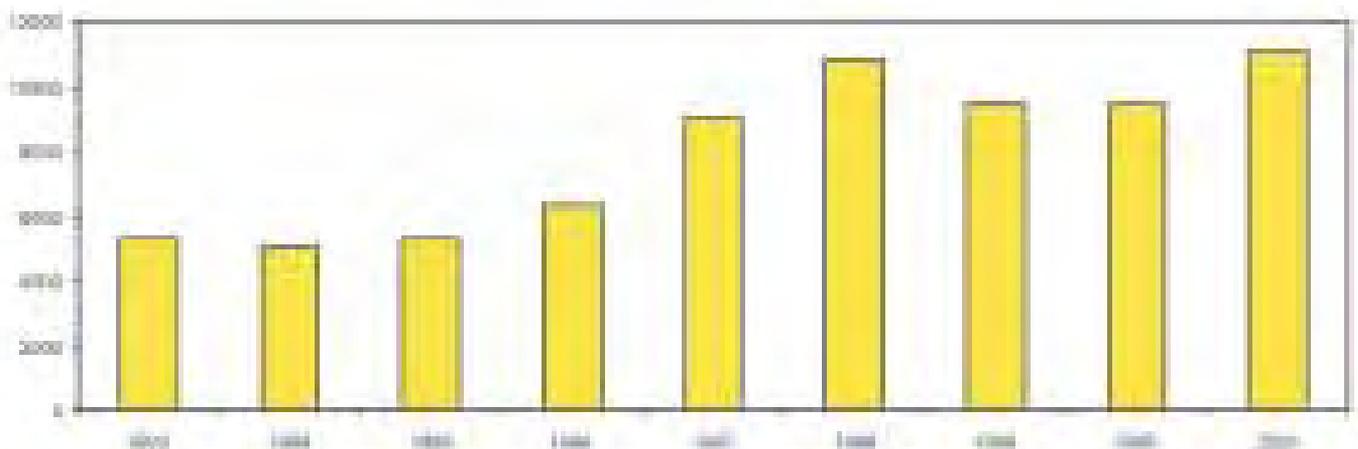
(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics)



Total number of victims	660	660	600	620	619	687	690	690	700
Firearm-related offences	100	79	81	100	89	79	120	120	132
Firearm-related as % of total	15.2	11.9	13.5	16.1	14.4	11.5	17.4	17.4	18.9

VICTIMS OF ARMED ROBBERY (AUST) 1993-2001

(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics)



offences rising from 780 to 867.

The number of kidnapping/abductions grew from 693 victims in 2000 to 758 in 2001, with the ratio of firearm-related offences increasing from 7.1% to a nine-year high of 9.1%.

The fact is the past five years have seen little if any reduction in the overall rates of most serious crimes. There is a clear upward trend in attempted murder, armed robbery,

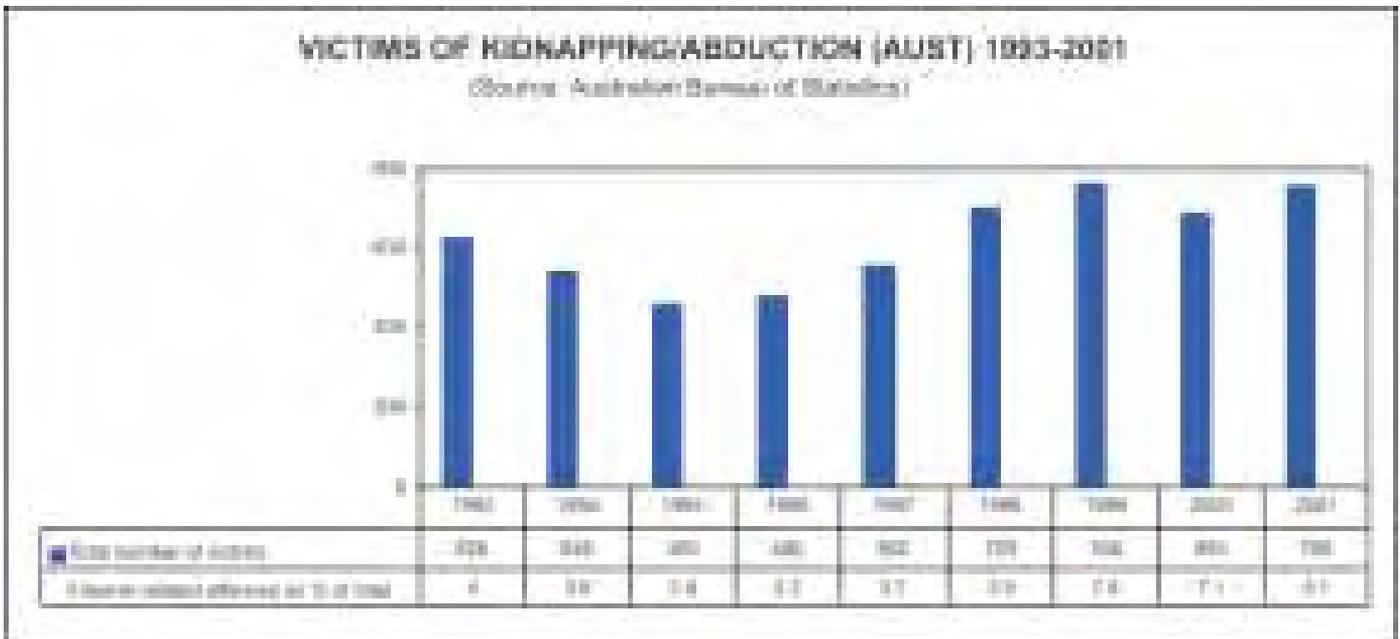
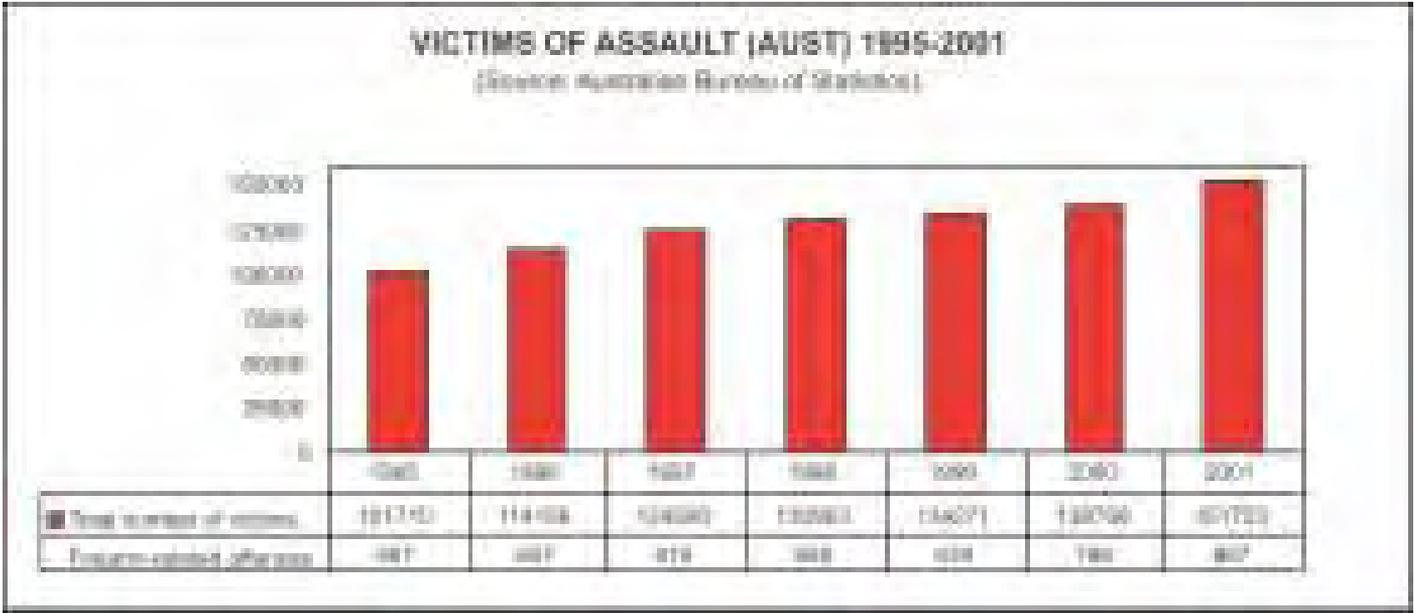
serious assault and kidnapping/abduction. Similarly, the number of unlawful entry with intent offences has continued to increase; rising from 429,374 victims in 2000 to 435,524 in 2001.²

Given the half a billion dollars lifted from taxpayers in order to fund the Federal Government's confiscation project and the Prime Minister's claims that we'd all

be better off as a consequence, any fair-minded assessment of the facts could only conclude that the whole exercise has been an outstanding waste of resources.

References:

1. Gordon, M. (1996, June 17). PM braves angry crowd. *The Australian*, p. 1.
2. (2002). 2001 Recorded Crime: Australia. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.



April Mania

April brings to Australia the annual hysteria about the lawful possession of handguns. The sixth anniversary of the mass murder at Port Arthur was precluded by a range of events that activated the gun prohibitionists to make unsubstantiated claims of the alleged danger that Australian society faces from those who lawfully own handguns.

A mass murder in Germany committed by 19-year-old Robert Steinhaeuser on April 26 gave added impetus to the prohibitionists' call. Echoing murderers Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, who were responsible for the shootings at Columbine High School in the US in 1999, Steinhaeuser was described as obsessed with violence. German police reported finding videos containing "dark, blood-dripping and violence-worshipping films". A lawsuit lodged in Denver by the parents of some of the Columbine victims claims that 25 companies that make violent videos influenced the activities of both Klebold and Harris. The \$10 billion suit argues in part: "Absent the combination of extremely violent video games and these boys' incredibly deep involvement, use of and addiction to these games and the boys' basic personalities, these murders and this massacre would not have occurred."

April 3 saw the release of new data from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. The Bureau noted that there had been a massive 30 per cent increase in the number of criminals using illegal guns. NSW Police Minister Michael Costa was quickly on Radio 2GB commenting on the use of (illegal) handguns and offering advice as to where they came from. "Well they're coming in from overseas. We don't produce handguns in this country, that's my information from police, so every one of these handguns has got to come in from overseas.

"Now you've got to ask the question - how do they get them through over our borders? And that's really the difficulty for us. We have the toughest gun laws in the country at the moment in this state but if they come across borders, you've got a major problem."



"Most of our violent crime in Australia is committed by licensed shooters." - Samantha Lee Coalition for Gun Control on Radio 2GB Sydney; 16/04/2002

"Not one handgun used in a homicide between 1997 and 1999 was used by a licensed owner." - Australian Institute of Criminology, Jenny Mouzos; May 2000

On April 5, the National Dealers and Traders rejected Mr Costa's reference to border control and said, "The current proliferation of illegal handguns rest squarely on the shoulders of the New South Wales and Queensland Governments.

"State Dealers Associations had advised their respective Police Ministries as early as 1998 of loopholes within firearm legislation that permitted handgun frames and parts to be sold in NSW and handguns to be de-activated and sold in Qld without a licence."

Needless to say the Coalition for Gun Control (CGC) immediately demanded a ban on semi-automatic handguns. However, CGC spokesperson Samantha Lee was in for a shock when she was questioned by radio 2GB's Philip Clark:

Lee: Well, it's the problem in Australia. Most of our violent crime in Australia is committed by licensed shooters. But the other major problem is that the way...

Clark: Hang on, hang on. I don't believe that. Say that again. Most of the violent crime in our community is committed by licensed shooters?

Lee: That's correct, yes.

Clark: Yes, but this is not your problem, Samantha, with all due respect. I mean, the problem in the community is - those criminals who own handguns in gangs. I mean, they're not likely to be turning up on Saturday morning at the shooting range. Okay, thanks for talking with us. Samantha Lee from the National Coalition for Gun Control. Quite frankly, I think that's a bit daft, isn't it?

Clark's comments set the media pattern for much of the ensuing debate. Maybe it was all the grainy, black and white security videos from 'current affairs' programs showing people being bashed, robbed and in some cases shot. But refreshingly, as the controversy unfolded, the majority of the media made a clear distinction between criminal gangs (often connected to the drug trade) misusing handguns and legitimate sporting shooters.

The *Daily Telegraph* ran a front-page story about how easy it supposedly was to buy handguns from the USA via the Internet. Ray



"A ban on the semi-automatic handguns - and that's what the Greens are calling for now." - NSW MLC Lee Rhiannon (Greens) talking about guns on Radio 5AA Adelaide; 29/04/2002

"Prohibition doesn't work, it just makes life harder for people." On Marijuana - Seven News web site i7.com.au; 19/2/2002

Hadley from 2GB interviewed US gun dealer Eric Thompson who said, "According to a 1994 crime bill here in America, I cannot send a gun to another person - let's say in New York. I can't do that.

"What I have to do is send the gun to a licensed dealer. The licensed dealer then has the individual come in, sign an affidavit, they do a formal background check on them and they will then release the gun to them.

"So there's, even in America, there is no opportunity for a person to actually to have the guns shipped directly to them. They have to go through governmental back-up checks."

The SSAA subsequently rang the *Daily Telegraph* and enlightened them on several aspects of US Federal gun law.

On April 17, the Prime Minister John Howard allowed his personal prejudice to get the better of his political judgment when he stated on radio 2GB: "I hate guns." The SSAA responded with a letter to Liberal Party CEO Lynton Crosby that said:

"While we understand the personal bias Mr Howard has against firearms, this Association shall continue to work closely with the Attorney-General's Office and the Justice Minister to reduce gun-related crime in this country and improve the safety standards of those who have firearms in their possession."

At a state and federal level, the government focus has been on the illegal firearms trade. In a press release on April 17, Federal Justice Minister Chris Ellison stated that the Howard Government would be promoting a new National Firearms Trafficking Policy Agreement to the states in an effort to "help to overcome the spread of dangerous illegal weapons through our community."

In response to a question from One Nation MLC David Oldfield, NSW Police Minister Michael Costa stated in parliament, "I make it clear that I do not intend in any of my comments to detract from the right of honest citizens to use legal firearms in a legal manner. I have great respect for the law-abiding members of the gun-owning community and I have met a number of them. They have a legitimate right to own firearms and to use them lawfully in pursuit of their sport."

Throughout the debate, the SSAA's main focus has been on improving the image of both the Association and the shooting sports generally and we're continuing to work closely with the firearms industry, government and other shooting groups in order to achieve that end. The fact is, gun-related crime hurts the public's perception of law-abiding shooters and any sensible contribution the SSAA can make in order to help reduce it is something worth pursuing.

Travelling with Qantas

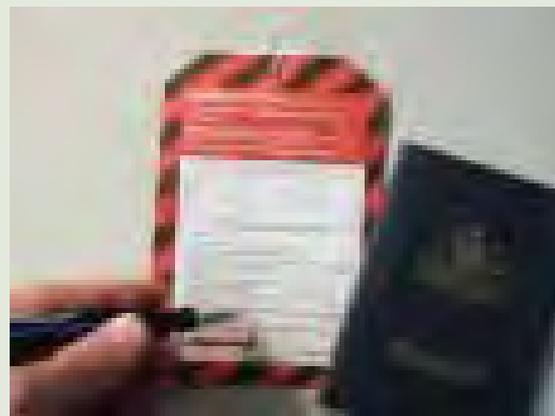
Qantas has recently introduced an additional procedure for transporting firearms on Qantas flights. Passengers travelling with firearms are now required to fill out a declaration indicating that the firearm is unloaded and that no ammunition is packed with the firearm. In the case of separately packed ammunition, a declaration is made that the ammunition weighs no more than 5kg gross and that Qantas approval has been given for carriage on Qantas operated flights only. This approval can be obtained by ringing 0419 204 670. If the flight is for international travel, then a declaration is made that the appropriate Customs documentation has been completed. The declaration also indemnifies Qantas for all costs incurred as a result of non-compliance with the declaration. Laurie Willoughby, manager of Qantas Dangerous Goods Compliance, told the SSAA that the new arrangement is focused upon the security of firearms while in transit.

"The arrangement now determines that any parcel with the new tag will not be placed by baggage staff on the luggage carousel at the passenger's destination. The passenger will have to attend at the Baggage Services area and pick up their parcel after the baggage receipt has been verified. For international flights the parcel will be collected from the Baggage Claims Hall."

The red tag is designed so that the passenger keeps a copy of the signed declaration and the original stays with the luggage. Laurie made it quite clear that he wants to be informed if the parcel, with red tag attached, makes it to the normal luggage carousel. "I want your members to ring me if they experience a failure of the new system. I need flight details and the baggage receipt number.

"I have heard comments that this system will only identify these parcels as containing firearms and thus make them prone to theft. We at Qantas believe that by making these parcels even more accountable throughout the travel process, we will negate that apprehension. I am happy to talk to firearm owners if they have any concerns over this procedure." Laurie Willoughby's mobile phone number is 0419 204 670.

More information on travelling with firearms can be obtained on the SSAA web site: www.ssaa.org.au/quantascarriage.html



Street theatre gets mixed reviews

On April 30, 2002, Sydney's Martin Place again became the stage for the Coalition for Gun Control (CGC) to push their agenda. Twelve months earlier in the same location the CGC implemented their now infamous attempt to impress the public of Sydney with a media stunt that involved placing electronic gun crosshairs on pedestrians in the area. Having failed to win the hearts and minds of Sydney residents with that episode, they were back again with a new stunt.

Metal detectors (aka magnascanners) were erected on the footpath and about 30 actors walked through and were searched by 'security guards'. They then walked through again and again and again. This was the message from the CGC: If handgun laws don't change, the way we live may have to.

Catchy line, but it totally misses the point that criminals use illegal handguns illegally. Perhaps CGC should have used this line from the Australian Institute of Criminology¹: "Criminals are the group least likely to be affected by any further restrictions on firearms ownership."

Firearm owners should know that NSW MLC Ms Lee Rhiannon (Greens) obviously thought that her presence could sway public opinion on the issue of illegal handgun crime. She released an impassioned press statement, which read in part:

"Today's striking event in Martin Place communicates the reality that the public are not safe because legal firearm owners in Australia have access to a stockpile of 300,000 handguns. The Greens call on the State Government to immediately ban handguns."

Three hundred thousand handguns? Source, please. While the vegetable-type greens are good for you and are low in fat, it appears that the political type are low on facts and are not good for sound social policy.

The Democrats were also present, along with representatives of advertising agency Saatchi and Saatchi, who assisted in the promotion of this CGC production. Not present was Kevin Roberts who, as the worldwide chief executive of Saatchi and Saatchi "once annihilated a Coca-Cola vending machine with a machine-gun to celebrate Pepsi becoming the top-selling cola brand in Canada."²

Scrutinising closely, NSW MLC David Oldfield (One Nation) later commented that the event was more "public nuisance than public interest". A sentiment related by members of the public to SSAA people who were present and handing out copies of the AIC Trends and Issues Report No. 151.

1. Mouzas, J. (2000). The Licensing and Registration Status of Firearms Used in Homicide, Trends & Issues in Crime Control & Criminal Justice, No. 151. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology

2. *Panorama*, Ansett in-flight magazine, Page 36. May 2001- "Love that Brand"



Samanthe Lee - Coalition for Gun Control.



NSW MLC David Oldfield - One Nation



NSW MLC Lee Rhiannon - Greens



The Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans - Australian Democrats.

SSAA endorses New South Wales police call for public assistance.

The NSW Police launched “Operation Vulcan” on the 19th June in an attempt to encourage members of the public to report the illegal trafficking and possession of firearms. The SSAA and the NSW Firearm Dealers Association, both of which represent the law-abiding firearms community, were present at the launch at Police Headquarters.

“We are glad to be working in partnership with industry organisations such as the SSAA and dealers. The community should be aware that these groups have worked in concert with police to increase our capacity to reduce gun-related crime. I welcome their participation in this project.” said the Commander of the NSW Firearms Trafficking Unit, Detective Superintendent Helen Begg.

“Although police welcome any information regarding firearm-related crime, Operation Vulcan is specifically targeting those involved in the illegal trade of handguns.”

SSAA National Secretary Roy Smith pledged the Association’s full support for the Carr Government’s latest initiative to reduce gun crime. “Following up on the Government’s previous strategies of best practice ballistic science and technology, gun detector dogs and heavy penalties we now have another weapon to include in the armoury against the criminal use of guns.” Mr Smith said.

“I urge all of our members, in fact all firearm owners, to support Operation Vulcan and supply police with any information, no matter how small, about possible activities involving the trafficking of illegal firearms.”

Mark Burgess, Chief Executive Officer of the Police Federation of Australia said about the SSAA stance, “The SSAA are to be applauded for their support of the NSW Police Service and their efforts to remove from the NSW community illegally held guns.”

The SSAA Website Media Release page indicates that the Association has for some time taken a responsible position on gun crime and has been supportive of law enforcement in it’s mission to crack down on gun-related crime.

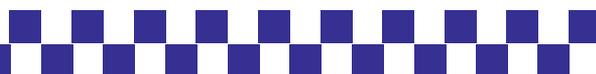
- 24Jun02 - **Sporting shooters support police on illegal gun strategy.**
- 27Apr02 - **Get tough on gun crime says SSAA.**
- 27Apr02 - **SSAA National Conference endorses firearms trafficking agreement.**
- 24Sep01 - **Gun trafficking charges welcomed.**
- 25Aug01 - **Illegal gun trafficking - share the information.**
- 03May00 - **Identify those unlicensed persons who hold guns.**
- 27Jul00 - **More resources needed.**



From left to right: Paul Osborne and Barry Smith of the NSW Firearm Dealers Association, Detective Superintendent Helen Begg, Bill Shelton SSAA National President and Roy Smith SSAA National Secretary.

INTERSTATE CRIME STOPPERS NUMBERS

ACT - 1800 632 805
 QLD - 1800 800 400
 NT - 1800 891 136
 SA - 1800 018 010
 VIC - 1800 630 301
 WA - 1800 622 044
 TAS- 1800 005 555 (Monday only)
 Outside number 03 62302627



Greenie with a Gun

by Brian White

This is a story about my kind of pro shooting - that of the professional forester and all-round tree guy. I am a professional 'greenie' - not your traditional hippie kind of greenie, I am a real greenie, who is hell on ferals. I don't have my hair in a ponytail and I don't wave placards at city rallies, but this year I plan to plant my one-millionth native tree.

The radical element in the Australian conservation 'movement' has done much to change attitudes in Australia. However, because of its often combative and anti-stance and, dare I say it, its body-pierced and often unwashed public persona, there is that final bit of resistance in the bush towards adopting more of a conservative approach to native resources. I also feel that these predominantly city-bred types, with environmental consciousness, are so out of touch with reality of any kind, let alone commercial reality.

The facts are that we live in an industrial country and we are not about to re-invent ourselves with 19th century technology unless we absolutely have to. We must continue to have a strong economy so we can afford the luxury of things like government-funded hippies, for instance. If native forests are to have an assured



The author's nursery, which is home to more than 500,000 eucalypt trees.

place in our country's future, I feel we must re-plant vast areas of our cleared land to commercial hardwood and softwood timber plantations.

Radical greens tend to allow emotion to rule any argument they may have with the establishment. When we allow this noisy, taxpayer-funded minority to call the shots, it usually means that the wholesale changes in land use promoted by these

groups result in the baby being thrown out with the bathwater.

We can see this now with about 1.5 million hectares of reasonably well managed state forests in New South Wales and Queensland being converted to national parks - now 'off limits' to all uses except recreation. Seed collecting and even bee keeping are classified as 'extractive industries' - prohibited or



I prefer a medium sporter barrel and my present seed rifle, a .308 Sako L591, is about right for me.

A Sako 591 All with a Leupold 3-9x40 scope.

restricted under the 'radical' new forestry reforms. I use the word radical because that's what the changes are and that's where they came from.

Rather than chaining myself to some old 'lady of the forest', I would rather collect its seed and ensure its survival through future generations. I strongly believe that the surest way to save our native resources is to give them a commercial value. You see, I don't hug trees, I plant them.

After doing my ten years' service in the city and at the start of a promising career in government, I sat down one day and asked myself 'what do I want to do when I grow up?' My technical background in agriculture and an interest in timber and trees collided in a moment of inspiration while on holidays down south.

From my studies at university, I always knew that in higher rainfall areas forestry is the highest returning of all agricultural production - some five to six times more profitable than efficient cattle production, for example. The only problem is that it takes years for a saleable product to be produced. I saw ways to match new technology on the production side and on the processing side, which had potential to change the profile of plantation forestry in Australia.

An idea to grow large-scale native hardwood plantations in my local area of South-East Queensland and Northern New South Wales became my sole means of support. I realised that the bush is where I love to be and what better way to be involved with the bush than to be responsible for the planting of millions of trees. Best of all, I get to shoot in the bush for a good cause.

Since a child I have had a strong interest in guns. From the moment I shot my first rabbit at age seven, I was hooked. I remember the razor-sharp concentration that suddenly came to me as I sighted carefully down the barrel of my father's .22 - a 1967 Brno Model 2 - to shoot a ginger rabbit cleanly through the heart at a good 50 paces. I will never forget the experience of skinning it and

I strongly believe that the surest way to save our native resources is to give them a commercial value. You see, I don't hug trees, I plant them.



7.62 Military ball ammunition. The powder-like substance on either side of the cutters is the seed of Sydney blue gum (*Eucalyptus saligna*) and the capsules (gumnuts) are below the cutters.

enjoying its tender, white meat rolled in breadcrumbs and fried up with some bacon - unforgettably delicious.

My interest in firearms remained strong and I became a pretty good shot and a reasonably successful game hunter throughout the years. My tree nursery business literally flourished, with some big orders for a lot of gum trees. I found myself scrounging for eucalyptus seed all over the country and indeed the world.

With the boom in the hardwood plantation industry along the south-eastern part of Australia, we started to find that seed supplies dried up for many

important species. Combined with this, a serious drought meant virtually no trees carried seed. Some seed suppliers were asking very silly prices for seed and something had to be done.

Eucalyptus seed for sought-after species can get rather expensive. Generally, we are talking between \$250 and \$1000 per kilo for the species we grow. The best I have heard so far was some special flooded gum seed from South Africa, which was sold for trial in Australia at 80 cents per viable seed. Put in context, at more than one million viable seeds per kilo, we are talking some pretty valuable stuff.

The final clincher came with a seed bill for our first year of more than \$10,000. We figured if we spent that much on seed when we were just starting off, how much would we spend when we get larger? The thought was horrifying and spurred us into action.

The need for seed provided us with the impetus to get out and meet more people in this over-cleared land in the search for the remaining pockets of outstanding trees. Take it from someone who regularly travels whole days to get to seed, there ain't much good stuff left.

Seed Collection

I knew for years that eucalypt seed is often collected with a rifle. The preferred calibre - .308. I happened to have a .308 and so began a long, costly learning experience. It is one thing to get a packet of seeds from a supplier with a label on it telling you what's inside. It is quite another to go out into the paddock and locate and identify the eucalypt correctly. This is not so easy when there are more than 700 species and to the untrained eye, gum trees all look pretty similar, don't they?

Next, we contact appropriate landowners. This is usually the most pleasant and often interesting part. We like to try to swing some sort of seedlings for seed deal. There are plenty of wonderful characters out there, with a wealth of knowledge about the landscape, our pioneering history, trees and timber.

By working with these people, we aim to change some prevailing attitudes, to make people aware of the wealth and riches hidden in the back gullies and ridges on many properties in rural Australia.

After identifying a stand of trees, it can take years for them to have a heavy seed crop. Because we are dealing with trees, we are talking about long time-frames for things to happen, as they optimise their survival strategy according to the season. The trees we look for are existing commercial species (eg, spotted gum), with good form (straight and tall) and the crown in the top one-third of the trees height. We prefer to see stands of large numbers of the right kind of tree, so when we collect the seed from a number of individuals, it will not be 'inbred' when we collect the next generation of seed from the plantation.

When the trees are in full seed, I watch carefully for the capsules to ripen to a stage where seed will strike. If we are too early collecting, we waste a lot of petrol, ammo and time, not to mention precious seed. When the capsules are ripe, I shoot or otherwise collect branches from suitable trees. The seed capsules are picked at the correct stage of maturity from the freshly dropped branches, hopefully in sufficient quantities to make it worth your while.

A long and labour-intensive process enables us to produce large numbers of native seedlings from wild-collected seed. The processing stages include:

- Dry the seed capsules at low temperature but as quickly as possible to avoid fungal attack;
- Extract the seed by beating the seed in a bag;
- Sift chaff from seed and grade by size;
- Sow the seed in the nursery to complete the cycle.

Once the seed capsules open, both seed and chaff are released. The seed is tiny, ranging from more than 3000 to about 1000 seeds per gram for most eucalypts. This means from the size of castor sugar grains up to a several millimetres in length.

Shooting Trees

So now to the shooting part. The ranges are close, so tack-hole accuracy is not necessary. Some seed guys go for the heavy stainless barrel, but, in my opinion, this is just more to carry and lift.

After letting off some couple of hundred shots in a day, of which a number would be offhand, fatigue is a factor. I have on occasion been unable to lift my left arm after a big day from holding the rifle steady. I prefer a medium sporter barrel and my present seed rifle, a .308 Sako L591, is about right for me. Of some importance is the scope. At short and varying ranges, an adjustable objective is nice to have and my rifle has a low-mounted Leopold 3-9x40 variable with adjustable objective.

Other seed collectors place limits on themselves by only collecting seed by sending a fit 19-year-old up a rope with a chainsaw. The workplace health and safety (and insurance) aspect

Quite apart from the seed collection aspect of my job, there is also the feral animal control program, which is ongoing.



The author with four-year-old Sydney blue gums on his Moggill property in Queensland.

of this worries me a great deal. I would prefer to be paying people to pick capsules from shot-down branches. It is not only safer, but a lot quicker as well.

Some people use semi-auto .22s to shoot down small tips to verify identification before blasting down a big branch with the .308. Others use a shotgun for the same reason. I can't really see the need for these extras, when there may be 500 rounds of ex-military 7.62 in the vehicle and the right tool for smashing down branches with one careful shot is right there.

I have a good set of 10x50 binoculars and a quick 'emu parade' under the targeted trees can often quickly tell the story about the nature and readiness of the seed. I always take care to select branches on the low side of the crown, with no chance of falling

In the Media

onto lower branches and 'hanging up'.

Hang-ups are dangerous for those working below and are to be avoided or removed if at all possible. The best way to avoid hang-ups is to shoot as close as possible to 90 degrees to the perpendicular (try to come in from the side) and choose long thin branches coming out almost horizontal in the crown.

Ammo is usually ex-military solids, with the armoured tip cut off with a small set of cutters designed for making smooth flat cuts through copper and aluminium cable. I prefer the ADI stuff when I can get it because the cases can be reloaded.

Generally I cut the tip off almost back to the bearing surface of the projectile, giving it nearly a .30 cal flat face. I have heard of the danger of this ex-military ammo shooting the lead core out of the jacket in the barrel when the tip is cut off this way, leaving the jacket as a bore obstruction, but this has never happened to me and I strongly suspect it is an old wives tale.

The first shot is fired into the branch on the low side of centre. On the right size branch (generally 50-100mm) this is enough to blow the bark clean off the branch all around the entry site and thoroughly smash the branch inside. Another one of these shots above the centre line is often enough to drop the branch cleanly.

For larger branches, where more penetration is required, only the armoured tip is removed, so the lead just shows as a small circle only 2-3mm in diameter. These also make acceptable hunting rounds when great care is taken to make a level cut. I have nailed a few deer, pigs and even foxes with this combo at ranges out to 150m. One shot is always enough and the projectiles I have recovered from shot game showed textbook mushrooming.

Naturally, before shooting, discussions are made with the landowners as to the safest directions to shoot. In the areas we collect, this is usually not a huge issue, but an important one to bear in mind nonetheless. With the cut-down projectiles and the extremely hard target we are hitting, most of the bullet fragments are less than 5mm in diameter. To avoid sending stray bullets in the wrong direction, I just try not to miss. It has been more than 500 rounds since my last miss and that was because I sent a projectile through a clean hole created by an earlier shot.

Quite apart from the seed collection aspect of my job, there is also the feral animal control program, which is ongoing. I am required to clean up rabbits and hares as well as pigs, goats and deer. All these feral animals damage young seedlings. I anticipate as the plantations under my care grow, huntable populations of these animals, as well as protected native wildlife, will be attracted to the shelter afforded by the native hardwood plantations.

So, there you have it, a little window on my kind of pro shooting. It's hard to break into, hard yakka and I have to cover a lot of kilometres. Still, with our nursery, we have a ready market for the seed, the workplaces can be very scenic and it's good to know we are doing something positive for our degraded rural areas. ●

19/3/02 - Radio ABC Illawarra New South Wales, John Tingle MLC Shooters Party and Jeff Angel from the Total Environment Centre - Angel: But what the (NSW) Game Council does is create a vested interest in the perpetuation of those populations of feral animals so that hunting can continue. That's what the Bill says they're there for: to do hunting, not to control feral animals. Tingle: We've got a lot of people in this state who are skilled hunters, good shots; why don't we find a way of mobilising them to do the job, if you like, on behalf of those people. The Game Council will offer special licences to suitably trained, suitably skilled people and the Game Council will co-ordinate those activities.

19/3/02 - Report says gun violence among teens declining.

On Behalf of NSSFBulletPoints@nssf.org

Contrary to widespread media stories that highlight gun violence among the nation's youth, firearm-related injuries and deaths among teens and young adults actually saw a significant downward trend during the 1990s. An analysis of data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveals that in 1990, there were 25.8 firearm-related deaths per 100,000 people in the US aged 15 to 24. By 1998, the rate had dropped to 19.9 per 100,000.

3/4/02 Radio 2Nova - Sydney

Newsreader: There's been a massive increase in the number of crims using guns. It's up by well over 30 per cent on last year. The shocking numbers are part of the latest crime stats that have just been released and Nova 969's Paul Murray has them in his hot little hand.

Paul Murray: The worst places where guns are used in crimes are Blacktown, Canterbury, Bankstown, St George and the Sutherland area along with central western Sydney. It's not a very good picture when it comes to crime in the past 12 months.

4/4/02 - Michigan. Gun Permits on Rise, Violence on Decline From Join Together Online - 4/2/02

Since Michigan relaxed its concealed-carry law on July 1, 2001, the State has seen a jump in gun-permit applications, but a decline in gun violence, the *Detroit News* reported March 21. In the months since the new law went into effect, concealed weapons permits rose 39 per cent statewide, from 58,280 to 81,033. According to law-enforcement officials, the increase in the number of people carrying concealed weapons has not led to a rise in gun violence, mishaps or vigilante justice. "That's really the surprise," said Wayne County Sheriff Robert Ficano. "There are no altercations or incidents I've seen that are at all attributable to the law change. We thought there might be some."

17/4/02 - Radio 2GB Sydney

One Nation MLC David Oldfield on CGC claims on illegal gun source - Philip Clark: David Oldfield is on the line. David, good afternoon.

Oldfield: I was ringing particularly about the Coalition for Gun Control and the lady you interviewed yesterday.

Clark: Oh, Samantha Lee, yes.

Oldfield: I must congratulate you on actually doing a bit of digging when she was speaking in the sense of being making inquiries as to - or not being willing to immediately believe everything she said. ►

In the Media (continued)

Clark: She said a few dopey things I thought.

Oldfield: Absolutely full of nonsense.

28/4/02 - Calls for handgun ban on Port Arthur anniversary - CGC Lee

AAP By Joe Hildebrand

Ms Lee said there needed to be a national ban on the sale and ownership of self-loading pistols and NSW should lead by example. She said Mr Costa was wrong in stating that illegal guns were hitting the Australian market from overseas and he was passing the buck on the issue. Australian Institute of Criminology figures showed that the majority of handguns on the black market were stolen from legitimate owners, Ms Lee said. "They are not coming in through Customs," she told reporters. "There is no proof that that is happening but we do have proof that they are being flooded into the black market through legitimate gun owners."

Discussions with the AIC and the SSAA refute those claims by Ms Lee.

29/4/02 - Today - Channel Nine interview with SSAA Gary Fleetwood

On calls to ban handguns -

Liebmann: But do you - as a member of the Sporting Shooters Association, do you acknowledge that the more guns there are, the greater likelihood of more gun incidents and more deaths?

Fleetwood: The more illegal guns out there, certainly. But one only has to reflect upon the AIC report by Jenny Mouzos a year-and-a-half ago, which clearly indicated that licensed firearm owners in this country are not a problem when it comes to gun-related crime. So, what we've got to do is stop the illegal trade in firearms, both at the Customs barrier and by legislation within the states, to make sure that people walking the streets in Sydney on a Saturday night are not carrying illegal firearms.

29/4/02 - John Laws 2UE with SSAA Gary Fleetwood

On SSAA support of stronger penalties for gun crime -

Good on you Gary, it's good to know that the government has your support, particularly because I know that you have been given a hard time by the media back in those panic days of 1996, but with your support and if we all collectively work on it we ought to be able to do something about it.

29/4/02 - Radio 5AA Adelaide

Lee Rhiannon - Greens MLC NSW

Parliament

"I think rather than get into a statistical argument...I don't think is going to help make our society safer."

Commenting on SSAA Roy Smith's reference to the AIC findings on licensed shooters and gun-related crime.

29/4/02 - From WA Police

Insp Catherine Bullen Media Liaison Unit

"Commissioner Matthews has at no time suggested he supports a ban on handguns. He has been misquoted by the reporter from the *West Australian*. He sees no benefits in a blanket ban."

30/4/02 - Today - Channel Nine Television

The Prime Minister John Howard

"We respect the right of sporting shooting organisations under appropriate controls to have access to guns."

7/5/02 - Radio 98.7 SEA FM (Mackay) Queensland

A blitz is being held in May for the Crime Stoppers crime of the month. The community is being urged to report organised crime involving weapons and firearms, illegal weapon use, unlicensed firearms and poor storage of firearms.

8/5/02 - US, in a Shift, Tells Justices Citizens Have a Right to Guns

By Linda Greenhouse - *New York Times*

Washington, May 7 - Reversing decades of official government policy on the meaning of the Second Amendment, the Justice Department told the Supreme Court for the first time late Monday that the Constitution "broadly protects the rights of individuals" to own firearms.

8/5/02 - Dutch eco-activist charged with Fortuyn murder

Amsterdam, May 8 (Reuters) - Prosecutors charged an environmental campaigner on Wednesday with the murder of flamboyant Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn, a spokesman said. "The suspect has been charged with murder and illegal possession of firearms," prosecutors' spokesman Robert Meulenbroek told Reuters.

Lawyers have named the suspect as Volkert van der Graaf, 32, a vegan animal rights activist opposed to factory farming.

9/5/02 - School Gunman Planned Violent Film By Stephen Graham

- The Associated Press Berlin (AP)

- The German teenager who gunned down 16 people at his old school planned to make a brutal film with his classmates and had a stash of violent videos at his home, an investigator said Wednesday. The comments by police director Rainer Grube came just as the government announced plans to tighten youth protection laws to better shield minors from videos and computer games depicting extreme violence. Steinhäuser's parents told Monday's edition of the *Der Spiegel* news magazine of their son's obsession with violence and computer games.

At a news conference in Erfurt on Wednesday, Grube said police had found 12 videos containing "dark, blood-dripping and violence-worshipping films".

9/5/02 - NSW Hansard Legislative Council

Michael Costa Police Minister replying to MLC David Oldfield One Nation -

"I have great respect for the law-abiding members of the gun-owning community and I have met a number of them. They have a legitimate right to own firearms and to use them lawfully in pursuit of their sport. Many of them are passionate about their sport. I have been invited to several firearms ranges, although I am not as passionate as they are."

14/5/02 - Herald Sun Victoria Hundreds flee violent partners

By Mark Dunn

Each day 110 Victorian women seek safety in government-funded refuges to escape violent or oppressive partners. Department of Human Services figures also reveal that more than 950 women and children each year are housed in secure refuges at 27 secret locations in Victoria at a cost of \$8.75 million.

5/5/02 - The Sunday Mail - Adelaide New Power for Police

NSW Police will have the power to pursue suspects across state borders, mount interstate undercover operations and bug people anywhere in the nation under a new deal. The agreement struck at a meeting of state and territory leaders and the Prime Minister earlier this month will also mean interstate police forces can operate in NSW. Police Commissioners are excited about the proposals, part of a ten-year-old plan to merge all of Australia's criminal laws into one common code.