

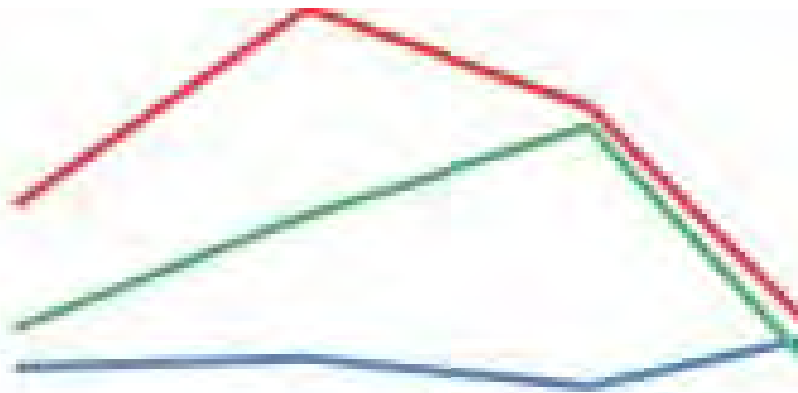
# ASJ

**AUSTRALIAN SHOOTERS JOURNAL**

*The political voice of the SSAA*



## SSAA's submission to the Australasian Police Ministers' Council - July 2002



1995	1996	1997
9244	9795	7443
12209	21356	28595
22068	37864	30191



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# ASJ

**The political voice  
of the SSAA**

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# Secure your gun Secure your sport

## A message from the SSAA National President Bill Shelton

It is up to you to protect your firearms from falling into the wrong hands - hands that could damage the reputation of other firearm owners who do the right thing.

Besides suffering heavy penalties for failing to secure your firearms, you will also give gun prohibitionists an opportunity to promote their cause.

Our ability to continue in the shooting sports relies upon our ability to be responsible for the security of our firearms in accordance with our respective state legislation.

I ask that you spread this important safety message to your shooting friends.

For information on correct firearm storage, contact your local SSAA organisation or local police.

### Police firearm registry contact details:

<b>ACT</b> 02 6245 7405 actfirearmsregistry@afp.gov.au www.afp.gov.au	<b>SA</b> 08 8204 2495 firearms@senet.com.au www.sapolice.sa.gov.au
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# SSAA

PROMOTING GUN SAFETY  
The Sporting Shooters Association of Australia Inc.



[www.ssaa.org.au](http://www.ssaa.org.au)



## A word from the President

July 17 saw the latest meeting of the Australasian Police Ministers' Council (APMC) held in Darwin. In the lead-up to the conference the anti-gun lobby embarked on a vigorous campaign aimed at having handguns banned. In response, the SSAA put forward a comprehensive submission to the APMC outlining some of the facts surrounding the issue. To its credit, the APMC completely rejected the anti-gun movement's argument in favour of initiatives designed to curtail the illicit firearms trade, including increased border surveillance and boosted law enforcement resources.

Beginning on page 4 is an edited version of the Association's 32-page submission, which highlights a number of important points members can use in their dealings with local politicians. The battle to protect private handgun ownership is far from over and members need to ensure that their ability to use this style of firearm in competition is maintained.

*Bill Shelton*

Bill Shelton  
SSAA National President

# Handguns and Firearm Security

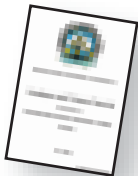


A Submission to the Australasian Police Ministers' Council - July 2002



## Introduction

The Sporting Shooters Association of Australia Inc (SSAA) is the foremost body representing firearm owners in Australia. The Association has in excess of 120,000 members and promotes a broad range of firearm sports at the local, state, national and international level. The SSAA also holds official Non-Government Organisation status within the United Nations. The aim of this discussion paper is to encourage informed debate on the question of private handgun ownership.

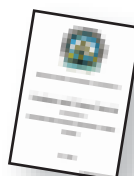


## Background

The private ownership of handguns has been strictly regulated throughout Australia for more than 60 years. The lawful possession of pistols and revolvers is restricted to active members of bona fide shooting clubs, legitimate collectors and the security industry. Handguns must be stored in locked, securely anchored metal containers and ammunition must be housed separately. Handguns cannot be licensed or carried for self-defence (the exception being security personnel engaged in work-related activities) and the penalties for their misuse are severe.

Recently, the anti-gun movement has begun to advocate a complete ban on the private possession of semi-automatic pistols and revolvers. The rationale rests upon three main points. First, that the illicit firearms trade has been fuelled by a recent increase in the number of handguns imported into Australia. Second, that firearms stolen from legitimate owners form the principal source of black-market guns and third, that a total prohibition on privately owned handguns offers the most effective solution to the problem of criminal misuse.

As is often the case with contentious public policy issues, there has been a tendency for the debate to stray from the evidence. However, any fair-minded assessment of the facts casts serious doubt on the anti-gun lobby's proposals.



## Handgun Importation

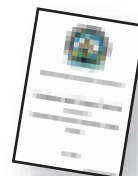
Handgun imports into Australia have increased over the past four years to an average of 13,161 pistols and revolvers per annum compared to 8827

per annum between 1995 and 1997. However, when various state government contracts for replacement police service firearms are taken into account the number of handguns destined for private use appears to have declined.

New South Wales and Queensland police service contracts, which collectively involve the purchase of more than 15,000 semi-automatic pistols, were awarded to Austrian manufacturer Glock between March 1997 and April 1998. The impact of these two very large procurements can be seen in Australian Bureau of Statistics firearm importation figures concerning countries of origin. While the majority of suppliers cited in the ABS statistics recorded a decline in the number of guns shipped to Australia at various points between 1996 and 2001, imports from Austria increased by more than 1700 per cent. Conversely, the number of pistols and revolvers imported from the United States, traditionally one of the strongest sources of supply to the private market and a good indicator of the declining trend, was down by more than 50 per cent in 2001 (2444 total) compared to 1995 (5671 total). See Fig 1.

A number of government agencies, including the Western Australian Police Service, which recently issued 1100 new semi-automatic pistols to its officers,<sup>1</sup> are presently assessing potential alternatives to their current service firearms or are in the process of replacing outdated guns. While the exact number of handguns imported in line with these various programs is unknown, it may equate to several thousand firearms a year.

With the ABS data as a guide, any claim that a rise in violent crime is connected to an increase in handgun imports should be viewed with suspicion. The evidence suggests that the number of firearms, including pistols and revolvers, brought into Australia for legitimate sporting purposes has declined considerably over the past four years.



## Stolen Handguns

While the theft of any firearm is cause for serious concern, the problem of handguns taken from private owners is often exaggerated. In New South Wales an average of 112 handguns<sup>2</sup> were stolen annually between 1998 and 2001.<sup>3</sup> Contrasted against the state's 27,000 licensed handgun-owners the number of legitimate users who fall victim to firearm theft is fractional.<sup>4</sup>

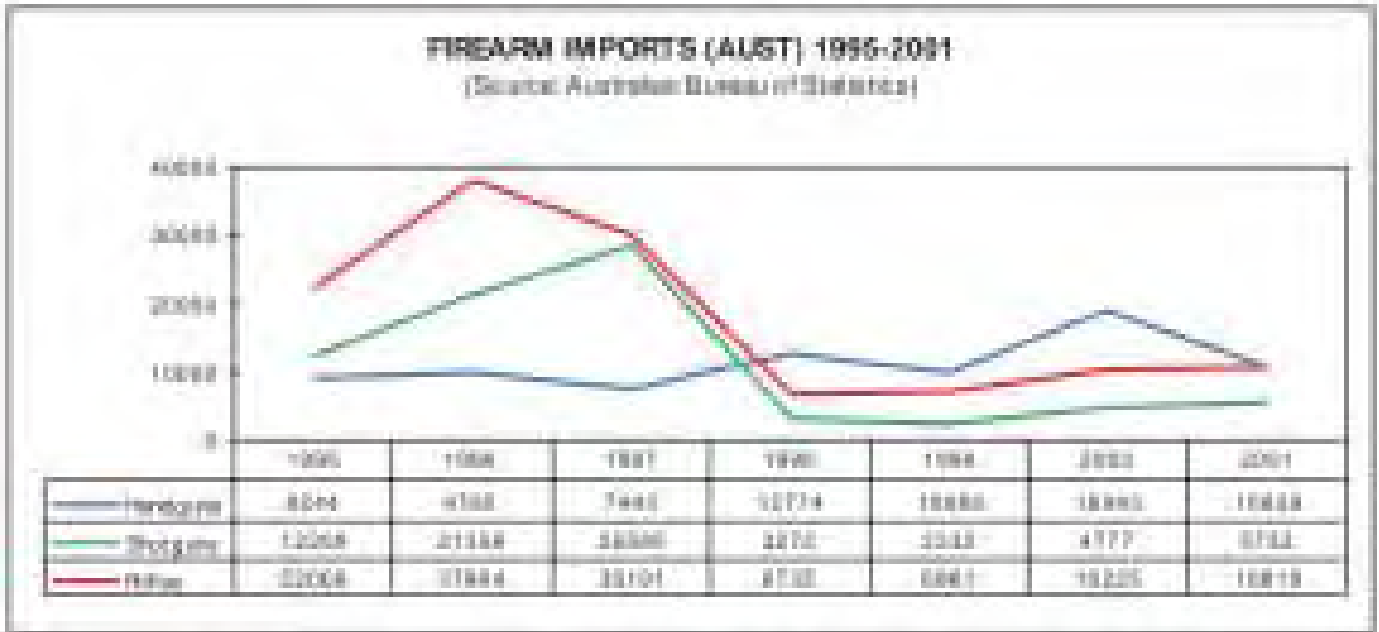


Fig. 1. (Handguns - ABS category 9302.00.0002 Shotguns - ABS category 9303.00.0004 Rifles - ABS category 9303.00.0005)

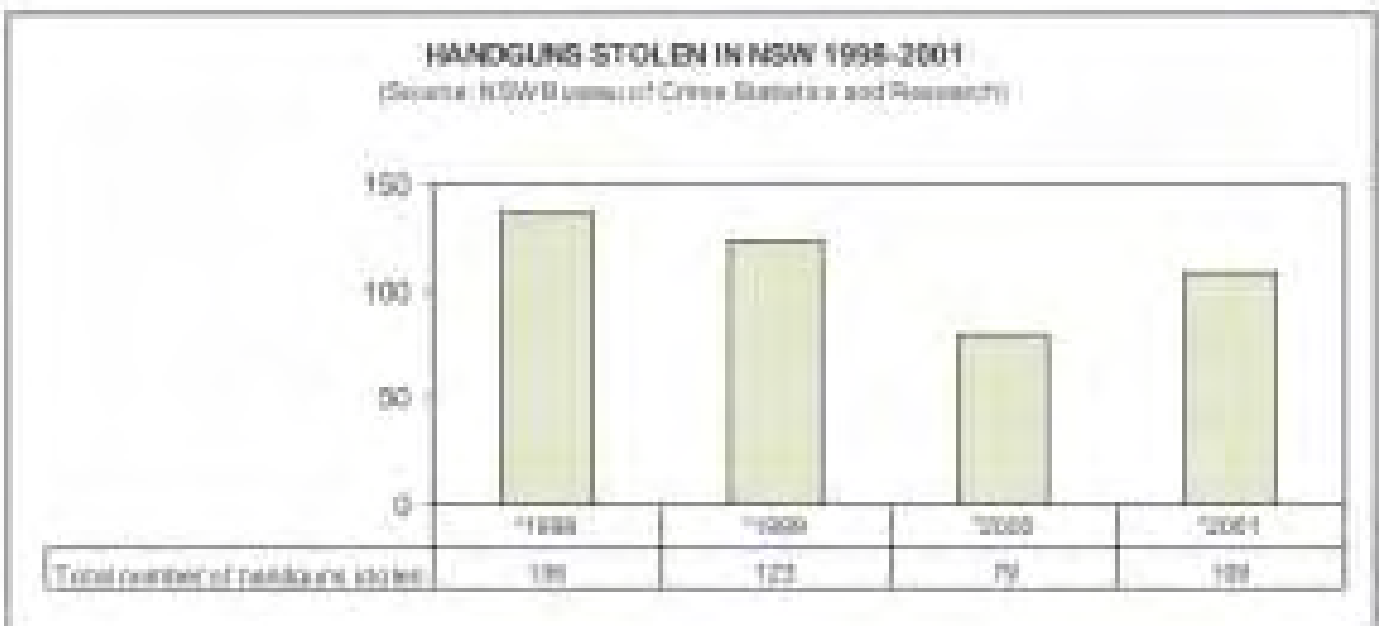


Fig. 2.

There is no doubt that firearms stolen from licensed owners contribute to the black market. However, the scale of the problem is debatable. There is considerable evidence from a range of sources, including the United Nations, suggesting that a significant number of handguns are smuggled into Australia annually - a view shared by the NSW Firearms Trafficking Unit.<sup>5</sup> "More than 4400 illegal guns and weapons have been discovered in NSW by the Firearms Trafficking Unit since 1999. Crime-fighting intelligence sources say most come through shipping containers or regular postal services."<sup>6</sup> In recognition of the problem, the federal government has recently

introduced changes to Australia's postal system designed to ensure that all mail entering the country is X-rayed.

While the question of smuggled handguns and their impact on the illicit firearms trade is arguable, there is strong evidence that the use of secure storage cabinets by private owners has a major impact on opportunistic firearm thefts. In Western Australia the number of firearms stolen per month was reduced by more than half following the introduction of mandatory storage requirements in 1996.<sup>7</sup> The SSAA believes that the key to further reductions in the number of handguns taken from licensed owners rests with education. The

SSAA maintains that Resolution (11) subparagraphs (b) and (c) of the Australasian Police Ministers' Council's 1996 National Firearms Agreement should be extended to encompass a national ongoing campaign aimed at encouraging licensees to ensure that their firearms are securely stored. The Association would be prepared to contribute resources to a program directed at educating firearm owners as to their responsibilities in this area.

(Note: Recently released Australian Institute of Criminology figures indicate that on average less than one quarter of one per cent of the country's 2,165,000 are stolen per annum.<sup>8</sup>)



## Handgun Ban

In 1997, the British Government implemented a total ban on the private possession of handguns. Despite the subsequent surrender of 200,000 privately owned pistols and revolvers, Home Office figures tabled in the House of Lords by Under-Secretary of State, Steven Bassam, show that handgun-related crime in England and Wales grew by almost 30 per cent in 1999/00 compared to 1998/99. Additionally, Metropolitan Police Service data published in June 2001 indicates that gun-related murders in London tripled in the first half of the year compared to 2000.<sup>9</sup>

According to recent analysis carried out by the King's College London Centre for Defence Studies, in 1999-2000 handguns were

used in 65.2 per cent of all firearm-related robberies in Britain, representing the highest level of handgun use in the period covered by the report (1985 to 1999/00). The study noted, "If the 1997 legislation is to be justified as an effective tool in the fight against the criminal use of handguns we would expect this percentage to be much lower."<sup>10</sup>

The Centre for Defence Studies conclusions are in line with findings published in 2000 by the University of North Carolina following a comprehensive review of the National Incident-Based Reporting System. The report noted that:

After estimating several models with a broad array of outcome measures and independent variables, we found virtually no evidence that legitimate gun availability influenced the violent crime rate or crimes committed with a gun...Rather, our results show the primacy of illegal gun availability in predicting the violent crime rate. Illegal gun availability is the only variable that shows consistent, nontrivial effects across all models estimated.<sup>11</sup>

The British experience clearly shows that prohibiting the possession of handguns by licensed owners is largely ineffective in reducing the criminal misuse of firearms. A view shared by the Australian Institute of Criminology which acknowledges that "individuals who have circumvented legislation...will be least likely to be affected if further restrictions on firearms ownership are introduced".<sup>12</sup>

**Fig 3. Notifiable offences recorded by police in which handguns were reported to have been used by offence group (England and Wales)**

Year	All offences	Homicide (Year ending March)	Attempted Murder (and other acts endangering life including wounding)	Other	Robbery	Burglary	Other offences (excluding criminal damage)	Criminal damage
1990	2537	22	114	58	2233	56	47	7
1991	3430	19	199	75	2988	76	50	23
1992	3997	28	193	90	3544	78	47	17
1993	4202	35	270	88	3605	114	67	23
1994	2981	25	267	82	2390	134	72	11
1995	3118	39	230	150	2478	120	79	22
1996	2956	30	235	157	2316	116	80	22
1997	2648	39	249	234	1854	161	95	16
1998/99	2687	32	310	261	1814	150	103	17
1999/00	3685	42	310	407	2561	204	142	19

(Source: Figures adapted from Hansard, January 15, 2001 - [www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk](http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk))

Note - There was a change in counting rules for recorded crime on 1 April 1998. Figures before that date cannot be directly compared.)



## Media Review

**1997**

### **'Arms and the law'**

*The Weekly Telegraph, October 8, 1997*

From the start of this month, anyone in possession of a handgun will face up to 10 years in prison. Thousands of law-abiding people will be barred from their pastime, dozens of small businesses will close and the United Kingdom will become the first country to ban Olympic pistol-shooting since it was introduced in 1896. For the privilege of expropriating our fellow subjects, the rest of us will be required to stump up between 169 million pounds and 450 million pounds in compensation. In every democracy, citizens give up some of their liberty in return for greater security, but here there is no such trade-off. The Firearms Act will not reduce handgun-related offences: several studies have shown that there is no correlation between the number of legal pistols in a society and the number of violent crimes. Nor would it have stopped Thomas Hamilton, who acquired his guns because the existing law was not enforced.

**1999**

### **'Top gangs getting more guns, warn police'**

*PA News, September 10, 1999*

Illegal gun ownership among major criminal gangs is increasing, the national police force warned today. Firearms are being stolen or smuggled in from abroad and used to protect drugs or other illegal goods. Director General of the National Crime Squad Roy Penrose said it was becoming 'common place' to discover stashes of illegal weapons at addresses used by organised gangs.

**2000**

### **'London gun crime link to drugs'**

*The Times, July 26, 2000*

Shootings in the black community account for nearly three-quarters of gun crime in London. Commander Mike Fuller, head of Operation Trident, which is tackling black gun crime, said seventy percent is linked to drug disputes.

**2001**

### **'Handgun crime soars despite Dunblane ban'**

*Electronic Telegraph, January 11, 2001*

The number of crimes involving handguns reached its highest level for seven years in 2000. The use of illegal weapons rose dramatically with 42 people killed. The total was more than a third up on the previous year, according to figures given in a parliamentary written answer by Lord Bassam of Brighton, a Home Office minister.

### **'Handgun crime up despite ban'**

*BBC, July 16, 2001*

A new study suggests the use of handguns in crime rose by 40 per cent in the two years after the weapons were banned. The ban on ownership of handguns was introduced in 1997 as a result of the Dunblane massacre, when Thomas Hamilton opened fire at a primary school leaving 16 children and their teacher dead. But the report suggests that despite the restrictions on ownership the use of handguns in crime is rising. The Centre for Defence Studies at Kings College in London, which carried out the research, said the number of crimes in which a handgun was reported increased from 2648 in 1997/98 to 3685 in 1999/2000.

### **'Gun crime rise in London'**

*Join Together Online, December 12, 2001*

A report from Scotland Yard shows that gun crime in London, England, has increased by nearly 90 per cent. This is London reported 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. Officials attributed the increase to organised crime and drug trafficking. Commander Alan Brown, head of the Operation Trident taskforce against 'black on black' gun crime, said the increase in gun crime was "an extremely worrying development. The level of violence is increasing, there is no doubt about that," he said. "We have seen shootings in the West End. This is not just happening in Hackney or Brent, this is a problem for all of London."

2002

## 'Gun crime trebles as weapons and drugs flood British cities'

Telegraph.news.co.uk, February 24, 2002

Gun crime has almost trebled in London during the past year and is soaring in other British cities, according to Home Office figures obtained by *The Telegraph*. Gun crimes during the first 10 months of the annual period have trebled in most of the urban areas that have so far submitted statistics to the Home Office. Sir John Stevens, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, said gun gangs were spreading across the country whereas, until recently, they were confined to a handful of London boroughs. The new gun crime figures also show that handgun crime has soared past levels last seen before the Dunblane massacre of 1996 and the ban on the weapons that followed. The ban on ownership of handguns was introduced in 1997, the year after Thomas Hamilton, an amateur shooting enthusiast, shot dead 16 schoolchildren, their teacher and himself in Dunblane, Perthshire. It was hoped that the measure would reduce the number of handguns available to criminals. According to internal Home Office statistics, however, handgun crime is now at its highest since 1993.

**With the ABS data as a guide, any claim that a rise in violent crime is connected to an increase in handgun imports should be viewed with suspicion.**



## Conclusion

In summary, when the three main arguments in favour of a ban on the private possession of handguns - namely, that the illicit firearms trade has been fuelled by an increase in handguns imports; that firearms stolen from legitimate owners form the principal source of black-market guns and that prohibition offers the most effective solution to the problem of firearm-related crime - are considered against the evidence, the proposition appears unreasonable.

First, there has not been an increase in the number of firearms imported into Australia for private use. Second, there is considerable evidence suggesting that the illicit trade in handguns may be fuelled to a significant degree by illegal importation and third, the British experience shows conclusively that prohibitive laws aimed at legitimate handgun owners are largely ineffective.

The SSAA maintains that while the number of handguns stolen from law-abiding owners is comparatively small contrasted against the total number of licensees and registered firearms, the number could be reduced through increased education. Further, the Association believes that the most effective means of tackling the criminal misuse of handguns lies in increased resources for law enforcement at all levels. ●

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4. Media interview with NSW Police Minister, Paul Whelan, ABC Radio 2BL, April 27, 2001. - (Figure includes 19,000 "target shooters, and members of pistols clubs", together with "8000 who are security officers in NSW".)
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# APMC Discusses Trafficking Agreement



(L to R) State ALP Police Ministers: Tony O'Grady, Qld, Syd Stirling, NT and Andre Haermeyer, Vic.



Federal Justice Minister, Senator Chris Ellison.

July 17 saw the Australasian Police Ministers' Council (APMC) meet in Darwin to discuss a common legislative framework for curtailing the illicit firearms trade. The SSAA was in town before, during and after the conference in response to the Coalition for Gun Control's (CGC) demands for a complete ban on semi-automatic handguns. The CGC's Samantha Lee claimed firearm dealers were supposedly doing deals under the counter<sup>1</sup> and subsequently accused Federal Justice Minister Senator Chris Ellison of undermining her group's campaign.<sup>2</sup> To its credit, the APMC chose to completely ignore the anti-gun movement's call. After distributing a comprehensive submission on the question of handguns and firearm security to all state and territory police ministers, the SSAA met with both Senator Ellison and Northern Territory Police Minister Syd Stirling in order to outline the Association's support for the Council's draft Firearms Trafficking Agreement.

The APMC considered the initiation of a Firearm Trafficking Intelligence Desk and agreed that under its national firearm trafficking policy all jurisdictions will make further provision for controlling the black-market trade in guns. The Commonwealth agreed to provide the Council with a detailed strategy for increased Customs detection. Along with a host of proposals covering revised standards for deactivated firearms and controls on unsuitable people being employed in the firearms industry, the Council deferred

consideration of a national ballistics identification system until its working party completes a report clarifying legislation on safety testing of imported firearms.

## SSAA Attends Firearms Trafficking Conference

The SSAA was recently invited to give a presentation to the first National Firearms Trafficking Conference hosted by the New South Wales Police Service in Sydney. Canberra-based Special Projects Director Gary Fleetwood spoke for 45 minutes on the issue of gun-related crime and the role of sporting shooters in reducing firearm theft. Police from all states were in attendance and the Association appreciated the opportunity to put its case to such an influential gathering. Thanks goes to Detective Superintendent Helen Begg from the NSW Police Service for her positive approach to better communication between the shooting fraternity and the police.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Radio ABC Central Australia 15/7/02

<sup>2</sup> Radio ABC 612 Brisbane 16/7/02

# Hunters, let's get it right

by Chef Ann Oliver

It is something of a curiosity that hunting is generally blamed for the extinction of a species when in fact, since time began, far more species have been made extinct by farmers eager to keep their crops and herds or gourmands determined to eat absolutely anything regardless of the rarity. Louisiana's most famous chef, Paul Prudhomme,<sup>1</sup> would have hardly expected to be blamed years later for the extinction of two fish species. American food writer, television personality and close friend Natalie Dupree often jokes, "Whoever would have thought that someone serving burnt fish (teasing his most famous and favoured dish, blackened fish) would make a dish so popular it would fish out an entire ocean?"

Much the same can be said for the cod<sup>2</sup> - now supposed to be about ten per cent of the population it was at the time of Columbus.<sup>3</sup> Arguably the cod fishermen were professional hunters but there can have been little pleasure or comfort for the seamen on their long, dangerous and badly paid journeys. For all but the business owners it was a way of making a living and not a sport.

Take another animal once in abundance: the panda. Pandas are capable of creating their own environmental disaster when foraging for food - a factor that contributed to making it one of the world's rarest species. Since man started cropping, farmers have protected their crops as best they could. Panda paw can still be found with live monkey brains and much more in the most exotic restaurants of Asia.

It is a naïve general public that believes a farmer should and will stand by and watch his living destroyed by a protected and/or introduced species. The koala, now destroying the environment on South Australia's Kangaroo Island, is introduced and in plague proportions. Culling something so cute and cuddly is repugnant to many but the fact is they have to be kept under control and not to do so will eventually create a far worse problem.

Curiously, the island also has an overabundance of wallabies and no amount of marketing what is actually good meat has been able to reduce their numbers to sustainable proportions. Even early settlers not flush with food did not particularly like the wallaby. Kangaroo on the other hand was quickly taken to. Mrs MacLurcan<sup>4</sup> in her second edition recipe 421- Roast Wallaby notes, "most people, even Australians, are prejudiced against the wallaby, after all they are one

of Australia's natural foods and feed just the same as hare, in fact I have often served it for hare and no one has been any the wiser."

She goes on to offer a recipe. "Mode - get a nice young wallaby, and skin it as soon as possible after it is shot, wash it in a little vinegar and water, then stuff it with a nice highly seasoned stuffing, pepper and salt it, and bake in a quick oven. Make a gravy of the water you have boiled some of the bones in and a little port wine."

Bush tucker may have become the fashion, but it was the norm for early settlers who showed no similar temerity in coming to terms with crayfish, oysters, prawns and fish of all types, but then they knew them from their own cultures.

Almond growers can see their entire crops eaten by marauding black cockatoos, another protected species. By lateral thinking, one Riverland almond grower has managed to get his crop loss to birds to virtually nothing. He bought a small plane and allows all would-be local pilots to run up as many hours as they wish flying low over their orchards - a win-win situation for producer and community. It means that youngsters who might not otherwise be able to afford to clock up the necessary hours to maintain their licences are accommodated and the producers get to keep an unprecedented 95 per cent of their crop.

Not all solutions are so happy. The truth is that regardless of what legislation is brought in by governments, farmers will continue to protect their crops and their livelihoods. The derided cull is better done humanely by professional shooters and it should be remembered species that have some use to man rarely need to be culled.

The Australian Aborigines are now recognised as having had one of the most environmentally friendly methods of hunting and gathering. They clearly knew how to cultivate, but chose a nomadic life basically killing and collecting only what they could eat. The foods that they gathered were harvested with care and knowledge, ensuring their regeneration.

We need to remember that there is one vast difference between the Southern and Northern hemispheres - climatic conditions. The Australian Aborigine was faced with rapid deterioration of fresh food and must have quickly realised how wasteful it was. The opposite are the Eskimos and other northern tribes. They knew the

advantages of butchering and freezing since their time of hunting began. The deficiency of the Northern hemisphere was fire. What are sometimes referred to as mass slaughters are now believed to be quite highly sophisticated hunts, processing and distribution centres - all in the frozen form.

Sex (or the lack of) is of course responsible for the destruction of many species. Most of these outrageous and ancient claims for enhancing virility are scientifically unfounded yet they are myths that are persistently popular to this day. It is a curious observation (from a woman of course) that myths to make a woman sexier or more attractive are never mentioned or discoverable when questioned. My “make me sexy” after translation in an ancient Asian herbalists apothecary bought nervous titters, hilarious laughter and shaking heads. Apparently it is strictly for men only. Given that billions of dollars have been spent developing Viagra, it would be pointless to be surprised by the fact that the rhinoceros is still senselessly killed for his single horn, which is a minuscule part of his body mass.

Unfortunately, it is just this senseless and shameless illegal hunting that gives hunting as a sport and profession a misrepresented image. It is as untrue as thinking all bank managers and their employees are perfect citizens. In actuality, most professions have about the same proportion of criminals. In times past, city dwellers would have gladly swapped with the life of the hunter, who was more than likely aristocratic and had a lifestyle as attractive to the aspiring young as perhaps a computer nerd in Silicone Valley on \$US500,000 a year does today.

It would be difficult to calculate how few people in the past 50 years have actually looked their dinner in the eye while it was still alive. Remember that a 1970s British survey asking children where milk came from received the not surprising reply, “the supermarket!” Our ancient relationship with food and the land has long vanished.

Personally, I think it is an idiotic educational process that takes young teenagers to an abattoir or meat processing plant. They invariably turn instantly and irrevocably vegetarian. To my amusement, the children of my vegetarian friends not allowed to join the group had long since turned carnivore before any of the others could look at meat again.

Lack of time is blamed for the loss of so many traditions and

perhaps one of the most lost to our society is that of hunting and fishing, the passing of skills and traditions from one generation to another. Recently a child of 11 recounted a weekend camping and hunting with his grandfather and it was like reliving my own childhood. It seemed to me he had learned many lessons firsthand by killing what he ate. He had been taught about guns and knives and bush cooking, about killing cleanly. I couldn't help wondering if some city child in America with a gun in his hand for the first time, his only firearms experience the insane scenes of television violence, would be so keen to turn it against his classmates had he had a hunting experience. Like fly-fishing, hunting requires patience skill and ingenuity.

Perhaps Toussaint-Samat sums it all up when writing: “Hunting led to technology. Man had to use cunning and ingenuity to compensate for his vulnerability and his inferiority to his prey in strength, number and sense of smell. It was to get game that he first made tools. Those tools became weapons, household and agricultural implements. It is easy to see the stick becoming the hunting spear, and that development can almost be seen leading onto the digging stick, the swing plough, the wheeled plough - and to the javelin, the gun, and all the way to the space rocket. Man dug pits on the paths customarily taken by game animals, traps like the efficient one shown in the Font-de-Gaume cave at Dordogne. There was a mechanism working this trap long before machinery was invented, for it caught a mammoth 50,000 years ago.”<sup>5</sup> ●

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Prudhomme, Paul chef/owner *K-Pauls Louisiana Kitchen*, 405 Chartres Street, New Orleans, USA and the entire *Cajun Magic* spice empire – still one of the best feeds in New Orleans.

<sup>2</sup> Kurlansky, Mark *Cod*, published by Vintage 1999

<sup>3</sup> Columbus, Christopher discovered the Americas in 1497

<sup>4</sup> The State Library of South Australia Rare Books Collection has two editions of the famous *Mrs MacLurcan's*, a second edition published in October 1898 and a tenth published around 1910. Mrs MacLurcan must have been a fascinating character and certainly had an astronomical rise within the hotel industry in Australia. Mrs Mac ran the Queen's Hotel in Townsville and went on to be the proprietress of the Hotel Wentworth, described in her advertisement that appears in the 10th edition “as the finest appointed Hotel in the Southern Hemisphere.” An extremely entrepreneurial woman, her books have extensive advertising by the beef industry and other primary producers and also publishes an acknowledgement letter from Mary Lamington the wife of the Governor of Queensland.

<sup>5</sup> Toussaint-Samat, Maguelonne, *History of Food*, translated by Anthea Bell published by Blackwell Reference, 1992, pp73



# the *Feral deer in Australia* Bambi Syndrome

by Jeanine Baker - A SSAA member of many years, Jeanine has a PhD in Natural Resources and Agriculture. She is currently working on a post-doctorate position with CRC-Weeds on a project that examines the potential of genetically

modified crops to escape and cause detriment to the environment. She is an active member of the Conservation and Pest Management Group and the Yellow-Footed Rock Wallaby Preservation Association.

Early colonists dreamed of being able to live the life of European nobility in a new land. They worked hard to make their dream a reality by establishing wild populations of deer to hunt. Dr John Harris of Sydney imported the first deer into Australia in 1803 (Moriarty et al. 2001). They were chital deer from India and were running wild a few years later with strenuous efforts being made to protect them from poachers and dogs.

The first wild deer in Australia were seen as a great success and these six species of deer from different parts of the world were eventually established in the wild: fallow (*Dama dama*), red (*Cervus elephuis*), sambar (*Cervus unicolour*), rusa (*Cervus timorensis*), chital (*Axis axis*) and hog (*Axis porcinus*) deer. Each species has a different and fairly narrow set of requirements, so that they are now found in widely varying climatic regions in pockets of favourable Australian habitat. This habitat ranges from arid woodlands to rainforest. Only the sambar, found in the forested ranges of Victoria through to south-eastern New South Wales, was regarded as having the potential to increase its range. However, hunting appears to have prevented this deer from becoming a pest. Consequently, until recently, no species of deer was regarded as a serious pest and they were more likely to be viewed as a recreational resource.

Feral deer in Australia will never be as prolific as other mammalian pests like feral pigs or feral goats. This is because they are seasonal breeders, with females capable of breeding at 14 months of age, usually producing only one offspring per year. Despite this they may become regional pests in the same way that feral horses and donkeys have. Fallow deer are currently the most numerous and widespread wild deer throughout Australia, but the six species that have successfully colonised Australia originated from widely diverse climatic regions, ranging from Indo-China to central Europe and North America. Consequently, it is possible that deer could spread into all but the most unsuitable regions of the country (Moriarty et al. 2001).

The facts are now becoming clear that the number of feral deer in Australia has increased rapidly during the past two decades. As a consequence of natural increase, escapes and deliberate releases, the feral deer population has increased from an estimated 20,000 in 1979 to 80,000 in 2001 (Moriarty et al. 2001). Despite the potential for deer to become important feral pests, the temptation exists to ignore the problem by failing to introduce active management

programs or even to attempt the total eradication of some populations where the Australian ecosystems are threatened.

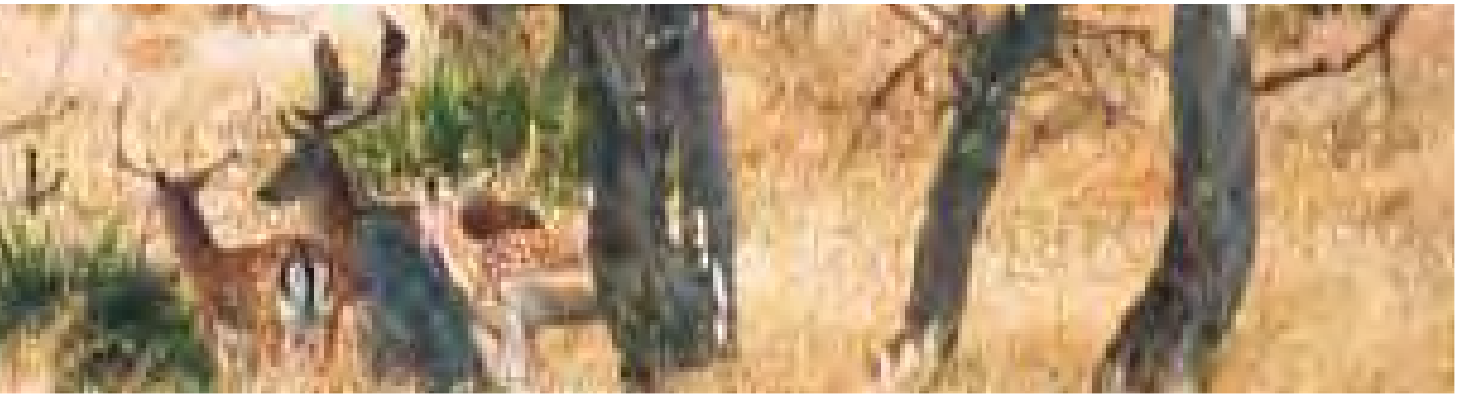
Feral deer can cause a number of problems, depending on the density of the animals in a given area. High population densities of deer have been shown to change plant and animal species composition, growth of trees and cause damage to regeneration in Canada, North America, New Zealand and Australia (Wilson et al. 1992; Patel and Rapport 2000; Kie and Lehmkühl 2001).

In a case study undertaken at the Royal National Park, NSW, initial surveys indicated a significantly lower diversity and abundance of plant species where rusa deer density was high compared to locations where rusa deer density was low (Moriarty et al. 2001). This mirrors findings from New Zealand (Allan 2001). Knowing that biodiversity and species richness are affected by the number of deer present in an area makes it clear that management targets must be set if maintenance of biodiversity in a system is to be achieved.

Foot-and-mouth-disease virus can infect deer. The devastation that has been caused in the UK where the disease affected farmed animals such as sheep is still a vivid image. One of the biggest concerns is the potential of feral deer to spread such endemic diseases. Johne's Disease (JD) already exists in Australia. This disease infects not only cattle and deer, but also goats and alpaca (Kennedy and Allworth 2000). National standards for state control of JD through zoning, movement controls and procedures in infected and suspect herds have been developed and infection in feral herds of deer would raise concerns that the spread of JD would become uncontrollable.

There are many other potential disease hazards that have not yet entered Australia. For example, there is the risk of trypanosomosis entering Papua New Guinea and eventually Australia via infected rusa deer from Indonesia. This disease can infect pigs as well as deer, although rusa deer have more potential to spread the disease than feral pigs because deer are a more capable reservoir (Reid et al. 1999). If the disease became endemic in Australia it would have an effect on many animals. The most economically important being horses and cattle, but it has also been reported from sheep, goats, pigs, dogs, cats and a range of wild animals. Of these animals, horses are the most severely affected, often dying within weeks of infection (Monzón and Russo 1991).

Compared to other exotic herbivores, feral deer are not serious feral pests. However, given that feral deer populations



have quadrupled during the past 22 years, the emerging threat of uncontrolled high-density populations should not be ignored. Particularly when there is sound evidence that deer can cause gross habitat changes and have the potential for spreading endemic and exotic diseases.

#### Management Options

There are many management options for controlling feral deer populations. Some of these programs are more practical than others. Fertility control is increasingly promoted as a possible tool for reducing animal populations. The reality is that this technique is not only potentially expensive, but may have unintended consequences, such as altering behaviour in the targeted species. For example, tubal ligation in a brushtail possum colony in New Zealand led to the increased transmission of bovine tuberculosis because of an associated increase in the frequency of mating (Ramsey and Carley 2001). One of the last things needed in this country would be a technique that increases the potential distribution of an endemic disease in a feral animal population.

Culling or harvesting is another, arguably more practical, technique, particularly given the fact that the number of hunters appears to be increasing. For example, in England, during a period of strong anti-hunting and animal liberation activity, the number of hunters increased from 591,000 (in 1982) to 829,000 (in 1992). In America, it has been estimated that there are more than 14 million hunters and in Australia there are more than one million registered shooters, 85 per cent of whom are described as hunters (Submission No. 118, 1995). Where the management decision is not to eradicate populations of feral deer, these hunters are a solution for humane control via sustainable hunting or targeting culling.

Computer modelling of exotic axis deer (*Axis axis*) and fallow deer (*Dama dama*) at Point Reyes National Seashore, California was undertaken using records of numbers of each species culled from 1968 to 1996 together with demographic data (Gogan et al. 2001). Simulations of each population's response to the removal of males, but no females, resulted in both populations increasing until the carrying capacity of the region was reached. Removing only females led to the extinction of both populations. Cessation of control activities before removal of all females resulted in recovery of both populations. A combination of practical research and 'coal face' management of game animals internationally indicates that the culling of a range of ages and sexes could well be a suitable option

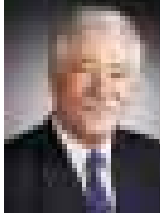
for the management of deer populations where eradication is not feasible. Michael Soulé, often called the 'father of conservation biology', was reported to have said that if the human species was to successfully manage wild deer populations then they must overcome their aversion to killing Bambi and become a true predator instead of a trophy hunter. A wider acceptance that feral animals are harvested for meat as well as trophies would encourage the culling of females or younger animals.

Hunters have long been recognised as conservationists, with a deep love of the natural environment and a desire to ensure the long-term sustainability of ecosystems. This principle demands hunters to be vigilant and responsible for natural environments, particularly for the areas they frequent. If Australian biodiversity is to be preserved, it will require researchers and hunters to shake off the Bambi syndrome and take a more active role in ensuring fragile habitat locations are protected by controlling any species that reaches densities high enough to threaten the ecosystem. ●

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# The SSAA represented in Naples



by Keith Tidswell  
Executive Director of  
International Affairs and  
Public Relations

Meetings that have considerable effect on what happens to firearm owners in Australia have been going on overseas for a long time. They're never announced in our media, of course, because they largely concern only high-level bureaucrats.

Many countries are having heavy restrictions placed on guns and are now going through the same puzzlement that Australians suffered during the gun bans of 1996. It comes as a surprise to many firearm groups to find the international community has long been working on perceived concerns about gun ownership, but at the same time remains uninformed about the needs of legitimate firearm owners.

For quite some time, powerful people and organisations totally against the ownership of firearms by civilians for any purpose were getting the international speakers' podiums all to themselves. But not any longer. Now, more and more international decision makers are hearing about responsible firearm owners and are speaking with one voice, namely the World Forum on the Future of Sport Shooting Activities (WFSA).

For the future of firearm ownership throughout the free world, a meeting held in Naples in June 2002 was probably the most important step to date in building a relationship between sport, industry and governments. And it is absolutely critical to maintain that relationship. The people who attended the meeting have many years of familiarity with firearms. They cover the whole spectrum of sport and business and their contribution on this occasion in Naples was based upon their experience in exporting, importing and transporting firearms.

A number of major decisions were made at the meeting in Naples, all of which will be fed into the United Nations processes. Gun owners accept that some monitoring procedures can be installed to create a safer environment for countries suffering terrorist activity. At the same time we can help protect our hunting, sporting and collecting activities and also assist industry.

Two general recommendations came out of the Naples meeting and these will continue to be placed before relevant committees of the United Nations. The first was that effective control of trade in firearms should be shared by importing and exporting countries and those whose borders are crossed in the process. The second, and most important, was that attention should not be centred on legitimate trade in those arms used by hunters and other lawful gun owners. The focus belongs on the illicit trade.

The specific recommendations for industry and the sport shooting

community are listed below. In reading them, we need to bear in mind that many of the governmental moves that trouble us so much as private gun owners have been brought forward internationally with the intention to stop illicit arms trafficking.

## Recommendations

Industry and sporting shooters should:

- Continue to gather relevant data on production, trade, economic effects and holdings of firearms.
- Continue to work with the international community and national governments in the development of more precise definitions of firearms.
- Establish and maintain a database of published national export, import and in-transit restrictions and embargoes at international and regional levels.
- Consider the development of a code of best business practice that covers export and import.
- Produce a report concerning their efforts against illicit trafficking in firearms.
- Help to develop standardised documentation about the final destination of exports of arms.
- Assist in improving relevant customs regulations and procedures.
- Continue co-operating with efforts on marking and tracing (the process of ensuring that batches of firearms have serial numbers and can in general be traced back to the source of manufacture).
- Assist in international efforts to develop a definition of firearms broking (so that the big, illegal arms dealers can be identified).
- Assist with developing consistent procedures for transport of firearms and ammunition as airline baggage.

We need to keep proclaiming our right to exist as a group throughout free societies. As part of this process we have to stay as close as we can to the decision makers. This way, when documents are created and recommendations are made our interests are properly represented.

Our process of international communication will go on, with the SSAA in its own right as an NGO and also in partnership with other international firearm users and manufacturers through the WFSA. When agreements are made between countries having problems with internal strife and terrorism and the decisions restrict, say, shipment of guns by sea, our overseas presence will lessen the impact on innocent countries such as Australia. ●



# In the Media

**04/08/02** *Sunday Telegraph* NSW

Taking fight to city's gunmen

By Rhett Watson

The number of robberies committed in NSW has fallen 25 per cent since hitting an all-time high in March 2001, crime figures reveal. Police are to increase their monitoring of gun shops and registered gun owners ensuring all weapons are accounted for. The figures are the first sign that an increased police focus on deterring crime through greater visibility and improved use of intelligence is delivering results.

**01/08/02** *Sydney Morning Herald*

Take them off road - forever

by Miranda Devine

We know that 4WDs are too big, too heavy, too high, too aggressive, too greedy, too dirty, and cause too much damage to other cars and pedestrians. We know most of their drivers are selfish fashion victims who rarely, if ever, take the vehicle off-road.

**31/07/02** 5CK (Port Pirie)

Germany is looking to copy an SA National Parks and Wildlife project where sports shooters shoot to kill feral animals on hunting trips. The program first started a decade ago in the Gammon Ranges and spread to the Flinders Ranges in the state's far north.

**17/07/02** TOP FM

'Morning Show' with Trish Crossin and SSAA Gary Fleetwood

Crossin: So do you think the buy-back of guns has worked and has been successful?

Fleetwood: Well, what we're seeing today, the illegal trade in illegal handguns, has got nothing at all to do with the gun buy-back. It's a new criminal phenomenon that's come across this country because of gang-related, drug-related activities on the eastern seaboard. The firearms which were targeted during the 1996 gun buy-back were a completely different type to the type that we read about in the paper today. So I don't think the gun buy-back's got any influence at all on what we're seeing today on the streets of Sydney, for instance, in relation to handguns.

**16/07/02** 612 ABC Brisbane 15:00 News

The National Coalition for Gun Control has accused the Federal Justice Minister of doing deals with pro-gun groups. The coalition's Samantha Lee is in Darwin to confront Senator Chris Ellison who is attending the annual Corrective Services Ministers Conference.

**11/07/02**

The Australian Institute of Criminology has released *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice No. 230 Firearms Theft in Australia* by Jenny Mouzos. This paper is available on the Institute's web site at [www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi230.html](http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi230.html)

A total of 25,171 firearms were reported stolen to police in Australia between 1994 and 2000. This equates to an average of about 12 firearms reported stolen per day. The majority of firearms reported stolen are rifles (51%), followed by shotguns (21%) and handguns (14%).

**25/06/02** Sydney Radio, SSAA Roy Smith

Breakfast with Richard Perno

Perno: Is it difficult to eradicate the emotional perception, Roy, that all guns should go because they're all able to kill?  
Roy Smith: I think there is a great deal of difficulty there, but I'd have to applaud, as I say again, the New South Wales Government. They really have introduced initiatives recently that focus on illegal handguns. They have drawn a definite line between legitimate firearm owners and those who obtain and use them illegally.

**24/06/02** Radio 2GB, Helen Begg NSW

Police.

Helen Begg: Yes certainly the figures from the Bureau of Crime Statistics are of concern to police. But we're getting intelligence that there are illegal firearms out there and members of the community do know about where they are, who's selling them, who's using them and that's why we've opened Vulcan up to let these people report those incidents to us.

**24/06/02**

Geneva (Reuters) - The number of small arms, ranging from pistols to shoulder-fired rocket launchers, in civilian and military hands around the world jumped some 16 per cent to 639 million in 2001, a survey showed Monday. Those legally owned by civilians, mainly handguns and hunting rifles, totaled 378 million weapons, which was up 25 per cent on a similar report issued a year ago. There is no figure for illegal weaponry. But Geneva's Graduate Institute of International Studies, author of the reports, said that the jump in the number of civilian-owned weapons probably owed more to improvements in information-gathering than to a real rise.

**17/06/02**

Handgun Training for Security Guards  
Press Release

The Combined Shooters and Firearms Council (South Australia) Inc said today that "Armed Security Guards in South Australia meet a strict regime of firearm training that largely mirrors that of police". Spokesperson for the Combined Shooters and Firearms Council, Mr Michael Hudson, today said that the recent incident in which a security guard was disarmed during a brawl did not reflect poorly upon the quality of firearm training that those in the industry undertake. "Security guards, like police officers, are subject to violent attacks that can occur without warning and which can incapacitate them, irrespective of the amount of training they receive," Mr Hudson said.

**07/06/02**

*Sydney Morning Herald*

Firearms seizure prompts police warning to gun owners  
A seizure of more than 50 weapons during a raid on a private residence in Melbourne's east yesterday has prompted a police warning for gun owners to register their firearms. More than 50 items were seized, including semi-automatic weapons, shotguns, pistols, silencers and ammunition, in the raid at a house in Seville yesterday.

**03/06/02**

Channel 10

Jessica Rowe: Stunning new allegations today before the Police Integrity Commission claims senior detectives kept a hidden cache of guns used to frame criminals; the weapons were later dumped in the Hawkesbury River.

**04/06/02** NSW Hansard

David Oldfield MLC Deputy President  
Last year the Coalition for Gun Control, through their spokesman, Andrew Denton, claimed 500 handguns had been stolen in NSW in the previous 12 months. The NSW Police Minister's office informed me in writing that the actual figure of handguns stolen in that period was 81. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that the Coalition for Gun Control's claims are false, dishonest, lies.