

Gun control study finds firearms expertise not utilised in Australia

A University of Queensland study into the cost of gun control in Australia has found the stigmatisation of firearms dealers has caused them to be excluded from important discussions about firearms safety.

The Cost of Gun Control for Licensed Firearms Dealers in Australia study aimed to better understand how changes in firearms regulations can affect businesses - both financially and socially. Key findings include:

- The level of bureaucracy makes it difficult for dealers to perform their mandated duties;
- The expertise of dealers is not being utilised in contributing to better regulation of firearms;
- Views of dealers are important given that the law-abiding firearms community play a critical role in maintaining gun registries and safe storage compliance;
- Law enforcement officers working in firearms compliance need more training so as to have a better understanding of the issues dealers have;
- Dealers have a vested interest in keeping firearms out of the hands of those who are not legitimate;
- Dealers play a critical role in why Australia has had a successful experience with gun control;
- The law-abiding firearms community has logical and sensible ideas to contribute to gun control policy.

Senior lecturer in criminology at the University of Queensland and lead author of the study, Dr Suzanna Fay, said much of the stigmatisation is influenced by negative media attention on the firearms community.

“Those negative stereotypes often paint gun owners and dealers as irresponsible and dangerous and not having society’s best interests at heart. We did not find any confirmation of that,” said Dr Fay.

“Stigmatising groups this way in society is almost never productive.”

One dealer involved in the study noted his personal experience with this matter.

“My biggest issue in this industry, as a firearms dealer, is there is a ‘them and us’ attitude,” he said.

“Licensing [police] will not work with you. We’re all working for the same end as far as I’m concerned.”

SSAA National President, Geoff Jones, said the study shows there are options to improve workable gun control in Australia.

“The findings of this report clearly indicate that a culture of division is denying Australia the best possible opportunities of practical and workable gun control,” said Mr Jones.

“Our licensed firearms dealers care about the work they do and they care about keeping people safe.”

Dr Suzanna Fay, University of Queensland
Geoff Jones, SSAA National President