

A JOURNALIST'S GUIDE TO

Firearms and the Shooting Sports



www.ssaa.org.au

A Journalist's Guide to Firearms and the Shooting Sports

prepared by the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA National) Inc

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Editorial policy

To create a better environment and community understanding of all forms of shooting sports and hunting.

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Should you wish to order further copies of *A Journalist's Guide to Firearms and the Shooting Sports*, please contact SSAA National on 08 8272 7100.

Disclaimer: Firearm, shooting and hunting legislation and regulations vary in each Australian state and territory. The information in this guide was correct at the time of writing.

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Introduction

Who is the gun lobby? Who shoots? Who owns guns, and why do you need more than one? Why do criminals always seem to have an endless supply of guns?

These are the sorts of questions we hope this guide will answer for journalists and assist them in understanding the basics of firearms, particularly in relation to the recreational use of firearms and ethical hunting in Australia.

‘Getting it right’ is the underlying aim of all journalists and this guide aims to help make it easier for journalists covering firearms-related news stories. When writing about firearms, it is easy to get it wrong unless you have personal experience with the topic.

This guide was created by the Sporting Shooters’ Association of Australia (SSAA National) and has been written by journalists for journalists. It will give you the basic knowledge to deliver your stories accurately, the first time and every time.

If you wish to research any of the topics highlighted in this guide, we welcome you to visit the SSAA website at www.ssaa.org.au

What is the SSAA?

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) is Australia's premier shooting body representing licensed firearms owners. The SSAA was established in 1948 to promote the shooting sports and recreational hunting, as well as protect firearm owners' interests. With more than 175,000 members and many branches and clubs throughout Australia, we are the predominant sports shooting and recreational hunting group in the country.

The SSAA has official Non-Government Organisation (NGO) status within the United Nations and also lobbies the state and federal governments on behalf of its members. The Association makes extensive use of its magazines, website, *E-newsletters*, Facebook page and daily media coverage to encourage grassroots action among its members. Through these mediums, the SSAA is able to keep members and supporters informed of legislative developments, media reports and general matters of interest. The SSAA is also in regular contact with firearms dealers across Australia.

The SSAA publishes a range of national magazines including the monthly *Australian Shooter*, quarterly *Australian Hunter* and annual *Australian & New Zealand Handgun*, and other publications such as *The Junior Shooter*, *SSAA's Comprehensive Guide to Shooting & Hunting in Australia* and the political periodical, *ASJ - the political voice of the SSAA*.

The SSAA's 10 commandments for journalists

1. Avoid photographing sporting shooters or hunters from dangerous positions, such as from in front of the firearm, no matter how good the photograph would be. The SSAA's golden rule is to never point a firearm, loaded or empty, at anyone.
2. Do your research and ask the right questions of all parties when you conduct an interview. There are reputable facts and figures behind every firearm-related issue.
3. Refer to firearms by their correct name. Unless used as such, they are no more of a 'weapon' than a knife or brick, so check the correct terminology if you need clarification. There is a big difference between a semi-automatic handgun, a revolver and a shotgun.
4. Get both sides of the story to avoid sensationalising the firearms debate. Maintain your credibility by talking to lobby groups, environmental groups, the government, police and the SSAA where appropriate.
5. Remember that firearms laws do not affect *illegal* firearm activities. SSAA members are licensed firearm owners who adhere to the law to use their firearms in an appropriate manner. These are the people who are affected by initiatives such as firearms buy-backs and stringent laws, not criminals.
6. Recognise that each Australian state or territory operates under different firearms and hunting laws. While some issues are widespread, other issues such as hunting seasons or the storage or transportation of firearms fall under varied legislation depending on your location.
7. Avoid bringing emotion into reporting of animal hunts or culls. Hunting is one of many effective animal population management tools utilised by both governments and landowners in Australia. All methods, including trapping, poisoning and hunting, have their pros and cons, but together, they form part of a necessary measure.
8. Do not assume hunters have no respect for the animals they are hunting. Hunting is usually performed as either a pest animal control method or in a hunter-gatherer role similar to fishing. Hunters maintain a close connection with their environment and have a great appreciation for all wildlife.

THE SSAA'S 10 COMMANDMENTS FOR JOURNALISTS

9. Realise the dangers of comparing Australia's illegal firearms issues with those in other countries. Australia has a unique economy, culture, set of firearm laws and criminal element. To warn of Australia mirroring a perceived gun culture in the United States, for instance, is unwise, considering the stark difference between the countries and the status of the aforementioned elements.

10. If in doubt, ask for help. The SSAA and its state and territory branches have a number of people who can be interviewed for stories or even to provide advice or clarification on firearms-related issues.

Photographing sporting shooters

Many photojournalists will do anything to get the 'money shot' - they may even stand at the target end of a shooting range or look down the barrel of a firearm. The SSAA does not condone these practices, as it breaks one of the shooting sports' golden rules - never point a firearm, loaded or empty, at anyone.

During the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games, a photojournalist was heard asking if he could take photos from the target end of the .22 rifle event during the competition. This individual either had a death wish or was, like too many people, very much uninformed about the shooting sports and firearms in general. The range officer at the event very politely informed the photographer that "They use real bullets, son."

The pro- and anti-gun lobbies

The gun lobby

Is there such a thing as the 'gun lobby' in Australia, and if so, who are they and what do they do? While there is no formalised pro-gun lobbying group within Australia, the SSAA is proud to say that it acts as a contact group for its 175,000-plus members. There is nothing unusual about a group representing tens of thousands of Australians talking to policymakers; in fact, this is a common practice. Occasionally, commentators make off-the-cuff comments about why the government bothers to consult with the gun lobby. These comments seem to rely on emotive and fearful responses, rather than the reality that those who represent shooters' interests actually want to and do sit down and negotiate with those who make legislation for the good of the fraternity.

The SSAA, as mentioned, has official Non-Government Organisation (NGO) status within the United Nations, and is a full member of the international lobby group, the World Forum on Shooting Activities (WFSA), and the Pacific Shooting Sports Forum. The Association has also previously held positions on the Commonwealth Firearms Advisory Council (CFAC) as appointed by the Minister for Home Affairs and Justice. These positions allow the SSAA to use its knowledge of the firearms and shooting industries to advise the government on Commonwealth firearms issues.

Other members of the CFAC included representatives from groups such as police, firearms importers and the then Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (now Australian Border Force). While the CFAC is no longer functioning, the SSAA continues to consult with politicians and relevant government and non-government departments and bodies, including the Attorney-General's Department, Customs, Australian Institute of Criminology and Crimtrac.

There is a small fringe of shooting groups in Australia that are not representative of a large number of shooters, but will most likely provide sensationalist comments when interviewed by the media. It is, however, up to the journalist to decide whether they seek comments from parent organisations that represent large numbers of recreational shooters, or just provide a way for the smaller, non-representative radicals to broadcast their comments.

Other smaller shooting groups within Australia, totalling about 40,000 members combined, include Pistol Australia, the Australian Clay Target Association (ACTA), International Practical Shooting Confederation (IPSC), Australian Deer Association (ADA), Safari Club International (SCI), and the Field and Game Federation of Australia (FGFA).

THE PRO- AND ANTI-GUN LOBBIES

The anti-gun lobby

The anti-gun lobby comprises those groups that choose to disagree with the viewpoint of the SSAA.

Gun Control Australia and National Coalition for Gun Control

Historically, the two main opponents of legal recreational shooting in Australia have been the Melbourne-based Gun Control Australia (GCA) and Sydney-based National Coalition for Gun Control (NCGC). In 2012, these two entities merged and continued to use the name Gun Control Australia under a handful of commentators.

This organisation is quite different from the SSAA, in that GCA is a standalone, single-topic lobbying organisation with little, if any, membership base or responsibility to members. According to GCA's website, the organisation is "a voluntary non-profit organisation, which is committed to raising awareness about the gun problem, the gun lobby and issues associated with gun control in Australia". It has been active since 1981.

The National Coalition for Gun Control formed in 1992 and during its operation had no website or public contact details. Today, the former spokespeople from the NCGC, Roland Browne and Samantha Lee, operate under the GCA name with president John Crook.

The Australian Greens

The Australian Greens has specific anti-firearms ownership and anti-hunting policies. The group also regularly calls for the total prohibition of possession and use of handguns and for the further tightening of the firearms laws that were introduced in 1996.

Gunpolicy.org

Gunpolicy.org is managed by adjunct Associate Professor Philip Alpers of The University of Technology Sydney. The website itself attempts to collate and account for legal and illegal firearms ownership throughout the world and presents selective news coverage on firearms. This website has evolved out of the belief that there's a 'gun problem' in Australia and the world, and its content and creator have strong links with groups that we would suggest are very anti-civilian firearms ownership, such as the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA).

In addition, the website's data relies on many assumptions, including figures that claim to estimate how many illegal firearms there are in Australia and other countries. One may question how that information could even be collected. Recently, the Minister for Home Affairs issued a report stating that there were an estimated 250,000 illegal firearms in circulation. These figures are far less than those touted by Philip Alpers.

Anti-duck hunting protestors

In recent years, two people have spearheaded efforts to ban duck hunting in South Australia and Victoria: the Coalition Against Duck Hunting's Laurie Levy, and Animal Liberation member Geoff Russell. The pair regularly appear in media coverage at times when duck season announcements are made and when the seasons commence, and they attempt to appeal to people's emotions, rather than science.

Geoff Russell encourages a 'shot pellet pattern' that suggests a high chance of ducks being wounded, which is not peer reviewed and has questionable credibility. Laurie Levy and the Coalition Against Duck Hunting make regular appearances at duck hunting locations and try to stop hunters from lawfully hunting. They cite 'cruelty' and 'wounding of ducks' as reasons for their protest.

Firearm laws in Australia

Firearm laws in Australia are quite restrictive compared to other western countries. Additionally, despite the proclamation that the federal government implemented 'national' firearm laws in 1996, firearm owners are bound by varying sets of state requirements throughout the country. The following offers a few examples of common requirements. A full account of the rules and regulations of the various state and territory Firearm Acts can be downloaded from the Australasian Legal Information Institute website at www.austlii.edu.au

Genuine reason

Those seeking a firearm must demonstrate a 'genuine reason' or need. While the purposes accepted as a genuine reason are more or less the same in each jurisdiction, there are a few variations. For example, a firearm collector in South Australia needs a separate collector's licence, while in Victoria, anyone wishing to collect firearms must be a member of an organisation of firearm collectors approved by the Chief Commissioner. In most states, a genuine reason for firearm ownership is target shooting, primary production, hunting or collecting.

Training

All states and territories require some level of training to obtain a longarm (air rifle, rifle or shotgun) licence, and further written and practical training to obtain a handgun licence.

Waiting periods

A 28-day waiting period applies to all permits to acquire a firearm in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. In Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia, the 28-day waiting period does not apply to existing licence holders who already have one firearm registered in the particular category and it may be waived for other applicants. In Victoria, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, the 28-day waiting period applies for first-time applications only.

Club participation

Throughout Australia, many firearm owners, particularly handgun owners, are required to participate in a certain number of club activities throughout the year; however, the number does vary. For instance, in New South Wales, handgun

FIREARM LAWS IN AUSTRALIA

club members must take part in club activities six times per year, while rifle and shotgun shooters must have four club attendances a year.

Firearms branch contacts

The rules and regulations for each state and territory can be found by contacting the appropriate department listed below.

Australian Capital Territory

Website: www.police.act.gov.au/crime-and-safety/firearms.aspx

Email: actfirearmsregistry@afp.gov.au

Phone: 02 6133 2122

New South Wales

Website: www.police.nsw.gov.au/about_us/structure/operations_command/firearms

Email: firearmsenq@police.nsw.gov.au

Phone: 1300 362 562 (Customer Service Line); 02 6670 8590

Northern Territory

Website: www.pfes.nt.gov.au/Police/Firearms-Weapons.aspx

Email: firearmsregistry@pfes.nt.gov.au

Phone: 08 8922 3543

Queensland

Website: www.police.qld.gov.au/programs/weaponslicensing/

Email: weaponslicensing@police.qld.gov.au

Phone: 07 3015 7777

South Australia

Website: www.police.sa.gov.au/services-and-events/firearms-and-weapons

Email: sapol.firearmsbranch@police.sa.gov.au

Phone: 08 7322 3346

Tasmania

Website: www.police.tas.gov.au/services-online/firearms/

Email: firearms.services@police.tas.gov.au

Phone: 03 6173 2720

Victoria

Website: www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=34098

Email: licensingregulation@police.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 651 645

Western Australia

Website: www.police.wa.gov.au/Ourservices/PoliceLicensingServices/Firearms/tabid/1802/Default.aspx

Email: licensingservicesfirearms@police.wa.gov.au

Phone: 1300 171 011

Compliance with the law

A range of offences relating to firearms are addressed in state and territory legislation. For example, it is an offence to own or possess a firearm unless authorised to do so by a licence or permit; to buy or sell a firearm unless through a licensed dealer (except in very remote areas where the sale can be witnessed by a police officer); to lend a firearm to someone if they do not have the relevant licence; to sell, buy or possess an unregistered firearm; to not inform your state's firearms registry if your firearm or licence is lost or stolen; and to use a firearm under the influence of drugs or alcohol. It's also an offence to cause any danger with a firearm, fire at a house or building and trespass with a firearm.

What happens when the law is broken?

When the law is broken, firearm owners may be penalised by losing their licence or firearm, they may be fined or they may be sent to jail. Again, the consequences are determined by the rules and regulations of each state and territory.

Applying for a firearms licence

Although each state and territory has different requirements for applying for a firearms licence, in general, you must display a 'genuine reason', complete an approved safety course and complete all necessary forms.

Purchasing a firearm

You cannot buy a firearm over the internet. Generally, in order to purchase a firearm in Australia, you must be in possession of a valid firearm licence for the category and type of firearm you wish to purchase.

You must obtain a 'permit to acquire' from the firearms registry and advise of the licensed dealer or club armourer who will be handling the transaction and details of the firearm you wish to purchase. A permit is required for each firearm that is to be purchased. The firearms registry will issue the permit to acquire a firearm 28 days after application, provided you have met all of the required conditions.

You then have a set number of days, as stipulated by your state or territory's laws, after the issue of your permit to acquire a firearm to finalise the purchase through a firearm dealer or club armourer. You must register the firearm with the firearms registry within seven days of the purchase.

Firearm categories by law

While firearm categories and the associated legislation varies in each state and territory, the following provides an insight into the main firearm categories.

Category A

Airguns; rimfire rifles; shotguns; combination shotguns/rimfire rifles; and muzzle-loading shotguns. A Category A licence requires a genuine reason for using or possessing a firearm of that category.

Category B

Muzzleloading firearms (except shotguns and handguns); centrefire rifles; any combination of shotgun/centrefire rifle; or blackpowder ball-firing cannon. A Category B licence allows use of Category A firearms and also requires a genuine reason for using or possessing a firearm of that category.

Category C

Self-loading rimfire rifles (magazine capacity no more than 10 rounds); self-loading shotguns (no more than 5 rounds); pump-action shotguns (no more than 5 rounds); and tranquilliser guns. A Category C licence is only available to primary producers, people employed or engaged in primary production, or bona fide firearms collectors.

Category D

Self-loading rimfire rifles (magazine capacity more than 10 rounds); self-loading shotguns (magazine capacity more than 5 rounds); pump-action shotguns (more than 5 rounds); and self-loading centrefire rifles. A Category D licence is only available to professional shooters whose principal occupation is the controlling of vertebrate pest animals, or bona fide firearms collectors.

Category E

Machine-guns that are not handguns; tear-gas guns or projectors; shotguns or rifles with a length of less than 75cm measured parallel to the barrel; cannons;

FIREARM CATEGORIES BY LAW

mortars; bazookas; rocket-propelled grenades; and large-calibre military firearms designed to fire an explosive or projectile.

Category H

Handguns are only available to members of handgun clubs, persons employed as firearms dealers, security guards and security agents, or a bona fide firearms collector.

Heirlooms

An Heirlooms licence allows you to own an inherited firearm or matched pair of firearms. You are not entitled to any other type of firearms licence as a collector or user. The firearms may never be used and must be made permanently inoperable.

Storing and transporting firearms and ammunition

The legal storage and transportation of firearms varies in each state and territory, but there are some basic criteria laid down for shooters in all states and territories to adhere to. These basic regulations require a licensed firearm owner to always secure their firearms as per their state regulations. Failing to do this may attract heavy penalties, and police often conduct random checks to make sure licensed holders are complying with the Act of their state.

Storage

An example of the ways in which firearms should be stored are Category A and B firearms. These firearms must be secured in a container made from either solid hardwood or solid metal or a combination of both, with locks approved by the various jurisdictions. The container must then be anchored or bolted either to a wall or the floor in an appropriate manner. If the container is of a certain heavy weight, it may not require anchoring.

The storage of Category C, D and H firearms requires more stringent regulations. Indeed, the lockable container would be made of stronger materials and in some cases the container must be specially designed. Furthermore, unless the container is of a certain weight, it must be bolted to the floor at all times.

There are many firearm collectors throughout the country whose collections represent both historical and financial value. These firearms owners, who register as collectors, must go through a separate check by their appropriate authorities to ensure they comply with their state regulations at all times. An example for the storage of collectable firearms would be a specially constructed strongroom.

All ammunition must be stored in a locked container or a separate section of an approved firearms container. These containers must comply with both the Firearms Acts and Explosives Acts of the appropriate state. Failure to comply with these regulations may render severe penalties.

Transportation

When transporting firearms in a vehicle, the firearms must always be secured in an appropriate way. This may mean locking the firearms within a closed area of the vehicle or a closed container within the vehicle.

Handguns and self-loading rifles must always be secured within their own con-

STORING AND TRANSPORTING FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION

tainer, so they are not easily accessible to any person other than their licensed owner. This may vary from a secured locked container, a container permanently fixed within the vehicle, or a restraining device such as steel cables, which are securely bolted to the vehicle.

Ammunition should never be stored in the same locked container in which firearms are stored. It is also advised that ammunition be stored in a separate lockable container when being transported.

For practical reasons, some transport conditions will vary in each state and territory to allow for people who require the use of firearms for their occupations, such as farmers.

For more information about the safe storage and transportation of firearms and ammunition, please contact your state or territory Firearms Registry and read the various Firearms Acts and Explosives Acts.

Firearm safety

During the training required to obtain a firearms licence, shooters are taught the following firearm safety and range rules.

Basic firearm safety

1. Treat every firearm with the respect due to a loaded firearm.
2. Carry only empty firearms, rendered safe with the action open or broken, into your car, camp and home.
3. Always be sure that the barrel and action are clear of obstructions.
4. Always carry your firearm so that you can control the direction of the muzzle.
5. Be sure of your target before you pull the trigger.
6. Never point a firearm at anything that you do not want to shoot.
7. Never leave your firearm unattended, unless you unload it first.
8. Never climb a tree or a fence with a loaded firearm.
9. Never shoot at a flat, hard surface or the surface of water.
10. Do not mix firearms, gunpowder and alcohol.

Basic range rules

1. The range officer (RO) is in charge.
2. Under no circumstances may a firearm be loaded except when on the firing line.
3. Firearms that are not in bags or cases must be carried with the muzzles pointed safely, actions open, and bolts and magazines removed.
4. Self-loading firearms with actions that do not remain open must be held open with a breech safety plug.
5. All persons must report any potentially dangerous situation to the RO immediately.
6. Firearms may not be handled behind the firing line unless in a designated safe area.

FIREARM SAFETY

7. No-one is permitted to approach the firing line until the RO issues permission.
8. You may not touch any firearm until the RO issues permission.
9. On the command “Cease fire” all shooters must immediately open the action, put their firearm down and stand immediately behind the firing line to await the RO for further instructions.
10. No-one is permitted to go downrange until the RO has issued the command to go forward. It is the RO’s duty to ensure no-one approaches the firing line when people are downrange.
11. Firing may not commence until the appropriate warning flags have been erected.
12. Shooting may only be at the proper targets.
13. Hearing and eye protection is strongly recommended.

Shooting sport safety facts

Safety rules and processes are a cornerstone feature of any shooting sport. Research conducted by the Research Centre of Injury Studies (RCIS) reported there are many sports with a much greater risk of injury. These sports include Australian football, soccer, rugby league, rugby union, touch football, water sports, cycling, roller sports, wheel motor sports, equestrian activities, basketball, netball, ice and snow sports, cricket, racquet sports, walking and running, combative sports, gymnastics, trampolining and field hockey.

By comparing data from two RCIS reports, the number of sport-related unintentional injuries (47,216) over a 12-month period can be compared with the number of unintentional firearm injuries (180) of a similar period. This indicates that firearm-related injuries make up only 0.16 per cent of all unintentional injuries requiring hospitalisation across the country.

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- Kreisfeld, R 2005 *Firearm Deaths and Hospitalisations in Australia 2002*, Research Centre of Injury Studies, Adelaide, SA.

Buy-back schemes

Australia has had several firearms buy-back schemes.

National Firearms Agreement 1996

In 1996, Australia's firearms laws and regulations came to the fore in Port Arthur, Tasmania, where 35 people were killed and 37 were injured by Martin Bryant with two military-style self-loading rifles. Bryant was a mentally challenged man with a low IQ and had exhibited disturbing behaviour for many years prior. He was ineligible for a firearm licence and had acquired the firearms illegally when he murdered two people with a knife and stole their firearms.

Within a short period of time, then newly elected Prime Minister John Howard pressured the state governments, which control firearms laws in Australia, to administer radical, reactionary and sweeping firearms laws in the form of the National Firearms Agreement 1996. The subsequent firearms buy-back collected 660,000 firearms nationwide. The expectation was to get 1.5 million. The cost of the buy-back was around \$500 million.

National Handgun Buy-back 2003

In 2002, international university student Huan Yun 'Allen' Xiang shot at his classmates and teacher, killing two and injuring five people, at Monash University in Victoria. Prior to the shooting, students at this university had expressed concerns about Xiang's mental state. During the trial, the defence and prosecution agreed that Xiang suffered from paranoid delusional disorder. Xiang himself argued that he felt "the killings were [my] destiny".

Then Prime Minister John Howard's government again reviewed the firearms laws and tightened the control of handguns and introduced the National Handgun Buy-back of 2003. It aimed to remove from the community small, readily concealable handguns such as pocket pistols, snub-nosed revolvers and other concealable handguns, which were thought to be more appealing for use in crime. About 69,000 handguns and 274,000 parts and accessories were surrendered during this buy-back, costing Australians \$118 million. About \$96.3 million has been paid in compensation.

Administrating and compensating the firearms industry for both the 1996 and 2003 buy-backs also cost the community many millions of dollars.

BUY-BACK SCHEMES

Were the buy-backs effective?

A 2008 research paper looking at the buy-backs and their effects on firearm death trends has concluded that the buy-backs have failed to make any tangible reduction in terms of firearm deaths. Using data collected since the First World War, the independent researchers from the University of Melbourne examined all prior research undertaken as well as the latest data on the topic and performed various scientifically accepted statistical tests of their own. Their results displayed no evidence to suggest that the various buy-back schemes (which cost about \$700 million-plus) achieved anything, particularly not making Australia a 'safer community' as then Prime Minister John Howard claimed it would.

References

ASJ: www.ssaa.org.au/asj

Lee, W & Suardi, S 2008, *The Australian Firearms Buyback and Its Effect on Gun Deaths*, Melbourne Institute Working Paper Series, no.17/08, Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, The University of Melbourne, Victoria.

Crime facts

Australian Institute of Criminology facts

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) in its *Homicide in Australia: 2007-08 National Homicide Monitoring Program* annual report indicated that the rate of homicide victimisation - 1.3 per 100,000 Australians - remains the lowest ever since records began in 1989-90. Knives and sharp objects remain the most common weapon used in homicides (43 per cent), followed by beatings (24 per cent). These statistics have remained stable for many years, with the use of firearms remaining in third position being involved in just 12 per cent of homicide incidents. Since monitoring began, homicides involving firearms have decreased by more than half. In 1989-90, there were 76 firearm-related homicides, while in 2007-08, there were 30.

The AIC has consistently found over the years that the majority of firearms used to commit homicide were, in fact, not registered and the offenders who used them were unlicensed. Research in 1997-98 and 1998-99 (following the National Firearms Agreement of 1996 and buy-back) found that 91 per cent of offenders using a firearm to commit a crime were unlicensed and 91 per cent of the firearms involved in crimes were unregistered. These offenders were, and are still, unaffected by the new firearm laws introduced to 'make Australia safer', which only affected law-abiding citizens.

The AIC's report series *Australian Crime: Facts and Figures* provides important insights into the use of firearms in illegal activities compared to other crimes. These reports show that the overall rate of homicide had been declining since 1996. In 1996, there were 354 victims, compared to 260 in 2010. There is a documented declining trend in firearms-related homicide since 1979, while assault figures have fluctuated. In 2010, assault continued to occur at a rate that far exceeded any other violent offence, at 766 victims per 100,000 people.

Australian Bureau of Statistics

The Australian Bureau of Statistics in its most recent report, *Suicides, Australia, 1995-2005*, identifies that the most common method of suicide was hanging, accounting for 51 per cent of deaths. Poisoning by drugs accounted for 12 per cent of deaths, and poisoning by other methods, including by motor vehicle exhaust, accounted for 16 per cent of deaths. Suicide by other methods, including drowning or jumping from a high place, comprised 14 per cent of suicide deaths.

CRIME FACTS

Firearms remained the least common method used, accounting for 7 per cent of suicide deaths.

Figures for the 10 years from 1995 to 2005 clearly show that the rate of suicide deaths by use of firearms has declined each year. Additionally, deaths by this method have reduced by more than half in that decade, from 389 incidents in 1995 to 147 deaths in 2005. Unfortunately, the overall total of suicide deaths has not followed this trend, which leads to the question: Should we concentrate on the *cause* of suicide and not just the methods? As the saying goes: Where there's a will, there's a way.

The 2010 report *Causes of Death* states that there were 2361 suicide deaths in 2010, with hanging comprising 56.2 per cent of incidents or 1328 deaths. The use of firearms in suicide in 2010 occurred in 6.9 per cent of incidents or 81 deaths. Accidental death involving a firearm was the cause of 10 deaths, and assault by firearm resulted in 31 deaths in 2010. Comparatively, transport accidents accounted for 1503 deaths in 2010 and accidental falls for 1648 deaths.

While we realise the issue of reporting suicide in the media has been under review, the SSAA has always recommended - as has the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance - that the media publish the details of relevant self-help websites and advice lines when reporting on these topics.

The Australian Firearms Buybacks and Its Effect on Gun Deaths

The paper *The Australian Firearms Buybacks and Its Effect on Gun Deaths*, released by The University of Melbourne's Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research in 2008, indicated that the highly expensive, public-funded 1996 and 2003 firearms buy-backs had not resulted in any real reductions in terms of firearm deaths.

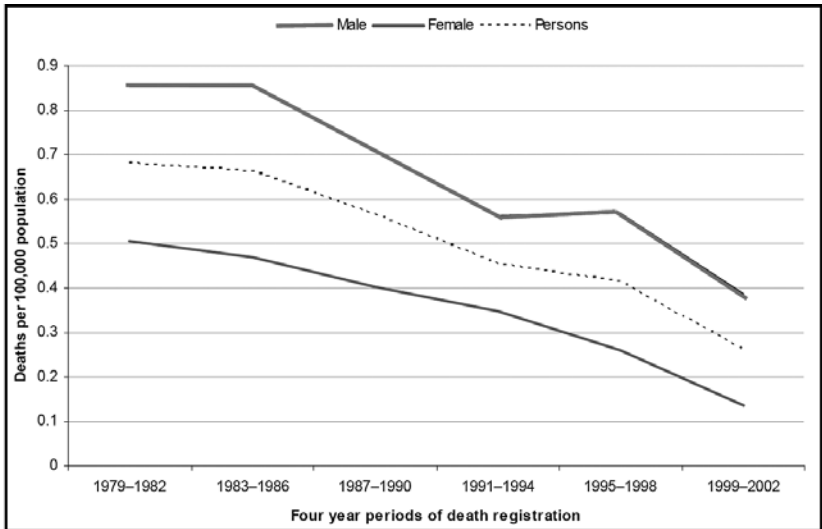
The independent authors, Dr Wang-Sheng Lee and Dr Sandy Suardi, used multiple statistical tools and tests to analyse all past research and data back to the years of the First World War. The authors concluded that there was not only no tangible decrease in homicide as a result of the buy-backs, but also that there was no effect on suicide rates in Australia as the result of the buy-back schemes. Put simply, the buy-back schemes failed to deliver results or 'make Australia safer'. The \$700 million cost of the two buy-backs would have been better spent on additional police and law enforcement efforts to get the criminals off the streets. That would have made Australia a safer place.

The black and grey markets and illegal firearms

Some firearm critics suggest that all illegal firearms start their origins as legally owned and registered firearms. This belief ignores the fact that most longarms were not registered in Australia prior to the late 20th century. In fact, at that time, the firearms could have been bought over the counter at Kmart, along with fishing equipment and tennis rackets from the sporting section. This is what the SSAA and the Australian Institute of Criminology refer to as the ‘grey market’. Just how many firearms are in the grey market is impossible to determine.

The black market, however, consists of firearms that were illegally imported in parts or as a whole through Australia’s porous borders. The SSAA and many criminologists agree that most illegal firearms in circulation form part of the grey market.

Figure 1: The declining firearm-related homicide, 1979-2002



Source: Kriesfield, R 2005, *Firearm Deaths and Hospitalisation in Australia*, National Injury Surveillance Unit Briefing.

Gun myths

When it comes to firearms, many myths are circulated and recirculated throughout the world by firearm critics. Here, the SSAA looks at these myths in an effort to set the record straight.

Myth: Individual firearm ownership puts lives at risk in homes, as offenders turn to their firearms in physical assault situations.

Fact: This is simply not true. The Australian Institute of Criminology's *Homicide in Australia: 2007-08 National Homicide Monitoring Program* annual report shows that stab wounds are the most prominent single cause of death in domestic homicides. It is true that someone intent on causing harm will react and the readily available tool of a kitchen knife proves to be the most dangerous item in the home in these situations.

Myth: If gun ownership was better controlled or regulated, there would be fewer killings.

Fact: Sadly, Australia's most recent mass murderers have been responsible for: 15 deaths from a deliberately lit fire at the Childers Palace Backpackers in June 2000; 10 deaths from a deliberately lit fire at the Quakers Hill Nursing Home in November 2011; and 173 deaths and the injuries of 414 people in the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, where it has now been confirmed that many of the fires were deliberately lit. Brendan James Sokaluk was found guilty of 10 counts of arson causing death.

Myth: Guns kill people.

Fact: Actually, people kill people. While this is an old saying, the SSAA argues that people are morally responsible for their own actions. A person intent on causing harm can do so with a number of items found within a home. The absence of a firearm is a poor deterrent to someone committed to causing another being harm.

GUN MYTHS

Myth: All guns are designed to kill people.

Fact: Target guns are designed specifically for target shooting using relatively low-velocity ammunition. These firearms are generally large, bulky, barely concealable and not suitable for any purpose other than target shooting. Many of them are single-shot firearms that have no other application. Similarly, hunting shotguns and rifles are designed for hunting gamebirds, rabbits or other larger game.

Myth: Shooters are, in reality, practising how to kill.

Fact: Those involved in the shooting sports and recreations are among the most stable, most balanced and most disciplined sportspeople in Australia. This is because shooters are interested in their sport the same way golfers are interested in theirs and they have no predisposition outside this. Suggesting a shooter practises to kill is like suggesting a golfer is practising to mug someone.

Myth: Locking up all firearms in a central storage facility or at the local gun club when not in use would prevent theft and crime.

Fact: Most gun clubs are simply tin sheds and are therefore very susceptible to theft. Both Australian police stations and army facilities have been subject to theft and are therefore no safer than keeping personal firearms at home locked in a police-approved safe.

Myth: Guns cause crime.

Fact: Switzerland provides a good example to dispel this myth. Switzerland has one of the lowest murder rates in the world, yet in the past has required all law-abiding able-bodied males between the ages of 20 and 50 to have military-issued automatic firearms, ammunition and other equipment in their dwelling.

(Killias, M 1990, 'Gun Ownership and Violent Crime: The Swiss Experience in International Perspective', *Security Journal*, vol.1, no.3, pp.169-74; and Kopel, DB 1992, *The Samurai, the Mountie, and the Cowboy: Should America Adopt the Gun Controls of Other Democracies*, Prometheus Books.)

Myth: Disarming the public reduces violent crime.

Fact: According to Gary Mauser, a professor at the Fraser Institute in North America, disarming the public has not reduced criminal violence in any country. In his paper, 'The Failed Experiment: Gun Control and Public Safety in Canada, Aus-

tralia, England and Wales', Professor Mauser says that Australia provides proof that limiting access to firearms does not directly reduce violent crime: "Following the shocking killings in 1996, the Australian government made sweeping changes to the firearm legislation in 1997. Unfortunately, the recent firearm regulations have not made the streets of Australia any safer. The total homicide rate, after having remained basically flat from 1995-2001, has now begun climbing again."

(Mauser, GA 2003, 'The Failed Experiment: Gun Control and Public Safety in Canada, Australia, England and Wales', *Public Policy Series*, no.71, November 2003, Fraser Institute, Canada.)

Myth: Hunting is cruel and unnecessary.

Fact: Hunting is used as a form of feral animal eradication, for conservation purposes and as a source of food. In the hands of a competent shooter, a firearm is one of the most humane tools to despatch an animal.

Myth: Trophy hunting is cruel and offers no benefit to the environment, species or hunter.

Fact: Trophy hunters actually remove the older members of the species from the environment and the breeding pool. Their removal has little to no effect on population numbers, but provides an effective form of quality game management. Shooters taking part in trophy hunting are generally highly skilled, which results in a humane death to their target animals.

Myth: Killing someone is the only reason to use a handgun.

Fact: Jenny Mouzos's 2000 study 'The Licensing and Registration Status of Firearms used in Homicides' states: "Licensed gun owners are law-abiding citizens with legitimate reasons for owning the firearms they have. In more than 90 per cent of firearm-related homicides, the offenders are not licensed and the firearms are not registered. Not one handgun used in a homicide between 1997 and 1999 was used by a licensed owner."

(Mouzos, J 2000, 'The Licensing and Registration Status of Firearms used in Homicides', *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, May 2000, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, ACT.)

GUN MYTHS

Myth: People who buy guns are more prone to violence and crime than any other people.

Fact: Again, licensed firearm owners are law-abiding citizens with legitimate reasons for owning the firearms they have. Rigorous police checks are conducted on an individual before they are even permitted a firearms licence.

Myth: Criminals mainly have guns in order to commit crimes.

Fact: Criminals buy guns in order to protect themselves, not simply to use for armed robbery, as the public may generally think. Criminals feel the need for self-protection because they are associated with other criminals. They are likely to be victims as well as victimisers.

(Reynolds, MO 2001, 'Myths about Gun Control', National Center for Policy Analysis, Washington, USA.)

Myth: Gun control laws keep criminals from obtaining guns.

Fact: Criminals do not obtain their firearms legally and further firearm restrictions would do nothing to reduce the number of firearms obtained illegally. "One cannot say with certainty the limiting of the number of firearms in the community has a direct provable bearing on the crime rate, it is probable the true criminal would always obtain firearms no matter the state of the laws."

(Dixon, O 1981, 'Review of Firearm Legislation of Western Australia', WA.)

Myth: The availability of guns contributes to high suicide rates.

Fact: Japan has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, but gun control in Japan is the most stringent you can find in the democratic world. The country's weapons law begins "No-one shall possess a firearm or firearms or a sword or swords" and very few exceptions are allowed.

(*The Economist* 2008, 'Suicide in Japan: Death Be Not Proud', *The Economist*, May 1, 2008, Tokyo; and Kopel, DB 1993, 'Japanese Gun Control', *Gunsite*, www.guncite.com/journals/dkjgc.html)

Myth: The availability of guns contributes to crimes of passion.

Fact: More often than not, when a crime is committed in a home, it is usually where there is a history of violence. Rarely is it a case that the police are visit-

ing for the first time. More often than not, if a firearm is used in this manner, the person is not licensed and they are in possession of an illegal firearm.

Myth: Gun control will keep guns off the street and improve public safety.

Fact: Criminals do not obtain their firearms via licensed dealers. If a criminal wants to get a firearm, they will find a way to get it by illegal means. Australia has porous borders and only 1 per cent of shipping containers are inspected to prevent the illegal trade of items. Illustrating this point, in 2012, more than 200 handguns were found to have been illegally imported from Germany to Sydney via nothing more insidious than the general mailing system.

Myth: Shooting is a dangerous sport.

Fact: There has never been a fatality in any of the international shooting sports in Australia because of the way shooting organisations run their events. No other sport on the international calendar can boast the same safety record. Research conducted by the Research Centre for Injury Studies concludes that the shooting sports have a lower injury risk than Australian football, soccer, rugby league, rugby union, touch football, water sports, cycling, roller sports, wheel motor sports, equestrian activities, basketball, netball, ice and snow sports, cricket, racquet sports, walking and running, combative sports, gymnastics, trampolining and field hockey.

(Flood, L & Harrison, J 2006, 'Hospitalised Sports Injury, Australia 2002-03', *Injury Research and Statistics Series*, no.27, Research Centre for Injury Studies, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra, ACT.)

Myth: All illegal firearms start out as legal ones.

Fact: The Australian Institute of Criminology has previously stated that less than 1 per cent of shipping containers bringing goods into this country are checked by the Australian Border Force or Customs. According to the AIC, police and other sources, the existing black market in Australia is mostly divided into criminal gangs, whose main focus are crimes rather than dealing with firearms, or small networks of individuals who buy or sell by word of mouth. Nonetheless, firearms traffickers play a significant role in supplying firearms to persons with a criminal intent.

(Mouzos, J 2000, *International Traffic in Firearms: Emerging Issues*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, ACT.)

GUN MYTHS

Myth: A semi-automatic firearm is the most powerful type of firearm available to shooters.

Fact: The term 'semi-automatic' refers to the type of action only and has nothing to do with the power of the firearms. In fact, a centrefire .223-calibre single-shot rifle is more powerful than a .22 rimfire semi-automatic rifle.

Myth: A Glock or a pistol of synthetic material cannot be picked up by a metal detector.

Fact: The major part of a Glock or synthetic pistol is in fact metal. The magazine that holds the cartridges and the cartridges themselves are also made of metal.

Myth: The more guns in licensed and law-abiding hands, the more crime there will be.

Fact: In recent years, there has been a gradual increase in the number of licensed firearms imported to dealers and licensed shooters. Some people have been reported as suggesting that the increase in legal firearms could lead to an increase in crime involving firearms. The SSAA would argue that the rise in the number of legally owned and registered firearms in the country has more to do with the fact that Australia's population of recreational shooters and hunters has increased, and any attempt to link this with increased crime rates or potential theft is ill-advised. Those who import these firearms are police-checked and appropriately licensed. They complete the correct paperwork and fulfil the letter of the law to undertake the importation process.

Myth: People have no need for multiple firearms. A limit should be put on the number of firearms someone can legally own.

Fact: Commentators who make this statement display a lack of understanding as to how different one firearm can be to another. A licensed owner may choose to own one firearm for sporting endeavours and several different firearms for the various targets, positions and styles of different shooting competitions. Another firearm may be owned specifically for hunting small animals, while others again may be for larger animals such as buffalo, deer and camels. Golfers head to the golf course with a large number of clubs, putters and wedges at their disposal, using these tools in different situations. The same mindset applies to firearm owners, who may participate in any number of target shooting or hunting situations.

Myth: There is no need for people who live in the city to own firearms.

Fact: Target shooting is a legitimate sport within Australia, just as much as golf or basketball. Property owners have a pest animal control use for firearms and they may be sporting shooters as well. Their city counterparts may be regular visitors to one of the many inner-city shooting ranges found throughout Australia, as well as travel outside of the city to go hunting. It is no different to the concept of people living in a CBD owning a boat, yet having to travel a fair distance to be able to put their boat in the water.

Quotes on firearms

Many anti-gun groups bend the truth and create myths in regard to firearms issues. The SSAA deals with real facts. It is very important that journalists query the content of any statements provided and strive to uncover false information. In many cases, we have to ask whether the anti-gun groups are purposely getting the facts wrong. Are they trying to mislead the community by using journalists as their tools of deception? You can protect yourself, your reputation and the community by making sure that you are not being used as an instrument for misinformation. Below are some quotes on firearms.

Quote: “Most of our violent crime in Australia is committed by licensed shooters.” Samantha Lee, anti-gun activist

SSAA: “Licensed gun owners are law-abiding citizens with legitimate reasons for owning the firearms they have.”

“In over 90 per cent of firearm-related homicides, the offenders are not licensed and the firearms are not registered.”

“Not one handgun used in a homicide between 1997 and 1999 was used by a licensed owner.” Jenny Mouzos, Australian Institute of Criminology

Quote: “Once you’ve qualified to own a semi-automatic handgun in Australia, you can basically have as many as you like in the home, keeping them at home.” Rebecca Peters, former IANSA spokesperson

SSAA: Handguns are restricted to those with a genuine reason for ownership. The police can refuse your ‘permit to acquire’ if they deem it necessary.

Quote: “Our logic is that shooters are the most ill-disciplined people of any recreational group. That’s what attracts them to guns. It’s a state of mind. They are usually poorly educated; they never had much success at school and were never very good at sport.” John Crook, former Gun Control Australia president

SSAA: Many of our members are doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers, fire and police officers, business owners, mechanics, professional sportspeople, tradespeople, stay-at-home parents and much more. Some well-known ‘celebrity’

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shooters include singers Shannon Noll and Lee Kernaghan, boxer Kostya Tszyu, Beaconsfield mine survivor Todd Russell and former international cricketer Glenn McGrath. Shooters come from all walks of life.

Quote: "...a gun is designed and purchased with lethal or threatening intent."
Simon Chapman, anti-gun academic

SSAA: A large proportion of our membership purchases firearms for the purpose of taking part in local, national or international shooting competitions. The shooting sports are often responsible for a large proportion of our country's medals won at the Commonwealth Games.

Quote: "The majority of Australian shooters are responsible persons is beyond dispute..."

"The segment of the Australian community which poses an obvious danger in terms of criminal violence, the subculture of professional criminals, will be minimally affected by any regime of firearms licensing and registration. They will often be able to obtain guns for criminal purposes." National Committee on Violence

SSAA: Our members are responsible and valued community members who are committed to firearms safety. We have always expressed the view that criminals don't respect or follow laws, thus leaving only law-abiding citizens to feel the effects of any new firearms laws aimed at restricting firearms ownership and use.

Quote: "Most illegal guns are not trafficked into Australia, they are stolen from registered owners. Almost all illegal guns started out as legal weapons." Senator Penny Wright, Australian Greens, 2014

SSAA: A 2014 Greens-led Senate Inquiry into 'The ability of Australian law enforcement authorities to eliminate gun-related violence in the community' found no evidence to suggest that firearms stolen from licensed owners is the predominant source of supply for criminals or the black market. In fact, the Senate Inquiry report signed by the majority of Committee members found that "The hypothesis that illegal guns are mainly stolen from registered gun owners was not supported by the evidence presented to the Committee." The Senate Inquiry majority report also acknowledged our nation's porous borders and lack of policing and border patrol resources as having a real effect on the number of illegal firearms coming into our country and into the hands of criminals of organised crime syndicates.

Quote: “The people who require a [hand] machine-gun be carried around available to them, in the glove box or whatever is very, very limited in a peaceful society like our own... There is no reason for so many hundreds of thousands of handguns, including effectively [hand] machine-guns to be available in Australia.” Bob Brown, former Australian Greens Leader and Senator

SSAA: Handguns are not ‘machine-guns’. We doubt whether the numbers quoted by The Greens are correct and question where Senator Brown obtained that figure. All legal handguns are licensed for sporting use, which is the only legitimate reason for civilian ownership in Australia. Current storage regulations prevent handguns from being stored in the glove box of a car.

Quote: “Isn’t it great that in slow motion you can see the bullet hitting the clay bird?” Commentator, 2008 Beijing Olympic Games

SSAA: Bullets are not used to shoot clay targets. Hundreds of small pellets called ‘shot’ are stored inside a shotgun shell cartridge and the pellets hold a pattern when shot from a shotgun. The commentator probably saw the ‘wad’, which holds the pellets tightly together within the cartridge, fly out of the shotgun towards the target. The ‘clay bird’ is in fact a clay disc called a ‘clay target’ and should be correctly called so.

Quote: “Handguns should be banned in Australia because they serve no useful purpose and are often the target of thieves wanting to sell them on the black market.” John Crook, former Gun Control Australia president

SSAA: Australians compete in a number of target shooting disciplines on a local, state, national and international level that require the use of handguns. Shooting events at the Olympic and Commonwealth Games also require the use of handguns, and Australia is quite competitive on this level. Furthermore, Australian Institute of Criminology research shows that handguns are the least likely type of firearm to be stolen and consequently used in crime.

Quote: “...just one percent of illegal firearms come from illegal imports.” David Shoebridge MLC, New South Wales Greens, 2015

SSAA: Mr. Shoebridge does not clarify that his statement is based on studies by the Australian Institute of Criminology, which only looked at reported incidents of firearm theft from licensed owners, with the results of the reports based on financial year data provided by the Australian state and territory police services. It is misleading to exclude this fact, as it is highly unlikely, if not improbable, that a

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criminal with an illegal or unregistered firearm would report any theft; therefore, of course the studies would account for a higher number of firearms having been stolen from licensed owners.

The SSAA's stand on social issues

Disarming third world countries

While the SSAA works tirelessly to protect the privilege of firearms ownership for law-abiding citizens within Australia, it is also active in the debate about small arms use or misuse throughout countries such as Papua New Guinea and the Pacific region in general. The SSAA does not want to see firearms in the wrong hands.

As a recognised Non-Government Organisation within the United Nations, the SSAA contributes expertise in this area. Through our international representation, we're quick to ensure that arguments revolve around the paramilitary use and/or criminal misuse of firearms and not the licensed, law-abiding firearm owner. It is vital that this distinction be made and that data does not deliberately or accidentally capture people who engage in the legitimate civilian and recreational uses of firearms. In the past, we have found organisations such as the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) attempt to draw in all firearms ownership as a problem in its debates and international treaty recommendations.

Domestic violence

At times, anti-gun groups attempt to argue against private firearms ownership by trying to draw links to the use of firearms in domestic violence incidents. This is a commonly used line by gun critics and there has never been any evidence to support this theory.

The reality is that those with a firearms licence have been approved by the police to be a fit and proper person and are more than likely to keep on the right side of the law. The Australian Institute of Criminology's *Homicide in Australia: 2008-09 to 2009-10 National Homicide Monitoring Program* annual report shows that stab wounds are the most prominent single cause of death in domestic homicides and this has been a trend for many years.

Secure Your Gun, Secure Your Sport

Secure Your Gun, Secure Your Sport is both a firearms safety campaign and publication promoted by the SSAA. The campaign has its roots from as early as 1999 when we encouraged SSAA clubs to focus on safe firearm storage by providing each club with a Secure Your Gun, Secure Your Sport poster for prominent

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display at their ranges.

In 2003, we released our *Secure Your Gun, Secure Your Sport* brochure, which explained the definitions and capacity requirements for different category firearms, provided contact details for each state and territory firearms registry and highlighted a variety of safes that members could purchase for their security needs. We continue to regularly update and distribute this brochure to our members, as well as our state and territory branches.

Furthering our aim to create greater awareness among our members and the shooting fraternity about secure firearms storage, in late 2008 we coordinated with the firearms industry and developed a National Gun Safe Voucher program. This provided firearm owners with access to discounted storage facilities for their firearms, with SSAA National offering members discounts of up to \$100 to purchase police-approved safes. The program was highly commended by the then Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Brendan O'Connor in 2009, and was awarded a Certificate of Merit by the Australian Institute of Criminology in its 2011 annual Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards.

More broadly, the SSAA regularly conducts safety seminars and practical instructions for the safe handling of firearms, and engages with youth groups such as the Scouts and Cadets to promote the safe, fun and all-abilities nature of sports shooting to interested juniors.

Get it right

It is always the goal of a journalist to get the best story out of something in order to capture attention and entice readers. However, care should be taken when reporting to get the facts and the language right and avoid sensationalising stories involving firearms. Here are some common errors that fit into this category.

Off target: “When police searched the suspect’s home, they found a cache of sniper rifles.”

Reality: The term ‘sniper rifle’ is applied to rifles used specifically by military or law enforcement personnel. These firearms cannot be legally owned by members of the public. Many manufacturers make reproductions, but these rifles are not sniper rifles. More often than not, the term ‘sniper rifle’ is used by the media to describe any type of firearm with a telescopic sight, which is not the case.

Off target: “Olympic shooter Russell Mark won his clay target competition with his trusty Beretta weapon.”

Reality: All too often throughout the media firearms are referred to as ‘weapons’. A ‘weapon’ refers to any item that someone uses with malicious intent. The correct term in this case would be a ‘Beretta shotgun’, as this is the target shooter’s tool of competition in his sport.

Off target: “The suspect used a semi-automatic revolver.”

Reality: There is no such thing as a ‘semi-automatic revolver’. The best way to approach the naming of a firearm is to consider it as either a handgun, rifle or shotgun. Handguns have shorter barrels and are usually fired in target shooting competition with one hand. Rifles are longer and are held against the body with both arms. Both rifles and handguns shoot projectile ammunition or bullets, while a shotgun looks similar to a rifle but shoots shotgun cartridges containing pellets or shot. If in doubt, simply call it a ‘firearm’ and avoid the use of the word ‘gun’ for an official news story.

GET IT RIGHT

Off target: “Hunting animals is unethical; the death is inhumane and hunters have no regard for the well-being of the animals they’re hunting.”

Reality: Hunters hunt in Australia for food or to control pest animal populations, and many hunters have much respect for the animals they’re hunting, built on the understanding they have of the animals in their environment. Gunshot, as a method of death, has actually been recognised as one of the most humane methods of animal control, ranking higher than poisoning or trapping and relocation.

(Sharp, T & Saunders, G 2008, *A Model for Assessing the Relative Humaneness of Pest Animal Control Methods*, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry, Australian Government, Canberra, ACT.)

Off target: “Duck hunters wound far more birds than they think. For every bird bagged at least one other is wounded. And good shots are likely to wound more birds than poor ones.” Geoff Russell, Animal Liberation SA

Reality: Animal Liberation, Animals Australia and many of their supporting organisations continue to state wounding rates of at least one wounded for every four ducks shot. This rate is completely wrong. These groups continue to rely on a computer model built and engineered by an animal rights activist to support and promote their views. It has not passed peer review in a credible scientific journal in wildlife science and simply cannot be taken as a credible instrument to measure a wounding rate, especially in the context of modern duck hunting practices. Dr Grahame Webb, one of Australia’s leading scientists in the field of sustainable use of wildlife, conducted a detailed review of the wounding model. He stated that the computer simulation model used for predicting wounding rates cannot and does not predict accurately, and for the purposes of discussing real rates of wounding in the field, it should be ignored.

Handguns

Competitive handgun shooting exists only within police-approved clubs and ranges. Laws that control the handgun shooting sports vary slightly across the states and territories. However, the following may be taken as the general rule across Australia.

Obtaining a handgun

To obtain a handgun, you need to attend a club and make it known you are interested in joining. You are required to undertake formalised firearm safety training prior to the police starting the licence-issuing process. You must complete six months' probation within a club, which involves ongoing instruction about the club rules and firearms safety, until after club consent, when you may apply to the Firearms Registry for a handgun licence.

The granting of a handgun licence is dependent upon a nationwide criminal record check, which looks for issues of concern, such as history of violence, warrants and domestic violence orders. Changes to firearms laws in 2006 have restricted new members to an initial purchase of a small-calibre target pistol.

Once a photographic firearms licence is received, you can then visit a licensed firearms dealer and select a suitable competition handgun. This handgun may be a single-shot air pistol, .22-calibre single-shot pistol, or .22-calibre revolver or self-loading pistol. You then submit an 'approval to purchase' form to the police that outlines the handgun's and dealer's details. Police then check to see if the details of the firearm, the seller and you are correct. This process will take 28 days to complete. Once police approval to purchase has been granted, you are notified in writing and can collect the handgun. The handgun must be taken to the nearest police station and registered within 14 days (some states vary).

After completing registration, the handgun can only be used at an approved range for the approved purpose. The handgun cannot be used for any purpose other than target shooting. Handgun owners must attend at least four to six club events per year to keep club membership and endorsement for a Category H (handgun) firearms licence. Clubs are bound to advise the Firearms Registry if you have not attended your specified minimum events.

Handguns must be stored as per state or territory regulations. To purchase additional firearms, the process above needs to be repeated. If you wish to sell a

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handgun, then it can only be sold to another licensed person (after the purchaser obtains an 'approval to purchase') or to a licensed firearms dealer.

Handgun ownership facts in Australia

The lawful ownership and use of handguns for approved purposes has a long history of being well regulated in Australia. Penalties for the illegal ownership and use of illegal handguns are also well regulated. It is illegal to own, use and possess a handgun in Australia without a licence. It is now and always has been illegal to kill, injure, frighten or annoy another person with a handgun, whether it is registered or not. The police can arrest and place before the courts anyone who commits an offence in relation to the use of firearms and the court may caution, fine or jail any offender.

In addition to conversations with the AIC, the SSAA has been in contact with each state and territory's Firearms Registry to obtain accurate statistics on national handgun use. The figures in the accompanying table were correct as of August 2010.

Handgun licences and handguns in each state and territory

State/territory	Handgun licences	Handguns registered
ACT	389	1242
NSW	11,135	38,752
NT	1129	3427
Qld	12,769	33,795
SA	3557	18,480
Tas	1657	4287
Vic	1292	10,540
WA	*	10,267 **

Notes: *WA issues non-category specific firearms licences, which means people are entitled to possess, carry and use firearms enumerated on that licence subject to any restrictions, limitations or conditions that may be applied. As a result, they do not have specific 'handgun' licences.

**Recorded against a firearms licence only.

The illegal handgun market

The media in Australia generally cannot differentiate between the legal and illegal acquisition of firearms, especially handguns. The Australian Institute of Criminology's *Australian Firearm Thefts, 2004-05* report on firearm theft within Australia indicates that the lowest percentage of firearms stolen from private residences and vehicles were handguns. So where are the criminals obtaining their illegal handguns? The government and the media need to focus on the positive side of legal firearms ownership and the reduction of illegal firearms on the illicit market.

Illegal firearms importation continues to be a concern when only a small percentage of shipping containers are scanned by Customs. During 2006-07, Customs examined only 155,601 containers Australia-wide, which equates to about only 1 per cent of all containers that entered Australia.

It is not only through shipping containers that illegal firearms may be imported. In early 2012, more than 100 pistols were illegally imported through a Sydney post office via an illegal firearms ring originating from Germany.

Handgun crime

The Australian Institute of Criminology has reported on numerous occasions that licensed firearm owners are not responsible for the majority of homicides and crimes where firearms are used. It's time to recognise what firearm owners have known for a lifetime - that their lawful activities are not involved in any rise of violence within our community.

References

Borzycki, M & Mouzos, J 2007, 'Australian Firearm Thefts, 2004-05', *Research and Public Policy Series*, no.73, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, ACT.

Annual Report 2006-07, Australian Customs Service, Australian Government, Canberra, ACT.
Trade Statistics Bulletin, July 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007, Sydney Ports, Sydney, NSW.

Hunting

A large percentage of SSAA members are hunters. They vary in age, gender, vocation and location. They travel throughout the country and sometimes even overseas to participate in hunting activities. A CSIRO study into Australia's recreational hunters indicates that the country's estimated 200,000-300,000 hunters contribute \$1 billion per year to the economy.

While hunting may be a controversial media issue, in reality it should be seen as an activity similar to fishing where people go out into the natural environment and harvest the best in organic free-range food. Hunting is also part of the solution in the management of problem animals such as foxes, rabbits and other feral species that cause social, economic and environmental problems.

The SSAA promotes safe and ethical hunting. We support adherence to sustainable wildlife management practices, game laws and regulations. We also encourage all hunters to display appropriate firearm handling skills and an appreciation of the environment and to participate with and be mindful of the welfare of others.

The SSAA also discourages hunters from taking photographs of hunters sitting atop their hard-won trophy, as we believe this cheapens the activity of hunting, as well as the animal.

Hunting safety and ethics

The SSAA expects hunters to practise the following safe and ethical hunting practices:

1. Having first obtained a landowner's permission to shoot on their property, members should consider themselves to be invited guests, so that they will be welcome in the future.
2. Members must obey the rules of safe firearms handling and diplomatically yet firmly insist others do the same.
3. Members must obey all relevant hunting laws and regulations and diplomatically yet firmly insist others do the same.
4. Members should support game conservation programs and the sustainable utilisation of wildlife.

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5. Members should pass on to others, including youngsters, the proper attitudes towards game management and conservation and the skills of safe firearm ownership, which are the hallmarks of the sporting shooter.

Hunting opportunities in Australia

Australia's rich and varied wildlife provides plenty of opportunities for the recreational hunter. Depending upon legislation, some states allow recreational, sustainable duck and quail hunting and deer hunting during declared open seasons.

While some species are taken for human consumption, hunters may also participate in wildlife management by culling problem species such as rabbits, hares, foxes, feral pigs, feral dogs, feral cats and feral goats. All of these species and more cause a high environmental and economic cost to Australia in general. As reported by the Invasive Animal Cooperative Research Centre, feral animals conservatively cost Australia around \$720 million per year. Hunters should be credited with and congratulated for doing their part in the conservation of Australia's native fauna and flora, as well as protecting valuable farmland and livestock.

SSAA Conservation & Wildlife Management groups

Within the SSAA, there are groups of shooters that assist in the preservation of native Australian species and management of problem species. These members form the SSAA's Conservation & Wildlife Management (CWM) branches. Members in these groups undertake an accreditation program consisting of map reading, navigation, firearm safety and handling, wildlife appreciation and management, living-in-the-field, ethical hunting and first-aid courses. The skills developed are more advanced than what most 'professional' shooters require to operate as a private contractor. All SSAA members have \$20 million of public liability insurance cover for the peace of mind of landholders.

Organised culls on both government and private land targeting rabbits, foxes, feral cats, feral goats, feral pigs and feral donkeys have taken place in the past and continue to do so as needed. Some areas include national parks within the Simpson Desert, the Flinders and Gammon Ranges in South Australia, Gregory National Park in the Northern Territory, the Murray-Sunset region in Victoria, and various places across Queensland.

In addition to feral animal control duties, CWM members provide vital services that help maintain the fragile balance of the Australian ecosystem. This includes duties such as data collection (assisting with native animal surveys and counts), assisting landholders (by checking fences, dams and stock), undertaking vegetation management, and maintaining ecological communities.

In 2007, SSAA South Australian CWM member Gil Hartwig was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for his services to the environment through conservation activities, particularly feral animal control, and to the sport of shooting. This highlights the importance of the work CWM members do and the positive impact their activities have on the environment and wider community.

SSAA Farmer Assist

The SSAA Farmer Assist program has been developed to enable farmers with wildlife management issues to seek the assistance of SSAA members. The specially designed, free-of-charge online-only program allows a farmer to choose who they invite onto their properties from the group of accredited members replying to their post.

SSAA National has worked with a number of SSAA state branches to release the SSAA Farmer Assist program throughout Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania, and will continue to work towards the expansion of the program into other states and territories. In 2014, the ABC's *Landline* program highlighted the success of the SSAA Farmer Assist program and the relationships the program has helped create.

1080 poisoning

1080 is the commonly used name for sodium fluoroacetate (also known as sodium monofluoroacetate), a potent metabolic poison used primarily to control mammalian pests. The name '1080' refers to the catalogue number of the poison, which became its brand-name.

Sodium fluoroacetate is a naturally occurring compound produced by many species of Australian plants. Compound 1080 is a white fluffy powder that is odourless and tasteless. It was first synthesised in Europe in 1896 and developed in the United States as a rodent poison during the 1940s. It is now widely used in Australia and New Zealand to control pest animals.

1080 is believed to disrupt the citric acid cycle, where ultimately cells are deprived of energy. Once consumed, animals typically show no obvious signs of poisoning until they suddenly collapse. Some experience convulsions; others simply lie still, breathing slowly, until death occurs. Death is typically the result of ventricular fibrillation (heart irregularities). Symptoms of nervous distress are seen in dogs, cats and humans. Rabbits and wallabies usually die several hours after eating the bait.

Advantages

Compound 1080 is said to be the most effective vertebrate pest poison currently available. It is relatively species-specific, is relatively humane in terms of its effects on herbivores and is biodegradable. However, some animals, such as birds, wombats, Tasmanian devils and mice, have a high tolerance to the poison.

Disadvantages

There is a definite risk of accidental poisoning of domestic and stock animals, such as sheep, cattle, goats, horses and pigs, so care must be taken to keep stock away from a poisoned area until all uneaten poisoned bait is removed. A recent CSIRO publication examined the efficiency of 1080 baiting and results were less than promising, with 99 per cent of all baits in the study taken by non-target species.

There is also a high risk of secondary poisoning if dogs eat poisoned pest rabbits or wallabies. Poisoned animals are not necessarily found near where the bait was laid, so a count of carcasses cannot be used to assess the effectiveness of the control operation.

1080 POISONING

Alternatives to 1080

Shooting is a genuine and viable alternative to control animals such as feral pigs, goats and in some cases, feral horses. In areas of rugged terrain and in vast remote areas, helicopters can be used. Helicopter shooting by trained shooters is the most humane way of reducing the number of feral animals in these areas. It is quick and the animals are not subject to the stresses of mustering, yarding and transportation.

An example of the effectiveness of shooting can be found at Operation Bounceback in the Flinders Ranges in South Australia. The Australian Government's Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts refers to this program on its website and states in an article titled 'Threat Abatement Plan for Competition and Land Degradation by Feral Goats' that "Volunteer shooters have been successfully used to conduct ground shooting as part of the control methods within Bounceback 2000. The success with volunteer shooters in this case has been achieved by having well-defined objectives and an effective system of coordinating their activities to maximise the level of control achieved."

Trapping is reported to be time-consuming, as traps must be checked daily. Fences are costly to build and maintain and therefore only suitable for small areas, and poisoning, while effective, poses risks for non-targeted species.

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SSAA in the community

The University of Queensland Deer Research Project

Although red deer have existed in Queensland for nearly 140 years, there is no information on their impacts on native vegetation. A considerable number of wild red deer can be found in the north-eastern parts of the Toowoomba region near Cressbrook and Perseverance Dams.

The Deer Research Project is a collaborative project undertaken at Lake Cressbrook by the local council with The University of Queensland, Biosecurity Queensland, the Environmental Protection Agency, the SSAA, the Australian Deer Association, and the Toowoomba Pipeline Alliance to research the ecology of Queensland's red deer and their value as a game species. The information gained from this research project will be very useful in quantifying the costs and benefits of wild deer in Australia and in managing deer as a resource or a pest or both.

South East Queensland koala habitat conservation

The SSAA rifle range in Ipswich has become a permanent home to koalas as a part of an initiative between the Queensland Government and the SSAA to save diminishing habitat for the native animal. As a part of ongoing efforts by the SSAA to contribute to environmental conservation, almost 1000 hectares of the range, which is located 30 minutes south-west of Brisbane, has been dedicated as the Stewartdale Nature Refuge.

The Stewartdale property, which is also home to a wetland rehabilitation program, is the largest state-funded koala habitat restoration project undertaken in Queensland. The project will include the planting of more than 100,000 trees over 200 hectares, where it will be managed for the next five years as a part of ongoing efforts to ensure koalas have suitable habitat into the future.

Field to Fork - The Australian Game Cookbook

In 2011, the SSAA published its first commercial recipe book, *Field to Fork - The Australian Game Cookbook*. The book was created to educate and encourage people to reconnect with their environment and really think about where their food comes from. Celebrating the abundance that is Australia and its rich and varied wildlife, the book won the First Cookbook category in the 2012 Gourmand Cookbook Awards.

SSAA IN THE COMMUNITY

SSAA National Academic Bursary program

Australia has a growing number of target shooters and hunters and with this growth comes a need for practical study of topics such as game management, ecology and legislation. The SSAA is passionate about supporting Australia's academic community to allow credible non-biased study into aspects of our sport and recreation with a fresh-minded approach.

Launched in 2014, the SSAA National Academic Bursary program is an annual grant program aimed at supporting university study into recreational shooting. The ongoing bursary program worth \$10,000 offers support to university students studying a range of topics, such as game and environmental management, psychology, journalism and more.

Boundless Canberra sponsorship

The SSAA has always prided itself as being a socially inclusive recreational sports shooting organisation. Indeed, men, women and juniors of all ages and abilities are encouraged to participate and when they do, they can compete on an even playing field in a social and fun competition.

In 2014, the SSAA backed an ACT initiative aimed at getting children of all abilities outside, having fun and being active. The National Children's Playground Project, called Boundless Canberra, is an initiative to build an all-abilities playground in the nation's capital, with the help of the community at large. The SSAA wholeheartedly supports Boundless Canberra in its initiative to provide a recreational outlet for children of all abilities - a mindset which is consistent with the Association's philosophy of giving everyone a fair go.

SSAA's publications

As a member-based Association, the SSAA publishes a number of regular magazines and publications for the benefit of its members, as well as the wider public who have an interest in firearms, target shooting, recreational hunting and other outdoor activities.

Australian Shooter

Australian Shooter is the flagship publication of the SSAA and is Australia's most popular sports shooting magazine. Published monthly, it aims to create a better environment and community understanding of all forms of hunting and the shooting sports. The magazine features political, legislative and current event news stories, firearm and product reviews, shooting advice, hunting philosophies, and technical and practical ballistics information to represent the varied experiences of Australia's recreational shooters and hunters.

Australian Hunter

Australian Hunter is Australia's favourite hunting magazine. Published quarterly, it caters to hunters of all interests and persuasions, including those who hunt for wildlife management, trophies and food. The magazine features hunting stories on small game such as rabbits and foxes, up to the world's largest and most dangerous animals. Much of the content is Australian-based, but it also includes stories about international hunting activities. Also featured are firearm, knife and general product reviews, practical advice for using tools in the field, and camp kitchen recipes.

Australian & New Zealand Handgun

The *Australian & New Zealand Handgun* is the SSAA's dedicated magazine for handgun enthusiasts. Published annually, it showcases legitimate handgun shooting for recreational club and competitive shooters, collectors, historians and those who may use their handguns professionally, such as law enforcement and security personnel. The magazine features firearm and product reviews, technical advice about reloading and building custom firearms, historical stories on interesting firearms, hints for shooting specific disciplines, and interviews with successful Australian and international competitors.

SSAA's Comprehensive Guide to Shooting & Hunting in Australia

SSAA's Comprehensive Guide to Shooting & Hunting in Australia is an introductory publication intended for those new to the SSAA or to sports shooting and recreational hunting in general. It showcases the Association's shooting disciplines and explains firearms and their components to help readers safely handle firearms and then master various shooting positions and techniques. Recreational hunting is well covered, with information about safety, ethics and etiquette in the field, trip planning, knowing your target animal and cartridge selection. Hunting rules, regulations, licensing and fees in each state and territory is also provided, as is some general information about cooking with various game meats. There is also a detailed glossary on common firearm, shooting and hunting terms.

The Junior Shooter

The Junior Shooter is a special newsletter intended for the SSAA's junior members. It features stories about casual plinking, competitive target shooting, hunting for the table, hunting for wildlife management, firearm and outdoor safety, and the legal and ethical requirements of shooting. *The Junior Shooter* includes interview-style articles and advice from young shooters who have competed nationally and internationally, as well as letters from members, game meat recipes and puzzles. Each issue also features member competitions. Many of the stories are written by SSAA junior members or their family and friends, but all are written for juniors to ensure the next generation can continue in their chosen recreations safely and sustainably.

ASJ

The *Australian Shooters Journal*, or simply *ASJ*, is a political-oriented supplement to the monthly *Australian Shooter* magazine. Published periodically and released to more than 175,000 SSAA members, it focuses exclusively on the legislative, licensing and lobbying issues that concern Australia's firearm owners. The *ASJ* brings a range of political, economic, social and environmental issues to the fore and enables sporting shooters and recreational hunters to make informed decisions on the issues that concern them.

Junior shooters

Shooting is one of the few sports that encourages and caters for the participation of young and old, males and females, the able-bodied and disabled. In fact, target shooting is a family-oriented pastime, allowing all members of the family to compete on an equal footing and in a safe environment.

Junior involvement in target shooting and recreational hunting is traditionally heavily criticised by anti-gun groups, but these groups fail to recognise that these pastimes can provide valuable outlets for today's youth. Sports shooting requires a great deal of dedication and commitment, concentration, consistency and above all else, practice. These attributes are just some of the life skills gained by juniors. Furthermore, the SSAA's focus on supervision and safety creates a nurturing environment for youths to grow and develop, while also helping to build their confidence.

Juniors can hunt in the field and target shoot under the supervision of a licensed adult for many years before they are old enough to do so alone. Age specifications vary depending on state and territory legislation.

SSAA shooting disciplines

The SSAA is the largest and most active shooting organisation in the country and manages more than 18 shooting competitions - commonly referred to as 'disciplines' - at local, state, national and international levels. We cater to many different types of firearms, including shotguns, pistols, revolver and rifles in rimfire, centrefire, air and black powder configurations, as well as disciplines that combine several types of firearm categories. For more information, visit www.ssaa.org.au/disciplines

Action Match

Action Match is a dynamic handgun discipline catering to revolver and self-loading pistol shooters. While international rules dictate that the firearm's calibre must be at least 9mm, due to Australia's handgun regulations, Action Match competitors can use either a .38 Super or 9mm Parabellum self-loading pistol or a .38 Special/.357 Magnum revolver. The discipline includes four firearm classes: Open, Open Modified, Metallic Sight and Production; and four main courses of fire: Practical, Barricade, Moving Target and Falling Plate, with each course having its own time, distance and scoring conditions.

Air Rifle Field Target

Air Rifle Field Target is a simulated field-shooting discipline that caters to springer and precharged pneumatic (PCP) air rifle shooters. The discipline includes five firearm classes: Open Air Rifle, Open PCP, Open Springer, International PCP and International Springer, with competitors aiming to hit reactive 'fall-when-hit' targets of various sizes at often unknown ranges from 8 to 50m. As the name suggests, Air Rifle Field Target lends itself to being contested in a bush-type environment, although it may also be held on a more traditional range line.

Benchrest

Benchrest is a precision rifle shooting discipline where shooters aim to put five or 10 shots into the smallest possible group on paper targets placed at 50m, 100, 200 and 300 yards. Groups are measured from the centre to the centre of the two widest shots in a group. Rifles are fired from rests, comprising a front rest to support the fore-end and a rear sandbag to support the rifle's butt. There are

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10 main classes within this discipline, with the differences largely determined by rifle weight and calibre.

Big Game Rifle

Big Game Rifle is a rifle discipline that aims to foster the collection, preservation and use of vintage and modern classic large-calibre big-game rifles, particularly those of British origin, including black powder and early Nitro cartridge firearms. The discipline includes eight categories of matches and the courses of fire within these are largely determined by rifle types and eras, shooting times and shooting positions. The matches aim to simulate field-shooting conditions to improve the shooter's firearm skills in the pursuit of large and dangerous game.

Combined Services

Combined Services is a rifle and handgun discipline that aims to encourage organised competitive shooting with a view towards a better knowledge of the safe handling and proper care of military or service firearms. The discipline encompasses more than a dozen Service Rifle and Service Pistol classes in which competitors use original or faithful reproduction rimfire, centrefire and black powder military and other service rifles, carbines, revolvers and self-loading pistols to shoot for score at paper targets of different sizes and from various distances and positions.

Field Rifle & 3-Positional

Field Rifle & 3-Positional is a rifle discipline that aims to improve hunting marksmanship under rifle range conditions, while teaching shooters the capabilities and limitations of their equipment. Field Rifle uses rimfire and centrefire rifles and is designed around the four most used field shooting positions of rapid fire, standing, standing post rest and sitting/kneeling post rest over various distances, while 3-Positional uses the same rifles as Field Rifle, but is a slow-fire event that uses the prone, standing and sitting/kneeling positions.

Gallery Rifle

Gallery Rifle includes short- and medium-distance events for rifles and pistols chambered in pistol-calibre cartridges. The international rule book comprises four main events: Gallery Rifle Centrefire, Gallery Rifle Smallbore, Long Barrelled Revolver and Long Barrelled Pistol, though the SSAA principally supports Gallery Rifle Centrefire at a national level. This event is based around scoped and iron-sighted tubular magazine lever-action rifles in .32-20, .38-.357, .44 and

.45 pistol calibres. Gallery Rifle matches require the competitor to load and shoot very quickly either at stationary paper or reactive steel targets.

Handgun Metallic Silhouette

Handgun Metallic Silhouette is a rimfire and centrefire revolver and pistol discipline where competitors aim to knock down metal animal-shaped targets. The targets are placed on steel stands in banks of five and set at a variety of known distances, with the competitors having a certain amount of time to knock as many down as they can. The firearms used must fall into one of four categories: Production, Revolver, Standing and Unlimited, and there are three official matches: Big Bore, Smallbore and Field Pistol, with each match having its own categories.

Juniors Sports Shooting

Sports shooting requires a great deal of dedication, concentration, consistency and above all else, practice. These attributes are just some of the life skills juniors may gain when they participate in sports shooting. The SSAA's focus on supervision and safety creates a nurturing environment for young people to develop while also helping to build their confidence. Most disciplines within the SSAA have a Junior component, with juniors often separated into two categories: those up to 15 years, and those from 15 to 18 years of age.

Lever Action

Lever Action is a shooting discipline that caters exclusively for lever-action rifles. The discipline includes two categories: Classic Calibre for as-issued rifles in any centrefire cartridge produced up to 1938; and Open Calibre for rifles in any factory, handloaded or wildcat rimfire or centrefire cartridge. Lever Action aims to improve hunting marksmanship skills and includes contour animal profile targets and traditional paper ring targets. The matches require a variety of shooting positions and distances, and courses of fire can vary from 15 seconds to five minutes for five shots.

Long Range Precision

Long Range Precision is a handgun, rifle and black powder rifle discipline that aims to refine and develop the accuracy of firearms, ammunition and equipment for shooting at extreme distances. The handgun events vary from rimfire to centrefire calibres and are shot up to 500m, while the rifle events cover .22LR to .50BMG calibres and are shot up to 2000m. The core matches require the

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competitor to shoot five shots from a cold barrel, without the use of benches or windflags, as they would in a normal field situation.

Muzzleloading

Muzzleloading is an interactive discipline that caters to the original and replica rifles, muskets, handguns and shotguns that were used during Australia's colonial days. The firearm categories are very detailed, with each having its own classes and subsections. The rifle events are shot from the offhand, cross-sticks/prone, bench rest and sometimes kneeling/sitting positions, while the shotgun events are shot around stations placed at various distances from the thrower, shooting 25 clay targets overall. In addition to range shooting, Muzzleloading shooters are often enthusiastic followers of historical events and re-enactments.

Practical Shooting

Practical Shooting is a quick and energetic discipline that caters to rimfire and centrefire pistols, revolvers and rifles, and shotguns, with each having their own classes. Most matches comprise a minimum of three stages and the courses of fire are designed to offer challenging and active scenarios that test the capacity of the shooter and their equipment. The targets are mainly paper, cardboard or steel, and the competitor is scored on their accuracy and time in comparison with all the scores and times shot on the day.

Rifle Metallic Silhouette

Rifle Metallic Silhouette is an air, rimfire, centrefire, service and black powder rifle shooting discipline where competitors aim to knock down metal animal-shaped targets. The targets are placed on steel stands in banks of five and set at a variety of known distances, with the competitors having a certain amount of time to knock as many down as they can. The various competitions are shot from a range of distance and positions, depending on the firearm calibre and category, but all competitions aim to improve hunting marksmanship skills under range conditions.

Shotgun

Shotgun permits the use of any smoothbore shotgun up to 12-gauge to shoot clay targets. The discipline includes four main competitions. Sporting Clays is usually held in a bush setting, with competitors shooting from six or seven stands and traps throwing targets to simulate hunting. 5-Stand has five stands separated by a couple of metres each, with traps throwing single or double targets in different

directions. Low-Field and High-Field competitions are shot from pads level with or close to the trap house and the traps being above or below ground level.

Single Action

Single Action is a multifaceted discipline that uses original or replica firearms that were commonly used in the Old West period of 1800 to 1899. This includes single-action revolvers, lever-action and slide-action rifles and carbines, lever-action and pump-action shotguns, and side-by-side shotguns without automatic ejectors. The targets are generally reactive and vary in shape and dimension. In addition to competition, Single Action shooters also preserve, promote and respect the skills, traditions and pioneering spirit of the historic American Old West, often adopting a shooting alias appropriate to the era.

Target Pistol

Target Pistol is an international rimfire and centrefire revolver and self-loading pistol shooting discipline. There are six main classes and several side matches, with each based around the class of the handgun and ammunition used and many having their roots in different eras and types of service pistol shooting. The discipline includes four main matches: National Match Course, 900 Match Course, International Mayleigh Match, and Short Course Match, and competitors have varying time restrictions to shoot single-handedly in the standing position at paper targets placed at 25 and 50m.

Working Gundogs

Working Gundogs is a shotgun discipline that promotes the use of trained gundogs for hunting and retrieving in the field. The discipline conducts training, trials and competitions at various levels to provide owners with a guide to improving the abilities of their dogs. The four main Working Gundogs disciplines are Retrieving; Hunt, Point and Retrieve; Spaniel; and Pointer and Setter, with the various breeds of Labradors, Brittanys, retrievers, pointers, setters, spaniels, munsterlanders, weimaraners and more all having their own skills and specialities.

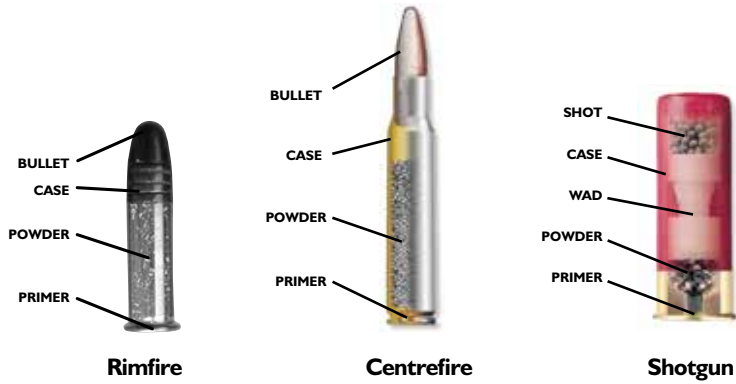
Firearm and ammunition parts

Familiarise yourself with the correct terms for various parts of a firearm.



FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION PARTS

Familiarise yourself with the correct terms for various parts of different types of ammunition.



Glossary

Shooting is a sport filled with terms that are often misunderstood or used inaccurately by the media and general public alike. By using the correct terminology, journalists can play a large role in helping to reduce the public's misunderstanding of firearms, sports shooting and recreational hunting.

Action: The combined parts of a firearm that determine how a firearm is loaded, discharged and unloaded. Most handguns are referred to as 'single-action' or 'double-action'. See 'Pistol, Double-action' and 'Pistol, Single-action'.

Action, Bolt: A firearm, typically a rifle, that is manually loaded, cocked and unloaded by pulling a bolt mechanism up and back to eject a spent cartridge and load another. Bolt-action firearms are popular for hunting, target shooting and biathlon events. A bolt-action rifle allows the shooter maximum accuracy, but may be too slow or cumbersome for some shooting sports.

Action, Lever: A firearm, typically a rifle, that is loaded, cocked and unloaded by an external lever usually located below the receiver.

Action, Pump/Slide: A firearm that features a movable forearm that is manually actuated to chamber a round, eject the casing and put another round in position to fire.

Action, Automatic: A firearm that loads then fires and ejects cartridges as long as the trigger is depressed and there are cartridges available in the feeding system (ie, magazine or other such mechanism). Note: This type of firearm is rarely owned privately, with the exception of museums and collectors. The term 'automatic' is commonly confused with the terms 'semi-automatic' or 'self-loading'.

Action, Self-loading: A firearm in which each pull of the trigger results in a complete firing cycle, from discharge to reloading. It is necessary that the trigger be released and pulled for each cycle. These firearms are also called 'self-loaders' or 'semi-automatics'. The discharge and chambering of a round is either recoil-operated or gas-operated.

Ballistics: The science of studying projectiles. Ballistics can be 'interior' (inside the gun), 'exterior' (in the air) or 'terminal' (at the point of impact). Toolmark investigation is the attempt to microscopically match a bullet or fired cartridge case to a particular firearm.

GLOSSARY

Ballistic coefficient (BC): A relative measure of how well a projectile may be expected to perform in flight, in overcoming air resistance and thus retaining its initial velocity. Mathematically, it is calculated as the ratio of sectional density to coefficient of form (known alternatively as 'form factor') or alternatively, the ratio of bullet weight to diameter squared times form factor I.

Barrel: The part of the firearm through which a projectile travels. The barrel may be rifled (with spiral grooves on the interior of the barrel) or smoothbore (a smooth interior barrel with no grooves).

BB: Spherical shot having a diameter of .180" used in shotshell loads. The term is also used to designate steel or lead air rifle shot of .175" diameter.

Bench rest: A table specifically designed to eliminate as much human error as possible by supporting a rifle for competitive shooting or sighting-in purposes.

Birdshot: Small lead or steel pellets used in shotshells ranging in size from No. 12 (less than the diameter of a pencil point) to No. 4 (about .1" in diameter) used for short-range bird and small-game hunting.

Black powder: The original propellant made from charcoal, saltpetre and sulphur that was used up until just prior to the turn of the 20th century in all firearms.

Black powder proof: The 'proof marks' stamped on a shotgun to designate its suitability to using black powder and not modern-day propellants.

Boat-tail: A projectile type having a tapered heel or base to improve ballistic efficiency.

Bore: The interior barrel forward of the chamber.

Bore diameter: On rifled barrels, the bore diameter is the interior diameter of the barrel from the tops of the lands (the highest point of the grooves). On a smooth barrel, the bore diameter is the interior dimension of the barrel forward of the chamber (not including the choke on shotgun barrels).

Breech: The part of a firearm that accepts the loaded cartridges into the barrel when open or 'broken'. Most modern firearms are breechloaders, as opposed to older-style muzzleloaders.

Bullet: A non-spherical projectile for use in a rifled barrel.

Bullet, Hollow-point: A bullet with a cavity in the nose exposing the lead core to facilitate expansion upon impact. Hollow-point cartridges are used for hunting, police use and other situations to avoid overpenetration.

Bullet, Wadcutter: A generally cylindrical bullet design having a sharp shouldered nose intended to cut paper targets cleanly to facilitate easy and accurate scoring.

Butt: On handguns, it is the bottom part of the grip. On longarms, it is the rear or shoulder end of the stock.

Calibre: A term used to designate the specific cartridges for which a firearm is chambered. On rifled barrels, it is the approximate diameter of the circle formed by the tops of the lands. It is the numerical term included in the cartridge name to indicate a rough approximation of the bullet diameter (ie, .30-calibre is a .308"-diameter bullet).

Cant: The act of tilting the barrels of an over-and-under shotgun beyond vertical due to poor gunfit.

Carbine: A rifle of short length and light weight originally designed for horse-mounted troops.

Cartridge: A single round of ammunition consisting of the case, primer, propellant, powder and one or more projectiles.

Cartridge case: The container of brass, plastic or other materials, which houses the primer at the rear, contains the propellant and holds the projectiles at the front. It also functions as a gas seal during firing.

Cartridge, Centrefire: Any cartridge intended for use in rifles, pistols and revolvers that has its primer central to the axis at the head of the case. Most cartridges, including shotshells, are centrefire, with the exception of .22-calibre rimfire ammunition. If you were to look at the bottom of a centrefire cartridge, you would see a small circle in the middle of the base; hence, 'centrefire'.

Cartridge, Magnum: Any cartridge or shotshell that is larger, contains more shot or produces a higher velocity than standard cartridges or shotshells of a given calibre or gauge.

Cartridge, Rimfire: A cartridge containing the priming mixture in the rim of the base. There are a few rimfire ammunition calibres besides the .22, but they are rare and not widely available.

Cartridge, Big bore: A general term that refers to larger-calibre cartridges, normally those with bore diameters ranging from .40 to .70" (and larger, should a sporting rifle ever be made with a bore diameter larger than .700"). Big bore rifle cartridges are generally intended for hunting big, tough and dangerous game.

Cartridge, Smallbore: A general term that refers to rimfire cartridges, normally of .22-calibre. This ammunition is used for target shooting, plinking and small-game hunting.

Cast: The movement from the centreline of a firearm from the stock centre. For a right-handed person, the stock is considered 'cast off' when aligned to the right of the centreline. 'Cast on' refers to left-handed shooters and stock movement.

GLOSSARY

Chamber: In a rifle, pistol or shotgun, it is the part of the barrel that accepts the ammunition. A revolver has multiple chambers in the cylinder.

Choke: The degree to which a shotgun barrel constricts the shot column, thus affecting the spread of the shot or 'pattern' produced. Chokes may be cylinder, improved cylinder, modified, improved modified or full, to name a few, and may be formed either as part of the barrel at the time of manufacture, by squeezing the end of the bore down over a mandrel or by threading the barrel and screwing in an interchangeable choke tube.

Chronograph: An instrument used to measure the velocity of a projectile.

Cock: To place the hammer or striker in position for firing by pulling it back fully.

Cock, Full: The position of the hammer when the firearm is ready to fire.

Cock, Half: The position of the hammer when about half-retracted and intended to prevent the release of the hammer by a normal pull of the trigger.

Combination (gun): The term given to a shotgun that has one shotgun barrel and one rifle barrel.

Cylinder: The round, rotatable part of a revolver that contains the chambers.

Deringer: A general term that refers to many variations of pocket-sized pistols. The name comes from the pistol's original designer, Henry Deringer.

Discharge: To cause a firearm to fire.

Double barrel (also double gun): A firearm that has two barrels mounted to one frame. The barrels can be vertically (over-and-under) or horizontally (side-by-side) aligned.

Double trigger: A shotgun that has two triggers to fire each of its two barrels.

Ejector: A spring-loaded mechanism on a shotgun that expels the fired shells clear of the breech.

Extractor: A mechanism that raises the cartridges from the breech of the firearm for each cartridge to be removed by hand.

Firearm: The legal definition of a firearm in your state or territory will be one that you need to know. Contact your Firearms Registry.

Firing mechanism: The part of a shotgun that cocks and releases the firing pin. Commonly called the 'lock' of the shotgun.

Firing pin: The part of a firearm that strikes the primer of a cartridge to start the ignition of the primer.

Flash suppressor: An attachment to the muzzle designed to reduce muzzle flash. A flash suppressor is not a silencer.

Flinching: The act of a person jerking or moving away from the impending recoil of a firearm or simply closing their eyes upon firing.

Forcing cones: A tapered area that leads the projectile into a barrel from the chamber once the shotshell is fired.

Fore-end: The part of the wooden stock under the barrel/s and forward of the triggerguard or breech frame to afford a grip.

Frame: The basic unit of a revolver, pistol or break-open firearm, which houses the firing mechanism and to which the barrel and stock are assembled. In other firearms, it is called the 'receiver'.

Front-sight: The sight that is nearest to the muzzle.

Gape: The distance the barrels travel through an arc at the receiver end to fully expose the chambers in the barrel.

Gauge: A term used to identify most shotgun bores, with the exception of the .410 shotgun. Gauge relates to the number of bore-diameter-sized lead balls weighing 1lb. For example, a 12-gauge shotgun is so called because 12 lead balls, each of which just fits the inside diameter of the barrel, weigh 1lb. The .410 shotgun is a calibre and refers to the diameter of the barrel.

Grain: The unit of weight used for specifying propellant charges and projectile weights. It is often abbreviated to 'gr'. The grain was derived from the weight of a grain of wheat and is now taken as 1/7000 of 1lb.

Grooves: Twisted depressions that are cut or swaged into a rifle or pistol barrel to form the rifling (opposite of lands).

Gun balance: The peculiar feature of a firearm to feel balanced between the hands of the shooter, to the extent that the firearm becomes an extension of their body. It can also be measured as a pivotal weight point from the hinge pin of a firearm, the point at which the barrels rotate to open.

Gunfit: The ability of a firearm to be adopted to suit the shooter as if it were an extension of their body. It includes critical stock measurements because the master eye aligns precisely with the rib of the barrels.

Hammer: The part of the firing mechanism that strikes the firing pin, which, in turn, strikes the primer.

Hammerless: A firearm having an internal hammer or striker.

Jacket: The envelope enclosing the lead core of a bullet.

GLOSSARY

Jam: A malfunction that prevents the action from operating. Jams may be caused by faulty or altered parts, ammunition, poor maintenance or improper use of the firearm.

Lands: The ridges that remain after grooves are cut or swaged into a rifle or pistol barrel to form the rifling (opposite of grooves).

Lead shot: Shot made from alloying lead with antimony to get varying hardness for various shooting purposes. The more antimony, the harder (but also the lighter in weight) the shot will be.

Load: The combination of components used to assemble a cartridge or shotshell. The term also refers to the act of putting ammunition into a firearm.

Lock: The mechanical parts of the firing mechanism assembly of the firearm.

Magazine: A receptacle on a firearm that holds several cartridges or shells for feeding into the chamber. Magazines take many forms, such as box, drum, rotary or tubular and may be fixed or removable.

Misfeed: Any malfunction during the feeding cycle of a repeating firearm that results in the failure of a cartridge to enter the chamber completely.

Misfire: A failure of the cartridge to fire after the primer has been struck by the firing pin. A 'hangfire', which is when the cartridge is delayed from firing, is a type of misfire. If the cartridge fails to fire, you should keep the firearm aimed at the target for at least one minute.

Muzzle: The front end of a firearm barrel from which the bullet or shot emerges.

Muzzle flash: The illumination or flash resulting from the expanding gases from the burning propellant particles emerging from the barrel behind the projectile and uniting with oxygen in the air.

Muzzleloader: Any firearm loaded through the muzzle. Muzzleloader firearms are also called 'black powder' firearms. They may be antique, replica or of modified design.

Nitro proof: The certification of a shotgun for use with modern-day nitrocellulose/nitroglycerine-based propellants.

Nitro propellants: Propellants or powders that have a base of nitrocellulose (single base) or nitrocellulose and nitroglycerine (double base) as a source of their energy. These propellants are also called 'smokeless' powders.

Nose: The point or tip of a bullet.

Over-and-under: A firearm with two barrels vertically aligned, one above the other.

Pattern: The distribution of pellets/shot fired from a shotgun.

Pellets: The small or large balls of certain compounds such as lead, steel, tungsten, tin or bismuth used as ammunition for shotguns.

Pistol: A term for a hand-held firearm with a single chamber. A revolver has at least five chambers.

Pistol, Automatic: A firearm that will continue to fire so long as the trigger is pressed and held and there is ammunition in the magazine/chamber. A common but improperly used term to describe semi-automatic or self-loading pistols. See Action, Self-loading for a description of how these pistols operate.

Pistol, Single-action: A firearm requiring the user to manually pull back the hammer before the firearm can be discharged (like the old Western revolvers).

Pistol, Double-action: A firearm requiring the user to either manually cock the hammer or simply pull the trigger to allow the firearm to cock and release the hammer on its own.

Plinking: The informal shooting at inanimate targets at indefinite points. Plinking typically refers to casual shooting at pine cones, tin cans or other such objects for fun and practice.

Powder: A commonly used term for the propellant in a cartridge or shotshell.

Pressure: The force exerted over the surface of the chamber developed by the expanding gases generated by the combustion of the propellant.

Primer: An ignition component consisting of a brass or gilding metal cup, priming mixture, anvil and foiling disc. It creates an explosion when hit by a firing pin, igniting the propellant powder. It is the most dangerous component of the cartridge.

Propellant: The chemical composition, which, when ignited by a primer, generates gas. The gas propels the projectile.

Rear-sight: The sight that is furthest from the muzzle.

Receiver: The basic unit of a firearm, which houses the firing mechanism and to which the barrel and stock are assembled. In revolvers, pistols and break-open firearms, it is called the 'frame'.

Recoil: The rearward movement of a firearm resulting from firing a cartridge or shotshell.

Recoil pad: A buttplate, usually made of rubber, to reduce the recoil or 'kick' from shouldered firearms.

GLOSSARY

Reload: A round of ammunition that has been assembled using previously fired cases.

Revolver: A firearm with a cylinder having several chambers so arranged as to rotate around an axis and be discharged successively by the same firing mechanism. A self-loading pistol is not a revolver because it does not have a revolving cylinder.

Rib: There are two types of ribs - a side rib, which separates the barrels of an over-and-under shotgun, and the top sighting rib, which provides a flat sighting plane.

Rifle: A firearm having spiral grooves in the bore and designed to be fired from the shoulder.

Rifling: Grooves and lands formed in the bore of a firearm barrel to impart rotary motion to a projectile.

Round: One complete small arms cartridge.

Safety catch: A device on a firearm designed to provide protection against accidental or unintentional discharge under normal usage when properly engaged.

Self-loading/Semi-automatic: A firearm which fires, extracts, ejects and reloads only once for each pull and release of the trigger.

Shotgun: A smoothbore shoulder firearm designed to fire shells containing many pellets or a single slug.

Shotshell: A round of ammunition containing multiple pellets for use in a shotgun. The multiple pellets in a shotshell are called 'shot'.

Side-by-side: A firearm with two barrels horizontally aligned, one next to the other.

Silencer: A device used as an expansion chamber about the muzzle of a firearm, to contain the gases discharged during firing and thus reduce some of the noise produced. Silencers are illegal or restricted in all states and territories within Australia.

Slug: A common name for a single projectile fired from a shotgun. Can be of a different shape for differing gauges.

Small arms: Any firearm capable of being carried by a person and fired without additional mechanical support.

Steel shot: A shot pellet developed from soft iron as an alternative to lead shot when shooting waterfowl due to environmental concerns.

Stock: The wood, fibreglass, wood laminate or plastic component to which the barrel and receiver are attached.

Swing: The act of moving a shotgun along the trajectory of a moving target in order to shoot it. 'Swinging through' a target refers to catching up to the target and then passing through it to ascertain lead so you do not shoot behind it, so that both the gun and target are then moving in the same direction at similar speed.

Tang: A piece of flat metal extending from the receiver of the firearm. It can be the top or bottom tang or both. The top tang usually houses the top lever and safety catch, while the bottom tang often incorporates the rear of the trigger-guard.

Trajectory: The path of a bullet through the air.

Trigger: The part of the firing mechanism (lock) that causes the firearm to fire when it is pulled by the shooter's 'pointing' finger.

Trigger, Hair: A slang term for a trigger requiring very low force to actuate.

Triggerguard: A metal enclosure that houses the trigger.

Triggerlock: A firing mechanism (lock) that can be entirely removed from the bottom of the receiver of a firearm and which also includes the trigger.

Trigger lock: An accessory for blocking a firearm from unauthorised use. Most trigger lock manufacturers advise against the use of a trigger lock on a loaded firearm, as shifting the lock against the trigger could fire the gun.

Trigger pull: The average force which must be applied to the trigger to cause the firearm to fire.

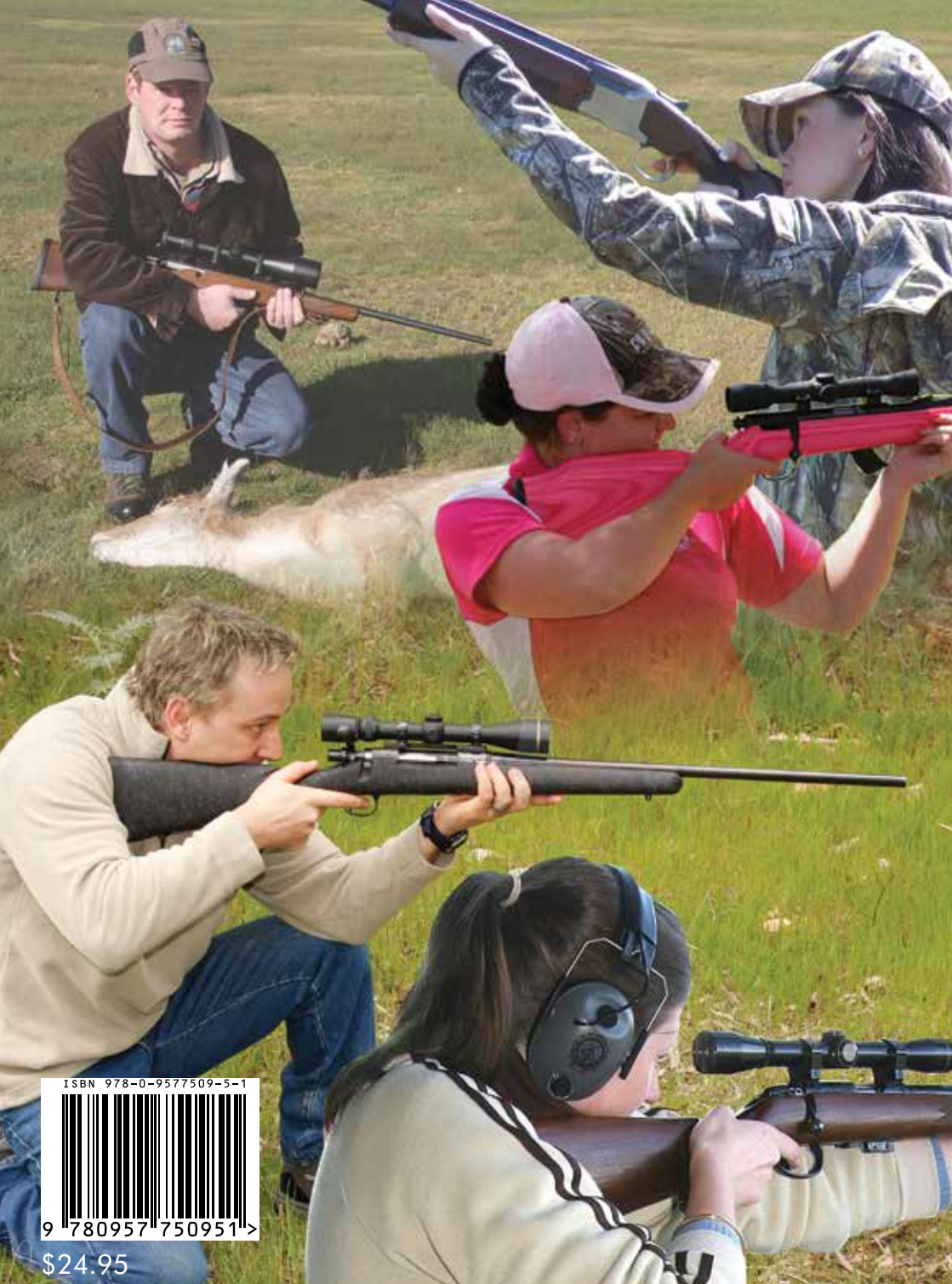
Unload: The complete removal of all unfired ammunition from a firearm.

Unsingle: A specifically configured break-action shotgun that is similar to an over-and-under shotgun, but has only one barrel for which to shoot single-barrel target events.

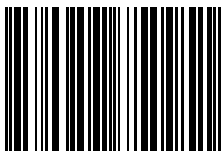
Velocity: The speed of a projectile at any point along its trajectory, usually listed in feet per second (fps).

Wad: A space device in a shotshell, usually cup-form plastic or paper discs, which separates the propellant powder from the shot.

Weapon: An instrument used in combat. The term is never used when referring to sporting firearms.



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