

## MYTH EIGHT: MOST GUNS USED IN CRIME ARE STOLEN FROM LICENSED FIREARM OWNERS

**REALITY:** A 2014 Senate Inquiry into “The ability of Australian law enforcement authorities to eliminate gun-related violence in the community” found: “The hypothesis that illegal guns are mainly stolen from registered gun owners was not supported by the evidence presented to the Committee”. The inquiry also found “that most guns used in the commission of crime do not originate from licensed firearm owners”.

## MYTH NINE: LICENSED SHOOTERS ARE NOT PROPERLY TRAINED

**REALITY:** To obtain a licence, shooters must complete safety training, and, in most states, a pistol shooter needs to compete at their club six to 12 times a year to maintain a licence. This is far more often than police officers in many states or territories, who may only be required to practise shooting once a year.

## MYTH TEN: ALL GUNS ARE DESIGNED TO KILL PEOPLE

**REALITY:** Licensed firearm owners are required to demonstrate a legitimate reason to own a firearm, must undergo rigorous police checks and complete safety training before they are eligible for a firearm licence. Law-abiding firearm owners include sporting shooters, farmers, feral animal pest controllers and hunters. As for their guns, many sporting shooters’ firearms are designed specifically for target shooting, use relatively low-velocity ammunition and are not easily concealed.



# TOP 10 FIREARM MYTHS

**Tightening of firearm legislation merely targets law-abiding firearm owners. It does nothing to prevent criminal misuse or stop criminals from obtaining guns via illegal importation, manufacture or theft.**

Shooters Union Australia (SUA) urges politicians to base firearm regulations on the facts, not emotion. This brochure highlights some of the myths about firearms that have been used to justify legislative change – despite the facts telling us otherwise.



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### SHOOTERS UNION AUSTRALIA:

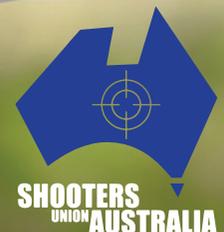
- Represents the views of hundreds of thousands of firearms owners in Australia
- Actively promotes the rights of law-abiding firearm owners
- Supports sensible firearms legislation covering licensing, use and storage.

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### **MYTH ONE: GUN AMNESTIES REDUCE THE LIKELIHOOD OF GUN CRIME**

**REALITY:** SUA believes there should be a permanent gun amnesty initiative in Australia, but understands gun amnesties do not reduce gun crime. Amnesties benefit people who want to do the right thing, including those who inherit an unregistered family heirloom or have previously failed to register one for fear of heavy penalties. Criminals who pay a lot of money to smuggle or manufacture illegal firearms will not participate. The myth that gun amnesties reduce criminal weapons is reinforced by the 2013 Queensland gun amnesty where nearly 65 per cent, or 14,000 of the 19,000, guns handed in were simply re-registered and returned to well-meaning, law-abiding gun owners.

### **MYTH TWO: FURTHER GUN REGULATION WILL REDUCE CRIMINAL USE OF FIREARMS**

**REALITY:** People with a criminal record are already prohibited from holding a firearm licence or legally owning a gun, with licensed firearm owners required to undergo rigorous police checks and safety training classes. Rather than targeting law-abiding firearm owners, the Government should focus more on criminals who access weapons via the illicit guns market. The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission's (ACIC) "Illicit Firearms in Australia" report released in October 2016, confirms "the illicit firearms market is driven in part by outlaw motorcycle gangs, Middle Eastern organised crime groups, and other groups engaged in trafficking illicit commodities such as drugs".

### **MYTH THREE: MORE LEGALLY OWNED GUNS WILL LEAD TO MORE GUN-RELATED DEATHS**

**REALITY:** There has been a steady decline in the number of gun-related deaths in Australia since 1980, despite the number of legal firearms and licences continuing to grow in Australia. According to the Australian Institute of Criminology's (AIC) homicide statistics, "the percentage of homicides committed with a firearm continued on a downward trend which began in 1969. In 2003, fewer than 16 per cent of homicides involved firearms". Meanwhile, the ACIC's "Illicit Firearms in Australia" report 2016 shows a 9 per cent increase in the number of legally owned firearms between 2011 (2.75 million) and 2016 (2.89 million) and an 11 per cent rise in firearm licences between 2011 (734,000) and 2016 (816,000).

### **MYTH FOUR: LICENSED GUN OWNERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR GUN VIOLENCE**

**REALITY:** According to an AIC study, "The Licensing and Registration Status of Firearms Used in Homicide", more than 90 per cent of firearms used to commit homicides are not registered and their owners are not licensed. According to the report, "those who commit homicide in Australia are individuals who have circumvented legislation and are the least likely to be affected if further restrictions on firearms ownership are introduced".

### **MYTH FIVE: FIREARMS CAUSE MORE DEATHS EACH YEAR THAN OTHER WEAPONS**

**REALITY:** Knives, not guns, are the most commonly used weapon in homicides, according to the National Homicide Monitoring Program's "Homicide in Australia 2012–13 to 2013–14" report. It found knives were responsible for 86 deaths in 2013–14, while beatings accounted for 37 deaths and guns for 32. The report also showed a 63 per cent decline in gun-related homicides since 1989–90.

### **MYTH SIX: THE 1996 GUN LAWS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DECLINE IN AUSTRALIA'S GUN-RELATED HOMICIDES**

**REALITY:** The decline in gun-related deaths in Australia was already evident well before the 1996 gun buyback. According to the ABS "Firearm Deaths, Australia, 1980 to 1995" report, the firearms death rate declined by 46 per cent between 1980 (4.5 deaths per 100,000) and 1995. The AIC's Weapons Use in Violent Crime statistics from 1995 to 2012 show the gun-related death rate continued to decline, with only a few spikes, following the implementation of the 1996 gun laws. Research also shows that New Zealand, Canada and the United States' firearm homicide rates declined over the same period, despite these countries NOT enacting any similar gun laws to Australia's.

### **MYTH SEVEN: THE REGISTRATION OF FIREARMS REDUCES GUN-RELATED HOMICIDES**

**REALITY:** Landmark research\* found the registration of firearms and Australia's 1996 tougher gun laws were unlikely to have been responsible for the decline in gun homicide rates in recent decades. Comparing Australia, Canada and New Zealand's firearm homicide rates, the study found these all declined between 1990 and 2010, even though both Canada and NZ allow semi-automatic firearms that were banned here in 1996. It also found registration of guns does not explain declining rates of shooting homicides, given the vast majority of shooting homicides involve unregistered guns (90 per cent in Australia, 80 per cent in Canada). Canada abandoned long-arm registration in 2015 (citing a lack of benefit to public safety) after spending about \$5 billion over 15 years implementing their system. NZ also dumped long-arm registration after more than 40 years for the same reasons as Canada, yet it has the lowest gun homicide rate. The research instead found socioeconomic disadvantage and the illegal drug trade played a greater role in gun homicide rates, as opposed to tighter gun controls, which did not influence criminals who committed gun violence. Given firearm registration across Australia costs an estimated \$80 million each year in administration costs, Government would be better off investing this money in police resources to fight crime.

\* McPhederan, S., Baker, J., Singh, P., (2010) Firearm Homicide in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand: Journal of Interpersonal Violence.

