

Committee Secretariat  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

10 July 2014

**My submission to the enquiry concerning: The ability of Australian law enforcement authorities to eliminate gun-related violence in the community.**

My name is Susan West and I submit this document outlining my views in reference to the guidelines of the inquiry. This is my personal submission and I hope it in some small way conveys my views on the points as outlined in the Senate Inquiry document.

Since I was 13 years old I have always had access to firearms my father owned, and in later life was part of the military and a pilot. In early 1990 I obtained my pistol licence and am the responsible owner of several handguns, both revolvers and semi-automatics. I have officiated in my sport over many years at both state and national level, and instructed and spent many enjoyable hours gaining an understanding of a shooting discipline and the training and dedication the sport requires on all levels including both the Commonwealth Games and the Olympic Games. Having not been fortunate enough to gain entry to this level of competition, I am certain you fully understand the commitment these athletes have to the sport of shooting, and the need for them to travel to local and overseas events, and to be constantly in training, always in possession of their firearms, of all descriptions, both semi-automatic, revolver, rifle and shotgun.

I address submission points on which I have opinions and trust it will enable the enquiry to come to a resolution that will not impinge more than it already does on the shooting fraternity, both pistol and rifle.

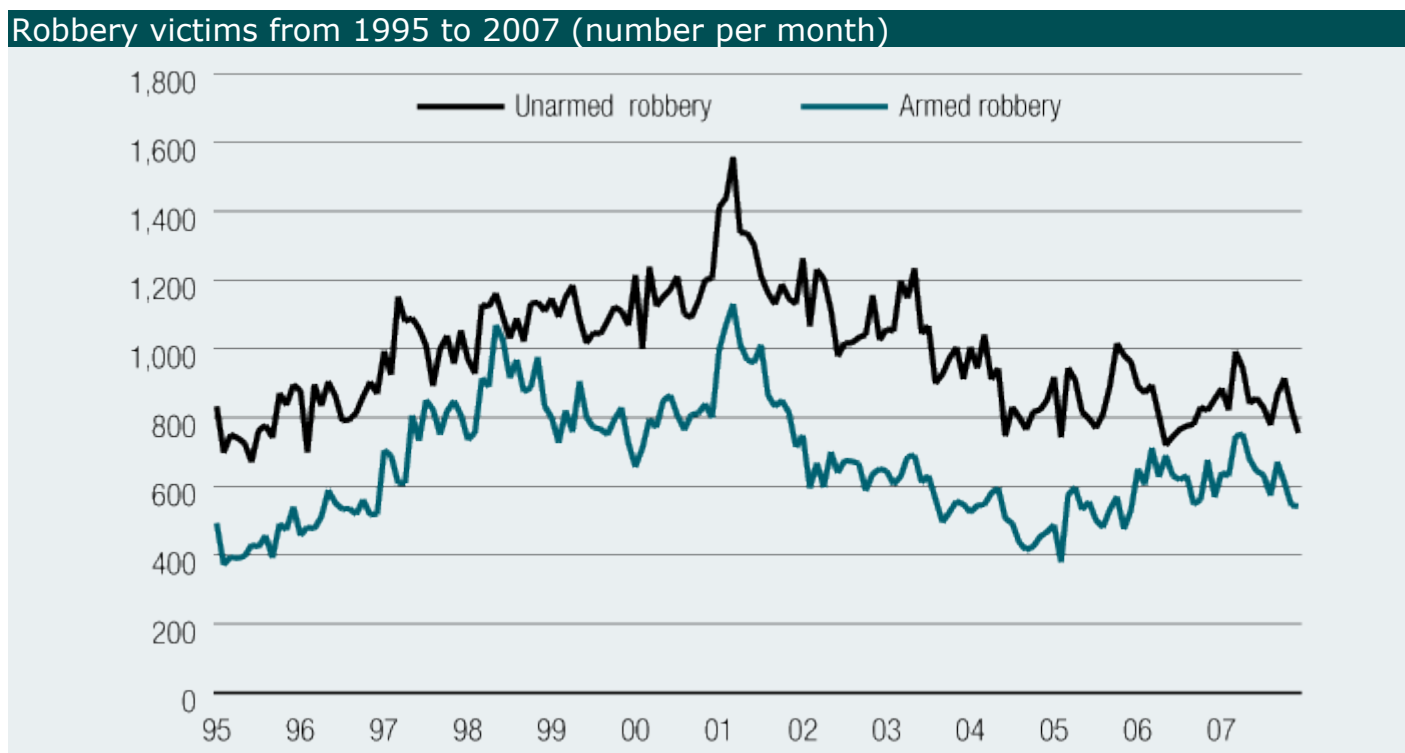
**Points A & B are outside my scope of expertise and I am certain police and government agencies will comment on the points raised.**

***C: The adequacy of current laws and resourcing to enable law enforcement authorities to respond to technological advances in gun technology, including firearms made from parts which have been imported separately or covertly to avoid detection, and firearms made with the use of 3D printers:***

Existing firearm laws are currently too rigid and the compliance requirements by the law abiding citizen making a licence application too lengthy. Criminals do not apply for firearm licences or comply with current laws and regulations, they source their firearms through mostly illegal sources, and shall continue to do so irrespective of any regulation or law. Police can have all/more the powers required, but it would appear that criminals have access to illegal firearms and obtain both rifles, of any description, including semi and automatics not available to any registered gun owner and semi-automatic pistols with barrel lengths shorter than allowed a legitimate gun owner, and revolvers of all descriptions, both short and long barrel. Hence funding of police forces and powers remains a state matter, as does their IT requirements. If new types of firearms made using 3D, and are undetectable, this is a dire issue, but new laws should not impact on legitimate responsible firearm owners who already are much too restricted in their gun ownership, both handgun and rifle/shotgun. Both illegal firearm and drugs importation remains high and serious, but intelligence gathering and use of that would appear to be the critical factor in combating both, not harsher or more lengthy jail terms as the criminal element ignore both.

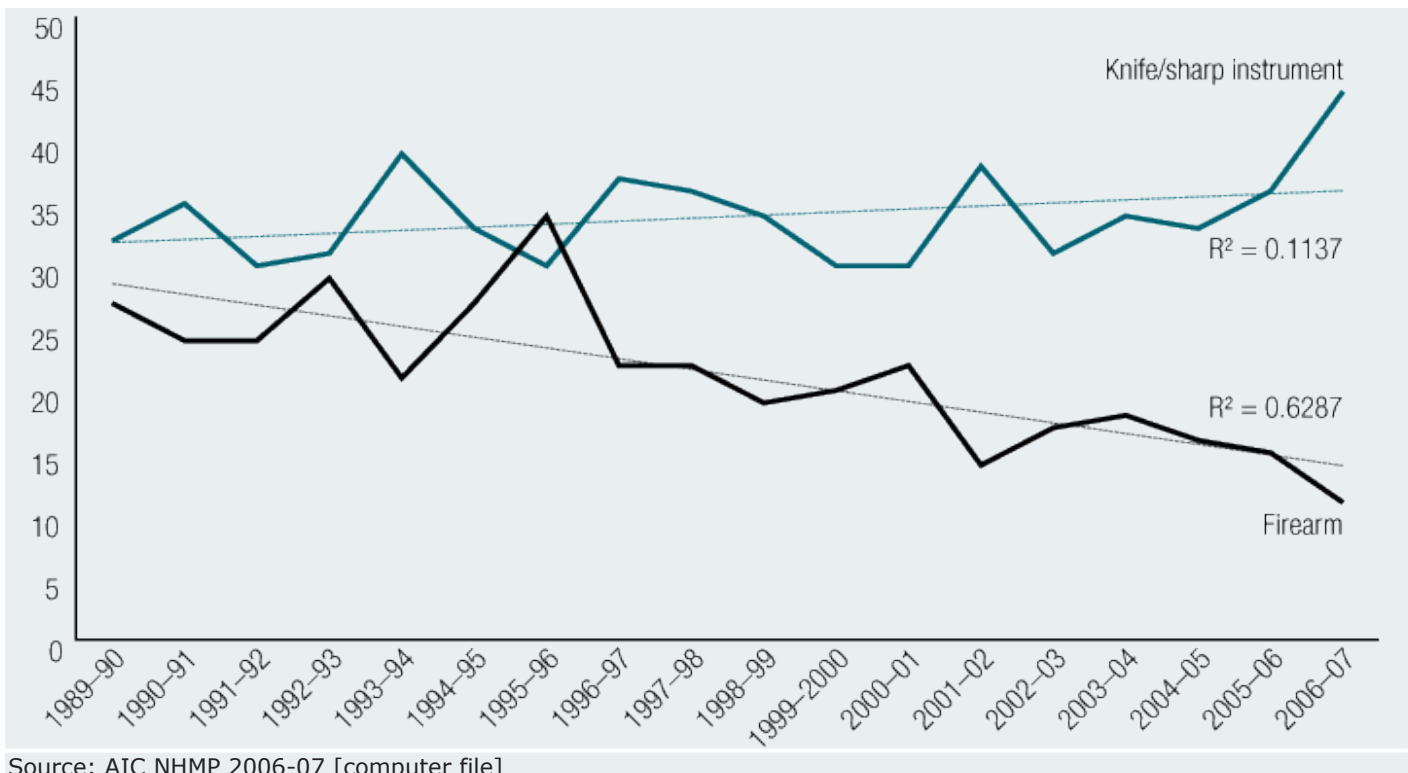
**D: The extent to which the number and types of guns stolen each year in Australia increase the risk posed to the safety of police and the community, including the proportion of gun-related crime involving legal firearms which are illegally held:**

Stolen firearms used by a criminal element or other individuals can be reduced by a more secure storage of any firearm, in possibly thicker wall steel safes, totally secured to a rigid structure. Firearms stored in central depots created a risk as the criminal element will target these depots as multiple firearms would be located there. It would appear that more rifles than handguns are stolen, however the risk to the community by a criminal element is not reflected in any increase in stolen firearms, as the majority of robberies and assaults on the general public appears to be carried out using an array of weapons, usually knives or other household items and the use of brute force.



Graph from Australian Institute of Criminology:

## Homicide weapon statistics Trend in firearm homicides



Source: AIC NHMP 2006-07 [computer file]  
Australian Institute of Criminology data;

### ***E: The effect banning semi-automatic handguns would have on the number of illegally held firearms in Australia;***

Currently semi-automatic handguns and automatic rifles are acquired for overseas sources and used in gang related incidents, biker related incidents. Criminals who want semi-automatic weapons obtain these illegally through importation for others countries in our north and in close proximity where they are available in large quantities at low cost. Transportation in fishing vessels along with drugs and other illegal substances.

Banning legally owned semi-automatics guns held legally by pistol owners would NOT impact the criminal element as they source high capacity magazines for their illegally obtained firearms, usually 17 or 19 round magazines, unlike the 10 shot engineered/blocked magazines used by Australian gun owners. It must be remember that many of the newer revolvers are now 8 and 9 shot, hence there is no reason to single out semi-automatics.

Drugs like Heroin, Marijuana and Ice to name a few have been banned since day one, yet the quantities on our streets and other locations is constantly rising, it is a source of monies to the criminal element who care little for our laws or court sentences, hence I would suggest that banning semi-automatics only impacts legal gun sports users and possibly dose little to reduce crime overall. However there is an element in our Government that appear to want to ban all firearms and who quote statistics to suit their argument, and care little for facts we present, or that Switzerland and numerous other European countries' have a far greater gun ownership and little is heard about their collective governments wanting to ban anything.

The news article below stands alone, as Britain has banned all handguns in the past years and it would appear that the ban has resulted in only genuine gun owners being impacted. I will let statistics for the period prior to banning handguns and post be examined in details to see what a like ban would result in here.

## The most violent country in Europe: Britain is also worse than South Africa and U.S.

By [James Slack](#)

Updated: 09:14 AEST, 3 July 2009

Britain's violent crime record is worse than any other country in the European Union, it has been revealed. Official crime figures show the UK also has a worse rate for all types of violence than the U.S. and even South Africa - widely considered one of the world's most dangerous countries. The figures comes on the day new Home Secretary Alan Johnson makes his first major speech on crime, promising to be tough on loutish behaviour. Britain has an even worse violence rate than South Africa. The Tories said Labour had presided over a decade of spiralling violence. In the decade following the party's election in 1997, the number of recorded violent attacks soared by 77 per cent to 1.158million - or more than two every minute.

The figures, compiled from reports released by the European Commission and United Nations, also show:

- The UK has the second highest overall crime rate in the EU.
- It has a higher homicide rate than most of our western European neighbours, including France, Germany, Italy and Spain.
- The UK has the fifth highest robbery rate in the EU.
- It has the fourth highest burglary rate and the highest absolute number of burglaries in the EU, with double the number of offences than recorded in Germany and France.

But it is the naming of Britain as the most violent country in the EU that is most shocking. The analysis is based on the number of crimes per 100,000 residents. In the UK, there are 2,034 offences per 100,000 people, way ahead of second-placed Austria with a rate of 1,677.

### THE LEAGUE OF SHAME

Country	Number of violent crimes	Rate per 100,000 residents
<b>1. UK</b>	<b>1,158,957</b>	<b>2,034</b>
<b>2. Austria</b>	<b>133,546</b>	<b>1,677</b>
<b>3. South Africa</b>	<b>732,121</b>	<b>1,609</b>
<b>4. Sweden</b>	<b>108,004</b>	<b>1,123</b>
<b>5. Belgium</b>	<b>107,885</b>	<b>1,006</b>
<b>6. Canada</b>	<b>306,559</b>	<b>935</b>
<b>7. Finland</b>	<b>41,664</b>	<b>738</b>
<b>8. Netherlands</b>	<b>111,888</b>	<b>676</b>
<b>9. Luxembourg</b>	<b>3,233</b>	<b>565</b>
<b>10. France</b>	<b>324,765</b>	<b>504</b>

### HOW THE UK COMPARES IN OTHER CRIMES

Rate per 100,000 residents and EU ranking



Source: Conservatives, EU Commission, UN

The U.S. has a violence rate of 466 crimes per 100,000 residents, Canada 935, Australia 92, and South Africa 1,609.

Shadow Home Secretary Chris Grayling said: 'This is a damning indictment of this government's comprehensive failure over more than a decade to tackle the deep rooted social problems in our society, and the knock on effect on crime and anti-social behavior.'

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1196941/The-violent-country-Europe-Britain-worse-South-Africa-U-S.html#ixzz36IL8dPch>

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***F: stricter storage requirements and the use of electronic alarm systems for guns stored in homes;***

The theft of firearms both semi-automatic handguns and rifle from secured in locked safes would occur regardless of an alarm system as police do not currently attend alarms, and by the time a security company attended, the thieves who may be armed would pose a threat to any person either police or security attending. Also not all residences are in suburban areas, many firearms are located in rural townships, no 24 hour police station or on remote farming properties. Again any added security, alarms would financially impact genuine hard working gun owners. As many firearms used by motor cycle gangs and other criminal elements in recent years and months, most prefer semi-automatic rifles, and handguns with large capacity magazines sourced from countries to our north.

***G: the extent to which there exist anomalies in federal, state and territory laws regarding the ownership, sale, storage and transit across state boundaries of legal firearms, and how these laws relate to one another:***

In all areas of the laws between states there exist anomalies, from speaking and participating with interstate fellow shooters most of the elements of registration, ownership, and storage appear to be extremely similar. The period from joining and being assessed by firearm clubs is the same and this is as good security measure to assess a new member's suitability. However the bias and dislike of some ethnic groups or individuals appears to raise its head occasionally, not all firearm club presidents are perfect. The only person actually able to speak to this point is an individual who knows all state laws and their similarities and differences. Gun ownership is extremely arduous to negotiate, costly and extremely unfair. Police in the state of Western Australia need to be notified if I wish to travel there for a competition, it appears they do not trust Victoria Police to have screened the licenced shooter, yet I can freely travel to NSW, ACT, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory with no police approval, it is mystifying, Western Australia should allow free movement of licenced gun owners, this is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

***H: Any related matter:***

In conclusion my I add that I have no empirical evidence to support my view that a criminal or person with evil intent will always find a weapon to harm or threaten a law abiding citizen. Law enforcement is not able to eliminate guns or drugs as the criminal element with its financial resources shall always find illegal ways of obtaining firearms (and drugs) with which to perpetrate a violent act in our community. Criminals have and continue to use violence on the community, if not with illegal or manufactured firearms then also with knives, swords or any other weapons at their disposal. Stronger border security and longer prison terms for firearm offenses may be a better solution to a problem.

The criminal cares not for our laws or punishment, hence imposing stricter gun laws only deters sports minded individuals, people who love with a passion the skill sets required of shooting, hunting and on a range, not a sport for all but a sport for more than 700,000 firearm owners in Australia.

Pistol shooting in my sport is practiced in over 70 countries, with fewer restrictions that we currently endure, countries in all of Europe, Asia, New Zealand, Canada, South America and many more. In fact our neighbour new Zealand abandoned its strict firearms policy in years past now has a model that possibly Australia could, should adopt. In fact overseas shooters no longer travel to Australia, and if they do in very small numbers because of our 10 shot magazine limits, pistol calibre and barrel length restrictions, another loss for Australian shooters and visitors. In fact in 2013 the Australia open IPSC shooting event was held in New Zealand, a much more tolerant pistol and rifle environment.

I thank you for your patience in considering my submission.

Attachments: Link:

- 1: [Australia and Handguns: Myths and Facts - Welcome to WiSH](#)



## Mass Shootings in Australia and New Zealand

### Number of mass shootings

- Following conventions used by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP), a mass shooting is defined as an event with four or more people killed by a single perpetrator.
- From 1980 to 2010, there were 12 mass shootings in Australia and 4 mass shootings in New Zealand (Table 1).
- Although rare, these events were 'clustered' in the late 1980s to mid-1990s.

### Gun law differences

- In reaction to the Port Arthur shooting, Australia banned semi-automatic rifles and shotguns, and pump-action shotguns.
- New Zealand still allows these types of firearms for the purposes of hunting and target shooting.
- In Australia, all firearms must be registered. New Zealand does not require registration of all firearms.
- Despite their different gun laws, both countries have experienced comparable periods of time with no mass shootings.

### Social and economic similarities

- Australia and New Zealand show many social and economic similarities.
- For example, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, both countries experienced high levels of unemployment, followed by a decade of relative economic stability and growth from the mid-1990s onward.

### Rate of mass shootings

- From 1980 to 1997, the rate of mass shootings, (which controls for differences in population size) was slightly higher in New Zealand (0.0062 incidents per 100 000 population) than in Australia (0.0040 incidents per 100 000 population).

Table 1: Mass shootings, 1980 to 2010

Country	Location	Date	Victims
Australia	Port Arthur, TAS	28 April, 1996	35
Australia	Hillcrest, QLD	25 Jan, 1996	6
Australia	Central Coast, NSW	27 Oct, 1992	6
Australia	Strathfield, NSW	17 Aug, 1991	6
Australia	Surry Hills, NSW	30 Aug, 1990	5
Australia	Rock Country, NT	25 Sept, 1988	6
Australia	Melbourne, VIC	8 Dec, 1987	8
Australia	Canley Vale, NSW	10 Oct, 1987	5
Australia	Melbourne, VIC	9 Aug, 1987	7
Australia	Pymble, NSW	23 Jan, 1987	4
Australia	Wahroonga, NSW	1 June, 1984	5
Australia	Campsie, NSW	24 Sept, 1981	5
New Zealand	Raurimu	8 Feb, 1997	6
New Zealand	Dunedin	20 June, 1994	5
New Zealand	Paerata (near Auckland)	20 May, 1992	6
New Zealand	Aramoana	13 Nov, 1990	13

### References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008). Labour Force Australia, Detailed – Electronic Delivery. Time Series Workbook, Australian Bureau of Statistics: Canberra.

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Mouzos, J. (2000). Mass and serial murders in Australia. In J. Mouzos (Ed.), *Homicidal encounters: A study of homicide in Australia, 1989-1999*. Australian Institute of Criminology: Canberra.

New Zealand Police. (2010). Firearms approved for use in New Zealand. <http://www.police.govt.nz/service/firearms/approved.html>.

Statistics New Zealand (2008). Key Labour Force Measures. Customized data series, retrieved December 3, 2008.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submissions, and for taking the time to consider my arguments. I am contactable should any further clarification is required.

Because I hold a pistol licence Victoria police have conducted checks on my background, my past and current history and I am certain they continue to monitor us all through their intelligence network to ensure that should I commit any slight indiscretion I am sought out and my situation examined.

Importantly should some individual for reasons best known to themselves make a false claim against my character or another shooters, the police immediately and wrongly act on this information and do not allow the other person to correct false or misleading information, this we at my own expense need to bring to a higher body. There have in past years been many a false claim by an angry partner to make false claim just to get even, this occurs because a female is believed in the report and no making a false claim is ever prosecuted when these false claims are discovered.

AS an aside, when I first began training females to shoot pistols, some actually indicated that they were apprehensive about learning, when asked why all stated that they were scared of pistols, both revolvers and semi-automatics. When I explained to them they could be injured or worse just as quickly by a male wielding a baseball bat, or knife, they all agree, also if they looked at pistols ONLY as a sporting implement, like a tennis racket or golf club they could understand better, they all then continue on with learning and now participate in our sport and enjoy the challenges our sport offers. Firearms are not the source of all evil even if some in the community wish to portray them as such, they are ill informed and watch too much television and take what they see as fact. Again, the banning or further restrictions on firearm owners impacts only law abiding citizens who love their collective sport, and do not wish to participate in knitting or badminton, allow us our sport with less restrictions and encourage all in our society to find a sport or interest that suits them, and leave all perceived issues with firearms in the dark ages where they belong.

Yours Sincerely,

Susan West

A 3D gun ... made off the internet with a 3D printer is the size of a small handgun and weighs just 300 grams and is also undetectable with scanners. *Source:* News Limited; 8 July 2014



This firearm as a single shot is still useless without the ammunition required, ammunition will show up on scanners. Possibly stricter controls on ammunition may be an option, then again like illegal firearm imports, ammunition usually goes with the firearm from overseas. Possibly also information as to reliability, possibility of the 3D exploding in a users/persons face and other information obtained from experts, like minimum size criteria before too much hysteria is generated.