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*- for immediate release*

## **‘New Level’ of gun debate hits 100 day mark**

It may be only 100 days old today, but the Combined Firearms Council of Victoria (CFCV) has already created political history several times over.

The CFCV has united Victoria's major shooting organisations as a single political voice on firearms issue - something never seen in Australia before - in response to the Federal Governments move to ban certain handguns after the shootings at Monash University.

“The group came to the public's attention during the state election, when it ran full page advertisements in the major metropolitan papers advising shooters how to vote to protect their interests, said the CFCV’s Chairperson, Sebastian Ziccone,

"It was an astonishing achievement to bring the shooting organisations together in this way in such a short period of time. This has taken the gun debate to a whole new level"

Ziccone said that a lack of a consultative process to drive firearm policy over the past few years has sharpened the focus of shooting organisations.

“This is why the CFCV exists today. We're actually trying to help the Government improve the way it develops firearm policies but they choose not to listen" he said.

"All we want to do is ensure that firearm policies become based on rational debate and not end up with outcomes which fail to achieve their objectives. For example, if the Federal Government had listened to shooters in 1996 when it decided to repeal licence probationary periods, the shootings at Monash University would not have occurred."

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Mr Ziccone said that the CFCV's election campaign helped the National Party retain party status by picking up another seat, and assisted other candidates win their seats despite the landslide victory to Labor.

The group attained prominence across the electronic and print media on the handgun and duck hunting issues.

It recently established a staffed office and is aiming for the next Federal election.

"Our strategy at the recent state election was a political first as it involved all of the major shooting groups. We polled various candidates and used that to work out a strategy that was candidate rather than party specific. I don't recall seeing this type of approach being used anywhere in Australia before," he said.

"I don't think anybody can be anything but impressed with the distance we have come in such a short period of time," he said.

The CFCV turns 100 days old today [*3 February 2003*].

For more information: Sebastian Ziccone, Chairperson, CFCV, ph [edited]

**Background:**

The CFCV was formed on 26 October 2002. It's membership includes gun dealers, hunting groups, target shooters and others.

The key milestones have been:

1. Mailouts to tens of thousands of shooters in the lead up to the state election
2. Questionnaire to all state election candidates polling them on firearm issues (to determine support and preferences)
3. Full page ads in the major metro papers on how to vote (value of ads approx \$93K)

4. Having a material impact in some seats despite the landslide, including assisting enabling the National Party to retain party status by actually picking up a seat (some statistical analysis has been conducted which suggests a material impact)

5. Letters to the editor and an opinion article published in the Herald Sun

6. Front page recognition as well as radio and TV interviews

7. Establishment of an office,

8. impending appointment of an Executive Officer and

9. working towards the Federal election

... all within the first 100 days.