



Media Release – 17 September 2003 Contact: Sebastian Ziccone – [edited]

SHOOTERS SLAM DELAYS AS 'TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE'

Shooters have described delays at the handgun buyback are forcing shooters to wait up to ten hours in the wet and cold to surrender banned handguns, as totally unreasonable.

The Combined Firearms Council of Victoria has already asked the State Ombudsman to investigate the treatment of shooters at the first handgun buyback at Geelong in August, where shooters were forced to wait until 4am to be processed.

CFCV President, Sebastian Ziccone said making shooters wait for up to ten hours at the most recent buyback in Bendigo, was reprehensible, and a form of abuse.

"Many shooters are being forced to return home with guns that are now banned," he said.

Some in buyback queues were elderly and frail, and there have been serious health, safety and security concerns.

Mr Ziccone rejected claims that shooters have 'rushed' the buyback centres.

"The problem was not the number of shooters there, but the time it is taking to process them. I understand people that are travelling the longest distances are being told they will have to wait the longest, as the police are giving priority to processing local shooters." he said.

"Making people wait in the cold and wet for this long is totally unacceptable. Shooters have rapidly lost confidence in a process that the Government had over six months to get right."

"The only way to shorten the wait under these circumstances is to ask shooters not to turn up – which obviously beats the purpose of having a buyback."

Mr Ziccone said he asked the Ombudsman to direct Police to guarantee that handgun owners be processed within 15 minutes of arrival at a buyback centre after the Geelong buyback – or postpone the buyback.

"I'm very disappointed the Ombudsman has not yet stepped in to fix this up. He had the opportunity to do this, but we haven't seen any action on this yet," he said.

"Postponing the buyback would create issues under the Firearms Act, but nothing that cannot be fixed in the Spring Session of Parliament," he said.

For more information, phone Sebastian Ziccone, [edited]