



Media Release – 2 December 2003 Contact: Sebastian Ziccone

TIME RUNNING OUT ON HANDGUN BUYBACK

Handgun owners unable to turn in banned handguns by December 31 should not face prosecution, according to a key lobby group.

Combined Firearms Council of Victoria President, Sebastian Ziccone, said the handgun buyback has been plagued with so many problems, it would be unreasonable to prosecute owners who were unable to comply with the buyback program.

"Politicians have used Parliament to illustrate the problems in following the Government's instructions," he said.

National Party Gippsland MP, Peter Hall, told Parliament about a constituent who travelled from Gippsland to a gun buyback centre in Melbourne advertised as being open between 9am and 4pm, only to arrive to find it closed at 1pm.

"One member of my own organisation has told me how he was turned back from buyback centres twice," Mr Ziccone said.

Reports of long queues also continue to plague the buyback program.

"Queues at some centres were longer than others. Up to 12 hours in some cases. These are not teething problems, but systemic planning problems by a Government wanting to do the buyback on the cheap", Mr Ziccone said.

He said the buyback should be extended past 31 December.

Another National Party MP, Bill Sykes, told Parliament how the buyback was causing the international shooting sports to be decimated due to the extent of the buyback.

Mr Ziccone said that up to half the number of pistol clubs involved in international competition could disappear.

Representation at the Olympic and Commonwealth Games would also suffer because of the new gun laws.

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