

Station: 4BC Date: 13/04/2004

Program: CHRIS ADAMS Time: 03:42 PM

Compere: CHRIS ADAMS Summary ID: B00013647968

Item: THE HANDGUN BUYBACK SCHEME HAS COST TAXPAYERS \$60M. IN THE LAST THREE YEARS OVER 100,000 GUNS HAVE BEEN IMPORTED INTO THE COUNTRY. INTERVIEW: DR JANINE BAKER, PRESIDENT, SPORTING SHOOTERS ASSOCIATION, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

CHRIS ADAMS: Whether you support the initiative of various governments to get rid of handguns or not, the information that's come to light today is clearly bizarre. Probably shows a huge waste of taxpayers money going on as well. Now a representative of sporting shooters groups have told me this before, but it's always been on suspicion, but now someone has been able to identify the number of weapons being bought into the country, and it appears to be more than we've collected in buyback schemes. Now the handgun buyback has so far cost us about \$60 million, sixty million. It's a lot of money. And yet in the last three years over 100,000 guns have been imported. So, have we spent \$60 million to get the weapons off some people only to have probably more imported? Something is very wrong somewhere.

Doctor Janine Baker is the President of the Sporting Shooters Association in South Australia. She's on the line. Hello Janine.

JANINE BAKER: Good afternoon, Chris. How are you?

ADAMS: I'm very well, thanks. This sounds very, very bizarre. Can I start with Port Arthur, has there been any impact on gun crime since the buyback scheme that followed that?

BAKER: No, that's something that we've been monitoring very closely, and there has been no noticeable impact. There was a decreasing trend in firearm misuse and crime well before Port Arthur, and that sort of decrease continued its same steady decrease.

ADAMS: All right. Now I just raised that because I wanted to know whether there had been any effect of that buyback. But what about the... since the handgun buyback?

BAKER: Well it would be a bit early to see any of the figures obviously, but we're not anticipating any decrease in handgun misuse because it's already been shown by the Australian Institute of Criminology that it's not the licensed firearms owners that are causing the crime. And they only bought back handguns from licensed firearms owners in this buyback.

ADAMS: Righto. So the handgun buyback has cost about sixty million so far. Do you know how much we've spent buying back weapons altogether?

BAKER: Including the Port Arthur?

ADAMS: Yeah.

BAKER: The Port Arthur... the buyback there cost around five hundred million.

ADAMS: So we're getting up toward \$600 million we've spent on this sort of thing?

BAKER: Yep, that's correct.

ADAMS: Righto. Now these weapons that are reported, and I think the initial report was in The Sydney Morning Herald maybe this morning, was it? No, The Australian newspaper, I'm sorry. Says that 100,000 guns have come in the last three years. What sort of weapons are they?

BAKER: They would be a mix of everything from shotguns, rifles, through to the handguns, and it would probably... oh well, in fact, it does include weapons that go to the police. And I know, for example, the Western Australian police have recently replaced their old police revolvers with the brand new Glock.

ADAMS: Righto. But I mean how many of the \$100,000 [sic] would have gone to, say, the military or police or security firms?

BAKER: In the buyback?

ADAMS: No, of the 100,000 that have been imported?

BAKER: Okay. Well that's a figure that I don't have in front of me. I only know that around 4,000 of those went to the Western Australian police. So, your guess is as good as mine.

ADAMS: [Laughs] I get the impression out of this that what's been happening is we've been spending a hell of a lot of money to buyback some guns, while a hell of a lot of others have just been simply flooding in with no control.

BAKER: Well the ones that are coming in through the Customs imports are coming in with controls. We know where they go to. If they go to civilians, they're going to licensed firearms owners who have undergone police checks.

ADAMS: Righto.

BAKER: The problem that we have are those ones that we don't know anything about that are being smuggled in. And those are the ones that are a real concern to us in Sporting Shooters, because they will not be registered, they will not belong to licensed firearms owners and they will never be traceable.

ADAMS: It just seems to me that the spiel that was put out was by the government, and I know that a lot of people in your organisation didn't agree with it. But the spiel was, if you reduce the number of guns in the community per se, and you spend a lot of money to do that, then gradually the presence of weapons in the community has got to diminish. But it seems that we took that argument and now we're letting all these weapons in anyway.

BAKER: Well, I guess that argument can always be countered by the existing facts that we know for a fact that crime doesn't decrease, homicides don't decrease and suicides don't decrease merely because you take firearms out of circulation. People resort to other ways, other weapons. So the talk about taking handguns or firearms out of the community may well be valid. You could use the same argument for cars, if you take all the cars off the road, you're not going to have car deaths.

ADAMS: All right. And we can probably argue back and forwards all day about this.

BAKER: That's right.

ADAMS: But I suppose the key question in relation to this is, have we really done anything by having the buyback scheme? Has it achieved anything in your view at all?

BAKER: Nothing at all. And the key question for me is, could we not have invested that money in police on the ground fighting crime, could we have not had invested that money in hospitals saving lives? There comes to a point where you have to look very closely at gun control and the methods that you're using. And the answer that I have in my mind is that buying back firearms from people who have undergone checks by the police to prove that they're fit and proper to hold a firearms licence does not solve the problems...

ADAMS: All right. Seems like...

BAKER: [Inaudible].

ADAMS: Yeah, okay. Good to talk to you.

BAKER: Okay.

ADAMS: Appreciate your time, thank you.

BAKER: Thank you.

ADAMS: Doctor Janine Baker, the President of the Sporting Shooters Association in South Australia. Yeah, and it just seems to me to be hellishly confusing. Here we are bringing in all these guns, and we're spending a fortune to try [laughs] and get rid of them on the other hand.