



# Spring Edition

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## Amendments to the Firearms Act

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### Special points of interest:

- Shooters support most of the amendments to the Firearms Act currently before parliament.
- The recent shooting in Melbourne enabled us to comment on the black market
- Consultants tasked with enabling the interstate firearm registries to talk with each other, have produced a business case without important costings.
- A Liberal MP from Sydney has called for a change in laws relating to gunshops.
- Your ongoing support is important—you protect your sport is by shopping at Ritchies IGA or donating directly.



Amendments to the Firearms Act are currently in Parliament.

The amendments will address a number of anomalies and other matters, including:

- reporting requirements for handgun target shooting and approved handgun target shooting clubs;
- firearms held by the security industry;
- storage standards for antique firearms;
- streamlining of firearm collector licences;
- better access to Crown land for hunting;
- investigation, seizure and forfeiture of firearms and silencers;
- recognition of certain interstate firearms licences and permits; and
- the regulation of imitation firearms.

There are some provisions which we object to and others which we think could be supported with some further work.

However the majority of amendments have shooter support, and it is pleasing to see this.

In early September, The Nationals spokesperson for police, Dr Bill Sykes, issued a press release noting that shooters 'generally support' the amendments and the importance of the Firearms Consultative Committee process. He said:

*"This is a pleasing change from bygone times when the Government imposed unreasonably strict and often impractical constraints on legal firearm owners without any consultation."*


Among the amendments is a provision allowing hunters to cross Crown Land on their way to hunt on other land. The usual rules of trespass will still apply. However the amendment, which was an election commitment of the ALP, will benefit hunters who have had difficulty passing through Crown Land.

The amendments also provide for the 'cascading' of collectors

licences so that multiple licences will not be needed (the highest category will automatically cover lower category licences).

In addition to the amendments, the CFCV has raised additional matters, including:

- pulling back on the *National Handgun Control Agreement* because of its adverse impact on handgun shooting clubs and international competition;
- amending the definition of Prohibited Person to exclude where 'no conviction' may be recorded;
- extending the immunity available to firearm clubs who inform the Chief Commissioner of a persons unsuitability to hold a license, to firearm dealers and officers of approved incorporated associations; and
- the introduction of automatic renewals of licences, as currently each 'renewal' is in fact a new and separate licence.



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## Melbourne shootings reignites gun debate

**You may recall one of the election commitments provided to shooters by the ALP at the 2006 Victorian State Election was the establishment of a Firearms Safety Foundation.**

**The funding commitment was for \$400,000 over four years, and was included in this year's state budget.**

**The intention of the program is to help broaden the reach of the safety messages put out by the major shooting organisations, to the broader community.**

**Not just shooters, but others who come into contact with firearms such as their families.**

**This includes making sure that firearms are stored correctly.**

**The State Government has been working to set the foundation up with an incorporated association, and a funding deed.**

**Details of this are still being worked up, but the foundation is beginning to take shape.**

**The steering committee, which includes a number of key CFCV people who were able to secure the election commitments, is in the process of developing advice for the government on the inaugural committee for the foundation.**

The triple shooting in Melbourne in June by a member of the Hells Angels in which a lawyer was killed, sparked the debate on handguns yet again.

On the day of the shooting, the Prime Minister floated the possibility of 'talking' with the state premiers about further 'strengthening' of our current laws.

As noted by the CFCV back then, we took that as being code for "*I haven't got enough information about today's shooting to hang the shooters again just yet*".

As it turned out, the gun was sourced from the black market and the political desire to have another crack at shooters fell away. However media interest in the issue lingered on for a few more days.

## The National Firearms Flop

The Federal Government's Attorney General Department is spearheading a project to track firearms, from birth to death.

In May 2007, the project's manager gave the Victorian Firearms Consultative Committee an overview of the National Firearms Management Scheme (NFMS) which was originally touted to cost about \$17m.

Such a system could benefit shooters who travel or move interstate, as the various firearm registries currently can't talk with each other!

Those at the FCC who we have spoken with were briefed on the project, but it was immediately obvious that the scope and benefit of the project lacked important detail—such as cost.

While it was ok for a concept paper, we understand that our name was been used as 'supporting' the project.

As a result, the CFCV was fortunate enough to have an opinion piece published in the Herald Sun, explaining that the illegal market is often overlooked in the gun debate.

It also reminded readers just how hard it is to get a handgun shooting license.

As a consequence of this article, The Age followed up with an excellent article on the porous nature of our borders with the illicit important of illegal handguns. This led to a follow up story on the ABC's 7:30 Report on the same issue.

The anti-gun lobby got more than its fair share of coverage with its usual swag of unattributed research, but it was comforting to see the debate shift away from the legal market for a change.

Fortunately the responses by the Federal and Victorian State governments were appropriate and properly targeted.

So, what started out as being an attack on the shooting fraternity, provided us with a platform to raise awareness about the illicit trade in illegal guns.

Unfortunately it took the death of a lawyer and injuries to two others for this to happen.

While the debate had a happy ending, the event should serve as an important reminder of the need for all shooting organisations to remain politically interested, if not active.

We simply cannot afford to become politically complacent.

We support the concept, but cannot support the project until we are satisfied that it will provide a net benefit.

This includes ensuring that the data underlying it—in other words, the data being held by the various firearms registries—has integrity.

Our understanding is that there are high data error rates, so a super gateway would simply be passing 'garbage' around. The data needs to be cleaned first.

We would also want to understand who is expected to pay for the project.

Will it be the states, and will they seek to recover the cost from shooters?

In early July, we posted a message to that effect on our website and this sent a number of people into orbit.

NOUS, the consultants who are pushing the project, then briefed shooting organisations

in July and August.

Their analysis suggests maintains the NFMS will produce benefits.

However when you look closer, the analysis contains very little data—certainly not enough to support the business case.

We also understand the latest cost estimate of the final system being touted around is between \$75m and \$100m!

In the absence of more information, we have no option but to remain opposed to the project in its current form.

Without hard data, the project does not deserve to be supported.

That's a shame, because we support the original concept of the NFMS, as it will help shooters move across state borders by enabling the registries to talk with each other.

## Liberal sparks gunshop furor

A few weeks ago, a Liberal local member in NSW thought he was on top of a local issue when he spoke out against his local council's decision to allow a gun shop to open in a retail area.

The Ku-ring-gai Council had earlier approved the opening of a "sporting goods" shop in Babbage Road Roseville Chase

Jonathan O'Dea, Member for Davidson, not only opposed it but made it a State issue on his website, by stating:

*"I have also written to the NSW Police Minister requesting that the NSW Government review the whole firearms dealer licensing issue and introduce serious safeguards to protect residential areas from gun shops."*

Suddenly a local issue became a State issue.

It was more than that though, because the potential existed for this to affect gunshops nationally if the precedent had been set in our largest state.

## Don't get caught with unsafe storage!

The safe storage of firearms is as every bit as important as the use.

In fact it is arguably more important because people who shouldn't have access to firearms, are more likely to misuse them. That's also how accidents happen, sometimes with tragic consequences.

As a condition of your license, the police have the right to inspect your storage. They cannot just barge in, but with the appropriate arrangements, should given every courtesy they need to do their job.

This was exacerbated by a provocative survey he put out which some say is 'push polling'. Three of the questions were:

*Has the gunshop approval heightened fears for your personal safety?*

*Should there be an overhaul of gun dealership laws in NSW?*

*Do you believe there are adequate rules governing the location of gun shops?*

The Shooters Party in NSW jumped on the issue and O'Dea later reported on his website that he had been 'overwhelmed' by gun owners supportive of the gun shop—being run by a family man trying to earn a living.

The NSW Greens also bought into the debate, guaranteeing this will be slugged out in the NSW Parliament.

They said:

*"Selling weapons in neighbourhoods with child-care facilities, primary schools and other vulnerable community facilities is an invitation to disaster."*

It is your responsibility to make sure you keep your firearms and ammunition safely stored away.

This includes the keys!

If your family knows where your safe keys are, and they do not hold firearm licenses, then you could find yourself in trouble with the law if the police visit your home to conduct an inspection.

*"Do you know where the keys are?"* is all the police need to ask your other half or kids, to get you in trouble.

It's the same with combination locks—make sure combinations

*"Police checks on gun licences are not up to the task of stopping individuals getting their hands on weapons and inflicting horrendous violence against children."*

*"Gun shops also damage the amenity of shopping centres by creating a climate of fear and apprehension, especially amongst the elderly."*

Remember this next time you are tempted to vote Green ....

A public meeting was later held where a strong contingent of shooters to represented their side of the story.

If you would like to put your view to Mr O'Dea of what your view of his opinion is, please feel free to do so.

O'Dea's email address is: davidson@parliament.nsw.gov.au

His office number is (02) 9880 7400 and fax number is (02) 9880 7488.

Don't forget to also let your local member of parliament know what you think of this, even though this happened in another state.

Also don't forget—be firm, but polite ...

are known only by those who need to know.

So, if you don't keep your keys with you all the time, don't leave them where other people can find them.

Otherwise you could find yourself on charges, and might even become a prohibited person.

This could result in a fine, the loss of your license and your firearms.

Lock them up safely!

The Firearms Safety Foundation will be promoting the importance of safe storage.

**The recent Shot Expo in Melbourne was truly fantastic. It was very well attended beyond expectations.**

**.. but where was the Licensing Services Division of the Victoria Police?**

**Normally they have a presence at gun shows to handle enquiries and issue permits to acquire.**

**We would have hoped they would have had a presence at the largest firearm Expo in the state, but they weren't anywhere to be seen.**

**However to their credit, they were at the recent Melbourne Arms & Militaria Fair at Altona North.**

**Join CFCV's email list by**

**going to it's website at**

**[www.cfcv.org.au](http://www.cfcv.org.au).**

**It's free !**

**The sudden resignations of Steve Bracks as Premier and John Thwaites as his deputy had no real impact on the shooting sports.**

**Police Minister, Bob Cameron held onto his role, and this ensure the firearms part of his portfolio will continue to be managed the stable and sensible way we have become used to.**

**We are pleased to see that important advisers appear to have survived the shakeup.**

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### *Protecting your sport*

**In June, the Herald Sun ran a story where a judge accepted 'self defence' as a reason to hold an illegally sawn off shotgun purchased on the black market.**

**This is despite section 1 of the Firearms Act prohibiting self defence as a reason, and the dedication of valuable police resources to administering the Act.**

**Ramze Zayat, 28, was sentenced to six months after pleading guilty in the County Court to being a prohibited person in possession of an unregistered firearm.**

**Six months, when the maximum sentence for the offence is 15 years. You really have to wonder ...**

Member organisations of the CFCV are:

- Field & Game Australia
- Firearm Traders Association
- IPSC
- Sporting Shooters Association of Australia
- Target Rifle Victoria
- Victorian Amateur Pistol Association
- Victorian Clay Target Association
- Victorian Rifle Association
- Vintagers (Order of Edwardian Gunners) Inc

**Check our website -  
[www.cfcv.org.au](http://www.cfcv.org.au)**

## Top Cop calls for complete gun ban

The Herald Sun recently carried a story on the 20th anniversary of the Hoddle Street shooting.

It featured comments from Gun Control Australia's John Crook.

However it wasn't Crook's comments which caught our attention.

Rather it was the comments made by Superintendent Graham Kent to the Herald Sun.

Supt Kent called for a blanket ban on all firearms.

Supt Kent, who works at the Victoria Police Academy, went further by saying the ban should include guns carried by police.

What he didn't call for was a ban on criminals carrying guns. Huh?

Upper House MP, Bernie Finn then came to the rescue.

In Parliament, he said:

*"I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the other place.*

*Members of this house would be aware of my concerns about the direction the police force in Victoria is taking under the present chief commissioner.*

*However, they will be relieved to learn that tonight I am not asking the minister to remove the chief commissioner from her position — although if the minister wishes to do that, I certainly will not oppose him.*

*My concern is in regard to comments that have come to my attention after being reported in the online edition of the Herald Sun yesterday.*

*They are comments by Superintendent Graham Kent of the Victoria Police Academy.*

*Superintendent Kent was one of two police officers who spent some hours interviewing Julian Knight soon after his appalling crime some 20 years ago.*

*I can certainly understand how Superintendent Kent must have been affected by that and I can understand that that effect would be colouring his thinking today.*

*My concern is regarding his comments when he said that there should be a complete ban on all guns in the community, including guns carried by police.*

*He said:*

*If I had a magic wand, if I was Premier for a day, I would have a total prohibition on guns. Total prohibition, including disarming the police force ...*

*Apart from the fact that there are many legitimate and genuine shooters in our community who I think have borne a great burden over the last 20 years as a result of the acts of some very evil individuals, the suggestion that our police force be disarmed is something that should concern us all."*

He went on to seek the Minister's assurance that the policy espoused by Supt Kent is never implemented.

The CFCV supported Mr Finn at the last State election.

Now you know why.

## Your money at work

Readers will be aware that we participate in the Ritchies IGA scheme—where 1% of what you spend on your weekly shopping can go to supporting your sport via the CFCV.

The really good news is that the same applies to purchases at their grog shop!

However this only applies to Ritchies IGAs—not other IGA supermarkets.

Donations via this scheme have been steadily increasing to the point where it is paying for our website and newsletters.

However if you aren't near a Ritchies IGA, you can still help out if you wish to make a donation.

Just pop your donation in the mail to us at the address provided above payable to the "Combined Firearms Council of Victoria".

Elections cost big money, particularly when it comes to advertising, such as the full page ads we run in major newspapers.

We also helped bankroll a number of television ads in regional areas warning people of the dangers of voting Green.

That was part of our budget for the election of over \$100,000 which was only made possible through the generosity of the member organisations and a number of individuals.

The result is that we have fewer Greens in Parliament than would have otherwise been the case—and their policy on hunting is to ban it.

Any contribution you can make now will help us as we build up towards the next State election, in 2010.

Also let us know if you want to help us out on polling day.