



Winter Edition

Aug 2005

Holding tripped up

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The re-establishment of the Firearms Consultative Committee earlier this year came after years of battle with the government following a promise by Premier Steve Bracks to re-establish it during the 1999 Victorian state election.

The first meeting of the FCC was held on 29 June this year, and included representatives from:

- Australian Security Industry
- Field and Game Australia,
- Firearm Traders Association
- Law Institute of Vic,
- Melb Uni (Criminology)
- Royal College of Surgeons,
- Shooting Sports Council Vic
- Sporting Shooters Assn Vic,
- Target Rifle Victoria
- The Police Association
- Vic Amateur Pistol Assn
- Victorian Clay Target Assn,
- Vic Farmers Federation

The CFCV did not want to be included in the FCC given its political charter.

Unfortunately, just eleven days after the first meeting of the FCC, the State Government issued a press release announcing 'new laws' to effectively ban pump-action and lever action centre fire rifles *capable of being fitted* with five or more shot detachable magazines, and pump-action, lever-action and bolt-action rimfire rifles *capable of being fitted* with a 15 or more shot detachable magazine.

This could result in another buyback for shooters - or a 'surrender' without compensation.

Lesser restrictions had been floated only as a possibility in a 'review paper' circulated at the meeting. The press release therefore not only pre-empted the outcome of the consultative process, but went further than what is contained in the 'review paper' (which contemplated banning magazines *greater than* 15 shots— not magazines with 15 *or more*).

The State Government's announcement also cuts across a commitment in the 'review paper' prepared by the Minister's own Department, that it would refer any changes to the Firearms Act to the FCC *before* recommendations were made to Government.

Although the Minister's media release did not commit to specific changes, that was not the impression given in subsequent newspaper and TV articles.

The CFCV is curious to understand why the Government suddenly decided to appear to bypass the consultative process it agreed to set up.

Special points of interest:

- Government's media gaff leaves shooters high and dry.
- Shopping at the right supermarkets can save your sport
- A new political party representing regional interests is being formed.
- Victoria Police press on with their audit of every privately held firearm.



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Just fill out an Application Form at a Ritchies IGA Supermarket, and enter this beneficiary number - **91698**. Each time you shop there, just present your card when paying and 1% will automatically go the CFCV. It's that simple.

Ritchies IGA Supermarkets can be found at:

Aspendale Gardens, Balnarring, Berwick, Camperdown, Cobden, Cobram, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Diamond Creek, Dromana East, Bentleigh, Emerald, Frankston, Hastings, Maffra, Langwarrin, Mt Eliza, Mt Waverley, Narre Warren, Pakenham, Ringwood Nth, Rosebud, Sale, Seaford, Shepparton, Somerville, Timboon, Tower Hill, Wantirna, Wonthaggi, Yarrowonga

Victoria Police push ahead on firearm audit

The Licensing Services Division of Victoria Police seems intent on proceeding with a plan to conduct inspections of the storage and firearm of every licensed firearm user in Victoria.

The audit will cost the taxpayer between \$20—50m and yet the police don't exactly have a clean record themselves.

Queensland police in Qld 'misplaced' a Heckler and Koch MP5 submachine gun and later lost a pistol in a home burglary. It was stolen with a uniform—begging the question of how it was stored in the first place.

Then there is the story of the loss of ammunition from the back of a police vehicle in Victoria.

The other thing that we have taken issue with, is the justification for the audit. This is vague at best, and misleading at worst.

We have no problem with a process to confirm shooters have appropriate storage, but the audit exceeds the bounds of reasonableness given the 'routine' inspections which take place as owners purchase firearms.

The Victoria Police have cited the following as 'benefits' of the audit (with our comments in *italics*):

1. Providing a safer Victorian community by ensuring compliance with the firearm storage legislation

(Inspections already occur after the purchase of the first and 14th firearms)

2. Reducing the incidence of firearm theft.
(LSD previously advised that the number of firearms being stolen was falling)

3. Increasing the level of "police – community liaison".
(LSD has not asked shooting organizations to publish information relevant to their concerns for their members. Most, if not all shooting organizations would have been happy to do this free of charge if invited to.)

4. Identifying if there is a need to educate the shooting community in relation to firearm storage requirements
(The Government recently rejected a proposal by shooting organisations to establish a firearms safety and education foundation to improve awareness of firearm safety issues)

5. Reducing the incidence of suicide by firearm
(LSD has provided no data to support this contention)

This is a crude attack on licensed shooters who are often regarded as a 'soft' targets in the pursuit of 'empire building' by the LSD.

The CFCV advises shooters who are asked to make their firearms and storage available for inspection, (as the police have the legal right to do this), and not to argue or blame it on the police officer who is only doing his or her job.

In fact, we would expect that officers conducting the audit, will see it as an imposition on their already significant workload.

We do however **strongly** advise you to fax, call, email or visit **to your local MP to complain about this vindictive policy.**

This brings us to another point. It would seem that the Licensing Services Division has idle time and resources on its hands and we wonder if an 'efficiency review' - similar to that conducted of the state's energy safety regulators, is now due.

We can't help but notice that the Licensing Services Division of the Victoria Police rakes in \$8m in fees, and returns nothing to the shooting community in terms of 'positive' initiatives, as it does with road, water, boating and other areas of community safety.

An efficiency review would provide the shooting community with some transparency of the cost of running an 'efficient' registration system.

A review may enable efficiency gains which can be used for 'positive' initiatives such as a firearm safety and education foundation, or be returned to shooters through lower fees.

Don't hold your breath though...



The firearm audit will deter new people from entering the shooting sports.

The audit will cost the taxpayer at least \$20m and divert scarce resources from community policing.



The FCC was established by Police Minister, Tim Holding (above).

Unfortunately the State Government bypassed the FCC just eleven days after it was set up by announcing sweeping bans on rimfire and centrefire rifles "capable of being fitted" with high capacity magazines.

Shooters support cattlemen's rally

The Bracks Government's decision to ban cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park created a revolt by country Victorians who have had enough of the way they have been treated.

The rally was therefore not just about Alpine grazing.

Shooting organizations marched alongside the cattlemen and other organizations such as four wheel drivers,

bush users, trail riders and even a fire brigade—to let the government know what they thought about the greening of Victorian politics.



Feathers fly in duck hunting petition

The RSPCA used its regular newsletter to have a grizzle at shooting organizations for the removal of one of its directors.

The CFCV previously complained to the Ombudsman that Dr Robert Begg had a conflict of interest given his 'day job' in the Department of Sustainability and Environment advising government on fauna issues such as duck hunting, which the organization he was a director of, opposed.

He resigned from the board of the RSPCA after a long investigation by the Ombudsman.

In one of its editions, it claimed shooting organizations were hypocritical for taking a stance on "perceptions" of conflict of interest.

The RSPCA also used the newsletter to set up a petition for 20,000 signatures calling for the State Government to ban duck shooting.

A later edition suggested that less than one third of the target number had been reached.

However, there is no reason to suggest that they are about to give up. They have campaigned on this issue many times before, and will no doubt continue to push

their view.

Meanwhile, the Ballarat Organisation for Animal Rights was reported on Yahoo! News as having dumped a bag of rubbish allegedly collected from duck shooting wetlands, on the doorstep of Ballarat West MP Karen Overington.

The report said that the organizations president claimed that "shooters (were) putting all their rubbish around the place".

So, the response of a group supposedly interested in this issue is to dump rubbish outside an MP's office ?



At least one animal rights group has targetted ALP Member for Ballarat West, Karen Overington on the duck hunting issue.

This is in contrast with Ballarat East MP, Geoff Howard whose unfriendly position on duck hunting is well documented.

CFCV website

The CFCV website is the best way to stay in touch with what is happening to your sport on the political front.

Issues affecting your sport are regularly posted on the 'Current News' page.

We also post voting recommendations prior to state and federal elections on the site about a week before the elections.

If you have email access, why not sign up to our email list ?

This way you will stay informed on matters affecting the shooting sports including voting recommendations.

Join today by going to the website—www.cfcv.org.au—and then click on 'Join our email list'.



Join CFCV's email list by going to it's website at www.cfcv.org.au.

It's free !

Country Alliance emerges as new political force

Changes to the way the upper house of Parliament will work from the next state election next year, have had several consequences for shooters.

First, the Greens could get the balance of power which will mean they will get what they want.

This could include a permanent ban on duck and deer shooting, no more shooting ranges and so on.

However—and thirdly—a new political party called

Country Alliance has been formed in response to this.

The Victorian Electoral Commission has now published a notice of Country Alliance's application, and its President, Russell Bate, spoke about the party's profile, aims and strategy during a half hour interview with Tess Lawrence on 1179.

This party is seeking to represent a broad cross section of those who enjoy the traditional regional recreations and activities.

This include shooting, four wheel driving, fishing and businesses such as farming, agriculture and the timber industry.

You can call them on (03) 9876 9902.

Or, if you have internet access, then you might like to visit their website at www.countryalliance.org.

You can also email Country Alliance at: admin@countryalliance.org.



Country Alliance continued its recruiting drive at the Healesville Timber Festival earlier this year (where it later opened its first branch).

The Alliance will be campaigning on a range of local issues as well opposing the sale of Telstra.



COMBINED FIREARMS COUNCIL OF
VICTORIA
- THE POLITICAL VOICE OF
VICTORIA'S SHOOTING COMMUNITY

PO Box 425
Somerville Vic 3912

Phone: 0425 746 066
E-mail: admin@cfcv.org.au

Protecting your sport

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 Rifle Association
- Vintagers (Order of Edwardian Gunners) Inc

The CFCV wants your help at the next state election.

Since first forming in 2002 on the back of the handgun restrictions, we have been working to ensure that shooting organizations have an effective and long lasting presence on the political front.

We ran full page ads in The Age, Herald Sun and Weekly Times listing candidates who we supported. This got a lot of media coverage at the time.

Shooting organizations have done well to march on Parliament, but this is unlikely to be noticed by politicians whose only 'currency' is what impacts we may have at election time. This applies equally to politicians from Labor, as it does to Liberal and the National Party.

They have ALL made us line up at their buybacks—and if the ban on pump, lever and bolt action rifles that could take large capacity magazines goes ahead, then there will be another one.

Please support your sport. We are not 'pro-Labor' or 'pro-Liberal' but after a fair go for shooters.

We are interested in hearing from people who have talents they believe might be able to use, and most importantly, being able to translate that into action on election day.

A word from our President



CFCV President, Bill Paterson, says that significant progress is being made to address problems being faced by Victoria's 200,000 licensed shooters.

2005 is shaping up to be a big year for the CFCV and the shooting sports.

The work we and our member organisations did, in conjunction with the Hunting Advisory Council, ensured we again had a duck season and with reasonable bag limits.

We have established ourselves as a voice of shooting with a high pick-up rate for our press-releases and, most importantly, been a key player in the re-establishment of a Firearms Consultative Committee. The FCC is a very significant success.

This group, comprising representatives from all the major shooting organisations, plus other specialists (eg. Police Assoc., Law Institute and College of Surgeons), will advise the Police Minister (Tim Holding) on shooting issues on which he seeks advice. Importantly, they will also be able to raise issues with the Minister.

The State Government is seeking to correct some of the more glaring problems in the Firearms Act in the Spring Session of Parliament and this is the first priority for the FCC.

The CFCV, at our request, is not a member of the FCC as we did not want to compromise our ability to "kick political heads" when necessary.

Unfortunately, such a situation occurred with a fortnight of the FCC's formation when a press release was issued under the Minister's name, which appeared to state that policy decisions relating to rifles capable of taking high capacity magazines had already been made; despite these issues being included in the "discussion paper on Firearms" being reviewed by the FCC.

This was very poor timing and simply not very smart, as the release could have easily been worded in a way which would not have been contentious and, if discussed with the FCC, could have been released with their support.

This could have been a win for both the Minister and the FCC!

The good news is that the FCC Chairman, Pete Steedman appears to have rescued the situation without a loss of faith between either party.

An even bigger issue is on the horizon - the upcoming state election next year.

The redistribution of electoral boundaries in the Upper House means that there is a real risk that the Greens will get a balance-of-power. This would be a disaster for shooting but we do have the numbers to beat it.

We know the marginal seats where there is a significant number of registered shooters and will be focussing on these rather than an across-the-board approach.

Imagine if the balance of power in the Upper House was held by members sympathetic to shooters!

**Bill Paterson
President, FCV**

**Check our website -
www.cfcv.org.au**