



C.L.A.S.S.

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PRESS RELEASE: Conclusions of Gun Law Report disputed.

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The results of a recently released report into Gun Law Reform in Australia since 1996, prepared by Philip Alpers and Simon Chapman and published in Journal of Injury Prevention, have been vigorously disputed by a pro-gun activist group, whose membership includes Doctors, academics and researchers.

President of CLASS Action, Peter Whelan summarised the complaints;

“When Prime Minister John Howard forced through his Gun Control Laws, he admitted, “I can’t guarantee that these laws will prevent another mass murder.” For the Prime Minister and others, to now claim otherwise in retrospect is the height of audacity and arrogance”, commented Whelan.

Since 1996, there have been several mass murders, such as the Childers backpackers’ fire, the Snow Town murders and several cases where parents killed their children and themselves, by car exhaust.”

“The fact that those mass murders were not carried out with a firearm, makes them no less a tragedy, but this report ignores such events”, explained Whelan.

“To credit the 1996 Gun Laws with a drop in death by firearm is to blatantly ignore all the other influencing factors, which have occurred in Australia, during the past ten years!”

Whelan referred to a report issued by the Australian Institute of Criminology, (Facts and Figures 2005) which highlighted that Serious Assaults have been increasing at 6% per year, since 1995, which was FIVE TIMES the population increase! A.I.C report no. 46, Homicide Monitoring, stressed that advances in emergency medical care had helped serious assault victims who would otherwise have died.

Whelan explained that, “To claim that the gun laws saved those lives, is an insult to those in the Medical Profession, who work so hard to efficiently save the lives of victims of crime.”

“Furthermore, the OECD report 2005, found that Australia ranked number one among developed countries, in crime victimisation.

Australia now has an estimated 200,000 private security guards, most armed with handguns, on patrol at our railway stations, clubs and shopping centres. The report makes no reference to the effectiveness of those armed guards, on having reduced the likelihood of mass murders.”

Other conclusions referred to in the report are also in error, claimed Whelan.

“To say that taking a semi-automatic (multiple shot) firearm from someone intent on suicide, will somehow stop that person committing suicide, is bordering on stupidity! Firstly, suicide with a firearm involves a single shot! Secondly, a depressed, suicidal person will find another method, be it rope or car exhaust, if a firearm isn’t available.

The many reports of suicides, following the 1996/97 buy back, as gun owners witnessed their family heirlooms, or favourite shotgun crushed, are confirmed in the figures contained in the Alpers and Chapman report.

Whelan explained, “Non-firearm suicide rates increased dramatically, in the years 1997 and 1998. The rate per 100,000 pop. had been around 10.00, but in those two years it increased to 12.91 and 13.09! We would expect that those who supported the gun crushing program would spare a thought for the families of those who died so needlessly after having been accused of being criminals.”

“If the \$One Billion wasted on gun crushing had been spent on improvements in Mental Health and Suicide Prevention programs, the Australian Community would have been a lot better off”, claimed Whelan.

CLASS Action, along with other shooting groups, also disagree with the reference contained in the report to “removal of 700,000 guns”, which were destroyed during the buy back.

“Most gun owners who had to hand in an old banned, semi-automatic rabbit rifle, or fox gun, received over-valued amounts in payment. They simply used that money to buy a new gun and in many cases bought two or three new guns, so they could continue to enjoy their sport.” explained Whelan.

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