



C.L.A.S.S.

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PRESS RELEASE March 30th, 2007

New South Wales Elections: Liberals finished!

At the recent (March 24th, 2007) NSW elections, the Liberal party failed to make any significant gains against Labor. That makes it the 21st Coalition loss, in State/Territory elections since 1996.

It is clear that State Coalitions have been “on the nose”, with many believing their decline can be traced back directly to the 1996 anti-gun laws.

When John Howard forced the States to accept his ill-conceived gun bans, he said, “**I know many Australians will not agree with these laws, but they can show their contempt at the ballot box.**” That was following the Australian Police Ministers Conference in Canberra on May 10th 1996.

Because, under the Australian Constitution, Gun Laws are a State responsibility, voters did indeed show their contempt at State level. At each post-1996 State election, Coalition Governments were voted out. The NSW Labor Government even increased its majority, but later “retired” the Police Minister Paul Whelan, who had been present at the ill-fated APMC meeting on May 10th, 1996.

Efforts were made, by both Peter Debnam (NSW Liberal Leader) and Adrian Piccoli (Nationals), to come up with a policy statement in support of sports shooting and private ownership of firearms; they both addressed the 2006 AGM of Sydney Branch of Sporting Shooters Association along the lines of “...getting rid of illogical and unreasonable gun laws...” However, they did not deliver on the improvements licenced gun owners had hoped for, like getting rid of longarm registration, re-classification of pump action shotguns to the same as pump action rifles, etc.

It is well known how Queensland National Party membership dropped by 30% and funding dropped by 60%, after the 1996 gun laws. A similar result had also occurred in other States which had been held by Liberals.

Queensland Senator Barnaby Joyce made the observation on ABC Radio that “The Nationals should never have given in on gun laws”. This was further supported during a separate interview (also on ABC Radio) when Russell Cooper (former Queensland Police Minister) confirmed that “...the Howard gun laws were so unpopular that the Nationals were wiped out...”

Highly respected head of NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Dr. Don Weatherburn claimed that he could see no evidence that “Tough Gun Laws” had any effect on crime.

Similarly, a detailed, peer-reviewed analysis of Australia's 1996 gun laws published in the British Journal of Criminology (October 2006) concluded that there had been no affect on firearms-related deaths.

Another study of Australia's 1996 Gun Laws, published in "Injury Prevention" (Dec. 2006) highlighted how non-firearm suicides had increased dramatically after 1996; no doubt including people who had to hand in a treasured family heirloom to be crushed and were so distraught at being vilified, marginalized and traumatized at being treated like a potential mass murderer, by Prime Minister Howard!

When Howard forced his idea of gun control on the States in 1996, he hadn't realised there would be such a backlash. Farmers, hunters, target shooters and others who treated gun ownership as an Australian tradition and who had never committed any crime, hated being treated like criminals. Hundreds of thousands of Liberal and National Party votes were lost.

Beattie swept into Government in 1998, when a newly-formed pro-gun political party (One Nation) gained 12 seats; people voted for O.N. as a clear rejection of the gun laws. Premier Kennett was next to fall in 1999, when pro-gun Independents sided with Bracks. The "belting from the bush" they called it! Similarly, all other Liberal Premiers were subsequently rolled as each State election came around.

Even Prime Minister Howard's own electorate of Bennelong is now "marginal"!

Australians have witnessed a massive amount of taxpayer money and police time and effort wasted pursuing Howard's personal hatred of guns. This has caused considerable inconvenience and expense to those who choose to legally own a firearm, while gun crime continues unabated.

Meanwhile, other critical Government services such as hospitals, roads, dental and mental health remain starved of funding. The lack of funding in mental health is so critical that many academics are expressing concern that psychotic patients are a high risk to the community.

Not only is it appropriate to attribute the demise of the State and Territory Coalition parties to Howard's gun bans, but it is timely to revisit the National Firearms Agreement of May 10th 1996. The fact is that all the Police Ministers who signed on to the NFA, are no longer in Government; either having been voted out or (in the case of NSW) sacked.

The newly elected Canadian Government has taken steps to disband their Firearms Registry, set up in 1995, after a study found that it was of no help in preventing or solving crimes.

Gun bans, gun buy-backs and gun control, haven't worked, so it is now time for the Coalition Parties to admit it and with integrity and honesty win back hundreds of thousands of lost votes.

For further information, please contact:

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