

Submission from Victorian Rifle Association (VRA)

Regarding:

The ability of Australian law enforcement authorities to eliminate gun-related violence in the community.

Terms of reference:

- a. **The estimated number, distribution and lethality of illegal guns, including both outlawed and stolen guns in Australia**

This would be a matter for the relevant authorities to estimate.

- b. **The operation and consequences of the illicit firearms trade, including both outlawed and stolen guns in Australia.**

This would also be a matter for the relevant authorities to comment on.

- c. **The adequacy of current laws and resourcing to enable law enforcement authorities to respond to technological advances in gun technology, including firearms made from parts which have been imported separately or covertly to avoid detection, and firearms made with the use of 3D printers.**

This is a question for the relevant authorities to answer.

- d. **The extent to which the number and types of guns stolen each year in Australia increase the risk posed to the safety of police and the community, including the proportion of gun-related crime involving legal firearms which are illegally held.**

The variables involved with this question render it an enigma. The last part of the question is a contradiction in terms.

- e. **The effect banning semi-automatic handguns would have on the number of illegally held firearms in Australia.**

By virtue of the definition, it would have no effect. Without proven statistics, it would be a pure guess as to how many guns of this category are illegally imported (and currently illegally held) versus how many are stolen and are then used criminally. You would simply be stopping one part of the problem – perhaps the minor part – at the expense of a sport that many law abiding Australians enjoy. The problem is not those people who do the right thing, the problem is those people that do NOT do the right thing. You would be punishing the wrong people and destroying a sport in the process for absolutely no gain.

Those organisations who control this sport will no doubt have a more relevant submission.

- f. **Stricter storage requirements and the use of electronic alarm systems for guns stored in homes.**

It would be interesting to look at the breakdown of statistics for firearms stolen that may not have been stolen had electronic alarms been fitted. Again there are so many variables with this question. Of those firearms stolen, how many were stored correctly and as per the regulations? If the answer is a small percentage, then the question is answered.

- g. **The extent to which there exists anomalies in federal, state and territory laws regarding the ownership, sale, storage and transit across state boundaries of legal firearms, and how these laws relate to one another.**

There will always be legal anomalies between the states/territories. Adding federal into the equation will only confuse the issue. Whilst there are some subtle differences, the various states/territories systems seem to be working on a standalone basis and in unison. There may well be a better system, but there may well be a worse one as well.

We will work within the system that we are required to, however if you are bent on changing something then change it for the betterment of everyone involved.

h. Any related matters

Our (VRA) sport is long range target rifle shooting and VRA cater for a wide variety of people in the community. Long range rifle shooting is one of the very few outdoor sports that our Seniors and our Disabled communities can successfully participate in. The VRA has an outstanding safety record in conducting shooting events and has been an active organisation since 1860.

As the inquiry is looking at eliminating gun related violence in the community, it is reasonable to look at just how much violence in the community is generated by people with guns in comparison to other types of weapons. Assaults form a major element of violence in the community and the following was sourced from the Victoria Police Crime Statistics Records for 2012, 2013:

Type of weapon used in assaults	Percentage of total
Rifle	1.03%
Air rifle	0.29%
Shotgun	1.73%
Handgun	2.30%
Knife/edged weapon	30.56%
Bat/Club	11.26%
Axe	1.77%
Bottle	9.77%
Other weapon	25.99%
Vehicle	7.79%
Aerosol spray	0.55%

So, just over 5% of assaults in Victoria in 2012, 2013 involved the use of a rifle, shotgun or handgun. It would appear from these statistics that gun-related assault violence in the Community is not as prevalent as some would have us believe. I agree that violence in the community is unacceptable in any form and/or using any type of weapon, however looking at the statistics it is obvious that a far greater degree of violence is committed with weapons other than rifles, shotguns or handguns.

In long range target rifle shooting, which is a Commonwealth Games sport, we use single shot rifles. The above reported figure of 1.03% for rifles would likely encompass all rifles including semi-auto and hunting rifles (magazine fed, bolt action rifles). Whilst there are no break down figures available to quantify the 1.03% into categories of rifles, I would estimate that the long range single shot rifles would form a negligible overall percentage as a weapon used in a violent act.