



Branches in all
States and Territories

Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (Inc.)

Special Projects

PO Box 3308, Manuka, ACT, 2603

Phone: (02) 6232 6798 Fax: (02) 6232 6817

International: Phone: 61-2-6232 6798 Fax: 61-2-6232 6817

Email: gf@ssaa.org.au Internet: www.ssaa.org.au

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Dear Sebastian,

The Australian (1) recently mentioned a paper presented at the 16th Annual Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology. The primary author of this paper, Professor Peter Reuter, who works at the University of Maryland, apparently suggested at the Conference presentation, that according to a rough cost-benefit calculation, The National Firearms Buyback Scheme had been a success. The subsequent media coverage given to the author's comments, and the impression promoted by the media, was indeed that The National Firearms Buyback Scheme had been cost-effective.

"The paper concludes the extra controls on licensing and training, coupled with the buy-back of self-loading and automatic rifles, had reduced the rates of all firearms crime, including murder and armed robbery." (1).

"Prime Minister John Howard says a fall in firearm related murders since 1995 justifies the Government gun buy-back scheme." (2)

The suggestion that the 1996 legislation has been in any way successful in reducing firearm-related murders is extremely doubtful. We attach two pages to this missive entitled "Firearm Related Crime - The Facts" and "Murder/Attempted Murder: offences with a *gW*" as evidence that the comments made by Professor Reuter are debatable. The first page is based on information available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) and clearly indicates that the downward trend in firearm-related homicide, commencing in 1980, did not change after the compulsory 1996 buy-back. The second page is also based on information available from the ABS and AIC and indicates the increase of firearm-related murders and attempted murders from 1993 to 2001. This increase is even after The National Firearms Buyback Scheme removed 642,000 firearms from the community.

The AIC web pages and publications support our contention that The National Firearms Buyback Scheme was not successful, with several publications pointing out that homicide has been remarkably stable over the last two decades(3) and that licensed firearms owners with registered firearms are not responsible for firearms **homicide(4)**. Ms Jenny Mouzos, a research analyst at the AIC, pointed out in "Weapon Involvement in Armed Robbery" that other weapons were being substituted for firearms (5).

The SSAA has very publicly supported elements of the National Firearms Agreement in particular the requirements for firearm security, safety training and effective vetting of licence applicants, but we reject claims that The National Firearms Buyback Scheme has been a successful policy in reducing gun-related crime.

Yours Sincerely,

Cary Fleetwood
Special Projects SSAA

1. The Australian "Gun buyback a success", by Sian Powell 0311012002
2. ABC 666 2CN (Canberra) 311012002
3. "Homicidal Encounters: Study of **homicide** in Australia 1989-1999", p9
4. "The Licensing and Registration Status of Firearms Used in Homicide" AIC Trends and Issues No. 15 1, p4
- 5. "Weapon Involvement in Armed Robbery", Executive Summary, AIC Research and Public Policy Series, No. 38

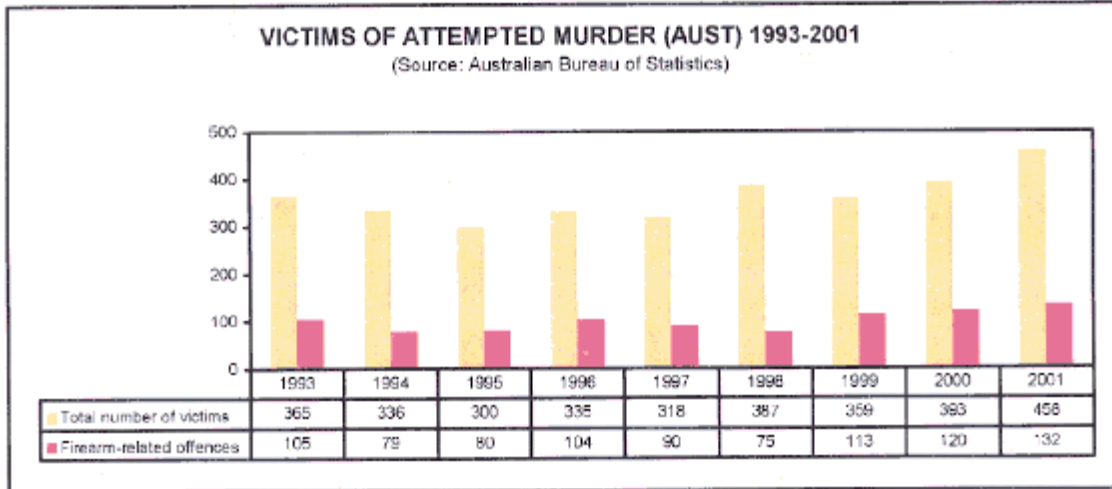
More information at: <http://www.ssaa.org.au/buybackindex.html>



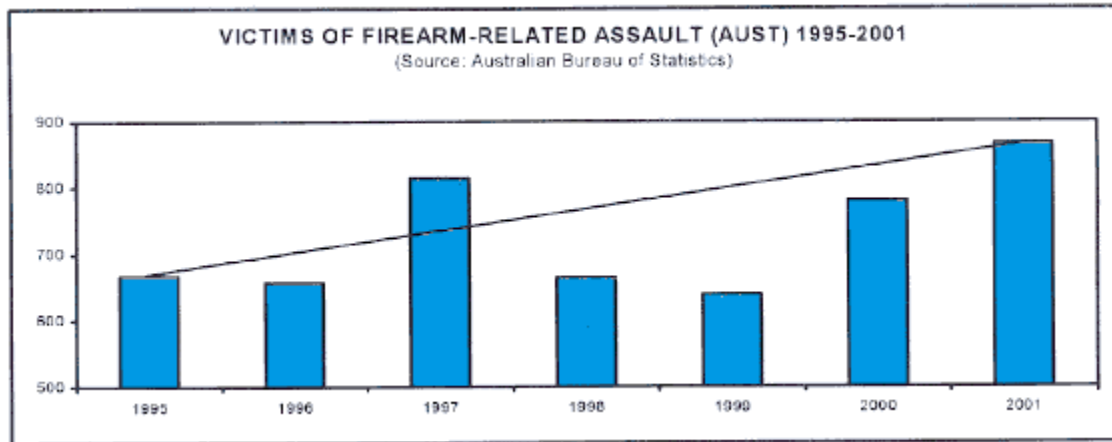
FIREARM-RELATED CRIME - THE FACTS

The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics *Recorded Crime* data shows that despite the government's \$500,000,000 'Buy-Back' scheme rates for serious firearm-related offences continue to rise.

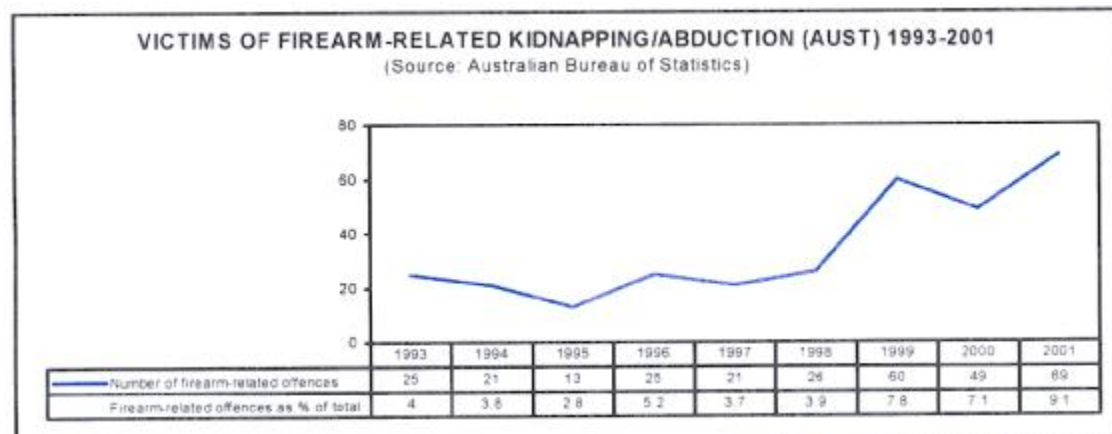
In 2001 attempted murders rose by 17% to reach a nine year high. The total number of firearm-related offences mirrored the general increase with 132 victims.

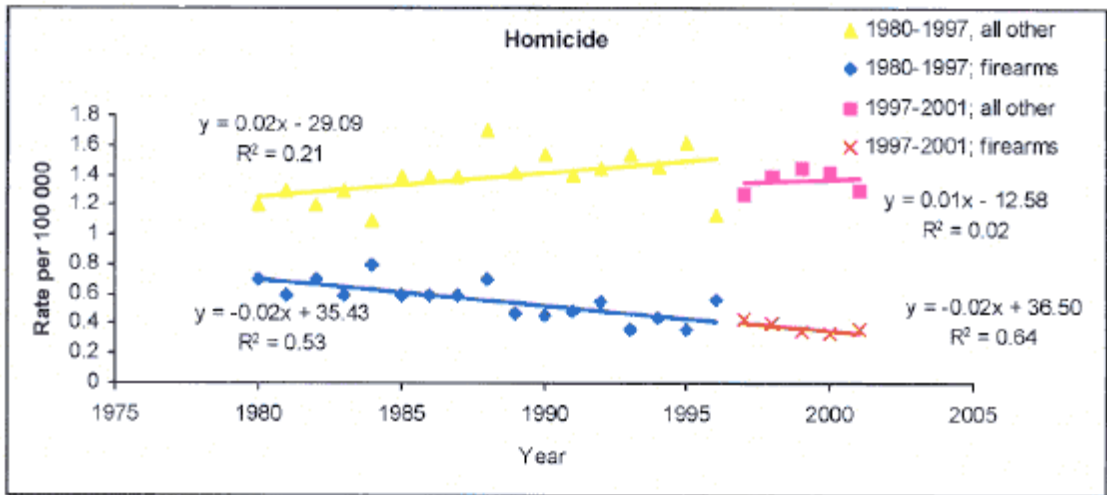


Assaults followed the upward trend with the total number of victims climbing by more than 13,000 to 151,753. The number of firearm-related offences rose from 780 to 867.



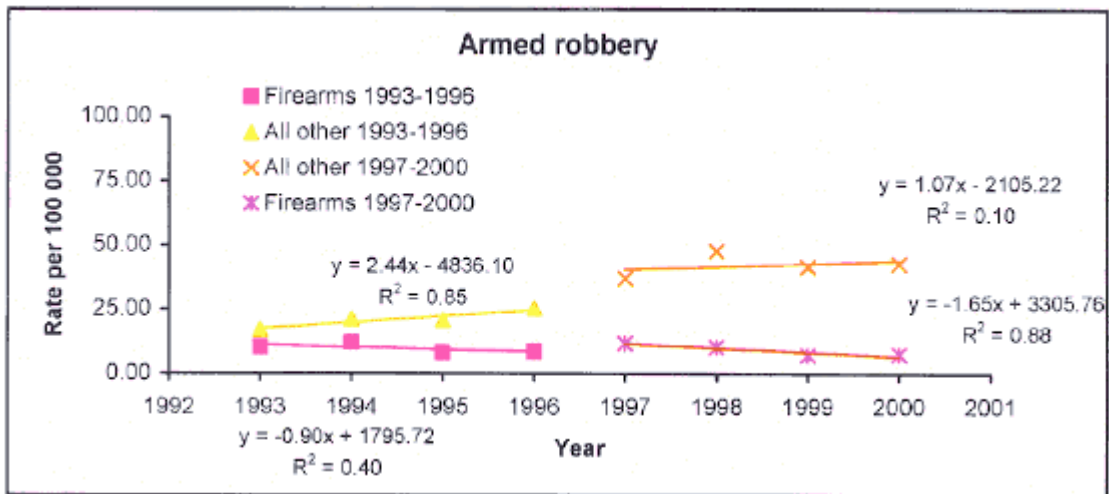
Kidnappings and abductions grew from 693 victims in 2000 to 758 in 2001. The ratio of firearm-related offences increased from 7.1% to 9.1%.





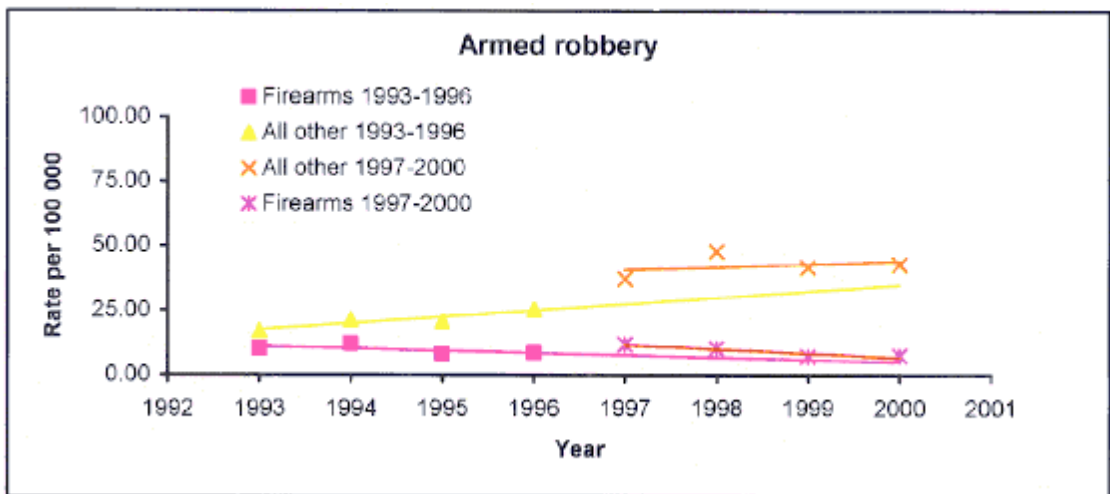
(Source: Australian Institute of Criminology and Australian Bureau of Statistics)

The downward trend in firearm-related homicide commencing in 1980 did not change after the 1996 'buy-back' legislation was introduced. In fact, the lines are indistinguishable indicating that the legislation has not had any major impact on the already preexisting pattern of firearm use in homicide.



(Source: Australian Institute of criminology)

Although firearm-related armed robbery appears to have decreased at a more rapid rate after 1996, there are only 4 points and the 1997 figures bias the result making the slope steeper than it would otherwise have been. Given the variation in the data year-to-year and extrapolating from the pre-1997 line, it is clear that the 'buy-back' legislation has not affected the trend in firearm-related robbery.



As shown by the extrapolated line (pink) the decline in firearm-related armed robbery has not been significantly altered and the trend for armed robbery by other methods has increased (compare yellow and orange lines).

Murder/Attempt Murder offences with gun

ABS Stats	Murder Guns	AttemptMdr/Guns	Total Guns usage both offences
2001	49	132	181
2000	60	120	180
1999	62	113	175
1998	54	75	129
1997*	75	90	165
1996	99	104	203
1995	58	80	138
1994	49	79	128
1993	59	105	164
			*642,000 guns removed from the community.
			Illegal gun useage in total murder/attempt murder has not declined - homicides may be down because fatal wounding has declined coupled with an improved medical response by doctors.

The number of (firearm) offences has increased even when 642,000 guns were destroyed.

<http://bmj.com/> British Medical Journal
 Doctors patch up violence statistics
 Canberra Times 2919102

The community has many reasons to thank medical science: think pencillin and polio vaccine or chemotherapy and cholestorol-lowering drugs. We are more likely to survive child birth, serious injury and sickness provided the family doctor is not Harold Shipman, from Hyde, near Manchester. It is believed Shipman (aka Dr Death) killed 215 patients during a 23 year period. The latest British Medical Journal draws a different link between medicine and murder, arguing medical advances mask an epidemic of violence by cutting the homicide rate. In the September issue Roger Dodson says murder rates would be up to five times higher without medical developments during the past 40 em. "According to new research doctors are saying the lives of thousands of victims of attack who four decades ago would have died and become murder statistics," Dodson writes. "Although the study is based on US data, the researchers say the principle applies to other countries too." The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported there were 321 murders, 301 attempted murders, 30 cases of manslaughter and 10 1, 149 assaults in 1995. A research team from Massachusetts University and Harvard Medical School finds technological developments have to significantly depress today's murder rates, converting homicides into aggravated assaults. "Without this technology we estimate there would be no less than 55,000 and as many as 115,000 homicides annually instead of an actual 15,000 to 20,000.:" the researchers say. They compare statistics on murder assault and other crimes going back to 1960 with health data and information on county medical resources including trauma centres population and geographic size. "They found that while the murder rate had changed little from a 1931 baseline figure, assaults had increased. The aggravated assault rate was by 1997 almost 750 per cent higher than the baseline figure," the British Medical Journal reports.

Improvements in medical care are linked to the significant decrease in deadly assaults. "(And) our lethality findings are strongly consistent with the hypothesis that progress in emergency medical care has converted and ever-increasing proportion of homicides into no-lethal assaults and thus, by virtue of good intentions ironically and unintentionally masked a continuing epidemic of violence in America" researchers say. "clearly, there is less perceived need to find common cause on gun control if the perception is that severely wounded victims of knives and automatics are repaired and back on the streets in no time."

