

# STEPS TO JOINING A PISTOL CLUB



While these steps described here are based on joining the Sporting Shooters Pistol Club (Vic), they can be applied to most SSAA (Vic) sub clubs and are typical of most pistol clubs in Australia. The major differences between clubs will be the fee structures as many of the requirements are set by Government regulation.

## **Step 1: Visit a club and try out the sport.**

Victorian Government regulations allow you to visit a Pistol Club and try handgun shooting under the supervision of a licensed shooter (usually a qualified Range Officer) a maximum of 3 times. You will be required to fill out a Police form stating that you are not a 'Prohibited Person' and that you have not done this twice before (making 3 total visits). The form, 'Notification of Receiving Instruction' is available either at the Victorian Police web site [www.police.vic.gov.au](http://www.police.vic.gov.au) or on the SSPC web site at [www.ssaavic.com.au/sspc](http://www.ssaavic.com.au/sspc) (look under Forms & Files) or you should be able to obtain a copy at the range on the day. You should have your drivers license and medicare card for identification purposes or equivalent and you should have signed the form. At most ranges you will then be asked to pay the appropriate range fee and the cost of a box of ammunition. (approximately \$20 - \$30 depending on the facility). You will be given a thorough safety briefing and shown how to use a club handgun.

## **Step 2: Join the SSAA.**

If you are not already a rifle shooter and member of the SSAA you should join ASAP. The benefits are many, a subscription to the Australian Shooter magazine and insurance coverage to name just two. Current annual membership of the SSAA (Vic) is \$70.00 and mandatory for all members of sub clubs of the SSAA. Membership application forms are available on the SSAA (Vic) web site ([www.ssaavic.com.au](http://www.ssaavic.com.au)) or at your local range.

## **Step 3: Join a Pistol Club.**

Membership forms are generally available at the range or some are on the SSAA (Vic) website such as the SSPC forms. You will need to have obtained a clean report from a Police National Name and Fingerprint check. The forms for Consent to Release National Police Records are available again on the Police web site or the SSPC web site which can be found at <http://www.ssaavic.com.au/sspc/> or by following the links on the SSAA (Vic) website via the pistol shooting menu bar. Take the forms to one of the larger Police stations and have your fingerprints taken. When you receive the results of the check, bring the original and a copy to the Pistol Club Committee meeting. Generally most pistol clubs will follow the procedures outlined below, however you should check with your local club for further information.

Most clubs will require you to bring a completed membership application with your other paperwork (SSPC have their forms on their web site under forms) and two personal references from people that have known you for more than 2 years (not direct relatives). You will also need to bring two passport sized photos so that we can make up a membership card. You will be asked to briefly meet with the Committee to put a name to the face and tell us a little about yourself. Your initial membership fee will be paid at this time. The committee will discuss your membership application in your absence and assuming there are no problems you will be accepted as a member of the club you apply to.

## **Step 4: Apply for a 'Probationary Handgun Licence'.**

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This step should be almost simultaneous with step 3. Once you have used your 3 visits as a non member, and have decided this is the sport for you, you need to start your application for a 'probationary handgun licence' as soon as possible. This is called a **'Permit to carry a General Category Handgun during Probationary Period'**. Forms again on Police or SSPC web site. The cost is about \$160. It is not exactly as the name implies a 'permit to carry' but a permit to use club guns under supervision on a approved range for a six month period at which time you must apply for a full handgun licence (or leave the sport completely!). During this 6 month period that you will have your Probationary Handgun Licence you are not allowed to purchase any handguns or ammunition. The law requires that you shoot at least 5 competitions in the 6 months of your probationary licence.

## **Step 5: Complete a Handgun Safety Course.**

Most handgun clubs will be able to inform you of the dates for a Handgun Safety Course. The information below pertains to the SSPC and is provided as an example to give you an indication of what the course involves. You should find out when the next course is available for you to attend as soon as possible on receiving your Probationary Handgun Licence as this is a crucial step in being successful in receiving a Handgun Licence.

The SSPC runs an approved Handgun Safety course on the third Saturday of every month at the Springvale Range starting at 8:30 AM. It is a full 8 hour course, four hours of 'theory' covering firearm laws, storage requirements and Safety. There is a multiple choice theory exam followed by 'practical' session of another four hours, in the classroom, learning the safe handling of handguns and then finally on the range with dummy ammunition and then live ammunition. If you pass this you will be issued a Police certificate that you will require for your Handgun Licence but also so that the Club is satisfied you are safe to handle firearms without constant one-on-one supervision. The fee for this course is \$30 for members.

## **Step 6: Start Competition shooting.**

Under the new Firearms Laws, the only 'genuine reason' the Government will accept for holding a handgun licence for 'Sporting' purposes, is that you actually shoot competitions. The Government doesn't want to know what your scores are, they simply want proof that you attended and shot under competition rules. The club has a number of Range Officers who are qualified coaches and happy to help show you how to do it. Remember the law requires that you shoot at least 5 competitions in the 6 months of your probationary licence.

## **Step 7: Apply for your Handgun Licence.**

At the end of your 6 month probation you must move on and apply for your General Category Handgun Licence. By now you will have completed your National Name and Fingerprint check and your Handgun Safety Course. If the club by then feels you are a fit and proper person to hold a handgun licence, they will endorse your licence application and the Police should accept the clubs recommendation and issue the licence. Forms are available again on the Police and SSPC websites.

## **Step 8: Arrange your Safekeeping facilities.**

You will know from the safety course, exactly what is required in the way of a safe and alarm facilities to store firearms. Put these facilities in place as soon as you are sure you want to progress to getting a full Handgun Licence. The Club will ask to inspect these facilities and ensure they meet club and Police standards before approving a Permit to Acquire which is necessary to purchase a firearm.

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## **Step 9: Apply for a Permit to Acquire a Handgun.**

By now you should have a good idea of what type of competitions you would like to shoot and what make and model handgun best meets your requirements. Obtain the forms and submit them to the Committee along with the club 'Form 3'. If the club is satisfied that the type of firearm is appropriate for your needs, they will endorse your application and send it on to the Police.

## **Step 10: Start shooting more Competitions.**

Once you hold a handgun licence, whether you own a gun or not, you are required to shoot at least 10 competitions a year. The participation matrix for handgun licence holders is shown on the SSAA (Vic) website under the Pistol Shooting menu. Four of these competitions can be more in the nature of an unofficial competition or a practice for a competition but at least 6 must be competitions shot under formal (international) rules.

## **Step 11: ENJOY YOUR SHOOTING!**

If you need any further information about where your nearest club is or any aspects of this information sheet that is not clear please contact the SSAA (Vic) State Office for further assistance.

The SSAA (Vic) would like to thank the Sporting Shooters Pistol Club for their efforts in putting together this information sheet for use by the SSAA (Vic) and other groups.

