

1987. Gun Control

[Submission by the Coalition for Gun Control, with H.S.V. consultation]

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COALITION FOR GUN CONTROL

The Hoddle Street shootings in August this year occurred close to the house where Jac Renzinbrick lives with his wife and two children. In the aftermath of the tragedy he and some of his neighbours formed the Coalition for Gun Control with the aim of bringing together organisations and individuals concerned about gun misuse and violence in the community. The group has researched existing legislation on control of various types of guns and ammunition in Australia and in other countries, formulated a set of aims and principles and a draft submission (printed below).

The HSV, among others, was invited to participate in these efforts. Jac kindly attended our discussion group (13 September) on this subject, making it a more informed debate and patiently tackling the devil's advocate's questions and statements.

Submission on Gun Control Legislation from the Coalition for Gun Control

Statement of Principles

We believe that:

- I. in view of
 - i.) the amount of death, injury and distress caused in our society by guns, and
 - ii.) the unacceptable power to control others that guns give a person, that the private possession of guns in urban areas cannot be justified;
- II. legitimate gun users must be strictly controlled and must be prepared to accept some inconvenience for the safety of other citizens;
- III. in order to protect citizens from gun misuse, police must be given wide powers of investigation following criminal gun misuse [but HSV possible alternative is the police should be given every assistance to do their job of protecting the community].
- IV. every citizen must be made aware that our society will not tolerate the misuse of guns.

SUBMISSION

1. A Gun Control Authority must be formed with the responsibility of licensing of shooters and registration of firearms. This body must be the major source of gun legislation proposals. The authority should have an advisory committee which decides policy and is composed of a wide range of community representatives. The costs

associated with this Authority are to be borne by revenue from shooters' licenses and gun registration fees.

2. The Gun Control Authority will require that an application for a shooter's licence, giving reasons for requiring a gun, is supported by two guarantors who are people of responsibility in the applicant's own community. The applicant and guarantors are to appear before a panel nominated by the Authority.

3. Shooters licences are to be renewed yearly, and guarantors consulted. A guarantor can withdraw at any time, thus making the licence invalid and necessitating the impounding of firearms by the Authority. The licence can be reinstated with a suitable new guarantor. The Authority itself may withdraw the licence under certain circumstances.

4. To ensure the applicant's competence and maturity an examination must be passed which demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the responsibilities and dangers of gun use. Licence applicants must be exposed to the consequences of gun misuse.

5. All ammunition must be of a type approved by the Authority with limits on the quantities sold at any one time. The ammunition seller must report details of sales to the Authority. Shooters may only buy ammunition for the type of gun(s) which they have registered.

6. In urban areas guns are to be kept in an approved repository controlled by the Authority. Advance notice of 24 hours must be given before a gun is released.

7. Semi-automatic and pump action weapons are to be banned and conversion of guns after they have been registered will be illegal.

8. Every private gun must be registered by the Authority and no/ exchange of guns is to be allowed without prior permission from the Authority.

9. The Authority will be responsible for gun research and continuing community education in aspects of gun ownership. Some points made during our ... [Text in cursive type: would not scan adequately.] ... discussion

Additional comments by readers will be very welcome.

[Postscript: from the Victorian Humanist, Aug. 1988: 3]

Since our last report, several meetings of the CGC Vic. Committee have taken place, a federal body — the Australian Coalition for Gun Control — organised, the first issue of Gun control Review, a quarterly publication, was distributed, and a one-day interstate conference was held in Melbourne on 5 June. This conference, hosted by the Australian Bank Employees Union (ABEU), and chaired by Dr David Neal, Commissioner in charge of LRC [Law Reform Commission] Vic., (CGC) discussed papers, videos and comments presented by the representatives of the following groups: Tasmanian Lawyers Association, Tas CGC, ABEU, NSW CGC and some women's groups, HSV, Animal Protection, and Social Justice Dept. of the Uniting Church. This conference established valuable contacts between groups and discussed their differences in priorities and approach to gun misuse and control.