

Australian Medical Association Limited

ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



GUN LAWS SHOULD BE TOUGHER, NOT WEAKENED IN ANY WAY
AMA Position Statement on Firearms 2017

Gun ownership laws should be tightened, and a national, real-time firearms register should be established, the AMA said today in its new *Position Statement on Firearms 2017*.

AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said that the AMA was concerned at ongoing attempts by some groups to water down the National Firearms Agreement, introduced after the Port Arthur massacre in 1996.

“There is a legitimate role for guns in agriculture, regulated sport, and for the military and police, but gun possession in the broader community is a risk to public health,” Dr Gannon said.

“In the nearly 21 years since Port Arthur, gun deaths in Australia have halved, thanks to the National Firearms Agreement.

“However, it is estimated that there are anywhere between 260,000 and six million guns held illegally in Australia, and most gun-related deaths in Australia are suicides within the families of gun owners.

“Restricting access to firearms reduces the risk of impulsive purchase and use of guns, and their use in intentional acts of violence, including suicide.”

Dr Gannon said that it was concerning that some groups and people, including Members of Parliament, were agitating for changes to allow newer models of pump or lever action rifles to be imported into Australia.

“The AMA commends the decision of State and Territory leaders at the December Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting to withstand political pressure and impose stricter controls over the lever action Adler shotgun,” Dr Gannon said.

“We also welcome their agreement to a national gun amnesty this year.

“Gun laws should be tougher, and not watered down in any way.

“The AMA supports a strengthening of current laws banning high-powered semi-automatic weapons and pump or lever action rifles, so that they cannot be circumvented by new or adapted models.

“We strongly oppose any campaigns or policies that seek to dilute or relax the restrictions on firearm purchase and ownership, such as winding back the mandatory ‘cooling off’ period between applying for and buying a gun.”

The Position Statement calls for tighter restrictions on the definition of a “genuine reason” to purchase a firearm, and greater efforts to restrict weapons from entering the country illegally.

It also calls for a real-time, readily accessible National Firearms Licensing Register to be established, incorporating State and Territory information for all types of firearms and other lethal weapons.

It recommends that if a registered owner of a firearm fails to notify the register of a change of address or change in location of storage for any weapon, they should lose their licence and have their weapons confiscated.

Licence applications should be refused if the person is subject to a current restraining or protection order, or a conviction of an indictable offence involving firearms and/or violence within the past five years.

The Position Statement also calls for laws banning the manufacture and sale of 3D printed weapons.

“With advances in 3D manufacturing technology, it is increasingly likely that people will be able to produce firearms and other weapons,” Dr Gannon said.

“Therefore, 3D weapons should be classified in the same way as other firearms and weapons.”

The AMA *Position Statement on Firearms 2017* is available at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/firearms-2017>.

Background

Figures from 2012 showed that there were about 2,750,000 registered firearms and 730,000 licensed firearm owners in Australia.

In 2014, 253 people died from gunshots, of which 185 were determined to be suicide.

About 1500 firearms are reported stolen each year.

More than 1,121,000 firearms have been handed in to police in a series of amnesties held between 1998 and 2015.

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CONTACT: John Flannery 02 6270 5477 / 0419 494 761
 Maria Hawthorne 02 6270 5478 / 0427 209 753

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