

SSANZ News May June 2018

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Public Health Summer School

Several of our committee attended this event organised by the Otago University in Wellington on 14 February, primarily because it appeared that it would be dominated by people who promoted an anti-gun agenda such as Chris Cahill and Philip Alpers. Alpers was presented in a slick pre-recorded video in which he extolled the success of disarming Pacific island nations, but allowed no opportunity to challenge his assertions or ask questions of him. Cahill produced his now familiar call for tougher gun laws including registration of all firearms. Dr Vito of the SPCA produced an excellent fact based presentation on the value of firearms in maintaining animal welfare. Various pro-shooting groups/individuals were able to inject some reasoned arguments into the discussions however many questions were suppressed when they did not suit the organisers agenda. Unfortunately the media focussed largely on the exaggerated claims of Police Association President Chris Cahill, who published his speech online even before the seminar was over, and mostly ignored the issues raised by other speakers. The main public health concerns associated with firearms being suicide and the effect of lead ingestion by shooters particularly on indoor ranges.

Firearms and Schools

In March the Education Ministry released a "Draft guidelines for schools developing a firearms policy" for public comment. SSANZ is pleased to see that this document has taken a pragmatic approach to providing practical guidance for School Boards and Staff to allow firearms to be taken into schools and used for all reasonable and lawful purposes. The main thrust of the document is to reinforce the provisions of the Arms Act and allow for the presence and use of firearms in schools while under the supervision of a Licensed Firearm Owner. SSANZ has made a submission supporting this document but pointed out a small number of technical errors.

Why We Shouldn't Compare NZ with the USA

Whenever a shooting tragedy occurs in the USA, the media and anti gun advocates here immediately start to pose the question as to whether our firearms laws are tough enough. Why? New Zealand is nothing like the USA.

First the USA is a nation of 50 States all of whom have their own gun control laws, some of which are very strict and some very lax, but none are anything like New Zealand's gun laws. So how can you compare one thing with 50 different things, which is rather like comparing one apple with a whole fruit market, absurd!

Second the ethnic and socio economic mix of New Zealand is vastly different to the US where strong racial and gang tensions exist in many parts leading to violence in some major cities.

Third the attitude towards firearms in NZ is significantly different to that of the USA. In New Zealand a firearm is regarded as a tool for hunting, pest control or an item of sporting equipment, whereas in the US it is regarded by many as a weapon necessary for self preservation.

Because bad things occur in the US with firearms it does not follow that the same things will happen here. However recent research would indicate that the more exposure these events are given in the media the more likelihood that there will be copy-cat shootings as disturbed individuals seek their moment of fame in

the media spot light. It is for this reason that acts of suicide are suppressed in the media here. How long before the media apply the same logic to mass shootings?

The table below illustrates why comparing gun ownership in one country with that of another makes little sense.

World's Safest Country	1st Iceland	2nd NZ	8 th Canada	14th– Aus	44th UK	115th USA	144th Israel	151st Russia	163 rd Syria
Guns per 100 residents	30.3	22.6	30.8	24.1	6.2	101	7.3	8.9	3.9

Sources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Peace_Index

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estimated_number_of_guns_per_capita_by_country

Stay Safe

"With the game bird seasons almost upon us, it is timely to review the seven basic rules of firearm safety:

- 1: Treat every firearm as loaded.
- 2: Always point firearms in a safe direction.
- 3: Load a firearm only when ready to fire.
- 4: Identify your target beyond all doubt.
- 5: Check your firing zone.
- 6: Store firearms and ammunition safely.
- 7: Avoid alcohol or drugs when handling firearms.

With approximately 40,000 game bird hunters expected to pursue waterfowl and upland game birds later on in the early winter, prospects for slipping, falling and having unintentional discharges of firearms are much greater when in the field.

So watch your step, watch where your muzzle is pointing, and enjoy your hunting safely!"

LOCK UP YOUR FIREARMS

Keep a Record of: Make, Model, and Serial No