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AUSTRALIAN Shooter

OUR POLICY

To create a better environment and community understanding of all forms of hunting and shooting sports.

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ASSOCIATIONS ON FRONT FOOT OVER LAW CHANGES

WORDS: TOM KENYON
SSAA CEO



I feel it's important to let you know where we're up to around the country regarding changes to gun laws so, at time of writing, here's the state of play. Western Australia hasn't changed its laws and there are unlikely to be any modifications in the near future. That's not to say their laws are good. The WA Labor Government led the nation on gun-limit craziness and now, SSAA (WA) President Paul Fitzgerald spends countless hours each week talking to police, trying to make bad laws workable. If there is an upside, it won't get any worse.

The New South Wales Labor Government (with the help of the Liberals) changed their laws in

December, taking WA's examples and trying their best to make them worse. In some ways they succeeded. Like SSAA (WA), SSAA (NSW) is now working with police, trying to find some workability amid the mess the government created.

Tasmania was looking good until the Liberal Premier folded to the Feds on straight-pulls, lever-release and button-release firearms. Any upside to this shambles lies in the fact there will be a buyback and it'll be generous at 1½ times market value. This is still to be legislated and the risk here is The Greens and Labor convince some of the Independents to introduce caps, by moving amendments when the Bill comes before parliament. SSAA (Tas) along with state and National President Andrew Judd are working to defeat caps and convince the government to change course.

South Australia held an election in March with the Labor Government re-elected. Their new Police Minister was recently interviewed on ABC Radio and said he'd no plans to change gun laws, being adamant theirs were quite sufficient. We agree. SSAA (SA) will continue to monitor the situation and meet the new minister to reinforce our view they've made the right decision but so far, well done them.

The Queensland Coalition Government has been excellent. No change there of any significance and increased penalties for possession of illegal firearms have already been legislated, so hats off to

Premier David Crisafulli. Northern Territory Liberal Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro also deserves congratulations, with no changes from them as they've stood firm from the start.

Victoria is uncertain as SSAA (Vic) await release of the quick review undertaken for the state Labor Government by former police commissioner Ken Ley. SSAA (Vic) were cautiously optimistic as we went to print, though keep an eye out for any movement there.

ACT Labor Chief Minister Andrew Barr is moving ahead on NSW-style changes, with gun limits proposed at five for hunting and 10 for sports shooting and primary production. Parliament is currently holding an inquiry into the proposed Bill, with SSAA (ACT) working assiduously to help them see sense.

The Federal Labor Government passed legislation in January with help from The Greens. It mainly focussed on import restrictions, though one sensible provision was to allow sharing of intelligence between Federal security agencies and state police forces. Failure to do this led to the use of firearms in a terror attack and resulted in unfair changes to NSW firearms laws. SSAA Inc (National) continues to argue against other changes at both national and state level.

Rest assured your state and territory associations continue to work hard on the issues in front of them, some with a steeper hill to climb than others but, needless to say, they're all on your side.

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TROPHY IMPORT BANS WILL HURT PEOPLE AND CONSERVATION

WORDS:
MATTHEW GODSON



International hunting is often portrayed in the media as simply the killing of animals for trophies. In reality, regulated hunting plays a far more complex role in wildlife conservation and rural livelihoods in many parts of the world. In remote regions, particularly parts of Africa, regulated hunting provides employment for local people who may have very limited economic opportunities.

Hunting operations employ trackers, guides, camp staff, drivers and wildlife scouts, while communities also receive income through hunting concessions and wildlife management programs. These jobs exist because wildlife has economic value. When hunters visit these regions, they bring income which supports local businesses, conservation programs and local communities.

This economic value is important. In areas where wildlife damages crops, threatens livestock or competes with land used for farming, local communities need a reason to tolerate animals on their land. Where wildlife generates income through regulated hunting, it becomes a resource worth protecting rather than a burden to remove. When that value disappears, habitat which once supported wildlife can quickly be converted to agriculture or livestock production.

For hunters themselves, the trophy is only a small part of the overall experience. The real reward lies in the hunt, in tracking animals, spending time in remote landscapes

and testing skills in unfamiliar surroundings. Hunters who travel overseas invest heavily in these experiences, often paying for flights, permits, guides and accommodation. For many, these trips are once-in-a-lifetime adventures and that's why proposals to ban the import of trophies into Australia are unlikely to reduce hunting itself.

Sections of the media and anti-hunting lobby groups argue that preventing Australians from bringing trophies home will discourage them from travelling abroad and, ultimately, reduce the number of animals hunted. However, most hunters know the trophy itself is only a small reminder of the overall experience.

A hunter willing to invest in an international outing is unlikely to cancel purely because they can't bring a mounted head or hide home. The hunt will still happen and the animal will still be harvested, the only difference is the physical trophy remains in the country where the hunt took place.

Modern technology also means trophy import bans may have little practical impact. High-resolution photographs and 3D scanning can easily capture the detail of horns, skulls or other trophies. These digital files can then be used to create replicas, using 3D printing or casting techniques when the hunter returns home.

Some hunters already display replica skull mounts or sculpted reproductions instead of traditional taxidermy. If import bans become

stricter, many will simply switch to locally (Australian) produced replicas. In effect the animal will still be hunted, yet the trophy displayed at home may simply be a 3D-printed version rather than the original horns or skull.

Where the real consequences of a trophy import ban may be felt is in the communities where hunting occurs. If trophy exports decline due to restrictions imposed in countries like Australia, the revenue which supports jobs and conservation programs will reduce. Workers who rely on hunting operations for employment could lose their livelihoods.

In regions with few alternative economic opportunities, this can create serious problems. Illegal hunting and bushmeat trade are often driven by economic necessity. When wildlife loses its economic value and local jobs disappear, the incentive to protect animals can also disappear. Trophy import bans therefore risk targeting the symbol of hunting rather than addressing the realities of conservation.

If hunters continue travelling overseas and animals continue to be harvested under regulated systems, the policy achieves little in terms of reducing hunting. Meanwhile, communities living alongside wildlife may lose jobs, income and incentives to support conservation. Wildlife conservation works best when animals have real value to the people who share the landscape with them.

Policies which ignore that reality risk weakening the economic systems which help keep wildlife and wildlife habitat intact. Our government should reject inner-city lefty ideology that'll only hurt some of the most vulnerable people (and animals) on earth.

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TRULY A CARTRIDGE FOR THE AGES

WORDS:
BARRY WILMOT



The 22-250 Remington cartridge, also known as the 22-250 Varminter, is one of the most successful small calibre cartridges in existence today. It started life as a 'wildcat' by necking down the 250-3000 Savage cases to take a .224 calibre projectile. Quite a few different versions existed in the early days and its popularity grew even though no commercially built rifles were available for it.

Three Americans - Grosvenor Wotkyns, J.E. Gebby and J.B. Smith - are credited with making the first cartridge in 1937, which they named the 22 Varminter. That same year, Gebby built Phil Sharpe a rifle for the new cartridge. Sharpe, who'd been working with Winchester on their new 220 Swift cartridge for nearly two years and was in a good position to compare them, became an immediate fan of the 22-250 cartridge. He believed the steep 28-degree shoulder made the powder burn in the case, rather than in the throat of the rifle. This steep shoulder also prevented the case stretching and the neck thickening, which was an added bonus.

Some years later in a move considered risky at the time, in 1963 the Browning Arms Company began chambering their Browning High-Power rifle for the 22-250 cartridge. In fact John T. Amber in the 1964 *Gun Digest* called the event "unprecedented". He said: "As far as I know, this is the first time an arms maker has offered a rifle chambered for a cartridge that it, or



some other production ammunition maker, cannot supply." He applauded Browning's courage in taking this step. It took Remington until 1965 before it adopted the 22-250, calling it the 22-250 Remington and offering their Model 700 and 40 XB match rifle for the cartridge, as well as producing a line of commercial ammunition.

It's now almost 100 years since its inception and, in that time, many similar cartridges have come and gone, including Winchester's 225 which lasted only a few years. Then there's the 220 Swift which could outperform the 22-250 Remington, though had a reputation in its early days of excessive throat erosion and has fallen into disuse, as well as the 222 Remington Magnum.

Another cartridge, Roy Weatherby's 224 Weatherby Magnum, is more than a match for the 22-250, though rifles for it are more expensive than the more affordable Ruger, Winchester and Remington rifles. And it was an acknowledgement of the 22-250's popularity when, in 1967, Weatherby began offering their Mark V rifle in 22-250, the only non-propriety cartridge they offered at that time.

Perhaps the main reason for the 22-250 Remington's long-lived popularity is its versatility, in that it can deliver projectiles ranging in weights from 35 to 80 grains, using any one of a large range of powders with excellent accuracy. Indeed it was this flexibility which helped the 22-250 Remington become so popular, unlike the 220 Swift which performs best at near maximum loads. The 22-250 can be loaded with 40-grain Hornet projectiles and a light load of shotgun powder to give quiet, head-shot accuracy on rabbits out to 100 meters, while long-range shots at higher velocities can be made using projectiles of up to 80 grains.

All in all the 22-250 Remington has enjoyed an illustrious career. It has been able to withstand the onslaught of many similar designs over the years and is probably the most successful centrefire .22 cartridge in history.

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CONSISTENCY: IT DOESN'T COME EASY!

WE ALL HAVE TO ACCEPT THE FICKLE NATURE OF CLAY TARGET SHOOTING.

WORDS:
LAETISHA SCANLAN



Q Why do some days at the range feel easy and natural, while other times it doesn't even feel like I'm using my own gun and I struggle with consistency?
Jason, Vic.

A That's a broad question and it depends a lot on the individual, though almost every clay target shooter has felt this at some point, myself included. Sometimes shooting can feel incredibly frustrating and inconsistent and that's because it's a far more complex sport than it appears from the outside. You'll often hear people say shooting is '80 per cent mental' and while that number may not be scientific, the idea behind it is very real indeed.

At its core, clay target shooting is a reflex-based, hand-eye coordination sport with a complicated mental component. We're relying on precise timing, visual perception and subconscious movements, all of these things happening in a fraction of a second.

Without actually watching you shoot it's impossible to comment on your technique, though assuming your fundamentals are sound, there

are several other factors which can cause the kind of inconsistency you're describing. Even small changes in how we feel physically or mentally can have a big impact on our movement and shot outcome.

Something as simple as a poor night's sleep can slow reaction time, affect visual clarity or disrupt routine. When that timing's off, the body and mind compensate in subtle ways and those small compensations can quickly snowball into missed targets. Firstly, pressure plays a role in how we feel and react. The weight of a competition, or even the importance we personally attach to a practice session, can create unnecessary tension and disruption.

When we care too much about the outcome, we often stop reacting naturally and start trying to 'force' the process. Shooting which normally feels smooth and instinctive suddenly feels difficult, over-technical and uncomfortable.

Small distractions can add another layer. Outside noise, work stress, personal issues or even a random fleeting thought can break concentration at exactly the wrong moment. In a sport where every-

thing hinges on the split second between calling 'pull' and squeezing the trigger, losing focus even for an instant can make you miss a target.

Preparation matters too. Lack of recent practice or competition doesn't just affect technique, it impacts your confidence. Sometimes when you don't feel prepared, doubt creeps in and that disrupts trust in your movement and timing. On the flip side there are days when everything clicks and you feel you put a foot wrong. You're relaxed, your eyes are sharp, timing is right and even slightly imperfect moves or mistakes still break targets.

That's what makes this sport so fascinating and, at times, frustrating. Clay shooting is fickle by nature and is never going to feel perfectly consistent, so learning to accept that is part of becoming better at it. The goal isn't to eliminate the bad days entirely, as that's an almost impossible task. Rather identify them, manage them, mitigate them and accept that some days will just feel 'easier' than others. Rest assured Jason, you're not alone!

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Q I have two old firearms I picked up at SSAA Shot Expo many years ago and am keen to learn more about them. Value is not the reason for the contact. First seems to me to possibly be a starter's rifle with minimal markings. It has about a 7-8mm bore, barrel length of 575mm and overall length of 950mm.

The second is, I believe, a 12-gauge muzzleloader with ramrod and barrel length of 800mm and overall 1200mm. The name Ward is stamped on the side plate, though I think this may have been put there by a previous owner. I'd greatly appreciate any information and history of these firearms.

William Bell, Vic

A Your rifle is a Flobert system firearm dating from around the early 1900s. Louis Nicolas Auguste Flobert (1819-1894) was a Paris-based

gunsmith credited with developing the first self-contained rimfire metallic cartridge, the .22BB (bulleted breech) cap which went on to be developed into the .22 Short by Smith & Wesson.

Flobert-style firearms have at least four different breech mechanisms which were used in salon and gallery pistols and rifles, small game rifles and orchard guns for small pest control. All the longarms had one-piece stocks and octagonal barrels chambered for the .22 and .32 Short rimfire cartridges as well as 7mm and 9mm shotshells. Yours appears to be what's known as the Flobert Remington action due to its similarities to the Remington rolling block rimfire rifles of the same era.

Usually manufactured in Belgium by makers such as Pieper, they were never noted as a particularly high-quality range of firearms. In 1925, Chicago-based Montgomery and Ward Company in their No.57 catalogue advertised Flobert Remington action rifles in .22 Short for the princely sum of \$2.25. The advertisement advised owners to use only .22 Short ammunition and also carried the warning: "Don't expect a Stevens or Winchester in a Flobert rifle."

For all of that there are still quite a few Flobert firearms in circulation, the majority well and truly past their use-by date. Even so, they're an interesting group of firearms and no single-shot rifle collection is complete without an example or two.

John Dunn

• If anyone can shed light on the shotgun, let us know at edit@ssaa.org.au



Q I'm hoping one of your specialists can provide me with some information on this 12-gauge side-by-side shotgun, specifically who made it and when it was made. Any help much appreciated.

Sam Barton, via email

A Your gun was made in 1960 by the firm of Giovanni Gamba in the famous gun-making town of Gardone in Val Trompia, northern Italy. It looks like a nicely kept example with highly attractive woodwork and engraving.

Giovanni Gamba launched his company in 1950, making both machine tools and guns before selling the firm to his brother Renato in 1967. Renato's guns are far more valuable and well-made apparently. The markings on the barrels indicate the steel from which your gun is made was imported from the famous steel firm of Vickers in the UK.

I haven't been able to find any comparable shotguns for sale in Australia to give you an approximate valuation and our prices are typically much lower here, though a couple from the US suggest in the low thousands for one in good order.

Geoff Smith

Q I'm looking at buying a new scope for target shooting and the one which stands out for me, especially where value for money's concerned, is the Nikko Stirling Diamond FFP 5-30x56. The problem is it uses MRADs instead of Minute of Angle elevation and windage adjustments, which I'm not familiar with and I can't find a formula to accurately convert MOA to MRAD or vice-versa. I was brought up on MOA calculations and find it easy to use. I'm sure many of our members of a certain vintage would be in the same boat, so can you offer a solution?

Graeme W., NSW

A I agree the Nikko Stirling scope you mentioned is good value for money. However, you shouldn't be too concerned about changing to the MRAD or Milliradian (mils) system for angular measurements. While there is a formula to convert one to the other, my advice is to forget about Minutes of Angle when using the Nikko or similar scopes and just think about all measurements in mils.

It's a simple metric system and more precise than MOA, especially when shooting on a metric target range. Essentially, one mil subtends an angle of 10cms on a target at 100m. Most MRAD scopes have 10 clicks to the mil, so moving the turret one click moves the bullet one centimetre on the target at 100m, two clicks equals two centimetres and so on. The formula you asked for, if you still want to go down that track, is: 1 mil = 3437.75 divided by 1000 = 3.43775 MOA. Conversely, 1 MOA = 1000 divided by 3437.75 = 0.2909 mils.

Rod Pascoe

SEND QUESTIONS TO: edit@ssaa.org.au

When seeking information on old or antique firearms, please include a photo of the proof marks on those guns which have them. Old shotguns typically have markings beneath the breech. Also outline the firearm's known history or provenance where possible.



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GOING BALLISTIC . . . IN A GOOD WAY!

WORDS:
CHARLOTTE FOX

A *manda Vallance is a true firearms expert. Having started work in a gun shop with no experience, she's built Australia's leading independent centre of excellence for forensic, historical and applied firearms expertise. Ballistics Headquarters Pty Ltd combines deep technical capability, decades of operational experience and rigorous research to deliver court-grade forensic services, technical consultancy and safety solutions. Amanda sat with Charlotte Fox to tell her story and that of Ballistics HQ.*

Tell me about yourself and role as director of Ballistics Headquarters

I grew up in a lot of rural towns, mostly in mining communities. My dad was an electrician and we moved around a fair bit. Through those moves I was exposed to lots of different environments, which transitioned into having a diverse start to my working life. I started off in health and safety, then in swimming coaching then working in a gun shop.

That was more than a decade ago and I'd no experience until my partner took me shooting and I loved it, along with the engineering behind it. So I did my absolute best to learn everything I could about firearms after that shop took me on. They taught me a lot which made me realise I love this industry. I developed my knowledge further through becoming a firearms rep and managing a couple of different gun shops, as well as undertaking a gunsmithing course in America.

How did you transition to starting Ballistics HQ?

I became a qualified gunsmith and worked as an apprentice to my partner, who's also a gunsmith, in his armour shop until I was fully qualified. We started noticing we were being contacted by lawyers, barristers and other people saying: "I have a legal problem (related to firearms) and the court

doesn't quite understand it, I don't understand it so can you help us out?" We started giving professional advice which really took off, so I decided to turn that service into Ballistics Headquarters.

Via that process I noticed how in-depth the service provision was becoming, so I decided to do a Bachelor of Criminology. My partner, Tom Tolley, has also completed a Masters in Ballistics and Forensics and is now undertaking a PhD, which is co-sponsored by Ballistics HQ and the University of Cranfield in the UK.

How would you describe Ballistics HQ?

We're the largest independent company in ballistic forensics in Australia and have lots of different things happening. Essentially we're a one-stop shop for technical information about firearms and how they work.

There's a lot of confidentiality which limits the details I can provide, but we work with a range of clients including lawyers, Federal Government departments and organisations like the SSAA. We do jobs in relation to all kinds of things including gel blasters, airsoft, knife crime, general forensics and obviously firearms. We also assist with range design and matters related to antique firearms.

I recently had a fun job where I was asked by the South Australian Museum to value all their antiques and put them into collections. It was incredible being hands-on with guns from the 1800s which came here on ships from Prussia and thinking about the history they have.

How did you build Ballistics HQ from those initial enquiries?

It snowballed with demand by word of mouth until we realised we had to run two business, the armour shop and ballistic advice services.

What does a workday look like for you?

I spend a lot of time brushing up on different laws, looking at changes in the various firearm



laws across Australia, so I can give the best-informed advice to clients in legal cases. Hypothetically, a lawyer might approach us in a case where someone's been shot with a shotgun, and they want to work out the distance that shot could've come from. With the forensics available, could it have been self-defence? From there I work out details such as how far the shotgun was fired, its shot pattern, whether there were any marks from the wad, was there gunshot residue (GSR), where was it and other relevant details. We're forensically looking at trying to work out what happened in relation to the firearm in that scenario.

How have you seen ballistic science and firearms change?

Not fast enough. My biggest sticking point is how people look at GSR. The way my experts look at it is by focusing on the exact molecules, how they're structured and what they're structured with, rather than saying: "There's these three key markers, therefore there is GSR." GSR can be complicated as it can show up in brake dust, heavy machinery and all sorts of things. The substances and molecules have to be in the correct amounts in certain ways to provide accurate advice.



How do you communicate technical evidence?

It can be tricky but I use images and graphs to assist, say, a judge in understanding what I'm trying to convey. I tend to be quite technical so have to remind myself that it's not me reading my advice. I usually provide a brief explanation with any written technical information to assist in the communication process.

How does ballistic science differ between TV's perception and reality?

It would be nice to have things wrapped up in half an hour! A lot of things depicted in TV shows aren't necessarily wrong but, in reality, everything takes time. We also provide advice more in terms of probability and possibility in relation to the evidence available. For example, we might be able to say certain evidence could point to a possibility of 10 different firearms. It's definitely not as cut and dried as proving 'this gun' and 'this ammunition' was used in a given scenario.

How have you found engaging with the legal system?

It's very different. I often have to remind myself that everything in the legal system is a process and if you try and come into that process halfway

through, it doesn't work. I've also learned not every lawyer will give you all their information at the start, so you have to methodically work through, providing them with a little bit at a time and understanding how they work.

And you also work with government agencies?

It's fun and I often work with multiple experts providing different advice. As an example, one report involved using a veterinary expert, a games expert from South Africa who worked in poaching prevention and a retired ADF member. In that case we teamed up to examine the ethical euthanasia of animals. We used advice about shot placement and the animal according to a veterinary expert and games expert, with firearms advice from our team and the ADF member.

What's one of your most memorable or meaningful experiences?

I tend to get drawn in so often have to try to push myself back a bit. I must remember it's a job and not become too emotional. Having said that, one case involved a gentleman in Western Australia who was charged with a firearms crime through shooting someone with a gel blaster, which is essentially a toy.





That case was memorable as here's someone who was being charged with a serious offence and faced going to prison for basically using a toy that's not dangerous. It would've been incredibly stressful for him and I found that situation hard to comprehend. It was a time when the law hadn't kept up with the availability of that kind of equipment and I remember thinking: "If I don't win this he could end up in prison." That's an example of frustration in the legal system being a process where you can't just jump to the end and say: "He couldn't have done it for these reasons."

And Ballistics HQ has 11 specialists across Australia?

We have different people who bring various expertise to our team. There are gunsmiths, armourers, retired Defence Force personnel, veterinarians, game experts along with myself and my partner. Most of us were brought up around and worked with firearms to provide expertise in different scenarios.

How does Ballistics HQ help promote firearm safety?

A good example is when friends run a 'come and try' day through SSAA. I go along as a representative of Ballistics Headquarters and help guide

participants. Those events are safe as they're run by SSAA, yet by being there I can help further promote safe practices and teach how firearms work, not just pick up the pieces if someone makes a mistake. We do lots of ladies come and try days and I've found that when you start explaining the ballistics behind using a firearm, such as the exact mechanism of how things work, they gain a lot of confidence.

How do you discuss the legislative changes which came in after the Bondi tragedy?

Firstly by reinforcing that firearms are a tool. People shoot for recreation and as athletes in the Olympic Games. A lot of firearms are owned by members of legitimate clubs, which means they're shooting paper targets. Then there are those who go hunting and, in my experience, a lot of them do it for ethical harvesting of food. There's lots of misinformation around and the way people describe the sector is also incorrect, so there needs to be more education, especially in relation to the stringent safety checks registered gun owners have to go through.

Part of that debate relates to 3D technology. How do you see that evolving?

So long as it's managed correctly, I think there should be steps in place for licenced firearm owners to be able to print a broken part so they can fix it. Especially so in the case of older guns which may not be in production any more. I feel there should be something that would allow them to do that. It's not technically impossible to see a future where 3D firearms could be lawfully printed more broadly, though it would take a massive change in legislation.

How else are you involved in hunting and shooting these days?

Not as often as I'd like, though I do go with friends to harvest deer in an effort to be a bit more self-sustainable. I love Victoria's High Country, except when I haven't been exercising and am puffed halfway through the hill. That's embarrassing! ●



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A man in camouflage gear is shown from the chest up, looking down at a pair of black binoculars he is holding with both hands. He is wearing a camouflage beanie and a camouflage jacket. The background is a blurred forest.

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Benchrest titles well earned

BRENDAN ATKINSON

This year's Australia Day benchrest matches in the ACT consisted of three classes rather than just the usual Light and Heavy, with Sporter included for rifles weighing not more than 4.082kg (9lbs). The latter was held on Friday with shooters greeted by plenty of wind and mirage to make things difficult. This was duly reflected in the scores and at 100 yards the first six placegetters were all Hall of Fame members. Best group was a .129 shot by Darren Parsons with the winning aggregate of .2706 shot by Michael Thompson, with Paul Sullivan and Ean Parsons filling the minor places.

The longer yardage at Majura Range usually sorts things out and a .478 group by Milan Morrell was best of the bunch. Aggregate winner with .3714 was John Babic who never went over an inch on any group. The grand aggregate went down to the wire and Babic took the Ian Josselyn Memorial Shield from Thompson with .3371 and .3375 respectively, third place going to Brendan Atkinson on .3785.

The Light benchrest event was held in more favourable conditions and all but one of the small groups in the relays was over point-one. Best group of the morning came on the first relay with a .138 by Morrell. The aggregate produced a see-saw battle with Thompson finally edging out Murray Hicks with .2760 to a .2768, Milan not far behind in third on .2816.

The longer distance proved more challenging for most, though Will Greer shot a lovely .272 for

smallest group then went on to win the aggregate with .2936, well clear of Thompson on .3205 and Robert Evans on .3376. In the overall aggregate for the class win it was Thompson on .2983 just ahead of Greer on .3003 and Hicks with .3105.

Heavy benchrest usually produces the smallest groups and Atkinson's .126 looked safe until the very last relay when Morrell pipped him with a fine .125. It was a weekend of close finishes and the yardage win went to Hicks on .2274 from David Dixon on .2276 and Andrew Proll third on .2430.

The last yardage for the weekend produced another gripping battle and close results. Hicks shot the smallest group with a .329 but the yardage honours went to Les Fraser on .2954 ahead of Babic on .2955 and Atkinson's .2963. The grand aggregate brought a deserved win for Hicks on .2659 with Proll second on .2797 and Atkinson third on .2832

The Two-Gun aggregate winner receives the Bob Daniells Memorial Shield and this year it went to Hicks with .2882, Greer taking second on .2998 and Evans third with .3267. As the Sporter class had been included, the Three-Gun aggregate went to Babic on .3350 ahead of Hicks on .3410 and Thompson third on .3440.

Once again a first-class event was staged by the Tobler family and friends, who did everything from cooking meals to running the firing line. National scorer Ian Thompson was in attendance and the target crew was expertly managed by Caroline Rae.



MURRAY HICKS WON THE TWO-GUN TITLE FROM WILL GREER (RIGHT) AND ROBERT EVANS; JOHN BACIC (CENTRE) WON THE THREE-GUN FROM MURRAY HICKS (RIGHT) AND MICHAEL THOMPSON; SPORTER CLASS WINNER JOHN BACIC RECEIVES THE IAN JOSSELYN MEMORIAL SHIELD FROM BENCHREST CHAIRMAN LES FRASER.



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SSAA Activity Log launches to capture real impact of hunting

MATTHEW GODSON

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia has launched a new online tool designed to better capture the real contribution our members make through hunting and pest animal management. The SSAA Activity Log is a simple platform where members can record their hunting activities and the broader benefits they bring. Every trip into the field contributes to pest animal control, conservation outcomes and economic activity in regional communities, though historically much of this work has gone unrecorded. The new log aims to change that.

WHY THE ACTIVITY LOG MATTERS
Hunters play a significant role in managing pest animals across Australia. From rabbits and foxes through to goats, deer, pigs and feral cats, recreational hunters contribute countless hours each year, assisting landholders and reducing pressure on agricultural production and native wildlife.

However, without reliable data, it can be difficult to demonstrate the scale of this contribution. So by recording hunting activity, members will help build a clearer national picture of:

- Time spent hunting and volunteering;
- Pest animals controlled;
- Distance travelled to hunting locations (with travel costs);
- Economic spending in regional areas;
- The overall contribution hunters make to pest management.

Over time, this data will help strengthen the evidence base for hunting in Australia, while supporting informed discussions about wildlife management, land access and the role of recreational hunters.

SIMPLE TO USE

The SSAA Activity Log has been designed to be quick and easy for members to access. After a hunting trip, simply log in and record a few basic details about your activity. Entries take only a few minutes to complete, yet when combined with thousands of members, they'll provide valuable insights into the real-world impact of hunting.

A STRONGER VOICE FOR HUNTERS

Reliable data plays an increasingly important role in policy discussions around pest management, conservation and land use. By using the SSAA Activity Log, members can help ensure the work they're already doing in the field is recognised and better understood by decision makers, land managers and the wider community. The more members who participate, the more accurate and valuable this information will become.

START LOGGING YOUR ACTIVITIES

All members are encouraged to take part and begin recording their hunting activities. You can register and start logging your hunts and pest control activities today at: <https://ssaaactivitylog.com.au/> Every entry helps build a clearer picture of the important role hunters play across Australia.

The screenshot shows the SSAA Activity Log dashboard for a user named Matthew G. The dashboard is titled "Dashboard" and features a main menu on the left with options for Dashboard, New Activity Log, My Logs, My Documents, Profile Settings, and Account. The main content area displays a greeting "Hi Matthew G, ready to log your next hunt?" and a sub-message "Your contribution helps manage wildlife populations and supports farmers across the country." Below this are two buttons: "Log Activity" and "View History". To the right, there are two statistics: "1 Logs" and "0 Culled". At the bottom, there are five summary cards: "EXPENSES \$95", "EFFORT 11 h", "DISTANCE 464 km", "HARVEST 0", and "COMPLIANCE 100%".



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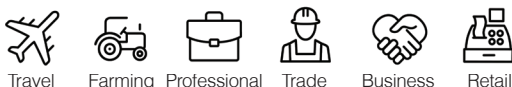
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HEAR no evil

BEN UNTEN ENJOYS WALKER'S RECHARGEABLE EARMUFFS

Hearing protection is a non-negotiable these days, especially for junior shooters. However, the challenge has always been having a conversation with someone when one or both of you is wearing hearing protection. Or if you've ever tried hunting with someone who wears their protection all the time, you'll know they make more noise than a kookaburra convention at sunset.

Thankfully, Walker's Razor rechargeable earmuffs have answered the call. The way electronic muffs work is they have an inbuilt, battery-powered microphone which allows the regular world to be amplified during general use. This then has a 0.02 second cutoff time, (which is faster than your mate claiming 'I saw the deer first'), when they detect a loud sound.

The Walker's Razor electronic muffs have a 21dB NRR (noise reduction rating) and weighed 321gr on my digital scales. The internal lithium 300mAh battery is rechargeable via a USB-C port (charging cable included) and is claimed to have up to 80 hours of use between charges.

There's also a 3.5mm audio jack to connect to an external device so you can have your own personal, walkaround disco. While I wouldn't recommend this when hunting, it could come in really handy if your mate's one of those people who can't bear the peace and quiet around a campfire at night, and insists in breaking the

SLIM PROFILE ALLOWS FOR
COMFORTABLE STOCK MOUNT.

land-speed record for spoken words per minute. The USB port and 3.5mm audio socket feature snug-fitting rubberised caps, which help protect against dust and moisture ingress.

IN USE

These slimline muffs are a firmer fit which would make them ideal for a junior or someone with a narrower face shape. I'm neither of those but wore them for several hours without any discomfort. On/off and volume are controlled by a single rotary knob which is easy to access and offers a wide range of controls. The upper volume limits could be of benefit to those who may have already experienced some hearing loss and are looking to prevent further deterioration.

With a gaggle of older shooters out there who sadly admit to suffering hearing loss and/or tinnitus from years of shooting without hearing protection, we owe it to ourselves and the next generation to ensure no newcomers to the sport end up with the nickname 'Whatsthat', as they constantly ask you to repeat yourself.

The Walker's Razor rechargeable earmuffs retail for around \$150 and are available in most good gun shops, or you can find your local dealer at the distributor's website tsaoutdoors.com.au ●

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TRAVIS ALLEN TRIALS A NIFTY TRAINING AID

Technology never sleeps and shotgun shooting is no different, so welcome to the latest training aid in the ShotKam Gen 4 which mounts directly to your barrel, records 4K video clearly enough to see your pellets and replays instantly on your mobile phone.

There are two versions available in the regular and mini, the only difference being in weight and battery life with the latter having less of both. Videos can be recorded in 4K at 2x zoom and decrease in quality as the zoom is raised to 2.7K 3x, 1080 4x and standard definition 720 at 6x. 'Clay Pigeon' mode is comfortable at either 2x or 3x.

I enjoy recreational clay shooting every few weeks and was keen to see what it could do. Instructions are clear and easy to follow and yes, you'll need to download another app but it's worth it and is one of the easiest apps I've ever used. No log-in or account needed, the app allows you to download videos straight to your phone or tablet and change settings. The settings themselves aren't complicated and it actually feels like someone who goes shooting and uses the device had a say in how the app should work.

Everything is large buttons or check boxes, almost like filling out a quick multiple choice survey. What firearm are you using? Select 'Shotgun

break-action'. Reticle? 'Red Crosshair'. Target? 'Clays'. Your reticle of choice can be zeroed in the calibration section and only takes a minute. Place your firearm on a rest with the ShotKam mounted and simply move the reticle to match your point of aim.

To use just mount, turn on to standby mode and it'll ready itself each time you close the action and take roughly 20 seconds of footage around the shot being fired. I just turned it on and forgot about it, then at the end of the session we gathered around my phone and run through the videos.

I believe it's not allowed in competition as it could be considered a training aid and honestly, I can see how it would help. In between rounds you can connect the app and see if you're leading too much or not enough, high or low. A picture (or video in this case) is worth a thousand words.

Now I don't want to pigeonhole ShotKam as a shotgun-only device, though it does seem to excel in the discipline. The settings allow for a bolt-action rifle to be selected and a target of ground game, which I intend to give a run through when I next go hunting. I'm hoping the 300 Win Mag isn't too much for it, though I'll report back later with the results.

There are a variety of mounts available, the unit coming with 12-gauge and the options including 20g, 28g, 410 and rail. The 20-gauge does seem to work with the profile of my rifle barrel, while the 12g and 20g both have some adjustability to the barrel grip. We have some videos at SSAATV on YouTube which include ShotKam footage, so we'll make sure to call it out in the description.

Now the real question is how much does it cost? The price on the ShotKam Aus/NZ site is \$999 which is certainly not cheap and, before using one, I'd have been on the fence at best. Now after using one, I'd encourage a couple of friends or family with similar interests to chip in and share it around. That said, if the rifle videos from my next hunt are any good, that would really get me over the line to buy one of my own. ●

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SSAA TV



Gun Law Changes, Buyback Plans, and Reporting Concerns: Tom Kenyon Weighs In on 3AW



Gun licence numbers under scrutiny: SSAA disputes Australia Institute report



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youtube.com/@SSAATV



Ahead of the pack

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE HUMBLE HAVERSACK, SAYS DICK EUSSEN

I can't remember a time in my life when I didn't have a haversack. Even as a boy I had a WWII German military issue I found in a bunker, large enough to hold a couple of rabbits which I caught in traps and snares. That's when I lived on the Dutch-German border as a growing lad and hunters on both sides carried leather haversacks containing cartridges, lunch and more.

The haversack originated from these countries, the Germans calling it the hafersack and the Dutch haverzak, both meaning 'oat sack'. It was a small cloth bag carried with a shoulder strap, which originally referred to a bag of oats farmers used for horse fodder. European militaries adopted the haversack, which was used by soldiers to carry bullets, powder and more. Early military versions were square leather or oilcloth bags, about 30cm per side with a button and flap lid. It was very much a part of British Army gear, which of course flowed on to the colonies.

In fact it's hard to find old photos of soldiers around the world who didn't carry one. It's of note that during the US Civil War, General Ulysses Grant's memoirs record: "In addition to the supplies transported by boat, the men were to carry 40 rounds of ammunition in cartridge boxes and four days' rations in haversacks."

By the time the British became involved in the Boer War, the haversack had evolved from leather to cotton webbing and became popular with armies worldwide. Webbing rifle slings, handgun holsters, rifle pouches, rucksacks, belts, gaiters and more were made from this durable and lightweight material. Some modern haversacks are made from waterproof Cordura, ballistic nylon and other synthetic materials. These have double-wall construction, front zippers, heavy-duty buckles, Velcro fasteners and Molle webbing, which matches tactical and military equipment and allows accessories to be attached to it with Velcro.

But all this comes at a cost when compared to the original webbing haversacks, made in India,

which are readily available from surplus and camping stores for not a lot of money. In fact, both Indian and Pakistani soldiers continue to use webbing equipment.

This original ex-army haversack is 21cm long, 32cm tall and 9cm wide and has a free flap which is secured by two brass belt buckles. The removable 2.5cm-wide carry strap is also secured with similar buckles and has a wide shoulder carry section. Of note is that traditional cotton webbing isn't waterproof, though most modern haversacks are. I have both a khaki-coloured army model and a navy-blue one. I use them to carry a bottle of water, snakebite kit, PLB and camera for shorter walks along streams and around dams.

The bag is slung over the right shoulder across my chest and carried on the left side. Because of the wide shoulder strap its weight is well distributed, so much so that it's barely noticeable after the first few metres. When the pressure becomes noticeable it's easy to shift the weight a little, so sometimes I carry it on my right shoulder instead of draping it around my neck.

Due to having a pacemaker installed on the left side I can't carry it over my left shoulder or use a backpack, as the carry strap sits directly across the device. This makes haversacks the ideal solution for people who wear a pacemaker. The secret to carrying a haversack is to keep the weight down and, unlike early soldiers, you don't need 40 rounds for hunting. Extra ammunition is easily carried in a purpose belt pouch, belt or 10-round rifle butt sock.

I used to hunt with a former British commando who carried two haversacks, minute-man style, over his chest in a cross-like fashion when overnight camping (he didn't like backpacks). Modern haversacks are widely used, though not so much by hunters. Instead, they've evolved to meet today's busy professional demands, travellers, teachers etc. and, in many cases, have replaced the briefcase which once identified office workers and sales people.

There's a reason for this, as it's difficult to snatch a haversack compared to a briefcase and it leaves both hands free. In the field it matters nought if you use a traditional army surplus or modern-style haversack. They're an incredible handy item for short hunts which enables gear, that would otherwise be carried on a waist belt, to be better distributed and easier to carry.

ARMY BACKPACKS

Today's backpacks can be expensive, while cheap bags often break straps and won't last long. The ex-army backpack may not be as comfortable to carry as a modern padded version, yet for many casual hunts the army webbing pack is ideal. They cost about \$50 with a choice of different models suitable for light to medium cargo that won't break your back. They have padding on top which sits below the neck across the shoulder blades, providing excellent weight distribution that's shared by both shoulders.

Traditional army cotton webbing packs are ideal for hunts which may require an overnight bivouac, being large enough to carry food, cooking utensils and more. But I reckon if you do that a lot or need to carry game meat out, a proper cargo pack with a back frame and padded straps has better weight distribution and is less tiring with a heavy load. Modern backpacks also have external straps to secure bedding and the like.

To summarize, ex-army-style webbing haversacks and packs are as simple a carry system as you'll find and at a reasonable price. The material and fittings are practical, durable and there are no plastic parts to break or zippers to stuff up. Webbing is easy to keep clean, just scrub it in a stream or waterhole or toss it in the washing machine to keep it looking like new.

And while you're in the surplus shop, check out the copy-cat army water bottles, cooking and eating gear, all proven, durable and lightweight designs which have kept armies round the world on the march for more than a century. ●



A HAVERSACK WILL CARRY ALL YOU NEED FOR A DAY'S FIELD OUTING.



Criminals oblivious to Bondi backlash

**JOHN
MAXWELL**

Every Australian shooter will be familiar with what occurred at Bondi on December 14 when two ISIS-inspired terrorists, a father and son, opened fire on a Jewish celebration, murdering 15 people. One was shot dead by police, the other wounded and arrested. This was Australia's worst-ever terror attack and biggest mass shooting since the 1996 Port Arthur tragedy when a demented gunman killed 35, leading to national gun law reforms which included banning of semi-automatic rifles and shotguns.

At Bondi the shooters used legally acquired longarms, with the father holding a NSW licence for Class A and B firearms. Police haven't officially disclosed which firearms were used but the son was videoed using what looked like a Beretta BRX1 straight-pull rifle, possibly in .308 Winchester, equipped with some form of red dot sight.

They also used a pair of Stoeger M3000 M3K 12-gauge straight-pull shotguns, at least one illegally modified with an extended magazine tube to increase capacity to 10. The father was carrying such a firearm when he was tackled by one of the heroes of the hour, Ahmed al-Ahmed, an unarmed 43-year-old Syrian Australian.

The Italian-made Beretta BRX1 is a high-end sporting rifle retailing for more than \$2600 at one prominent outlet. Stoeger is a US company, though its M3000 shotguns are made in Turkey, as are the large number of other straight-pull

and button-release shotguns sold under various brand names across Australia. These retailed for around \$800.

The Commonwealth and NSW governments moved quickly with a fresh buyback, limits of how many guns may be owned, bans and reclassification of some (from category B to C) and changes to licensing. But unlike 1996 when all states and territories were onboard with the National Firearms Agreement, this time it's different.

The ACT has adopted laws similar to NSW, though not an exact duplicate. Queensland has said 'no way' to the buyback, though it has tightened some provisions. Western Australia was already onboard, Victoria is conducting a review while South Australia has expressed in-principle support. So far neither Tasmania or the Northern Territory are on board.

The holdouts seem to be less than enthusiastic about a scheme that'll cost them a fortune (even with a 50-50 split with the Commonwealth), require a vast bureaucratic effort, is wildly unpopular with shooters and will surely contribute to a surge in support for parties such as One Nation, just as happened post-1996. So all this has some way to go, though NSW will be leading the way, standing up a buyback scheme.

Already there are consequences which likely weren't foreseen. In NSW, applications for new firearms licences have soared, rising by more than 70 per cent from December 16 to January



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16, compared with the same period the previous year. That includes a 1400 per cent increase in applications for Category C licences (from 15 to 226), presumably from gun owners seeking to retain otherwise banned firearms. The number of NSW shooters seeking collectors' licences rose 7000 per cent to 144. Anecdotally, there's been an increase in partners of shooters applying for firearms licences.

None of this appears to have impacted the criminal use of firearms in the slightest. On January 30, NSW police announced the arrest of seven men on drug and gun charges. In a series of raids, officers seized heroin and meth worth more than \$3 million, three firearms, a ballistic vest and more than 800 rounds of ammunition.

On February 12, a man was wounded in a drive-by shooting in Sydney's south-west. The previous day, two men were arrested for another public place shooting in south-west Sydney last July, the same day a shot was fired into a home in Bankstown.

On February 8 three men performed a home invasion in western Sydney, firing a shot, one of them later arrested. The same day, a group of men fired a shot during another home invasion in western Sydney, with one subsequently arrested when the getaway car crashed into a fence just down the road.

On February 4, police arrested a man in connection with the shooting murder of a man in inner Sydney last November and on February 3, announced two members of the Brothers for Life crime gang had been charged with firearms offences. That followed an investigation by the NSW Police Raptor Squad which targets organised crime groups. That's just a sample of incidents in Sydney in one month.

The worst incident in NSW occurred late January in Lake Cargelligo in the state's central west, when a man on bail for domestic violence offences shot dead three people, one his pregnant former partner. He never held a NSW firearms licence and remains on the run.

As I've noted previously, criminals will take any guns they can lay their hands on but, for serious gang warfare, what's obviously preferred are handguns and assault weapons, neither readily available and costly when they are. One solution is for crims to attempt to import complete guns. In mid-January, Australian Federal Police announced the arrest of a man who tried to import two dismantled handguns concealed inside remote-control cars sent from Arizona.

Another method is illicit manufacture, once a niche capability but of growing prevalence and of serious concern to law enforcement. Despite popular perception that to 3D print a gun all that's needed is a 3D printer and plans downloaded from the internet, that's not so. For a viable home-built gun, some metallic parts are required including springs, pins and barrels and, for handguns, slides. With the appropriate tools these can all be made in a home workshop. Alternatively, genuine factory-made components can be imported from the vast US market, though doing this is highly illegal in every Australian jurisdiction.

Here's NSW Assistant Police Commissioner Scott Cook who told *The Sydney Morning Herald* last year, that hybrid weapons using 3D-printed and official gun parts are untraced, unregistered and redefining Australia's gangland. "Traditionally, crooks used to steal firearms from registered gun owners. That grey market, where firearms drift out of the highly regulated market into the black market, is less prevalent now because criminals can simply import parts, which are much harder to detect," he said last year. "[Manufacturers] sell them to organised crime groups who use them in the violence we've seen play out in the streets. And so it's a brewing problem not just for NSW but the country."

In a series of busts last year, police in Sydney seized an AR-15 and an SKS in a raid on an underworld gunmaker which also netted a handgun and dozens of 3D-printed pistol magazines, ammunition and various frames and slides. In another un-

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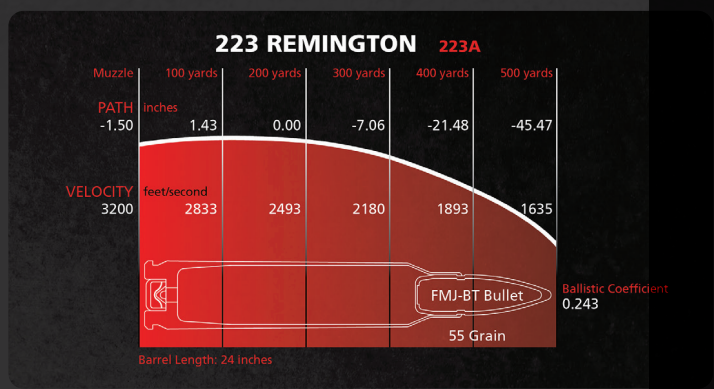
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derworld facility, police located an industrial CNC milling machine, 3D printer and large quantities of magazines, slides, barrels and ammunition.

Academic Professor David Bright, a criminologist from Deakin University, told the ABC the most effective 3D weapons were being assembled with authentic gun parts. “These firearms are just as good, just as deadly as factory-made firearms,” he said. “Individuals can produce firearms which can be automatic, semi-automatic, can 3D print magazines which can be inserted into these firearms and make them incredibly lethal.” He called on the government to compel internet service providers to block the downloading of 3D gun blueprints from overseas websites.

Another suggestion is all 3D printers sold in Australia be modified so they can’t print guns. Would any of this work? Maybe, though the Commonwealth is well into its social media ban on under-16s, which has demonstrated motivated individuals can usually find a way to bypass any online restrictions.

Before the Bondi atrocity, some jurisdictions had banned possession of 3D firearm blueprints. Post-Bondi other states and territories are likely to follow. What may also happen is an accelerated rollout of the National Firearms Registry, though it’s already happening and slated for operation by mid-2028.

One new measure, if in place previously, may have prevented one Bondi gunman (the father) from being issued a firearms licence. That’s proposed cross-checking of firearms licence applications with records of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), which means someone could be denied a gun licence based on security risk. ASIO was certainly aware of the son’s flirtation with Islamist extremism, though in 2019 concluded he didn’t harbour violent intentions.

Following the attack, ASIO director-general Mike Burgess launched an internal review, affirming the 2019 decision, though adding the pair “did not adhere to or intend to engage in violent extremism at that time”. Even so, would NSW have issued a firearms licence to a man had it been known his son harboured extremist leanings? Maybe not. Way back in 1973, NSW introduced a system of Firearms Prohibition Orders (FPOs), with major changes introduced in 2013 allowing police to search FPO subjects, their premises or vehicles without a warrant and without needing reasonable grounds.

FPOs bar a person from possessing firearms, parts or ammunition if, in the opinion of the NSW Police Commissioner, the individual is not a fit person in the public interest to possess a firearm. An FPO even bars someone from residing anywhere a firearm is kept. NSW police are big on FPOs, with more than 300 issued just in the second half of last year, this especially directed at those engaged in organised crime, particularly outlaw motorcycle gangs.

Police cite a wide range of FPO offence criteria (murder, armed robbery, drug dealing) though nothing specifically relating to security or terrorism offences. However, a 2016 study by the NSW Ombudsman found a significant overlap between Sydney crime groups and those with terror associations.

Out of 516 people searched under FPO powers, 83 were linked to listed terrorist organisations such as Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, Abu Sayyaf Group and Jemaah Islamiyah, or police had recorded concerns regarding the person’s radical or extremist ideology. In the case of the Bondi attackers, this would appear to have been a missed opportunity. ●



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Match made in heaven

SENIOR CORRESPONDENT ROD PASCOE ASSESSES A MATCHED PAIR OF WALTHER PDP PISTOLS, COURTESY OF NEWLY-APPOINTED DISTRIBUTOR SJS TRADING OF MELBOURNE

These pistols are Walther PDP full-size, striker-fired, self-loading, optics-ready and match grade, the main difference being one has a polymer frame and the other steel. Both have polygonal rifled barrels chambered for 9mm Luger (aka 9x19mm) and are supplied with three 10-round magazines with extended bases to complement the aluminium mag wells. The chambers have a step which prevents gasses escaping to the rear on firing.

The PDPs are fitted with long, ambidextrous slide stop levers and large, round magazine releases buttons which can be changed over for left handers. The external extractor on the right of the slide doubles as a loaded chamber indicator, while the presence of a cartridge in the chamber exposes a coloured portion of the extractor claw. Multi-slotted accessory rails are provided underneath the frames for attaching torches, training aids and weights. Unlike the PDP's forerunner the PPQ, these pistols are fitted with the Dynamic Performance Trigger (DPT) as standard, something previously available only as a drop-in aftermarket accessory in earlier PDP and PPQ models.

It's fair to say the major improvement in these models is the trigger. To a pistol shooter the trigger is the centre of the universe and the first thing tested for appraisal. The DPT firing mech-

anism has been refined to where the take-up has been shortened, to produce a crisp and precise break and a shorter and smoother than expected trigger reset. All this with a trigger weight of less than 5lbs which lets off at precisely 90 degrees from horizontal.

Apart from some cosmetic differences, both incorporate most of the earlier features which proved successful on the PPQ. I refer to that one as it was the ground-breaking model which changed the direction for Walther, turning basic 'defence' handguns into something comfortable in the hands of sporting shooters. Features such as the deep front and rear slide serrations, trigger guard and grip texture have been retained. Both recoil springs are of the flat wire type which are captive on the guide rods, while these PDP models house an adjustable rear sight which, unlike the PPQ, remains on the slide when an optical sight is fitted.

In the hand both feel good in terms of balance, weight and grip angle, highly familiar to me as a long-term PPQ shooter. Two models of Holosun reflex dot sights were also supplied by SJS Trading for the review and will be discussed later. So having explored their similarities, let's look at these PDP models individually.

The polymer-framed PDP pistols were reviewed in these pages when first released, and



ONE OF THE BETTER PERFORMERS WITH THE POLYMER PDP WITH HOLOSUN DOT SIGHT.



PDP STEEL-FRAMED MATCH.



received the much-coveted 'Handgun of the Year 2021' award from renowned US magazine *Guns & Ammo*. Walther has since increased the number of models, so now both compact and full-sized steel and polymer frames are available in a variety of barrel lengths and sight options. There are eight PDP models available from SJS Trading, including four steel with attractive finishes such as the PDP Vintage with its colour case-hardened appearance.

The polymer-framed pistol reviewed here is the PDP Full Size 5.1" Pro SD, considered 'match' grade by virtue of the DPT trigger as standard, its full-size frame and 5.1" barrel (it's also threaded hence the extra length). The grip backstrap has a choice of three sizes, one also modifies the beavertail shape.

It's not until you pick up the PDP Steel Frame (SF) Match Full Size 5" model you really appreciate what the fuss is all about. It's heavy - and I mean that in a good way. The weight and balance of this one reminds me of what pistols used to feel like before the polymer revolution of the 1980s. At 1.3kg compared to the polymer frame of just 835 grams, the SF is truly made for competition.

Unlike the polymer framed version reviewed, the front slide serrations are cut all the way through, helping with weight distribution and

barrel cooling. It has a wrap-around one-piece grip with the same deep texture that's sticky yet comfortable. The 5" barrel has a loaded chamber indicator where a small part of the brass case is visible in the top of the chamber.

AT THE RANGE

I fitted one of the Holosun dot sights, the popular 507 Competition, to the steel-framed PDP which came with the matching optic adaptor plate No.02, required for that sight. These plates can be supplied to the customer's requirements at time of ordering or as an aftermarket accessory for around \$140.

Both dot sights feature a choice of reticles with the option of either green or red. The 507 has a large window measuring 1.1 x 0.87", standard for competition use. The other Holosun sight, SCS-PDP, is specific to the PDP and I attached it directly to the optic cut-out of the polymer-framed pistol for testing. The SCS-PDP doesn't require an adaptor plate so the sight mounts lower in the slide, allowing the shooter to co-witness both

PDP POLYMER 5.1" PRO.



DEEP-CUT CHECKERING IN THE TRIGGER GUARD AND FRONT STRAP PROVIDE A STICKY GRIP; THE HOLOSUN DOESN'T REQUIRE THE ADAPTOR PLATE SO SITS LOWER ON THE SLIDE.



AN OPTICS ADAPTOR PLATE CAN BE SUPPLIED TO REQUIREMENT WHEN ORDERING.

the dot and open sights. A nice touch that which, combined with a smaller window, produces an overall lower profile of the pistol.

The trigger reset of the PDP is surprisingly short and it took me a while to get used to re-setting after each shot without releasing it fully. This way each trigger squeeze feels identical, similar to what you'd expect on a single-action hammer gun.

Seven commercially loaded ammunitions of varying bullet weights and types were tested on both PDP models from a bag rest at 25m, the best of those later reshot from a barricade at 25 yards on Service Pistol targets. The PDP SF was also tested with the factory open sights with excellent results. I found the white dots either side of the rear sight notch distracting, though they do have a place where fast target acquisition is required.

Factory loads used included American Eagle (Federal) 115gn FMJ; PPU 124gn lead RN; Winchester 125gn lead RN; Winchester 124gn FMJ; Sellier & Bellot 115gn non-tox FMJ; Federal 115gn Syntec range and Federal 124gn Syntec range. All rounds performed as expected for commercially-loaded ammo and both pistols functioned faultlessly.

SUMMARY

At time of writing, retail price for the PDP Full Size 5.1" Pro SD was \$2400. A number of gun shops are also offering this one with a Holosun SCS-PDP reflex sight as a package for around \$3200. Other polymer-framed PDPs, other than the 5.1" Pro, are between \$1500 and \$1700. Retail price for the PDP Full Size Steel Frame Match was around the \$4000 mark though again, packages are available including the Holosun 507 Competition for about \$5000.

I believe these PDPs are value for money and compete well with other European pistols of the

same standard - and they're versatile. The ability to make a firearm which serves more than one segment of the market is first and foremost in the minds of most gunmakers. Another important marketing criteria today is a pistol should also be able to meet the technical requirements of certain popular events, such as International Practical Shooting Confederation (IPSC) and other competitions with a Production division. This division caters to off-the-shelf handguns which haven't been modified or customised and fall into a group of reliable and readily available pistols.

Steel Challenge and WA1500 have matches specifically for revolvers and self-loaders fitted with reflex dot sights. IPSC, along with other disciplines such as Action Pistol, also has a Production Optics division, so producing pistols which are 'optics ready' has almost become a mandatory feature.

All the Walther PDP range of pistols available to target shooters in Australia fit the bill for the many competitions with a Production division. But on top of that they cater to those who appreciate high quality, European-built handguns that'll shoot accurately, reliably and last forever. ●



IMPRESSIVE FIVE-SHOT GROUP WITH LEAD PROJECTILES WAS UNEXPECTED.

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**NEIL GRAHAM LOOKS AT
COSTING THOSE RELOADS**





THE CONSUMABLES: PRIMER, BRASS CASE, POWDER AND PROJECTILE.

How many grains in a 1kg tin of gunpowder? Is it 5600, 10,502, 11,496? If you're reloading for a .223, .308, or 30-06 how many reloads do you get from that 1kg tin? For someone considering whether the cost of reloading their own ammunition is a better proposition than buying factory loads, or a shooter already reloading, it's very useful to work out how much each round you produce is going to cost.

Savings money is a major reason why many shooters decide to reload their own. Customising their ammunition to obtain optimal accuracy by varying powder charges and bullet seating depths is another. As is obtaining better performance in terms of velocity and gaining access to a greater range of projectile types and weights. Remember, factory offerings are loaded to be safe in all rifles chambered for that calibre, so you have a cartridge with a specific powder type, charge and projectile which may not provide the accuracy or performance it's capable of, or that you may be seeking.

To work out how much it's going to cost (or is currently costing) to reload, you need to add together the price per shot of the consumable items, these being the brass case, primer, powder and projectile. If you have brass cases from factory loads you've fired or are lucky enough to have been given them, they don't have to be included in this calculation. We'll consider the cost of buying unprimed brass later.

Primers are normally bought by a 100 pack or 1000 block, with opting for the latter normally working out slightly cheaper per unit. Last time I bought Remington 9½ primers they cost me \$220 for 1000 (\$22 per 100). The price per 100 packet was \$25 and for the purpose of this article we'll use that figure.

Now powder (by the way, there are 15,432 grains in a 1kg tin). My last tin of ADI powder cost me \$175. In this example we'll be considering a .308 loaded with 44 grains of 2208 behind a 150-grain projectile. A 44-grain load would mean 15,432 divided by 44 for 350 loads per tin. Powder cost per load is equal to cost per kilo of pow-

der divided by number of loads per kilo or \$175 divided by 350, which equates to 50c per load.

For the purposes of this calculation we'll consider two projectiles, a 150-grain Speer Hot-Cor pointed soft-point (\$70/100) and a premium quality and priced 150-grain Barnes TTSX BT (\$130/50). Cost per projectile works out to be 70c and \$2.60 respectively, with cost per loaded cartridge shown in the accompanying table.

The .308 Federal Power Shok use a 150g pointed soft-point projectile in their base priced factory loads which retail at around \$55 for 20. If you considered the 150g Speer Hot-Cor projectile to be in the same category, you'd see a saving from reloading of \$26 for 20 rounds.

OZ Gun Mart list Barnes Vor-TX 150g TTSX BT factory loads at \$175 per packet of 20 and Barnes 150g TTSX BT projectiles at \$130 per 50. Using the same projectile as the factory version, reloading would provide a saving of \$108 per 20 rounds, assuming your 44g of 2208 gives you equivalent velocity to the Barnes factory load.

If you buy unprimed brass you should probably include this in your cost per shot calculation, as they're eventually going to wear out and so should be considered a consumable like powder, primers and projectiles. Looking online, .308 unprimed cases from Winchester, Federal and Remington were around \$85 for 50 or \$1.70 per case. If you manage 10 reloads from each case, in your cost per shot calculation you'd need to add 17c and, for 20 reloads, you would need to add .085c per shot.

Variations in powder charge have a minimal effect on reloading costs. For example a 2g increase in the example above would reduce the number of loads per kilo to 335 (15,432/46) and increase the cost to \$0.522 (175/335), a \$0.022 increase per load. Projectile choice provides the greatest influence on the cost of reloading, as projectiles for the .308 come in differing shapes, construction and weights varying from 110g to 200g as shown above, with prices ranging from around 70c through to \$2.60 per unit.

In conclusion, when working out your unit cost, make sure you have current pricing for reloading components as a lot of websites don't regularly update prices. When you consider the cost of reloading equipment required, halving the cost of ammunition by reloading sounds great. But if you only shoot a packet or two each year and/or the savings you anticipate making go nowhere near the breakeven cost of reloading equipment, you're better off buying factory ammo. Then there are those shooters whose enhanced accuracy, performance and choice will always override cost considerations such as those discussed here. ●

	150G SPEER HOT-COR	150G BARNES TTSX BT
Primer	25c	25c
Powder	50c	50c
Projectile	70c	\$2.60
Total per round	\$1.45 (\$29 per 20)	\$3.35 (\$67 per 20)



Steady as she goes

MAGPUL BIPOD A WINNER, SAYS BEN UNTEN

We all know accurate shot placement is vital to successful shooting and especially so for longer shots. The MOE bipod by Magpul offers a lightweight front rest to squeeze best accuracy out of your rifle. Protruding only 50mm below the fore-end when collapsed, the legs open out to a minimum height of 180mm and up to 245mm fully extended. Weighing only 253 grams on my digital scales, the MOE bipod is made of lightweight polymer which is not only strong, but features steel jaws to securely grip the lug on your rifle.

The unit sports a large 34mm diameter knurled knob with a nyloc-type thread to quickly and securely attach and remove from your firearm. There's an additional forward lug to secure your sling, while the feet feature a stepped profile and have a slightly rubberised feel for increased grip on hard surfaces. These can be removed with a roll pin punch and swapped for most Atlas-patterned replaceable ones.

IN USE

After securing the bipod to your rifle and lowering the legs, they snap into place with a reassuring 'clunk'. Extending the legs involves pressing a

well-positioned, spring-loaded button while pulling them out. Each of the upper parts of the legs feature six sturdy indents to give you a significant amount of adjustment when shooting from an uneven surface, with these automatically locked into place by releasing the thumb-button.

Collapsing the legs involves pressing the same lock button while sliding them in and, to raise both legs back to parallel with your rifle, another spring-loaded button is pressed to release them. It's completely intuitive to do in practice and there's no chance of strongly-sprung legs or mechanisms pinching your fingers, something we've all done with other units.

I initially fitted the Magpul MOE bipod to my Lithgow .22 then my Ruger .223 to put it through its paces. Aside from being extremely quick to bring into use, it held my rifle steady and true as I fired group after group. I repeatedly extended and collapsed the legs and couldn't find fault with the operation.

The Magpul MOE Bipod is available in black and 'Flat Dark Earth' (a fancy phrase for 'brown') and sells for around \$165. It's available in most good gun shops or find your local dealer at tsaoutdoors.com.au ●



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PRESS GANG

DANIEL O'DEA TRIALS FIVE RELOADING KITS BY LEE

Reloading can be rewarding as well as being a chore, yet regardless whether you see it as a thankless task or therapeutic pleasure, having the right equipment certainly makes repetitive tasks a lot easier. I started reloading as a teenager on a Super Simplex neck-sizing press and, over time, have acquired and used everything from O-Frame to Turret to fully progressive presses. Each has its pros and cons dependant on task, though recently I came across a cheap and compact option which would make a great addition to any reloader's bench.

I encountered the Lee APP (Automatic Processing Press) almost by accident while looking for options to swage the primer crimps from a pile of ex-military brass. The APP came up as an option and, the more I looked at it, the more interesting it appeared. Speaking with local Lee distributor Grycol International, we agreed it would be a worthy product for assessment.

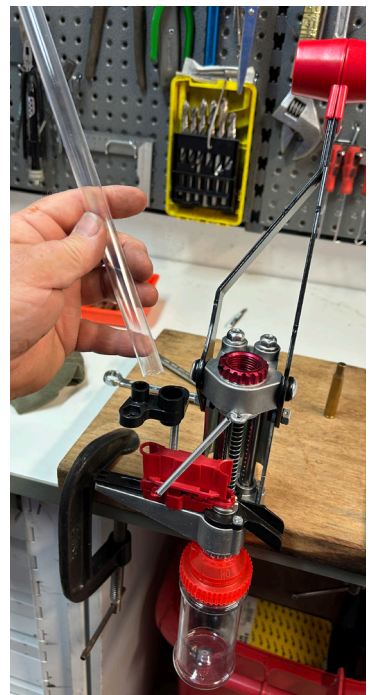
It seems Lee predominately market the press as a case prep-come-bullet sizing station, while also doubling as a quite compact and capable single station reloading press. Patented in 2019, according to their website: "It's the first of its kind with the ability to mount the die to the top or bottom of the press. This die-mounting flexibility allows previously unheard-of automation on a single station press. Now you can de-prime, primer pocket swage, bulge bust or size cast bullets as fast as you can operate the lever."

In essence what you have is a compact press with two opposing die heads and a simple but effective case-feed system. Adaptable for many processes, it excels in single stage repetitive operations such as swaging, sizing, de-capping etc. Kind of like the 'Thunder Bird Two' of reloading, you simply buy different APP kits to perform the desired function and, to this end, the following five kits are available.

APP Breech Lock Bullet Sizing Kit: Specifically for sizing cast lead projectiles, this along with the correct calibre sizer and punch has you sizing lead projectiles as fast as you can operate the lever. You load the feed tube and, at each stroke, a projectile is presented and pushed through the sizer to fall free into the supplied catch bottle.

APP Primer Pocket Swager: This one's for swaging primer pockets to remove primer crimps commonly found on (though not exclusive to) military brass. The kit comes with swages for both large and small primer pockets, with a swage push die which locates in the lower head and a spring-loaded guide and collet in the upper head. It'll function with cases up to and including .30/06 length. There's no shell holder required and again, once set up, the process happens as fast as you can cycle the lever.

APP Bulge Buster: Bulging can occur when cases are fired in chambers which don't fully support the cartridge. This kit operates almost identically to the Bullet Sizing one, though in



ASSEMBLING THE CASE FEED TUBE (COMES WITH THREE).



DANIEL WITH THE CASE FEED ASSEMBLY.

this instance you're pushing cases through a case-sizing bush as opposed to pushing cast bullets through a sizer. It comes with three sized bushes and is stated to work with the following cases "only" - .380, 10mm, .40 S&W, .41 AE, .45 ACP, .45 GAP and .45 Win Mag. Why not 9mm (9x19)? Because as slight as it is, the 9mm case is tapered, so results wouldn't be ideal in this bushing designed for straight-walled cases.

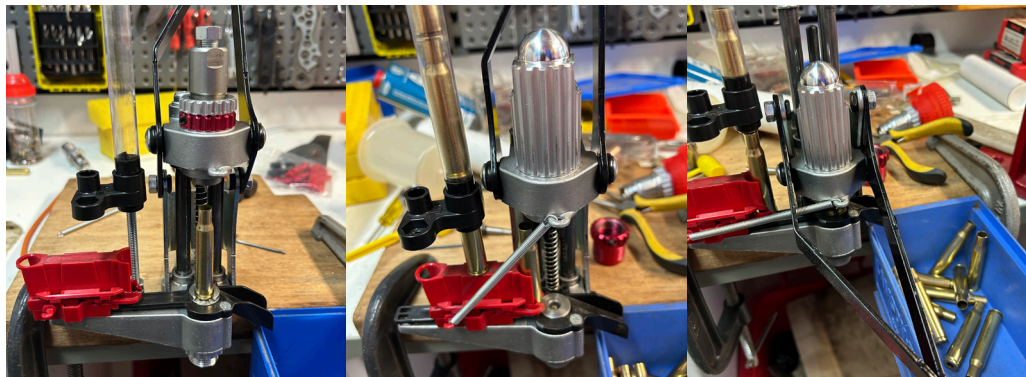
APP Breech Lock Ram Prime: This one incorporates two priming stems (large and small) which lock into the lower head and, on the down-stroke, protrude through the shell holder. Place your primer in a small spring-loaded cup atop the stem, put a case in the shell holder and push

down on the lever to seat the primer. It provides an effecting priming system said to have plenty of feel for consistent primer seating, if you wish to use the press for start-to-finish reloading (I prefer the much quicker Lee Auto Primer).

APP De-prime Kit: This one kind of looks and works similar to the Primer Pocket Swager, the top head having a guide and spring-loaded collet, though in this case the guide rod incorporates a de-capping pin. For the lower head a blank shell holder is provided. Load up the case feed with cases and, with each stroke, the case is located by the guide and collet and at the bottom of the stroke the de-capping pin pushes the old primer out. Fast and effective.



DE-CAPPING .30/06 BRASS.



THE PRESS CAN ALSO BE USED FOR SINGLE-STAGE RESIZING; LEE APP SET UP WITH THE PRIMER POCKET SWAGER KIT; LEE APP WITH PRIMER POCKET SWAGER KIT ON THE DOWNSTROKE.

When used as a conventional single stage reloading press, the APP will accept any universal (7/8" diameter) die sets that screw into Lee's Spline Drive Breech Lock Bush (quick change) system. However, when combined with Lee's optional X-Press shell holders, it allows you to use the supplied case feed which speeds things up considerably. This is because you don't have to place individual cases in the shell holder, with each stroke of the lever producing a resized case as fast as you can go for however many cases there are in the feed tube.

I gave the Lee APP a solid workout by virtue of the fact that I'd acquired more than 700 once-fired Lake City .30/06 cases. For those in the know, this stuff is premium thick-walled military brass that'll stand up to being reloaded many times before being junked. No matter how you put it, prepping 700 full-sized rifle cases is no small task. First up you want your cases clean, so they needed to be tumbled then de-primed, resized, trimmed and chamfered. And as these feature a military primer crimp, that must be removed to enable clean access for the new primer to be inserted.

After cleaning I started with the APP De-prime Kit. To be honest, results were a little mixed as .30/06 cases are close to the maximum length this kit can handle. So unless I was extremely careful, at full stroke the case neck guide could slightly impact and damage the necks. This was only with the 06 cases at full stroke and not apparent at all with shorter cases.

Thankfully I'd also grabbed a Lee Universal De-capping Die which handles cases up to 3.125" and was a much better option in this instance. Better still, in the APP press I could use the case feed which allowed me to de-cap as fast as I could work the lever. Spent primers are collected in the bottle below for a no-mess operation.

In summary, both de-capping options worked fine, only the Universal unit was a better option with longer cases (.30/06 or greater). Of course de-capping as a separate operation is essential if you're going to swage the primer pockets. Yet even with progressive presses there's good reason

to keep it separate, as debris from spent primers can clog up the works with some progressives and it's a far cleaner operation when left separate.

Moving to the Primer Pocket Swager and, once set up and adjusted on the APP, it made the job a breeze with each stroke of the lever. The process swages a slight bevel at the primer pocket mouth and removes any crimp after the de-capping stage. Once done it gives the new primer a clean and clear run into the primer pocket when repriming the case. Again in progressive presses, unless this is done, primers failing to seat correctly can be a major cause of jamming.

I didn't use the Bullet Sizing or Bulge Buster kits and, as mentioned, when manually priming I prefer a Lee Auto Primer which is much faster with no handling of primers. For those inclined there are plenty of online videos of all operations. Like the functions I tested, the rest appear to be fast and efficient processes.

I did use the press for straight-up resizing and, once again, the case feed combined with X-Press shell holders really speeds up the process. As a compact press it's never going to give you the resizing force of a large O-frame unit, though not everyone needs that.

So who should buy a Lee Automatic Processing Press? First up, anyone who does a lot of reloading and is after a cheap and efficient way to carry out specific processes at speed. And pistol reloaders with Federal 9mm FC cases, you know the ones with factory crimps that jam up your Dillon when the primers won't seat. Run all those through the de-cap and swage process and you'll never have the issue again.

Who else? Small volume reloaders with one or two medium calibres could race through a couple of hundred .38 Specials or .223 Remingtons (for example), faster on one of these than you ever will on a traditional single stage press, especially with X-Press shell holders and case feed in play. I can't see my reloading bench being without one now. Retailing at around \$165 for the APP press and kits from about \$60, it's hard to question the value. Check out the full range of Lee Products at grycol.com.au

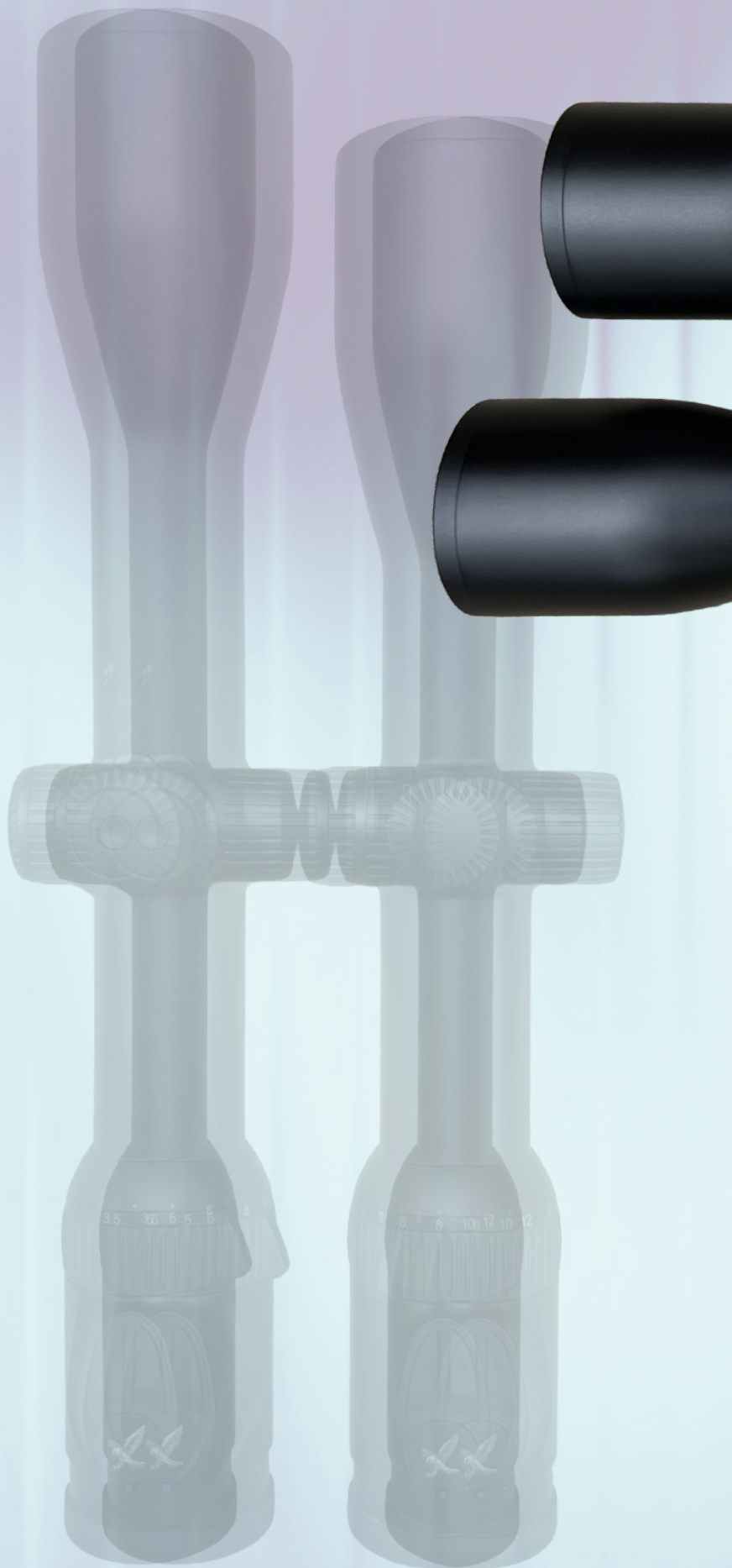
Double vision

PAUL MILLER TRIALS TWO EXCEPTIONAL SWAROVSKI SCOPES

When the non-shooting public hears the name Swarovski they invariably think of crystal and the incredible upmarket products they produce from precisely engineered lead-free glass. Rings, earrings, necklaces, watches, chandeliers as well as beautiful figurines of just about anything you can imagine, are sold worldwide to discerning buyers of these beautiful and highly expensive items.

The company, which is still family owned, was started in Austria by Daniel Swarovski in 1895 when he invented a machine to grind and cut crystal gemstones. Daniel's son Wilhelm was an amateur astronomer, who was able to use the company's increasingly advanced glass processing methods to develop his own improved binoculars in 1935. Wilhelm's passion led to the establishment of subsidiary company Swarovski Optik in Absam, Tyrol in 1949, to make long-range optical equipment. They're still in the same location today.

From a shooter's point of view, when we hear the name Swarovski we think of premium hunting optics. From its earliest days Swarovski Optik quickly rose to become one of the premium scope, binocular and telescope manufacturing firms in the world. In the early 1990s they introduced the first-ever hunting scope with an illumi-





nated reticle and, in 1995, the first riflescope with integrated laser rangefinder.

In 1996 the LRS series was introduced, the first civilian market telescopic sight with an integrated laser rangefinder. In 2007 they launched the first riflescope with 6x zoom and, in 2015, the X5i series arrived with 5x zoom and illuminated reticle for long-range hunting. The following year came an 8x zoom in the first version of the Z8i series, offering what I believe was the widest zoom range at the time.

Swarovski Optik employs about 1000 staff who produce and market a range of exceptional telescopic sights which include zoom ranges of 3, 5, 6 and 8. That's an amazing spread with technological achievement to match, especially at the top end of the range.

They're famous for optical excellence in all their model ranges and, while increasingly expensive as you move up the magnification range, they're generally considered as good as it gets. Interestingly though, they're no more expensive than other famous mid-European brands like Kahles, Pecar and Zeiss. Readers may be interested to know Swarovski actually bought Kahles in 1974 to strengthen their market position. The latter now leans mostly towards military and recreational target users, while Swarovski covers the demand for high-end hunting optics.

Having reviewed the Z5 series some years ago and been highly impressed, I was delighted to catch up with Stewart Leach, National Area Manager for Swarovski Optik in Australia. He offered *Australian Shooter* two new top of the line Z8i models in the 2-16x50 and the 3.5-28x50 in their recently released Generation 2 models. These

have the same optical properties of the Gen 1s but with a slightly different cosmetic look and enlarged function buttons for the illumination system, controlled from on the top of the eyepiece. Also available in the new Gen 2 Z8i range are the 1-8x24, 1.7-13.3x42 and 2.3-18x56, which surely cover all hunting scenarios. All Z8i models have an illuminated reticle.

Z8i GEN 2 - 3.5-28X50

With a useful lower end of 3.5 and amazing top end of 28, this scope would seem to have pretty much all hunting bases covered. It has a 30mm main tube, a generous and forgiving eye box which affords a wide 12m field of view at 3.5 power and the ability to shoot precisely, with a good rest, all the way to 28 power.

These numbers sound more like a target scope, yet this one's designed specifically for the type of hunting where long shots may be the order of the day, but close shots or early morning or last-light shots, especially those at closer ranges, may present. This power range covers all these eventualities. The 50mm objective allows in a significant amount of light, while the lens technology and proprietary coatings produce an amazing 93 per cent light transmission.

The bell of the objective externally measures 56mm but looks well balanced and elegant. Overall length is 380mm yet it's light for its size at 665g, always helpful on a rifle which may be carried considerable distances in rough terrain. The growing tendency in Europe to design higher powered hunting scopes, revolves around the idea you can identify and assess your quarry and its trophy potential with the higher end of your

THE Z8 SERIES 2-16X50 USES ALL THE SAME COMPONENTRY BUT IS ONE INCH SHORTER IN THE MAIN TUBE THAN THE 3.5-28X50.



THE SWAROVSKI Z8i 3.5-28X50 IS ELEGANT, LIGHTWEIGHT AND BALANCED VERY WELL ON THE TIKKA T3X TEST RIFLE.

magnification range, removing the need to carry a spotting scope. When it comes time for the shot you can power down (or not), while the rubberized power ring is exceptionally smooth and a delight to use.

There are three turrets on this one: elevation, windage and parallax. The first two are capped and the latter also houses a battery for the illuminated reticle (a spare fits inside the windage turret). Parallax goes from zero to infinity with a soft click you can feel, while being very smooth and precise.

Adjustments for elevation and windage are in centimetres with one click equal to 1cm at 100m. Not as fine as quarter MOA clicks, yet perfectly acceptable for my shots out to 500m at the range and 320m in the field. Total adjustment is 140cm vertically and 70cm of windage. Admittedly not an enormous range, though certainly more than enough with a flat-shooting cartridge to get you out to around 800m, beyond what I consider an ethical range for hunting except for an expert shot.

It pays to remember this scope's designed specifically for hunting and, as such, the adjustments are more than adequate, with clicks on both dials being crisp and definite. If you want to reach further and shoot long-range targets or steel plates, installing a 10 MOA rail and mounting the scope on it will get the job done.

Swarovski also offer an optional locking turret system exclusively for the Z8 series in the BTF (Ballistic Turret Flex), something of a gamechanger to my mind. The BTF package comes with a turret and rings numbered 2, 3, 4, 5 and one with a dot. It also comes with a ring for windage should you choose to install it as a windage turret.

Sight-in your rifle to be on point of aim at 100m (zero stop), then attach the BTF turret which clips on by way of a simple but secure interface. Having downloaded the free Swarovski Optik Hunting app to your phone, select a factory load from the comprehensive list or enter details of your handload, including bullet weight and ballistic co-efficient.

Now enter the exact average speed of your bullet (having chronographed the load), elevation where you mostly shoot and average temperature. You also measure distance between the centre of your bolt and centre of the scope tube and, the more accurate the data input, the more accurate your results will be. The app then calculates the appropriate clicks from your 100m zero to each ring you intend to place on the turret. You might choose to have 200, 300, 400 and 500m positions (as I did) or 200, a dot ring for 250 then 300 and 400m.

The BTF proved deadly accurate and utterly repeatable on my highly accurate Tikka T3X in 6.5 Creedmoor on the range to 500m and when hunting. You can also order a dial which is laser cut specifically to your cartridges ballistics for the BTF and I've no doubt this would also be perfect. Yet the advantage of the BTF is if you change your load, just put the new data in the app and use the new ballistic solution with the BTF to reset position of the turret rings.

All this technology isn't much use if your scope has less than excellent optical properties and the Z8 series of scopes are frankly amazing. We all see things differently, yet with the parallax adjustment and extremely effective eye relief on the eyepiece, you have superb imagery on all powers and at any range. The scope's forgiving depth of field means you could set the parallax at the indent at 100m and shoot with confidence at closer to middle ranges. The higher powers are a little more critical and that's where the parallax again comes into its own.

In terms of light gathering and ability to see well in low-light conditions, you begin to realise just how good these scopes are. Even at 28 power



THE BALLISTIC TURRET FLEX (BTF) IS AN EXCELLENT OPTIONAL EXTRA FOR THE Z8 SERIES.

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THE SWAROVSKI 3.5-28X50 OFFERS AN AMAZINGLY VERSATILE MAGNIFICATION RANGE.

I was surprised to see there was little difference as the shadows lengthened. Add to this the illuminated reticle with day and night setting and 64 brightness settings in total, and you can experiment with what suits your eyes best either day or night.

Illumination is controlled from on top of the substantial eye box, a simple toggle switch moving from centre to night and day by just moving it left and right. Brightness is controlled by the plus and minus buttons on top of the eye box and this is even more streamlined on the Gen 2 model. The large eye box also delivers about 30 per cent greater field of view compared to my other scopes set on the same power at 100m.

Three available reticles include the classic 4A-I, which is like a duplex without the heavy vertical bar tapering from the top of the scope picture down to the fine crosshairs in the middle. I like this one because it's simple and not so eye-cluttering than a duplex-style reticle, giving a less crowded look at what you're shooting at. The 4W-I is the same as the 4A-1, except it has marks on the fine horizontal crosshair between the thicker crosshairs for windage.

And finally the BRX-I (review scope) which is a more tactical option with a Christmas tree effect, for using the scope reticle and Hunting app

to allow for an almost infinite number of sight settings, useful for target shooters who also hunt. All the crosshairs are very fine to allow for precise long-range shooting. The illuminated dot appears only at the centre of the crosshair intersection on all reticles.

I found myself using the illumination at every opportunity, as it compensated on many occasions for the fine crosshairs against darker backgrounds, especially in early or very late light conditions. If you happen to leave the illumination on accidentally, it automatically turns off when you raise your rifle near vertical or lay it on its side (like putting it in a gun slip for transportation). It automatically turns on again if you level the rifle, a clever technology to prolong battery life.

Z8I GEN 2 - 2-16X50

Everything I've said about the 3.5-28x50 holds true for the 2-16x50. It's also optically incredible and uses the same BTF turret for elevation, windage or both if you have the need and feel the expense is warranted. It's one inch (25mm) shorter in the main tube and slightly lighter than its bigger magnification brother. It looked beautifully balanced when mounted on my Tikka hunting rifle and performed every bit as well.



BX-1 MCKENZIE HD

8x42 AND 10x42 CONFIGURATIONS

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BX-2 ALPINE HD

8x42, 10x42 AND 10x52 CONFIGURATIONS

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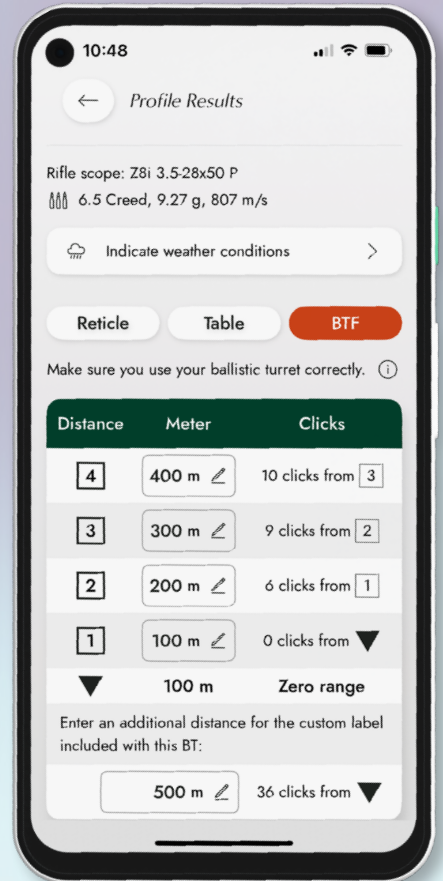
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THE EXCELLENT OPTICS AND BALLISTIC TURRET ALLOWED PRECISION SHOOTING ON THIS BIG SOW.



SWAROVSKI'S HUNTING APP PROVIDES PRECISE ADJUSTMENTS FOR THE BTF DIAL WITH ACCURATE DATA INPUT.

SPECIFICATIONS

Importer:

Swarovski Australia

Approximate prices:

2-16x50: \$5370; 3.5-28x50: \$5800; BTF: \$480

Warranty:

10 years

Included with scopes:

Bikini cover, instruction manual, throw lever and cleaning cloth

Accessories for either scope:

Ballistic Turret Flex: \$480; aluminium magnetic flip-up lens covers: \$193 each; neoprene scope cover: \$99

Once I had my rifle zeroed again at 100m, back on went the BTF and the results on targets at all ranges were faultless. Both scopes are second focal plane, which means the reticle stays the same size irrespective of magnification used, ideal for hunting in my opinion.

This scope with its 2x lower end and immense field of view (21m at 100m) is more useful for ultra close-range work and features the classic 4A-1 reticle. But to be fair to the amazing BRX-I, the Christmas tree is incredibly fine and just blends into the overall picture when you concentrate on aiming, using the illuminated dot in the centre of the crosshairs. The top end of 16x should cover most long-range hunting shots.

Also available in the Z8i range are the 1-8x24, 1.7-13.3x42 and 2.3-18x56. The 2-16x50 is Stew Leach's favourite model in the line-up for his style of hunting, as he prefers the uncomplicated 4A-I reticle and lower end 2x power for in-close activities. He made the point he feels this is the ultimate "all-rounder" in the Z8i stable.

Personally, I beg to differ as I've fallen for the bigger brother and its 28x top end. I've always been a bit of a 'rev-head' when it comes to magnification, having used a 6.5-20 scope most of my hunting life and, until reviewing this Z8i 3.5-28, had never experienced such a broad and useful range of magnification for both hunting and target shooting. But how I'll have this purchase approved by my 'financial controller' is anyone's guess.

IN SUMMARY

In all seriousness, Swarovski Optik products are genuinely as good as they get. We all have our personal preferences and prejudices, yet these are in the very top tier of scopes made anywhere in the world at any price.

Our eyes are arguably the most important of our senses and the optical and mechanical properties of these scopes provide the very best visual experience. This enables us to shoot targets or game to the best of our ability, though I acknowledge many will view them as expensive . . . as I did.

When you delve deeper into the company, its employees, the extraordinary quality of componentry and their long history in making incredible equipment, you understand the bigger picture. I've never reviewed scopes with such optical clarity edge-to-edge, which exhibit zero tunnelling and have perfect colour rendition and low-light performance. That's what you're investing in. More at swarovskioptik.com

• A big 'thank you' to Stew Leach, whose encyclopedic knowledge of his product was astounding and helped immensely with the technical details. ●



ALIEN 2: THE SEQUEL

AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND

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Canik TTI - Alliance with a champion
Frontier Reflex sight - Simplicity itself
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ISSUE 24

**OUT
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Different glass!

**CHRIS REDLICH ENJOYS THE LATEST
BINOS FROM ZERO TECH**



EXCEPTIONAL LIGHT TRANSMISSION THANKS TO THE LARGER 45MM OBJECTIVE LENS; THE ED 10X45S WERE USED EXTENSIVELY DURING FERAL PIG HUNTS.

Most binocular manufacturers these days seem to use high definition (or HD) as a marketing ploy to sell their gear, but what's the difference between one brand of HD compared to any other? It generally comes down to the manufacturing process, though it seems reasonable to assume the expensive stuff is better. So for this test I was keen to find out if the new ZeroTech Trace 10x45 ED binoculars have earned their place in the fair dinkum category of high definition.

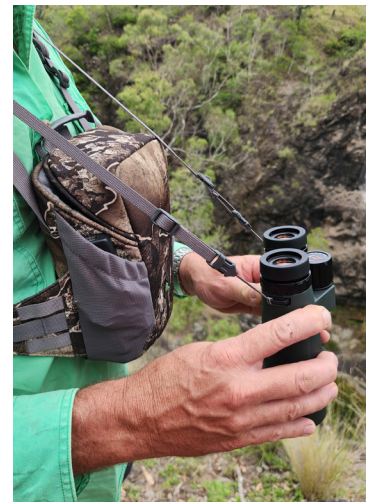
'Trace' is ZeroTech's stable of mostly hunting optics and a step up from the less expensive Vengeance range. I'd never heard of their ED (Extra-low Dispersion) binos before and learned the 10x45s are the company's second release in the Trace range after the larger 15x56s. They're an advanced roof prism-type design, typically identified by the distinct parallel arranged lens barrels. I never thought I'd go down the road of trying to explain a roof prism design, however the Abbe-Koenig label had me intrigued.

Abbe-Koenig equipped binos use a complex arrangement of angular prisms to reflect and reproduce an image as it passes, while the quality reflective coatings increase light transmission and further enhance that image. I challenge you to shine a torch down the objective lens (as I did), check out the angle lens shapes and you'll see exactly what I'm talking about. I'm no expert on lens glass and coatings but, as an average hunter, like to know what I'm buying.

I also wanted to learn more about Extra-low Dispersion as I wasn't familiar with the term, before discovering it's a specific glass treatment which helps reduce chromatic aberration. I'll spare you the science and explain as simply as I understand it. Chromatic aberration is a technical term for what's known as colour fringing. This happens when a mix of colours don't entirely focus together, creating a potential outline (or halo) around an object in view. ED glass is commonly found in high-end camera lenses to reduce chromatic aberration, where photographs have to be flawless.

Measuring 165mm long the 10x45s aren't quite as compact as others I've tested, though considering they have a marginally wider objective (providing a slightly larger exit pupil and light transmission over their 42mm rivals), it's to be expected. In the hand they actually feel closer to binos of 50mm objective, yet their size is offset by the heavy duty dual hinge design which opens for a wide-eyed interpupillary distance of 75mm. I can also fit three of my big fingers around the waist-shaped lens barrels and, despite nudging one kilogram, found them extremely comfortable to hold for extended periods.

The lens barrels are made from robust magnesium alloy, including the integral strap loops on either side, while the olive rubber armour coating with added grip contours feels softish and will provide ample protection in slippery situations. I secured these ones to the straps of my regular bino harness and strongly suggest most serious hunters do the same, as the supplied hard case and neck strap, while well made, is more suited



ERGONOMICALLY SHAPED FOR COMFORTABLE GRASP WHEN HUNTING; TWIST-UP CUPS FOR CORRECT EYE RELIEF.



to light duties. In the unfortunate event your binos fall in the drink, rest assured they're O-ring sealed and nitrogen purged for waterproofness and fog resistance.

Differing from the three-twist eye cups typical on other brands, the EDs have just two, yet despite this I'd no problem finding correct eye relief and they remained firm even after strong contact against my cheeks. The alloy focus dial is within perfect reach of the trigger finger, while the single dioptre dial on the right ocular moved easily and I'd no drama adjusting it to my eyes.

I like the way ZT have made these parts out of solid material, rather than just rubber coated rings like others tested, as the bold lugs felt solid and moulded to my fingertips really well. Minor details like this further instil confidence in build strength, while showing careful thought to creating a reliable quality package made in China to a very high standard.

FIELD AND GAME

I already own quality HD binos in Swarovski ELs and Leupold BX-4 10x42s, so was keen to run the ZeroTech EDs alongside them for hunting. What was instantly noticeable was the strong colour contrast during late afternoon at a mate's property, when I took a peak at some roos across a green wheat paddock. By comparison the others also gave a clear view, yet all three revealed a different translation of object colouring.

Although this observation was minimal between the three, the ZT EDs showed rich colouring which seemed surreal compared to the naked eye. This phenomenon in no way detracted from the quality of view, as it enhanced the colour of



THE ED BINOS WERE ALSO USED FOR IDENTIFYING PESTS AT NIGHT; HUNTING BINOS SUCCESSFULLY TESTED ON FERAL PIGS.



BIRD WATCHING IS AN ENJOYABLE PART OF ANY DEER HUNT.

an object which would otherwise seem deficient. I understand everyone's eyes are different, though I suspect it was the ED lens treatment at work. Furthermore, if you're into bird watching (as I am when deer hunting), you can appreciate their full colour while at play in the trees.

The EDs 45mm objective lenses give you a handy 112m field of view at 1000m. I also observed good depth of field which can help minimise focal adjustment on images at close range and long-range targets at around 1500m. Slight peripheral blurring was noticed during some glassing, though only seemed to be an issue in really bright conditions. When I did encounter incorrect eye relief it was my own fault, through hastily scanned views of moving targets but this proved inconsequential.

Binoculars are a deer hunter's best friend but, as it was late in the year, we were unfortunately out of season for stags. However, I made the most of our trips to western Queensland, running the binos through their paces early morning and late in the day on feral pig hunts.

As we stalked them, the EDs helped identify the biggest ones in the mob I'd take first. And while spotlighting, they also made sense of those eyes slinking around paddocks by night, right before I ended a red coat's dinner party.

END GAME

With expensive glass such as my Swarovski EL binos, I always expect a lot from them and they're excellent. Yet priced around \$899 at time of writing, I couldn't ask for more from the ZT Trace 10x45 EDs. They're as high definition as you'd expect from binoculars in their category and far superior to the cheaper Vengeance models.

I'd difficulty faulting them in all manner of scenarios, including evening hunts, and enjoyed watching unsuspecting animals go about their business long after my naked eye had given up. After sharing them with fellow hunters, all agreed if they were looking for a new pair of binos they'd consider these. All ZeroTech products are covered by their 'Any Problem, Any Owner, Lifetime Guarantee'. More at tsaoutdoors.com.au ●



THE BINOS COME WITH A SWAG OF EXTRAS.

SNAKES ALIVE!

EXPERT MARK PELLEY HAS SOME SOUND ADVICE

On the farm, at a target range or properly handling your firearm while duck hunting or stalking through the bush, no matter where you are in Australia, it's almost inevitable you'll encounter one of our many snakes.

The exact species you find will depend on where you are, as each snake is generally found in specific locations. For example in colder climates like Tasmania, you're likely to find black tiger snakes as well as lowland copperheads. In the eastern part of the country you can expect eastern browns (second most venomous in the world). In the north you may come across coastal taipans which are very different from inland taipans, king browns or death adders in the middle of Australia.

This country has more than 200 species of snakes with at least 100 of them venomous. We're the only country in the world with more venomous than non-venomous species, so the chances are if you mess with a snake, it can kill you. Of the top 10 most venomous snakes in the world, five are native to Australia including the inland taipan (most venomous land snake by far), eastern brown (second-most venomous), coastal taipan (third), tiger snake (fifth) and death adder (ninth).

The toxicity of venom is extremely dangerous and, if bitten, you require immediate medical attention. Without this you could easily die in 30 minutes from a bite, so to keep you safe while shooting, make sure you understand what follows.

BEHAVIOUR

Contrary to stuff you read online, no snake will ever chase you. Someone once try to tell me a snake chased them through water while duck



hunting, they leapt in the car and at 60km/h a tiger snake was still behind them. What that individual was actually saying is they allowed fear and emotion to cloud their judgement and perception of reality. Snakes have such a bad reputation which is unfair, as they're extremely shy creatures which bite humans only in defence.

A snake's first option is to retreat. That's why despite the fact there are so many around, we don't often see them. If a snake feels cornered or trapped, it may flare up, go into an 'S' bend or otherwise mock strike towards you, yet this behaviour doesn't mean it 'wants' to bite you.

AVOIDING BITES

Considering the above behaviour and personality of snakes, the answer to avoid being bitten is extremely simple: Leave them alone.

And there are many reasons to do this. In 2017, the Australian Venom Research Unit conducted a longitudinal study on snakebites, finding the majority of victims fitted the same criteria: Men over 40, in and around their own home after 4pm.

And what do you reckon they were doing? My educated guess after handling more than 14,000 snakes and catching them since I was seven years old? I'd wage they were trying to pick up, handle or kill a snake.

In other words if you leave them alone, they'll leave you alone.

No matter which state or territory you live in, it's against the law to handle, harm or kill snakes. The reason? It's never a 'you or the snake' situation because, as I said, they'd much rather retreat. And quite simply, you keep yourself safe and avoid being labelled an animal abuser. Snakes play a vital role in the environment and without them our delicate ecosystem will suffer.

MARK PELLEY, THE SNAKE HUNTER, IN HIS 'NATURAL HABITAT'.



THE EASTERN BROWN, NOT ONE TO BE MESSED WITH.

Furthermore, gun owners have enough of a challenging time demonstrating to the public we're responsible people who practice safe shooting. It only takes one to damage our reputation, so don't let you or your mate be the next one on the nightly news in a 'selfie' holding a gun and a snake. It makes us all look bad.

If you see a snake, leave it alone. Back away to give it space and remember, there's no need to run if you remain calm and responsible. Just let it pass or go the long way around it and whatever you do, don't harass or tackle it and you'll be safe. Of course incidents will happen in freak situations but, for the most part, this is all you need to do.

If you do become a victim of snakebite, never give up. Keep trying no matter how bad the symptoms become. If the venom reaches your organs, depending on the species you may suffer incredibly with severe pain, bleeding out, feelings of suffocation or extreme nausea. You could suffer a cardiovascular collapse (from an eastern brown), but never give up. As someone who previously worked in hospital emergency, I know how vital it is to keep fighting for your life.

You do not need to identify the snake. Our hospitals have polyvalent antivenoms for treating all Australian snakebites. If you can safely take a photo of the snake then great, but this isn't necessary. Never try to kill the snake or capture it for hospital staff as again, this isn't necessary.

I'm frequently asked what clothing or protection exists to prevent snakebites. I wear loose-fitting pants tucked into my boots, as a snake will generally bite the pants and not your leg in this case. Gaiters aren't strictly essential. I work as a snake catcher and don't use them, though there's no harm in wearing them.

I've been handling snakes for years and am also a registered nurse who used to teach overseas doctors who came to Australia about reptiles. I also run regular snake-safety workshops for businesses, teaching employees how to be safe around snakes and how to treat bites.

- Mark Pelley, The Snake Hunter, is a snake catcher based in Melbourne. He's consulted extensively by private businesses, governments and individuals about snakes, bites and snake safety. Mark is qualified and experienced as an RN, snake handler and demonstrator and has a background in OHS. He and his family have been proud supporters of the SSAA for more than a decade. ●

SNAKEBITE PROCEDURE

Move away a safe distance as they can bite again.

Remain calm. This is key - your next steps could mean the difference between life and death.

Lie down and stay still if safe to do so, moving as little as possible. Venom travels generally through the lymphatic system except in rare occasions.

Immediately call 000 and, if with a friend, have them do it. If you're in an area with mobile phone coverage, give the location and follow instructions.

Apply a pressure immobilization bandage to the affected limb but not too tight. Start at the bottom of the limb, just below the nails on the hand/feet to the top of the limb (shoulder/hip depending on bite location). The reason the nails are left bare is to press on them to ensure they turn from white back to pink. If so, the pressure is correct.

Slow your breathing as much as possible.

If you have no phone or radio coverage, apply the pressure bandage as above. If on your own, with as little movement of the limb as possible, make your way to phone coverage, **make the call then lie down.** If with someone else, stay still and have them find a signal, leaving markers as they go to find you again.

Best foot forward

DEREK NUGENT WALKS WITH CONFIDENCE IN RUNFUN BOOTS

Regular readers of *Australian Shooter* will recognize this review as the follow-up article promised in 'Reality bites' (March 2026). By way of a quick recap, that article addressed the issue of Australia's abundance of venomous snakes and some of the appropriate measures to manage encounters with them afield. Pertinent advice, given ours is the only country on earth with more venomous than non-venomous species of snake, including 12 identified as 'absolutely' life-threatening.

It's a fact most bites occur on the limbs as a result of one of two scenarios. Either the chance, unanticipated encounter or as an outcome of deliberate, if not ill-considered, attempts to 'interfere' with the snake. In both instances, if the freeze or flight strategy fails, then fight (i.e. bite) becomes the snake's instinctive go-to, with potentially tragic outcomes. In such circumstances, protecting arms and legs by being appropriately dressed in puncture-resistant garments is a must.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Appropriate attire is your first line of defence against snakebite, particularly when you understand how small venomous snakes' fangs actually are. Loose-fitting trousers and long-sleeved shirts of a heavy and durable material are an obvious first choice. Not only do they minimize skin exposure, they're puncture-resistant and create a 'dead air' space between clothing and skin, which helps reduce the chances of a piercing bite.

Enclosed footwear is also essential and can be augmented with a pair of gaiters for additional protection. In this respect, items made from leather, heavy duty denim and canvas, Kevlar, ballistic nylons like Cordura and synthetic rubber like neoprene are readily available. Personally I've never liked gaiters and have, as a result, always opted for quality calf-high military boots for foot protection when hunting.



However, being aware of changes in boot 'technology' in respect to design features, manufacturing techniques and materials, I've always been want to peruse hunting boot reviews and advertisements in search of something 'better'. Consequently, as a result of advertising in *Australian Hunter* magazine, I became aware of the existence of Runfun snake-proof hunting boots.

These seemed to go that desirable one step further by providing an enhanced length of leg protection, akin to gaiters, through use of an integrated design. After brief discussions with Australian Importer AFN in respect to sizings, I bought a pair online from The 4WD Depot. I've been happily tramping the ridges of the Brisbane valley in them for more than nine months now and am completely happy with my decision to splash out and buy a pair.

RUNFUN SNAKE-PROOF BOOTS

Runfun footwear is a US firm established in 1995, thus has 30 years' experience in providing hunters and outdoor enthusiasts with quality products. They market their wares as being "crafted for those who seek both perfection and pleasure in their outdoor pursuits".

Naturally there's a host of footwear products available, each with their own particular features and finishes designed to facilitate a wide variety of outdoor pursuits, the snake-proof range being just one of their offerings. They're made in China and imported to Australia by AFN who retail them for \$269. Having said this, there are quite a number of retailers offering these boots and



RUNFUN SNAKE-PROOF BOOTS EMINENTLY FIT FOR PURPOSE; KEY FEATURES: EXCELLENT MULTI-DIRECTIONAL TREAD (ABOVE) AND EXPANDABLE LEG (BELOW).



prices do vary as you'd expect. A simple online search will confirm this.

These boots are an original design, lightweight, water-resistant and snakebite-proof. The high cut design provides excellent ankle support and enhanced protection from bites. They stand 40cm tall so cover the entire lower leg (no more gaiters!) and weigh 1.6kg. They offer a very firm yet comfortable fit, while the lace-up configuration is complemented by a medial side zipper, making them quick and easy to take on and off. Depending on what you wear when hunting, trousers legs can be either bloused over the boots or neatly ensconced within. Interestingly, the side zippers also make it possible to comfortably accommodate thicker, warmer trousers and socks as the seasons dictate.

The boots are available in US sizes 8-13 and feature Runfun's G2 camo design in 'faded leaf brown'. The waterproof and breathable fabric membrane has been specifically chosen over the likes of leather as it retains almost no water, so remains as light as possible in inclement weather or when traversing dewy slopes and muddy game trails.

The 600 Denier textile uppers produce a dense, robust and durable fabric with high abrasion resistance, good flexibility and tensile strength, meaning these boots can withstand rough use over an extended period. They also offer excellent resistance to fading and degradation caused by the UV in sunlight. Snakebite proofing is courtesy of Emtexglobal linings, a company which has been providing custom laminated fabrics and textiles for both civilian and

military applications for around 75 years.

The soles of the boots are multi-directional rubber, which provides excellent traction in the field. The tread is deep and aggressive enough to prevent the accumulation of stones, mud and debris, at the same time allowing for surefooted movement across the full range of terrain types encountered in the great outdoors. I consider these boots one of my savviest purchases in years.

IN THE FIELD

Whether you're a hunter, outdoors person or trekker, good quality footwear, in particular boots, has always been an acknowledged prerequisite for safety and success while spending time on foot in the field. Well shod feet can make the difference between the success and failure of an enterprise. As a case in point, Roman Legions conquered the known world and successfully overcame all manner of challenges while wearing their ubiquitous yet exceptionally effective military sandals.

But I digress. Without doubt every hunter's going to encounter snakes in the course of their outdoor pursuits. Some of those encounters are going to be with venomous snakes which do have the potential to kill, a simple fact of life in Australia. It's at times like these quality, purpose-made boots are quite literally going to be a lifesaver. Boots like Runfun's snake-proof hunting range.

Overall I can't fault the performance of mine to date. Being of Chinese origin I guess some readers may have doubts about quality and longevity. But remember Runfun has a 30-year reputation to preserve and is not in the business of selling inferior products. From a personal perspective, I can honestly say I've been using mine regularly for the past nine months or so, and they've consistently taken me safely out and about and back again without issue or complaint.

The quality control appears more than adequate with the product being exactly as described straight out the box. Despite regular hard use, apart from a few mud smears on the soles they remain in pristine condition, undamaged by terrain and unfaded by the sun. I found the advertised sizings to be spot on, so the boots have always been a comfortable fit. As a result, they didn't need a 'wearing-in' process and my feet have always remained dry, comfortable and un-fatigued, even after many hours afoot.

They're solidly impressive, eminently fit for purpose and any snake foolish enough to take a swipe at them is likely to lose a fang. Having said that, I'm more than happy to never, ever put them to the test in that respect. ●

Out with the old . . .

ROBERT D. MOORE DUG DEEP TO REFURBISH AN AILING HOWA

A fellow shooter was unhappy after buying a new rifle for his wife who said recoil from the .308Win was too much for her. Instead she wanted a .223R, so an almost new Howa was for sale at a price within the budget. Happy days.

Fast-forward 10 years or more and the .308 was starting to show its age with results at the range heading south. So the dilemma was: Do you persist with the devil you know or start over with a new rifle? Either new or old the process is much the same and in this case, keeping the rebuilding cost down was important. The story here tells you these types of upgrades are mainly a series of relatively simple tasks done one at a time. Those who reload have the skills and will find these upgrades relatively easy, though if part of the job is too challenging you may choose to delay or seek help from a gunsmith. Remember a well-tuned older firearm will still give you years more fun and service.

Don't forget that articles in past issues of *Australian Shooter* are a valuable asset when looking for information on many things. It's a library full of real-world data. This Association's recent

innovation of making back issues of the magazine available as an online resource on their website is most welcome and should be applauded.

Back to the Howa and a fortunate situation here is the ready availability of new replacement barrelled actions, which come with the action and a head-spaced bolt installed. Remember, any upgrades you make to an older rifle can very easily be transferred to a new barrelled action, a sector of the firearms market which many have exploited for years.

The pain of recoil on an old shoulder had been fixed by installing a bolt-on muzzle-brake. This type was chosen as it avoids the cost of cutting a thread on the barrel then buying a screw-on brake. The benefit was immediate and welcome and the weight of a bulky brake really doesn't matter when you're benchrest shooting.

Over time the trigger had lost its wonderful feel of that two-stage crisp action, as dried lubricant and other matter had invaded it. A session in the ultrasonic cleaner worked wonders but there was more that could be done. It wasn't hard to find a new set of springs and while some mechanical skills are needed to fit them, it's not difficult (the use of non-drying synthetic grease for a rebuild is recommended). The new springs provided a trigger with a consistent below-2lb pull and though there are many replacement adjustable triggers out there, do check the cost.

The online Australian Shooter proved invaluable when looking for information on riflescopes. An upgrade goal was the pursuit of consistent sub-MOA groups and while a 1" 3-9x40 scope had given great service, a new one was needed. Riflescopes are the subject of joy, amusement, frustration and pride among shooters and almost everyone has a story and opinion. After much reading it became clear those who'd upgraded to scopes with 30mm and 34mm tubes were happy with their decision.

Many had bought scopes which used the first focal plane lens system and all accepted they needed to use them at less than full power when hunting. Yet all enjoyed the benefits on full power when benchrest shooting or setting zero with a new cartridge load. Advice given at the range was to change to a 20MOA Picatinny rail as it has a



HACT TRIGGER AFTER CLEANING.



THE SCOPE WITH HEAVY-DUTY MOUNTS.

Distributors and resellers can't afford to carry all products to suit all models

multiplier effect on scope adjustment.

A new Nikko Stirling Diamond FFP 34mm 4-16x44 scope with suitable four-bolt heavy-duty steel mounts gave great results at the range. Although the process of installing a riflescope is well known, remember as a starting point you must first set the eye relief then with the scope installed you need to adjust the parallax. This is

best done at the range and installation is all about setting the scope level on the rifle and vertical using a plumb bob (and of course securing your mounts to the correct torque).

Now it was time to consider the stock. The original Hogue had given good service but surface marks can make a rifle look unloved. There are many things other than cost to think about as stocks are made of many different materials, some from fibre-reinforced polymers and various metals, some of aircraft-grade aluminium.

The now-popular design with a pistol grip was adopted by the Australian Army in 1959 when they made the L1A1 SLR our soldiers' primary weapon, though there were some who still preferred the .303 SMLE.

Prior experience led to the selection of a stock made from laminated hardwood in what's being described as 'engineered timber'. This material isn't subject to the changes caused by weather, it's stable and resistant to twisting from the stresses



THE HOWA ACTION BEFORE AND AFTER REWORKING.

introduced by shooting, though there was some drama in sourcing one of the desired design to suit the Howa.

Quite a few dealers were most helpful, yet all were quoting around 12 weeks or more to source a suitable stock with an unknown final price and a warning it wouldn't be cheap. No matter the source, cost comes down to demand, insurance, freight and the exchange rate and regardless of the product, distributors and resellers can't afford to carry all products to suit all models.

An email to Boyds Gunstocks in the US was enlightening as at the time, the specific item needed in the desired style and colour was in stock (no pun intended). The landed cost was more than \$600 but it arrived at the office in Victoria in an impressive 15 days, even after the package had been opened and cleared for inspection by Australian Customs. Fitting the stock wasn't difficult as it was a simple case of removing and reinstalling two screws. It had been machined in a manner that floated the barrel and allowed clearance for a \$5 note.

Now another aspect of the upgrade needed to be addressed as, like many other makers, Howa had introduced mounting screws with the Allen key-type head to help ensure the bolts were properly torqued. These bolts were sourced via the distributor and local dealer and proved costly at \$22 each. A short time later, more out of curiosity, specialist dealer Ferntree Gully Bolts were contacted and had in stock bolts with the same thread (and heat treated) even if they were 4mm longer. They were \$2.50 each so lesson learned - if of interest, take the bolt you're trying to replace to a specialist and let them measure it so an alternative can be found.

While developing yet another handload it was found projectiles with a ballistic tip, albeit .060" longer, produced better results. The cartridge length was further increased by moving the



THE STOCK WITH CHEEKPIECE RETAINER.



HARD WORK PAYS OFF IN THE FINISHED ARTICLE.

projectile closer to the rifle lands. Testing using several batches resulted in a COAL of 2.835" so if you're happy loading one shot at a time that's great, though if you need to fill a magazine there's a problem.

A decision was made to install an AICS-pattern magazine to accommodate longer-than-standard handloads. Atlasworxs in WA makes great bottom metal in AICS pattern for the Howa but only sell online, though delivery was only seven days. A suitable Magpul magazine was also bought and happily arrived with a price drop. But beware, unless you have extensive and expert fitting and measuring skills and lots of patience, do not attempt this modification yourself. You'll have to work with the new width and length of the bottom metal to fit the stock, then there's the task of fitting the magazine clip while aligning the magazine with the chamber.

Much of the time spent altering the Howa action was in changing it to accept the AICS magazine, though the result works well and accepts .308Win rounds up to 2.860" long. Like many modifications, this one was neither simple nor low cost and in total around 12 hours or more was needed for the detailed fitting work, though I don't believe using other than the Boyds stock would make this task easier. And one final comment: Never again! Find a trusted gunsmith.

Yet there was a degree of satisfaction when the refurbishment package was completed. The time taken to find all the bits needed to rebuild the Howa has been several months, though results to date using well-tested handloads have been very pleasing. And perhaps there's a follow-up article on finding the right reloaded cartridge to produce those elusive half-inch groups on paper and suit the needs of the hunter in us all. ●



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CAUGHT in the act!

JOSEPH NUGENT PERFORMS SOME TRIAL AND ERROR TRAPPING

The use of traps and snares is an effective, if primitive, practice which appears throughout much of recorded history, as the requirement to hunt and gather food has always been one of life's necessities. As a consequence, the 'technology' of hunting has evolved with humanity's ingenuity of thinking outside the box, along with our resulting predisposition as a species to develop and use tools. This, naturally, included a variety of traps and snares to catch prey without the constant need to exert the physical effort of hunting afield.

The European and North America fur trade through the 16th to the 19th centuries brought the development of more effective and robust traps, not dissimilar to foothold traps we see today. Such devices were primarily used to catch species like fox, beaver, ermine, mink and bear among others. Their hides and fur were widely used for clothing and leather goods during a time when the European market was almost insatiable.

Fast-forward to now and, in Australia, foothold traps are primarily used to control feral pests like wild dogs and foxes. As both these predators are active through the night, trapping can be an effective method of controlling them without the need to hunt the hours of darkness. Traps a popular choice for farmers and landowners, where night-time hunting isn't an option due to ongoing work demands.

The modern foothold trap is characterised as one made of metal, featuring a high-tension spring system and pressure plate. It operates by spreading the jaws and loading the springs underneath the trap, which is then secured by a small indent or 'night latch' on the pressure plate. The trap is staked to the ground and buried under a fine layer of soil. It will deploy when the pressure plate is stood on by a target animal and the night latch released, the trap holding the animal until it can be dispatched by the trapper.



EVIDENCE OF FERAL PREDATION ON THE BLOCK.



SEVERAL NOCTURNAL VISITS RESULTED IN TRAPPING SUCCESS.

GETTING STARTED

Setting a foothold trap is as simple as taking it out the packaging and burying it in the ground. Right? Sadly not. Given the keen sense of smell and situational awareness of Australia's feral predators, all traps must be correctly prepared before use.

Step 1: Cleaning. Prior to using a foothold trap it should be cleaned, a process involving taking a brand new trap and washing it in fresh soapy water to ensure residual oil and grease is removed. It should then be left out in the weather for a couple of days, allowing it to develop a more natural scent and attract a small amount of rust.

Step 2: Dyeing. Now the dyeing process, whereby the trap is 'dyed' both by colour and scent. This is done either by boiling it in a shop-bought dye or a mix of vegetation from the local area, high in tannins. Both methods work in the same way, producing a liquid solution which should be dark brown or almost black prior to adding the trap. From there, the trap should be boiled for roughly 30 minutes and allowed to cool down naturally and, if done correctly, should be stained brown or black.

Step 3: Waxing (optional). An added step is to wax the trap. Similar to dyeing, the trap is submerged in a solution of hot trap wax to seal it, allowing for less scent contamination and hopefully causing it to work faster due to the reduction in rust and dirt on working parts.



THE WTS DOGLESS #3 DYED AND READY FOR ACTION.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT!



HUMANELY DISPATCHED AFTER BEING SECURELY ANCHORED BY THE TRAP; EVIDENCE OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE WTS DOGLESS #3 TRAP.

SETTING THE TRAP

Step 4: Site selection. The next step in developing a trap set is to identify target animal movements, which can be done by physical sightings or the use of trail cameras. The aim is to identify a point of interest or high traffic area where the likelihood of encountering a target animal is high. Once an appropriate site(s) is selected, consideration should be made as to the type of lure used to attract the animal. Although the quarry may pass through the area, in order to successfully trap an animal it must be directed to a particular spot on the ground.

Popular lures include natural scents such as canine urine and scat, animal carcasses or shop-bought scents. The lure should be positioned in such a location that it peaks the interest of passing animals, the aim being to entice them to inspect the site of the lure and inadvertently step on the trap. The lure should be positioned so the angle of approach is limited by vegetation, thus channeling the animal to the exact location of the trap.

Step 5: Set-up. Once a site and lure are selected, the trap may be set. This occurs by first digging a small hole in somewhat of a cone shape, so the anchor point and chain won't obstruct operation of the trap. Test and adjust the size and shape of the hole. The trap need only be covered by the minimum amount of soil so it remains hidden and flush to the ground.

Anchor the trap in the hole using a stake and once correctly adjusted for a flush fit, cover it in a thin layer of soil. It's wise to use a sieve or break up the soil to ensure no large clumps are covering the trap which may impede operation. Depending on the type of soil, a pan cover (small piece of baking paper or paper towel) may be needed to cover the trap, to make sure no rocks or clumps of dirt fall under the pan and hamper a flush fit with the ground.

Camouflage the trap by using small leaves and twigs from the area. It's important no rocks or large sticks are positioned over the jaws of the trap, as this may impede functioning and result in the quarry escaping.

When setting a trap there are a few additional considerations, the first being human scent. Foxes and wild dogs have a keen sense of smell, so always wear gloves and avoid touching any part of the trap or covering soil with your bare hands. The second is safety. Modern foothold traps have extremely fast springs and, if not handled correctly, can cause serious injury to hands and fingers. Always wear appropriate gloves, never place your hand on or near the trap pan once set and, if needed, use a small stick when leveling dirt and camouflage on a set trap.

ANIMAL WELFARE

This is a key consideration in any trapping operation. From an ethical point of view, all trapped animals should be humanely dispatched as soon as possible. Depending on the number

and location of traps in your 'line', they should be monitored with SMS-enabled trail cameras or physically inspected every 12 hours. From a legal standpoint, ensure all relevant state legislation is read, understood and abided by before commencing trapping, as laws vary from state to state. For example, the majority of states in Australia require foothold traps be fitted with rubber jaws. As such, the use of steel jaw traps may be prohibited in your location.

LESSONS LEARNED

Having recently moved to a small hobby farm in south-east Queensland, I quickly started to see signs of feral predators in the area, both on trail cameras and in evidence left behind. On several occasions I found piles of feathers likely from a nearby chook farm or those of native birds, clear evidence of a population of foxes and/or wild dogs in the neighbourhood.

Confirmed by images on my trail cameras I did indeed have foxes and, at times, wild dogs moving through the area, in fact my property would be visited by these predators almost every other night. Yet they were difficult to control as they may only be on my land for 5-20 minutes before moving on. Furthermore, the times at which animals moved through varied greatly from 7pm-5am.

I initially had some success using a thermal scope to locate and control foxes at night. This method was a bit hit and miss since it relied on pulling the thermal gear out at the right time and being lucky enough to spot an animal. With foxes and dogs moving through regularly and the need for me to protect my own animals from potential attacks, I decided to buy a foothold trap.

Western Trapping Supplies is a Toowoomba-based retailer with a user-friendly website which can fulfill online orders nationwide. In addition, they have a range of instructional videos and links to relevant resources to get you started, so I opted for their best-selling trap, the WTS Dogless #3. Initial set-up and operation was straightforward, though learning how to trap properly took some time.

The soil in my area is quite heavy and holds water. As such, in my first few attempts at setting the trap I had too much soil above it, so the morning drizzle would soak it then set hard during the day. This meant when foxes stood on the trap pan it wouldn't deploy, resulting in a missed opportunity.

I eventually found success using a cow's carcass. Wild dogs would visit regularly throughout the night and it wasn't long before the trap did its job. This particular location was only a few hundred metres from the house, so all animals trapped were dispatched just minutes after being caught. Overall, the use of foothold traps proved an effective and humane method of feral animal control, particularly when used on smaller blocks of land. ●



LLOYD PEREIRA FAREWELLS HIS HOMETLAND WITH A HUNT TO REMEMBER

A FRONT-ON VIEW OF THE
TROPHY KUDU.

OPPOSITE TOP: LLOYD'S DAD
CROSSING THE RIVER AFTER A
FOUR-HOUR MORNING HUNT.

OPPOSITE LEFT: REVISITING THE
VIEW POINT WHERE THE NYALA
WAS TAKEN.

OPPOSITE RIGHT: BREAKING
FOR A SPOT OF LIGHT-HEARTED
FISHING IN THE RIVER.

With my upcoming departure for Australia just around the corner, it was fitting that my father, two brothers, nephew and I went on one last hunt together. What many hunters don't understand about hunting in South Africa, mainly due to lack of exposure, is a whole world exists beyond buffalo or the other high-priced trophies which so often dominate the narrative.

Yes, who wouldn't want to take a cape buffalo on a hunting concession where the Big Five roam? Well not many people can afford such luxuries, myself included, yet that doesn't mean there isn't some amazing hunting on offer.

The land we planned to hunt was 6000 acres of thick bush with deep valleys cutting through the escarpment. The farm was once owned by a farmer who ran beef cattle, offered 4x4 off-road training facilities and catered to the 'biltong' hunter. He had a land claim over his farm and was forced to sell it to the government, though continues to lease the property from the local community. Kudu, wildebeest, bushbuck, hyena, impala, zebra, nyala, warthog, duiker and many

other species roam freely through this and neighbouring properties.

On arriving and sighting-in the rifles, we set off in different directions with our own trackers. These trackers are ultimately herdsmen who earn their living mostly guiding hunters over weekends during the season. Their English is limited at best but they understand the bush better than any of us and, more often than not, have incredible eyes for spotting game.

The first evening's generally about scouting the various areas and it ended up being just that, as none of us shot an animal. After a team talk around the fire, we each had our respective plans and target species for the following day. The farmer was to drop myself and tracker off a few kilometres away so we could walk and stalk back. I was hoping for a good kudu or nyala bull and would take a decent impala if one presented.

Fifteen minutes into driving away from camp, we saw an awesome kudu bull jump across the road and into the bush. We drove on another 300m when my tracker and I got out to see if we could catch up with him. We walked slowly



down into the bush and saw the magnificent animal staring at us from behind a tree 70m away. I set up the shooting sticks and squeezed off a neck shot in a clearing in the scrub. The animal bucked, tried to run then dropped where it stood.

Kudu are big animals, impressive in their mass, beauty and agility. I sat with my trophy for half an hour while the tracker went to call the truck. We loaded it up and headed to the shed where the trackers skinned and gutted it. An obligatory beer was had as I sat watching them, pleased to have achieved something which had long been on my bucket list.

That morning one brother had also taken a kudu, my other brother an impala and my nephew a wildebeest, dad fulfilling his assumed duties of driving around to collect animals and take photos. During midday downtime we fished the river which flows past the campsite, targeting scalies, a slender carp-like fish which lives in rivers and is endemic to the area.

In the afternoon I found myself with a .22 in hand looking for a small antelope called a duiker. I wasn't successful but we did spook what the tracker said was a good nyala bull. That evening I started rationalising the extra expense of taking another big animal and what I'd do with the meat.

The following morning I returned to the same area with rifle in hand (a 7x64 Sauer) and my brother decided to join me. I gave my tracker strict instructions I didn't want to shoot a nyala in the trophy category, as the price was around 40 per cent more than a standard bull. Having already taken a trophy kudu, my budget was well and truly blown.

In early morning with the African bush crackling and singing away, we walked up to a small lookout to scan the land below where we'd seen the nyala the previous day. The tracker reached the crest first, stopped immediately and opened the shooting sticks, signalling there was a shooter below. I walked up and saw a magnificent nyala bull moving through a clearing towards cover of the bush. I dropped to my stomach and lined up. The tracker whistled lightly to stop him, which he did, as I placed a shot into his vitals behind the shoulder. The animal stumbled off into the bush as I heard what I thought was it collapsing in the scrub.

I sat up and looked at the tracker who was chuckling away. Surely I hadn't missed. He assured me I hadn't, it was just a "very big nyala, very big!" which sent my brother into fits of laughter. We walked down and found an absolute giant of a bull, a once-in-a-lifetime trophy for most. It hurt my pocket at the time



ANIMALS ARE BROUGHT BACK TO THE SKINNING SHED TO BE SKINNED AND GUTTED.

Australian HUNTER

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LLOYD TOOK THE KUDU WAS TAKEN WITH HIS FATHER'S 7X64 SAUER.



FIVE YEARS ON, THESE HORNS SIT ADORN A WALL IN MY SYDNEY APARTMENT AS A REMINDER OF AN INCREDIBLE TRIP.

but was well worth it for the experience of taking that animal with my brother. We wheelbarrowed it out of the thick bush, loaded it into the truck and headed back.

The following morning I managed a big impala ram, taken in very thick cover after an awesome stalk. All up it was a fantastic few days. My brothers and nephew managed a few more impala and a nice nyala bull, while our afternoons were spent on the river, catching scalies and barbel.

That hunt will never leave me. The animals I took were amazing, though it's the time with family and hunting buddies that's etched into my memory. Riding in the back of the ute with your legs crammed to one side because the animal your brother just shot is lying at your feet, your brother sitting opposite you grinning like a Cheshire cat.

The moment dad arrives to see your animal with a look of pride on his face. The banter as someone catches more fish than the rest. Beers around the fire pit while each member recounts their day. For me, and it's probably a bit of self-reflection as I've grown older, it's not about that photo, rather the little moments in between.

In a world with a million things pulling our attention in different directions, any number of reasons why you can't or shouldn't take that trip, these times are reminders there's no substitute for days in the bush with friends and family. Memories and experiences don't make themselves, you need to get out there and plan your next adventure, making the most of the opportunities we're blessed to have access to. Make it happen! ●

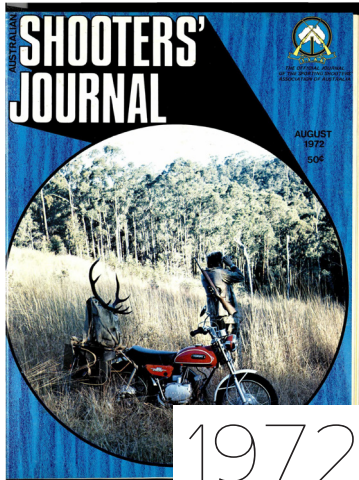


IT'S OFTEN NOT WHAT YOU DO THAT COUNTS, RATHER WHO YOU EXPERIENCE IT WITH.

FROM THE
**SHOOTER
ARCHIVES**

This month we travel back to August 1972, when Vern Tuckwell tackled the head-scratching issue of safe gun storage. Under the bed, on a nail in the corner or that wardrobe in the bedroom, the choice is yours! Oh, and don't forget to wrap that rifle in a sleeping bag for transportation.

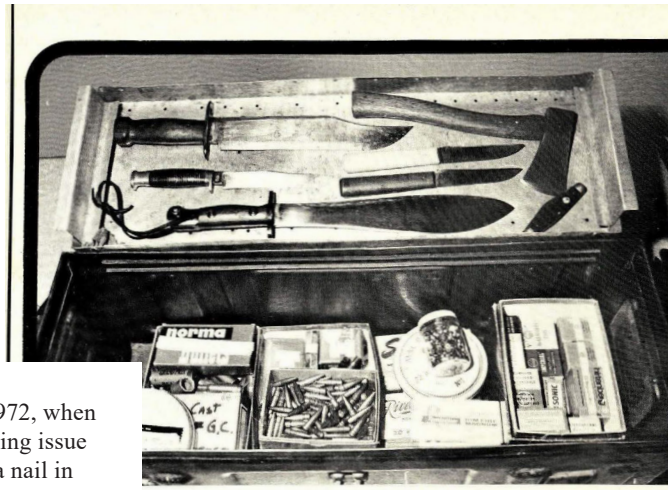
Clearly we've come a long way with modern-day Australia's stringent safe storage requirements.



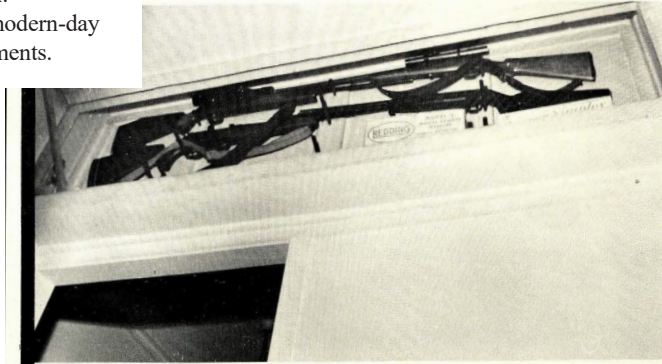
1972

FOREWORD:
ALLAN BLANE

WORDS:
VERN TUCKWELL

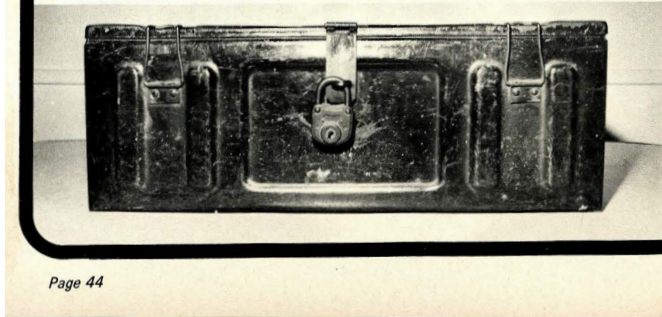


The aluminium tray resting on the lid of the ammo box reveals the great variety and material that can be safely and separately stored in these inexpensive boxes.



When closed, this "peg rack" gun cupboard will carry a large number of weapons for its small internal volume. This undetectable cabinet possesses all sought after features, e.g.: horizontal racking, tidiness and safety.

"Battle-scarred" yet rugged, the ex-Army ammo box with sturdy padlock ensures safekeeping of potentially dangerous material from young or inexperienced hands.



Page 44

GUNS AWAY!

by Vern Tuckwell.

FORTY years ago, an unknown hunter returned to his hut and proceeded to hang his .351 Winchester self-loader on the wall suspended by a single peg which fitted snugly into the trigger-guard.

Being a casual person, he hadn't bothered to check his safety,—your imagination can tell you the rest. The first shot rang out as soon as the weight of the gun was transferred to the trigger, and subsequent recoil and discharge cycles continued until the rifle's magazine was empty. This series of events quickly changed the hapless hunter's ideas on rifle storage.

This story, which I believe to be true, immediately aroused my interest on safe gun stowage, i.e. temporary storage, or more simply the placement of firearms when not in use.

Through the years, I have seen nails, screws, butchers hooks and even antlers used as gun racks; in the latter case, bare metal on bare bone. A Cashmore-carrying, well-bred Englishman would say, "Really chaps, it's just not done!" I regret to say it is done!

Forty years ago, an unknown hunter returned to his hut and proceeded to hang his .351 Winchester self-loader on the wall, suspended by a single peg which fitted snugly into the trigger-guard. Being a casual person, he hadn't bothered to check his safety and your imagination can tell you the rest. The first shot rang out as soon as the weight of the gun was transferred to the trigger, and subsequent recoil and discharge cycles continued until the rifle's magazine was empty. This series of events quickly changed the hapless hunter's ideas on rifle storage.

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temporary storage or, more simply, the placement of firearms when not in use. Through the years I've seen nails, screws, butcher's hooks and even antlers used as gun racks, in the latter cases bare metal on bare bone. A Cashmore-carrying, well-bred Englishman would say: "Really chaps, it's just not done!" I regret to say it is done!

In my opinion, the English have some very sound ideas on gun storage, with the belief that an expensive firearm should be properly covered and protected, regardless of the price involved. The English idea of setting one room aside as the gun-room/den is perhaps outside the realm of the average Australian shooter due to the cost involved in such a venture. Perhaps dedicated

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VINTAGE AD FROM FULLER FIREARMS FROM 1972.

trap shooters and target riflemen, who must own several guns if they're to compete successfully, would be the only members of the Australian shooting fraternity to go to such lengths.

So we find, here in Australia, a Rafferty's Rule-style of firearm stowage in corners and in boxes, on nails, pegs and shelves and usually without covers. In the home of every gun owner there should be "a place for every gun, and every gun in its place". Tidiness, safety and prevention of theft are three major reasons for careful thought on the storage of one's firearms.

The type and size of gun rack or cupboard we can build or convert, will be affected by the location and area of the space available, and finally, as usual, by personal preference. One of the most functional units I've ever seen was built in a short hallway between the top of two doorways and the ceiling, a horizontal cupboard six feet long, two feet high and eight inches deep (72" x 24" x 8"). Half-inch hardwood dowels with a protrusion of

4" were used to rest the firearms on, this length being sufficient to accommodate an extra gun on each pair of pegs when necessary. This home was once thoroughly ransacked by thieves but, due probably to the unobtrusive location of the gun rack, no shooting gear was taken.

Modern built-in linen presses make fine storage places for arms and ammunition, as they require a minimum of modification. Easily built floor-to-ceiling triangular corner cupboards are cheap and roomy but, due to limited horizontal dimensions, guns must be arranged vertically. Material used may be as light as a 2" x 1" frame covered with Masonite or plywood sheeting. Due to this, weight loading gear such as shot and projectiles should be placed at floor level.

Similar framework and covering can be used to make an under-the-bed gun box (a 'shunder' with dimensions 48" x 16" x 8") fitted with small wheels, castors or felt glued to the bottom of the gun box, to lessen floor friction when sliding the box in or out. Here the guns are packed resting on the muzzle and toe of the buttplate, trigger guard downwards, separated from each other by dowelling (6" x 3/8") fitted vertically.

A frequently-used medium for storage is the common bedroom wardrobe, internally modified for its new job. As with the corner cupboard, vertical racking is generally necessary. Yes, those blue-black beauties sure look good standing in a row. But hold hard! Reverse arms to the muzzle-down position, which prevents barrel oil from flowing into the firing-pin passages and slowing lock-time or striker-travel, besides soaking into the stock around the action.



"BATTLE-SCARRED" YET RUGGED, THE EX-ARMY AMMO BOX WITH STURDY PADLOCK ENSURES SAFEKEEPING OF POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS MATERIAL FROM YOUNG OR INEXPERIENCED HANDS.

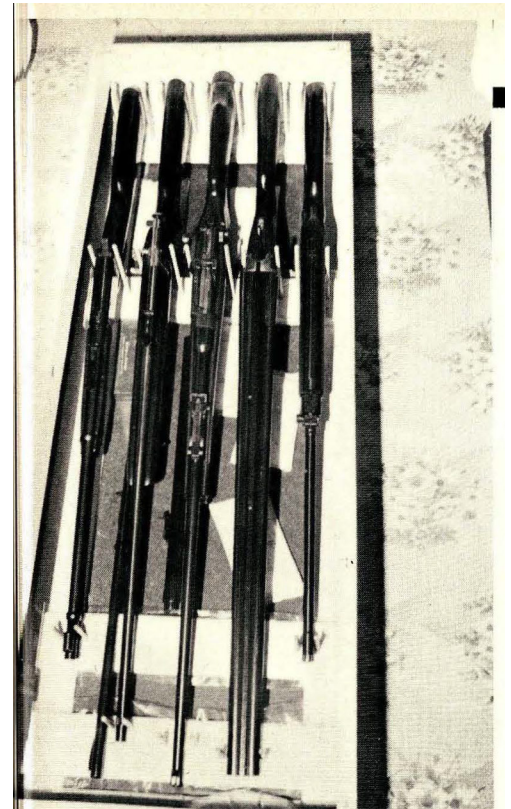
When firearms are cleaned and oiled after the hunt or competition, stow them with the muzzle lower than the breech. This requirement applies particularly to sensitive target and benchrest rifles. For those shooters who must settle for basic gun care accommodation, which seems to be two big nails per gun (driven into a wall), a little finishing touch here will pay dividends later. A slight downward slant (say 1" over a length of 4") helps prevent guns from falling off. The nails should be taped or otherwise covered, particularly the heads.

Live ammunition and components, particularly bulk powder, must also be given consideration and kept locked up in the advent of misappropriation by juveniles or thieves. Be sure that such material can be speedily removed in the case of fire. Army ammunition boxes, (26" x 9" x 9" or 24" x 8" x 8") are ideal for this purpose and are purchased cheaply for around \$3 at disposal stores. These steel boxes are easily fitted with a hasp and staple set and a strong padlock for security. By suspending a 1½" deep full-length aluminium tray from the existing end brackets inside the box below the lid, knives, compasses, whistles and other equipment may be stored in its own attractive, separate compartment.

If kept inside the house, the ammunition box would be the first property to be removed in case of fire and immediately taken to a safe distance from the flames. One can also easily make close-fitting, full-length dust covers from any material which will not absorb moisture from the atmosphere, thereby causing condensation of moisture on metal surfaces. A custom-made cover looks neat, keeps its occupant free from dust and affords a personal pride of ownership that cannot be bought with factory-made covers.

For transportation, a wooden gun-case is always best and next comes the felt-lined leather or canvas cover. In lieu of these, extensive wrapping in blankets or a sleeping bag will guarantee the arrival of guns in good condition.

Overlooked though we are by contemporary furniture designers, we can still give our guns the VIP treatment, with handsome accommodation of our own design, without inconvenience or disruption to normal family living space and conditions. Summed up, we need (preferably) a built-in unit, ventilated but dust-free with a good hidden lock. ●



THE AUTHOR'S UNDER-THE-BED GUN BOX ('SHUNDER') EXHIBITS LIGHTWEIGHT COMPACTNESS AND HORIZONTAL RACKING, IMPORTANT FEATURE OF CORRECT GUN STORAGE.



MISSED THE MARK

As a long-time SSAA member and shooter, I was disappointed but not surprised by the Dan Repacholi feature in last month's *Australian Shooter*. The magazine's own editorial admits upfront the federal firearms Bill passed in January was "largely a waste of time" that makes life more difficult for shooters and delivers "no real improvement in public safety" beyond minor intelligence-sharing changes. It then spends the rest of the piece running a feel-good profile of Repacholi's childhood at Melton Pistol Club, his Olympic career and "running amok" with his brothers.

The opening section claims he was "right there", quietly working with Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke to amend the Bill and make it "better than when first tabled". We're told he was the SSAA's best channel into the Minister's office, without him the Bill would've been "a lot worse" and voting against it would've seen him kicked out the Labor Party for nothing. This is weak defence, not advocacy.

Repacholi has a genuine shooting background: Five-time Olympian in 50m free pistol and 10m air pistol, hunter and one of the very few self-described shooters on the Labor benches. He publicly criticised aspects of the rushed NSW post-Bondi laws for their "unintended consequences" on competition shooters. Yet when it came to the federal vote, the one he actually controlled, he voted 'yes' to a package which includes a national gun buyback scheme, tighter import controls, enhanced intelligence-backed checks and other measures which add bureaucracy and costs for law-abiding owners.

The interview never asks the obvious questions: If the Bill was so flawed and ineffective, why vote for it at all? What specific, meaningful amendments did he win that actually protect competition pistol shooters, hunters or collectors? How does he square his proud Olympic and hunting history with supporting laws piling more restrictions and compliance burdens on responsible shooters who'd nothing to do with Bondi? Given strict Labor caucus rules, did he at least fight harder in the party room, or was "quiet lobbying" the best we could expect from our supposed friend in Parliament?

We don't need Olympic reminiscences or claims of invisible backroom influence while we deal with the real-world fallout: Firearm number caps in NSW, mandatory club membership, shorter licence periods, buyback schemes, import delays and higher compliance costs.

What we need is our national magazine to demand accountability from politicians, even (especially) those who shoot. Dan Repacholi's personal shooting story is legitimate. But at this moment, with tighter laws landing on us after yet another tragedy we didn't cause, a lightweight piece which excuses his vote reads as prioritising political access over standing up for the shooting community.
Damien Noonan, Vic

DON'T ALIENATE OUR ALLIES

I enjoy and appreciate your newsletters and publications which are still particularly pertinent and important at this time in our national history. I'm a former NSW SSAA Goulburn branch member and intend to join again.

With regard to the Dan Repacholi feature in your April edition, he's actually a fine ambassador for the legal, fun and interesting shooting sports and enterprises. He's also, in my opinion, an outstanding Labor-style politician. Not everyone agrees with Labor-style politics or policies and I get that. In a free democratic, diverse country where people have a right to opinions, I'll always uphold my neighbour's right to have one different to mine. Declaring myself as an active Labor party member, I'm committed to upholding and defending such democratic values. I'm not standing for election but do want to be clear about my motive.

In the heat of parliament, deals and compromises must be made and sometimes singular voices are outvoted in the party room or caucus. Senator Bridget McKenzie and Representative Repacholi MP have likely both faced intense ignorance, hysteria and, let's face it, just pure bullsh*t in relation to shooting sports and activities in recent months. It would be hard for anyone to maintain their position from such barrages. I have respect for politicians like Senator McKenzie as I suspect she works hard and has

high ideals derived from her sphere of political philosophy, even though I'd never first preference her party.

Owning firearms and using them has *never* been about being a 'leftist' or 'rightist' in Australia. As shooters we've had limitations imposed on us from political parties of all stripes. The average, ordinary, left-leaning Labor bloke like me is going to be just as likely to enjoy shooting, or need a rifle for work, as much as his neighbour across the paddock or street who votes One Nation or National.

Being a 'leftist' in Australia has never meant I have to swallow nonsense and moral panic over firearms. It seems to me it was a failure of intelligence gathering and dissemination, as well as bigotry, intolerance and racism which were the major contributors to the Bondi tragedy. Being a 'leftist' never meant I was incapable of shooting straight, despite the fact I'm literally a one-arm (left arm) bandit disabled shooter.

Dan Repacholi and Bridget McKenzie are both allies in federal parliament and we don't need to alienate them, or any allies, in state parliaments either. Just like we don't need to alienate or marginalize potential allies who are non-shooters but can think rationally.
Stuart Mawbey, NSW

BAG OF TRICKS

I was interested to read Scott Heiman's *Bushcraft & Survival* column in your October 2025 edition regarding frugal fire-starters. I make my own fire-starters by saving and drying used teabags then melting recovered wax into them. An insulated box with a glass or plexiglass lid in summer sun makes an excellent solar oven, more than capable of melting wax.

Keep the strings on the teabags and tie them into bundles of five so you can pull them out of the molten wax to drain and harden. The waxed teabags store extremely well in old ice cream containers and these fire-starters still work efficiently even if you don't completely dry out the teabags, they'll just pop and crackle a bit.

Andrew Fleming, SA

SEND LETTERS TO:
edit@ssaa.org.au

National

Combined Services National Postal Shoot

January 1-August 24, 2026
 Program: Rifle: Event 1 3P core event Match 1: Standard Rifle (Graded); Event 1 3P core event Match 1: IOC Rifle (Open). Pistol: Event 1 3P core event Class 1 Handguns (Graded), Class 2 Handguns (Graded), Class 3 Handguns (Open) as specified in Combined Services Rule Book No. 4. Three classes may be entered. Scan and email cover sheets and score sheets to combinedservices@ssaa.org.au. Full details on National website. Contact: Steve Knight at above email address.

Muzzleloading and Black Powder Cartridge National Championships
 June 6-8, 2026

SSAA Monarto, SA
 Program: Friday, June 5: Practice. Saturday: Handgun, Musket and Vetterli matches. Sunday: Rifle matches Class 1 (Military), Class 2 (Traditional), Class 4 (Flintlock). Monday: Rifle matches Class 3 (Open), Cartridge Rifle and Shotgun (Percussion and Flint). Full event details on National website. National medals for first three, perpetual trophies for each class. Facilities: Limited camping and caravan on range, drinks on sale, kitchen in clubhouse, barbecue Sunday and Monday night. Contact: Michael Nicholas 0467 763 716 or nicmy002@gmail.com

BPCR Silhouette National Championships

June 18-21, 2026
 Monarto Silhouette Range, Para, SA
 Program: June 18: Set-up and practice. June 19: 40 shots Smallbore iron sights. June 20: 40 shots BPCR iron sights. June 21: 40 shots BPCR any sights. Facilities: Camping available at range, barbecue Saturday night, limited canteen. Contact: John Visnyai johnviz@hotmail.com or 0421 117 391.

SSAA 2026 National Junior Challenge
 July 9-12, 2026

SSAA Majura, ACT
 Program: Thursday, July 9: Practice; Friday: Silhouette Rimfire, Cowboy Lever Action Silhouette, BR30 (time permitting); Saturday: 3P Rimfire, Introduction to Western Action, catered roast dinner and games; Sunday: Field Rifle Rimfire, presentations. See National website. Contact: junior.development@ssaact.org.au

Combined Service National Championships

September 18-20, 2026
 SSAA Narrogin, WA
 Program: See National website for full event details. Prizes: Medals for all pistol and rifle events, team events, top gun and top gun junior. Facilities: Contact Narrogin branch. Event contact: Ray Smith 0428 921 249 or narrogin@ssaawa.org.au

Practical Shooting Handgun National Championships

October 3-4, 2026
 Hill Top Complex, Wattle Ridge Rd, NSW
 Program: Friday, October 2: Range Officer match. Saturday-Sunday: National Championships. Contact: Paul Fitzgerald practicalshooting@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

International

NRA Any Sight International Postal Event

December 1, 2025-July 31, 2026
 Field Rifle, 3-Positional, Scoped Air Rifle and NRA Any Sight
 Program: Competition open to all registered participants who are current financial members of Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) Inc (or approved full member body) or National Rifle Association (NRA). Awards and certificates for first three in Off-gun (overall scores); Grades: Junior U-18 and Junior U-15. Full details on National website. Contact: Matt Rogaloff fieldrifle@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

NSW

SSAA (NSW) Big Game Rifle State Championships

May 29-31, 2026
 Emmaville Shooting Complex, NSW
 Program: Friday, May 29: Set-up and practice from 12.30-3pm; Saturday and Sunday: Rifle events. Awards: Medals for first three in all individual events. Facilities: Camping and caravans permitted at range with toilets and hot showers, clubhouse open for indoor camping. Contact: Ben Doherty bjdoherty@bigpond.com or 0409 831 258 (A/H); Gary Beling beling.home@gmail.com or 0409 751 384 or 0458 102 355. Full event details on National website.

SA

Black Powder Rifle State Championships

May 9-10, 2026
 Gorge Rd, Castambul, SA
 Program: Saturday: 10am 200m Benchrest Class 3, 11am 200m Benchrest Black Powder Cartridge Rifle, 12 noon 50m Open Musket, 12.45pm 50m Lever Action Rifle, 1.45pm 50m Class 1 or 2 Offhand, 2.30pm 50m Flintlock Rifle Offhand, 3.15pm 50m ML or Breechloader Black Powder Any Position, 4pm 50m Vetterli (Open Rifle Offhand). Sunday: 10am 100m Benchrest Class 1, 10.45am 100m Prone Class 1, 11.30am 100m Benchrest Class 2, 12.15pm 100m Offhand Class 2 (Musket Target), 1.30pm 100m Benchrest Rifle Class 3, 2.45pm 100m Whitworth Prone, 3pm 100m Benchrest Black Powder Cartridge Rifle. Contact: Stephen Nicholas 0419 805 299.

Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Championships

May 30-31, 2026
 Monarto Shooting Complex, SA
 Program: Saturday 80 shots rimfire, 40

shots air rifle; Sunday 80 shots centre-fire. Range open 8.30am for practice and weigh-in, first match 10am. Nominations to markwest@kentcivil.com.au. Facilities: Barbecue, hot showers, toilets, cooking facilities, on-site camping. Contact: Mark West 0421 775 101.

Gallery Rifle State Championships
 June 12-15, 2026

Para Range, SA
 Program: Friday, June 12: Practice from noon-4pm. See National website for full event details. Facilities: Camping, canteen, barbecue on Saturday night. Contact: Dave McCarthy atm3855@yahoo.com.au

Fly Shoot State Championships

July 9-12, 2026
 Monarto Shooting Complex, SA
 Program: Thursday, July 9th: Bench draw available; Friday: Flag set-up; Saturday, 9am: Centrefire 500m Fly five-target; Sunday, 9am: 200-yd Rimfire Fly five-target. Facilities: Barbecue, camping (limited sites with power), hot showers, toilets, cooking facilities. Contact: Pat 0455 280 024.

Black Powder Shotgun State Championships

September 20, 2026
 Long Gully Rd, McLaren Vale, SA
 Program: Breechloading Shotgun, Percussion Shotgun, Flintlock Shotgun. Nominations: \$10 per event, \$7 barbecue lunch. Contact: 0412 574 444 or secretary.srbpc@gmail.com

Black Powder Pistol State Championships

November 14, 2026
 59 Peel Rd, Currency Creek, SA
 Program: 10.30am 25m Class 1 Revolver Precision, 11.15am 25m Class 1 Revolver Timed, 1pm 25m Class 2 Precision Pistol, 1.45pm 25m Class 3 Revolver/Pistol (Open), 2.30pm 25m Firelock Pistol, 3.15pm 25m Class 3 Revolver/Pistol (Open). Nominations: \$5 per event (maximum \$20), barbecue lunch \$10 or \$5. Contact: secretary.gpasc@gmail.com

Vic

SSAA (Vic) Junior Scoped Silhouette State Championships

May 17, 2026
 Eagle Park Range, Vic.
 Program: 8.30am set up, 9-10.15 practice, 10.15 shooters' briefing, 10.30 2x40-shot matches. Nominations on the day. Prizes for first three in each age group. Facilities: Bruno's Café. Contact: Mark Butler 0409 135 740.

SSAA (Vic) Scoped Silhouette State Championships

May 22-24, 2026
 Eagle Park Range, Vic
 Program: Friday: Practice. Saturday: 80 shots centrefire. Sunday: 80 shots rimfire. Nominations on the day, medals for first three all grades. Facilities: Toilets, showers, Bruno's Café. Contact: Mark Butler 0409 135 740.

SSAA (Vic) Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

September 24-27, 2026
 Eagle Park Range, Vic.
 Program: Thursday: Set up and practice. Friday: 80 shots rifle calibre. Saturday: 80 shots pistol calibre. Sunday: 80 shots smallbore. Nominations on the day. Medals for first three in each grade. Facilities: Toilets, showers, Bruno's Café. Contact: Mark Butler: 0409 135 740.

WA

Shotgun Skeet State Championships
 May 24, 2026

Jarrahdale Sporting Shooters, WA
 Program: 100 targets, nominations 9-10am, adults \$65, juniors free. Prizes: Sash for high gun, 2x \$100 vouchers, medals in accordance with National rule book. Facilities: Free tea and coffee, cold drinks and snacks on sale. Contact: Nigel Youens 0466 341 379 or John Graham 0409 084 973.

Lever Action State Championships
 May 29-31, 2026

SSAA Narrogin, Dumberning, WA
 Program: Friday, May 29: Practice; Saturday-Sunday 9.30am start. Facilities: Camping at range with water and limited power, shower block on site, Saturday night dinner provided. Full details on National website. Contact: Tim Corby 0418 934 666 or leveraction@ssaawa.org.au; Ray Smith 0428 921 249 or narroginshooters@gmail.com

Single Action State Championships

May 30-31, 2026
 Bedfordale, WA
 Program: Saturday: Stages 1-2, 3-4, 5-6. Sunday: Stages 7-8, 9-10, presentations. Ammo count: 100 pistol, 100 rifle, 40 shotgun. Facilities: Camping available May 29 and 30, \$10 per site, barbecue packs to buy with notice. See National website for full details. Contact: Michael Lapham 0411 069 007 or michaellapham@live.com

Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

August 6-9, 2026
 Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
 Program: Thursday, August 6: Practice; Friday: Rifle match; Saturday Pistol Cartridge; Sunday: Small Bore (all 80 shots). WA state team selection will be on top 10 placings. Prizes: Medals in all grades, trophies for two-gun, three-gun, juniors. Facilities: Camping with showers, toilets and barbecue, limited power, meal supplied Saturday night. Full details on National website. Contact: David Brougham 0432 748 703 or laswa2011@gmail.com

Big Bore Handgun Metallic Silhouette State Championships

August 21-23, 2026
 Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
 Program: 8am gun check, 8.30 shooting starts. IHMSA Big Bore Production; Production Standing; Revolver; Unlimited; Unlimited Standing; Unlimited Any Sights; Unlimited Half Scale; Unlimited

Any Sights Half Scale; Practical Hunter Long Course. Competitors wishing to shoot six or more categories must be available to shoot over the three days. Facilities: Canteen and barbecue each day, onsite camping, toilets and showers. Contact: Joe Brajkovich 0414 474 573 of mamothprojects@hotmail.com

ACT

ACT Rifle Metallic Silhouette Territory Championships

June 6-8, 2026

Majura Range, Hector McIntosh Grove, ACT

Program: June 6: 80 shots rimfire, 40 shots air rifle. June 7: 80 shots centrefire. June 8: 40 shots rimfire hunting rifle, 40 shots centrefire hunting rifle. Facilities: Camping on range with water and showers, \$10 per person per night, fires allowed if no current ban, canteen facilities all weekend. Full details on national website. Contact: David True 0423 043 663 or dtrue222@gmail.com

SSAA Inc Event Cancellation /Postponement Policy

An event may be postponed or cancelled at any time by SSAA Inc, SSAA State Office or club directive.

SSAA Inc will not be liable for reimbursement to competitors for any costs associated with a postponed or cancelled SSAA Inc championship event for any reason. Competitors planning to attend an event should consider options for free cancellation or refund of travel and accommodation costs where available.



SSAA Victoria
2026 AGM notice

2026 Annual General Meeting and postal ballot declaration

The AGM will be held from 2pm to 4pm Sunday, September 27, 2026 at Hotel Bruce County, 445 Blackburn Road, Mt Waverley, Vic, 3149.

Nominations to fill four Board vacancies will open May 11, 2026 and close June 12, 2026. Nominations to be posted to **Returning Officer SSAA (Victoria), PO Box 336, Nth Melbourne, VIC 3051**; or emailed to jim@ybg.com.au

Results of the postal ballot (if required), which opens July 20, 2026 and closes August 21, 2026, will be declared at the 2026 AGM.

Financial accounts for the year ending April 2026 will be available at www.ssaavic.com.au prior to the meeting or upon written request.

For details contact the State Office by telephone :03 8892 2777 or email: admin@ssaavic.com.au

By order of the Board, SSAA Victoria



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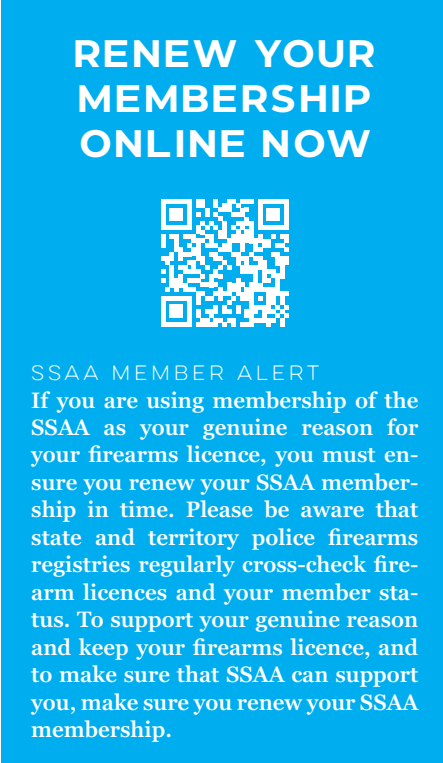


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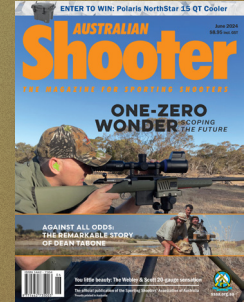


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THE VOTING ENTHUSIAST

WORDS:
MARK VAN DEN
BOOGAART



A I've been talking to a lot of people lately. Politicians, political staffers, representatives, association leaders and anyone with a hand on the wheel or a say in how things move. As a philosopher by calling and psychologist by study, I'm drawn to the human part of the equation. Systems matter, laws matter, structures matter, yet people are the ones who shape the culture in and around those systems. When I look back at how we got here one truth stands out. John Howard brought about the end of the casual firearm owner in Australia. Before that plenty of people had guns, some inherited, some passed down, some bought for a single trip and then forgotten. For many they were just part of the background of life, not a hobby, not an identity, not a structured pursuit, just something which existed in the household, like fishing rods. But 1996 cleaned up those guns and, in many cases, the people who owned them. That was the intent: Get rid of the guns. Yet in claiming the victory what went unnoticed was what remained, the people who chose to stay. The new type of owner the legislation unintentionally created. It created Version 1.1: People who were committed to ownership and willing to pass through the eyes of many needles. They accepted the mud thrown their way but hung in there. They joined clubs, built infrastructure, introduced new disciplines and new ways of shooting. They became the foundation of the shooting sports community and, 30 years later, collectively we're enthusiasts. For me, I went from shooter to hunter. I became serious about it as

my purchases, habits and outlook reflected that shift. Over time it shaped who I would become, to the point it's now the dominant code in my life. One way or another most things I do, or plan to, connect back to the fact I'm a rifleman and a hunter. It's my way of moving through the world. The rushed legislation, virtue signaling and outright character assassination we've seen since December 2025 are obvious in their intent and deployment. Someone decided to retread '96. Worked once, will work again but they didn't read the room or even glance at the guestlist. We're enthusiasts and firearms are the basis of that enthusiasm. Some of us are hunters, some collectors, some recreational shooters, while others compete across many levels and disciplines. But the ties that bind us are our enthusiasm for what we do and the way we go about it. We show up, we train, invest, build communities, maintain standards and take pride in doing things properly. Yet things have changed and our operating system needs an update. We need Version 2.0: Sharper, coordinated, consistent and impossible to ignore. It means recognising every voice is part of a larger pattern. We need to write, email, call, text, speak and let them know: 'What you're doing is hurting me, my family, the way I live my life and I'll remember that at the next election'. That's Version 2.0: Direct, steady, unmistakably human. It's not about aggression or outrage, it's about maturity and understanding you, as a voter, have every right to have your voice heard. And when they get something right, when they support lawful, responsible participation in our sport,

Version 2.0 acknowledges that too: 'I like what you're doing, you're supporting me and I'll remember that come election time'. Politicians respond to pressure but also to clarity. Your authentic message counts as when they finally decide to read the room, we want them to see it's full. Which brings me to alliances. We need them. We need clubs, associations, disciplines and interest groups to recognise that while our activities may differ, our foundation is the same. We need to acknowledge if you mess with one of us, you mess with all of us. If a government targets our fellow enthusiasts we don't stay quiet, because the moment we allow division, we allow erosion. We've spent 30 years focusing on commitment, structure and purpose. We've built ranges, clubs, competitions, training programs and social networks. We've raised a generation who didn't inherit firearms from a cupboard but entered the sport through process, discipline and intention. And that's not a weakness it's a cultural achievement. And now, as the political winds shift again, we must recognise what we are: A community of lawful, organised, informed and motivated citizens. We aren't problems to be solved or stereotypes to be dismissed, we're participants in a legitimate, regulated and meaningful pursuit. And we vote.





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