

Firearms Registration in Australia

Background

- Australia's 1996 National Firearms Agreement (NFA) required all firearms to be 'registered' with a state-controlled authority.
- Each of Australia's eight States and Territories maintains a firearms registry, staffed by police and/or civilian public servants.

Number of registered firearms

- There are approximately 2.6 million registered firearms in Australia.
- The number of unregistered firearms in Australia is unknown, but is estimated to range between 1.5 and 6 million.
- These figures suggest registration compliance is around 30% to 63%, meaning that between one and two out of every three firearms in Australia have never been registered.

Accuracy of the registries

- The error rate in the registries is estimated to be up to 80%.
- That is, up to eight out of every 10 records held by the registries is thought to be inaccurate.

Registry costs

- The annual cost, nationwide, of maintaining the firearms registries is not publicly available.
- Estimates place the annual cost somewhere between \$27 million and \$100 million.
- Over the 15 year period since 1996/97 when Australia's NFA was implemented, this equates to a cost of between \$405 million and \$1.5 billion.

Registered firearms and homicide

- Almost all firearms used to commit homicide in Australia are unregistered, with the offenders unlicensed.
- In 2007/08 (the most recent data available), there were 80 intimate partner homicides in Australia.
- Of these, 10 were firearm related. None were committed by a legal firearms owner, and none involved a registered firearm.

Does registration prevent crime?

- There is no publicly available evidence to indicate that firearms registration in Australia has prevented any criminal acts.
- There is limited analysis of captured 'crime' firearms.
- The majority of police time and effort goes into licensing low risk, legal firearms owners, and administering firearms registration.

References and data sources

- Bricknell, S. (2009). *Firearm theft in Australia 2007-08*. Australian Institute of Criminology: Canberra.
 Custom data tables. *AIC NHMP 2007-08 computer file*. Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.
- Dearden, J., & Jones, W. (2008). *Homicide in Australia: 2006-07 National Homicide Monitoring Program annual report*. Australian Institute of Criminology: Canberra.
- Mouzos, J., & Houliaris, T. (2006). *Homicide in Australia: 2004-05 National Homicide Monitoring Program annual report*. Australian Institute of Criminology: Canberra.
- NOUS Group (2007). *National Firearms Management System: Business case project*. Canberra.
- Vireuda, M., & Payne, J. (2010). *Homicide in Australia: 2007-08 National Homicide Monitoring Program annual report*. Australian Institute of Criminology: Canberra.
- Vos, T., et al. (2010). *Assessing Cost-Effectiveness in Prevention (ACE-Prevention): Final Report*. University of Queensland, Brisbane and Deakin University, Melbourne.