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Gun Law Research Agrees: 1996 Bans Missed the Mark

New peer-reviewed research shows that multiple independent studies on the impact of Australia's 1996 gun bans and half-billion dollar 'buyback' scheme all point the same way: no effect.

Study co-author and WiSH Chair Dr Samara McPhedran said "We compared four published papers that have evaluated the legislative changes. Using different analysis methods and time periods, none of the studies found evidence for an impact of the laws on the pre-existing decline in firearm homicides."

The research found that debate over whether or not the legislation had an impact has arisen from different interpretations of the same results.

"Disagreement has occurred because of seemingly contradictory research outcomes. However, it turns out that the studies do not contradict one another at all."

"The statistical findings were in complete agreement, even though the conclusions varied."

The authors identify a series of interpretive misunderstandings that have created the appearance of inconsistency.

"For example, the pre-existing decline in firearm suicides accelerated post-1996, but not all of the studies acknowledge that non-firearm suicides began falling from the late 1990s onwards, coinciding with the implementation of national suicide prevention strategies."

"This implies that broad social changes such as greater awareness of mental health influenced suicides across the board, highlighting the importance of early intervention and ongoing support for those in need."

The new research will clear the way for policymakers to support and develop initiatives that work, such as the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, rather than pursuing measures that have not achieved results.

"Just as one swallow does not make a summer, a single study cannot definitively answer whether or not the laws delivered public health and safety outcomes. Collectively, though, the research has become a flock of swallows with a very clear direction."

An executive summary can be downloaded from:

http://www.ic-wish.org/McPhedran%20Baker%20Impact%20of%20Australias%20Gun%20Laws%20Executive%20Summary_180408.pdf

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