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New Study: Gun Laws Did Not Affect QLD Suicides

The International Coalition for Women in Shooting and Hunting (WiSH) have commended new research into the impact of Australia's 1996 gun laws on firearm suicides in Queensland.

The Australian Institute of Suicide Research and Prevention study, published in *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, shows that firearm suicides in Queensland began falling in the 1980's, well before the legislative changes were introduced.

The gun laws did not impact on the pre-existing rate of decline in firearm suicides, which continued at the same rate before and after the changes.

"This study, like many before it, shows that the gun laws did not achieve the promised public health outcomes, despite their staggering price tag," said WiSH Chair Dr Samara McPhedran.

The report showed an ongoing increase in suicides by hanging among young men over the period 1990-2004, suggesting a shift in method choice by that group.

"Importantly, the authors highlight the role of suicide prevention strategies in tackling suicide overall."

"We can only imagine how many lives could have been saved, had the billions of dollars spent on banning firearms and maintaining a cumbersome legislative system been put towards mental healthcare, support services, and outreach programmes for people experiencing hardship," Dr McPhedran said.

The latest findings are broadly consistent with earlier work published in the *British Journal of Criminology*, which also found that the 1996 gun laws did not impact on firearm homicides.

References:

Klieve, H., Barnes, M., & De Leo, D. (2009). Controlling firearms use in Australia: Has the 1996 gun law reform produced the decrease in rates of suicide with this method? *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 44: 285-292.

Baker, J., & McPhedran, S. (2007). Gun laws and sudden death: Did the Australian firearms legislation of 1996 make a difference? *British Journal of Criminology*, 47: 455-469.

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WOMEN ON TARGET FOR POSITIVE CHANGE