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Mass Shootings: Australian Gun Bans Not the Answer

New research shows that Australia's costly ban on semi-automatic firearms cannot be credited with stopping mass shootings in that country. Published in the peer-reviewed *Justice Policy Journal*, the study compared the occurrence of mass shootings (four or more people killed) in Australia with its close neighbour New Zealand.

"Despite their very different gun laws, both countries have experienced almost identical periods of time with no mass shootings," said WiSH Chair Dr Samara McPhedran.

In reaction to the Port Arthur mass shooting in 1996, Australia banned semi-automatic rifles and shotguns, and pump-action shotguns. New Zealand still allows those types of firearms for hunting and target shooting. Neither country has experienced a mass shooting in over 14 years.

"This does not support the view that prohibiting certain types of firearms explains the absence of mass shootings in Australia since 1996," said Dr McPhedran.

Although mass shootings have historically been extremely rare in both Australia and New Zealand, there was a 'cluster' of shootings in both countries in the late 1980s to mid-1990s.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, both countries experienced high levels of unemployment, followed by a decade of relative economic stability and growth from the mid-1990s onward.

Dr McPhedran said that "The occurrence of mass shootings may reflect broader relationships between economic wellbeing and violence."

The study controlled for different population sizes between the two countries.

Executive summary:

<http://www.ic-wish.org/Mass%20shootings%20in%20Australia%20and%20New%20Zealand%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

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