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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Firearms Suicide in New Zealand

The International Coalition for Women in Shooting and Hunting (WiSH) today commended new research into New Zealand's rate of firearms suicide.

Guided by leading suicide researcher Professor Annette Beautrais, the study shows that although there was no decline in suicide rates overall, firearms suicides decreased following the alteration of New Zealand's gun laws in 1992.

WiSH Chairwoman Ms Samara McPhedran said "This outcome, while disappointing in terms of total impact, highlights the fundamental importance of raising community awareness about suicide. It shows we must deliver adequate resources for intervention and prevention programs."

The study concludes that restricting access to particular suicide methods must be viewed only as an adjunct to the identification and management of psychiatric precursors to suicidal behaviour.

"New Zealand's situation is not unique. Australia and Canada have had similar experiences. The New Zealand results serve as another warning that we must not view legislation as a substitute for comprehensive public health strategies."

"Too often, we hear promises that 'tough gun laws' equate to suicide prevention, which is not correct. Interestingly, although firearms ownership is quite high in New Zealand, misuse is lower than in Australia or Canada, despite those countries' more stringent laws," Ms McPhedran finished.

Reference: Beautrais, A.L., Fergusson, D.M., & Horwood, L.J. (2006). Firearms legislation and reductions in firearm-related suicide in New Zealand. *Aust. & NZ Journal of Psychiatry*, 40, 253-259

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WOMEN ON TARGET FOR POSITIVE CHANGE