



A submission to the WA
Government's consultation on the
Firearms Act Reform
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INTRODUCTION

The Australian Health Promotion Association Ltd (AHPA®) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the consultation on the National Housing and Homelessness Plan. As Australia's peak body for health promotion, AHPA advocates for the development of healthy and safe living, working and recreational environments for all people. Through our work we support the participation of communities and groups in decisions that affect their health.

Australia is one of the healthiest countries in the world. This is largely because of effective public health and its core services – protection, prevention and health promotion which includes action to create and support the social and environmental conditions that enable Australians to enjoy a healthy and happy life. We are now more aware than ever of just how complex the circumstances are by which human health is influenced – policies and actions shaped by the unfair distribution of wealth, power, and resources, both locally and internationally. **Health promotion's role has never been so significant.**

Peace is a fundamental pre-requisite to health. However, gun violence significantly threatens health across the globe.¹

In the wake of the 1996 Port Arthur massacre, there was agreement to a national, harmonized approach to firearm regulation in Australia via the National Firearms Agreement which stated that “... *firearms possession and use is a privilege that is conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety.*”²

In Australia, data indicates that post introduction of reforms after the 1996 massacre, the annual rate of total gun deaths in Australia fell from 2.9 per 100,000 to 0.88 per 100,000 in 2018. The national gun death rate is 12 times less than the US and the rate of firearm-related suicide has more than halved.² However, strong legislation is required to maintain these positive health and social outcomes. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that “*targeting multiple firearms regulations—including use, sales, ownership, and storage—can reduce firearm-related mortality.*”¹

About Us

Incorporated in 1990, AHPA is the only professional association specifically for people interested or involved in the practice, policy, research, and study of health promotion. Our member-driven national Association represents over 1000 members and subscribers and is governed by a Board at the national level with operational branches representing all states and territories. Membership of AHPA is diverse, and includes designated health promotion practitioners, researchers, and students, as well as others involved in promoting physical, mental, social, cultural, and environmental health, whose primary profession or area of study may be something different, but whose responsibilities include promoting health. Members represent a broad range of sectors including health, education, welfare, environment, transport, law enforcement, town planning, housing, and politics. They are drawn from government departments and agencies, universities, non-government organisations, community-based organisations and groups, private companies, and students.

Our activities include: national registration of health promotion practitioners for the International Union for Health Promotion and Education in Australia; national health promotion university learning and teaching network; early career support; national and local conferences and events; a tri-yearly Population Health Congress (with partners: Public Health Association of Australia, Australasian Epidemiological Association and Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine); a website providing professional and membership information; a national listserv providing members with sector news, employment, advocacy and events information; stakeholder and member communication across a range of platforms; advocacy action; strong partnership working with a range of organisations; awards; traineeships; mentoring; scholarships and bursaries; and the Health Promotion Journal of Australia, which has a strong focus on health equity and participation by First Nations people.

Our Vision

A healthy, equitable Australia.

Our Purpose

Leadership, advocacy and workforce development for health promotion practice, research, evaluation, and policy.

¹ The Lancet (2023). Understanding global gun violence, and how to control it. Lancet (London, England), 402(10411), 1393.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)02347-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)02347-4)

² <https://www.gunsafetyalliance.org.au/the-stats/>

Our Principles

- Ethical practice - Supporting culturally informed, participatory, respectful, and safe practice.
- Health equity - Addressing the sociocultural, economic, political, commercial, and ecological determinants of health in order to build health equity.
- Innovative and evidence informed approaches - Promoting and supporting evidence informed research, policy, and practice.
- Collaboration - Working in partnership with other organisations to improve health and wellbeing

Our Strategy

1. Promote our profession and members
2. Advocate for health promotion
3. Build professional capacity of AHPA members
4. Support career pathways in health promotion
5. Promote equity, diversity and inclusion
6. Provide responsible and sustainable governance and management

Detailed actions to achieve the strategy can be found in our [Strategic Plan](#) document.

Supporting change

AHPA commends the Western Australian government for taking serious and considered action to strengthen its gun control measures. These measures will have a significant and lasting impact on and legacy for community safety in Western Australia. However, we urge the government to inure itself to the influence of powerful and vested industry interests which will seek to weaken the proposed provisions. We believe that there is strong community support for the proposed changes. For example, a 2018 survey of the Australian public suggested current national legislation was 'about right' or '**too weak**'.²

AHPA provides its general support for the proposed changes however encourages the following revisions and considerations:

1. Increase the minimum age an individual can use firearms to 18.
2. Make improvements in the transport of a firearm in a vehicle.
3. Make training mandatory for existing Firearm Licence Holders if they apply for additional firearms where there are potential differences in handling, use or legislative requirements.
4. Introduce a firearms licence levy to support firearms safety research and data

AHPA also supports the content of submissions made by Injury Matters Western Australia, the Public Health Association of Australia and the National Gun Safety Alliance (AHPA is a member of the NGSA which is a coalition to advocate for full compliance with the National Firearms Agreement, signed after Port Arthur in 1996 and renewed in 2017), which may include additional detail and proposed amendments/considerations.

Our vision for a healthy, equitable Australia can be found in our [Health Promotion and Illness Prevention Policy](#).



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