

The hole in Australia's gun laws

What counts as a genuine reason to own a gun?

To get a firearm licence in Australia requires having a “genuine reason” to own a gun. In most jurisdictions, this requirement can be satisfied by being a paid-up member of a sports shooting club. Shooting groups promote this fact, advertising that you can join “from the comfort of home”. This may explain why up to 253,000 NSW firearms licences list shooting sports or recreational hunting as a reason for gun ownership, but fewer than 36,000 people in NSW participated in either activity in 2025.

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Summary

After the Port Arthur Massacre in 1996, all eight state and territory governments and the Federal Government signed up to the National Firearms Agreement, which they reaffirmed in 2017. One of the main reforms from the National Firearms Agreement was requiring individuals to provide a “genuine reason” to own a gun when applying for a firearm licence. Genuine reasons include working on farms or as a security guard, being a gun collector, as well as the most popular: recreational hunting and sports shooting.

The current requirements to prove a genuine reason are not strong enough to meet the stated aims of the National Firearms Agreement. There are at least 215,000 licences in NSW that list either sports shooting or recreational hunting as a genuine reason. However, only 36,000 people participate in either activity according to the Australian Sports Commission’s *AusPlay* data.

The gulf between these two figures suggests that the majority of people who own a firearm with the stated reason of sports or recreation do not actually participate in either activity.

While some of these people may be licence-holders who have retired from active shooting, it would be ambitious to suggest retired shooters make up the entirety of the over 200,000-person gap. (Such retired shooters should, in any case, return their licence and sell or surrender their firearm/s.) Another explanation is that some of these people may have taken advantage of the ease of providing a genuine reason for a firearms licence, while having never intended to use their weapon for the stated reason in the first place.

Despite being closely integrated with Australia’s firearm licencing laws, gun and hunting clubs face few transparency requirements or public regulation. This has allowed them to build up a multi-million dollar “war chest” for lobbying against gun control laws, all while avoiding public scrutiny. It also means that far-right groups have been able to set up gun and hunting clubs, making it easier for their members to acquire firearms.

Ever since the Port Arthur massacre, Australia has been united behind the principle that strict firearm controls are important for public safety. The thin practical requirements for getting a firearm licence are not in the spirit of that principle and allow for a worrying erosion of Australia’s gun control regime.

Introduction

There are more guns in Australia than ever before, with over four million licenced firearms in the country.¹ There is still no national firearms register, and the National Firearms Agreement is not being fully enforced – even though nearly 30 years have elapsed since it was agreed by all Australian governments. Many Australians believe that Howard-era gun laws have resolved the question of firearm ownership in Australia, but current data offers a different picture.

After the Port Arthur Massacre in 1996 all eight state and territory governments and the Federal Government signed up to the National Firearms Agreement, which they reaffirmed in 2017.² One of the main reforms in the National Firearms Agreement was requiring individuals to provide a “genuine reason” to own a gun when applying for a firearm licence. Genuine reasons include working on farms or as a security guard, or being a gun collector, as well as the two most popular: recreational hunting and sports shooting.³

Following the tragic Bondi massacre, there has been renewed scrutiny of Australia’s gun control regime. National Cabinet quickly agreed to reforms to restrict certain categories of weapons and the number of firearms a single person can own.⁴ These are welcome changes, but do not fully address issues with Australia’s firearm laws.

This report explores the current legislative requirements for an applicant to prove that their “genuine reason” is indeed genuine, and the apparent ease with which this requirement can be circumvented in most jurisdictions.

For almost 30 years, Australia has been united behind the principle that strict firearm controls are important for public safety. If those controls are easy to circumvent, then the Australian system of gun control is ripe for exploitation, putting community safety at risk.

¹ Gottschalk, Clarke, Chollet and Grundy (2025) “Gun Control in Australia”, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/P1606-Gun-control-in-Australia-report-WEB.pdf>

² Council of Australian Governments (1996, 2017) *National Firearms Agreement*, <https://www.acic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-03/1996%20National%20Firearms%20Agreement.pdf>; https://www.resources.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1399510/17-257.pdf

³ NSW Police Force (2025) *Firearms Licensing and Ownership Statistics Dec 25*, https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/927971/NSW_Firearms_Licensing_and_Ownership_Information_Dec25.pdf

⁴ Albanese (2025) “Albanese Labor Government will establish a National Gun Buyback Scheme”, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/albanese-labor-government-will-establish-national-gun-buyback-scheme>

Genuine reasons for firearm licences

In all states and territories, applicants for a firearms licence need to list a genuine reason for owning a gun.⁵ While exact details vary between jurisdictions, all states and territories are signatories to the NFA, which sets out 10 agreed-upon genuine reasons.⁶

Australian gun control laws restrict the reasons for which a person can acquire a firearm to prevent them from doing so for purposes outside the law, including ensuring that guns are not used for violence against others.⁷ If genuine reason requirements are easy to circumvent, then people with less than genuine reasons for possessing a firearm are able to acquire them, leaving the efficacy of Australian firearms legislation uncertain.

At present, two such requirements are extremely loose: sports shooting, and hunting/recreational shooting. A person can easily list sports shooting or hunting as their genuine reason for acquiring a firearm while having no intention of using the weapon for the stated purpose.

SPORTS SHOOTING

In every jurisdiction, financial membership to an approved club is required for sport shooting to be accepted as a genuine reason for holding a gun license. In most places, this is the *only* requirement for a licence that authorises ownership and use of category A/B

⁵ NSW Police Force (ND) “Licence Types”, https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/online_services/firearms/licences; Victoria Police (n.d.) “Genuine reason requirements to hold a firearm licence” <https://www.police.vic.gov.au/genuine-reasons-hold-firearm-licence#category-a-and-ab>; Weapons Act 1990 (QLD), WA Law Enforcement (2025) “Individual Licence”, <https://www.wa.gov.au/service/security/law-enforcement/individual-firearm-licence>; SA Police (n.d.) “Firearms Licence Eligibility”, <https://www.police.sa.gov.au/services-and-events/firearms-and-weapons/firearms-licence-eligibility>; Tasmania Police (n.d.) “Supporting evidence [proof]”, <https://fas.police.tas.gov.au/obtaining-a-licence/supporting-evidence-proof/>; ACT Policing (n.d.) “Firearms Licences”, <https://police.act.gov.au/community-safety/firearms/firearms-licences/types-of-licences>; NT Police Force (n.d.) “Licence and Permit Applications and Information”, <https://pfes.nt.gov.au/police/firearmsweapons/licence-and-permit-information>

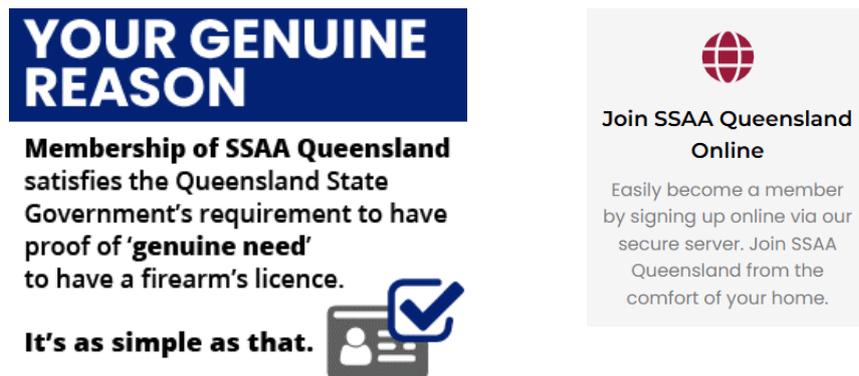
⁶ Council of Australian Governments (1996, 2017) *National Firearms Agreement*, <https://www.acic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-03/1996%20National%20Firearms%20Agreement.pdf>; https://www.resources.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1399510/17-257.pdf

⁷ Council of Australian Governments (2017) *National Firearms Agreement*

firearms—a category that includes non-automatic shotguns and rifles, and, in most states, the types of rapid-action/quick-fire weapons used in the Bondi shooting.⁸

Queensland is one of the jurisdictions where the only requirement for using sports shooting as a genuine reason for owning a firearm is financial membership to a club. This fact is used in promotional material for sports shooting clubs and associations. Figure 1 shows examples of this from the website of the Queensland branch of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (SSAA):

Figure 1: Images from SSAA Queensland website



Source: SSAA Queensland (2025) *Membership*, archived July 2025, still up as of 20/02/2026, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250703002433/https://ssaaql.org.au/membership/join-the-ssaa/>

The website states that “Membership of SSAA Queensland satisfies [Queensland’s] requirement to have proof of ‘genuine [reason]’ to have a firearm’s [sic] licence”.⁹ Elsewhere, text on the website emphasises that you can join “from the comfort of your own home”.

This makes fulfilling the genuine reason requirement for a sports shooting firearm licence in Queensland as easy as filling in a five-minute webform, with no human contact and relatively little money or effort. As shown in Table 1, the same is true in six of eight Australian state and territories.

⁸ Manning and Burgess (2025) “Bondi shootings show Australia's gun laws slipping since Port Arthur reforms, advocate says”, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-12-15/bondi-shooting-proof-port-arthur-guns-laws-failing-advocate-says/106142756>

⁹ SSAA Queensland (n.d.) *Join the SSAA* <https://ssaaql.org.au/membership/join-the-ssaa/>

Table 1: Category A/B sporting genuine reason requirements

	Financial club membership	Support Letter from club	Active participation
NSW	Required	Not required	Four times a year
VIC	Required (as one option)	Required (as one option)	Not required
QLD	Required	Not required	Not required
WA	Required	Required	Six times a year
SA	Required	Not required	Not required
TAS	Required	Not required	Not required
ACT	Required	Not required	Must be an "active participant"
NT	Required	Not required	Not required

Source: NSW Police Force (ND) "Licence Types"; Victoria Police (ND) "Genuine reason requirements to hold a firearm licence"; Weapons Act 1990 (QLD); WA Law Enforcement (2025) "Individual Licence"; SA Police (n.d.) "Firearms Licence Eligibility"; Tasmania Police (n.d.) "Supporting evidence"; ACT Policing (n.d.) "Firearms Licences"; NT Police Force (n.d.) "Licence and Permit Applications and Information"

This is not in the spirit of the National Firearms Agreement, which introduced genuine reason requirements to prevent firearm ownership for disallowed reasons, including "personal protection".¹⁰ This is one of the key differences between firearm licencing in Australia and other jurisdictions such as the United States.

Other states have a greater degree of stringency around genuine reasons, particularly New South Wales (NSW) and Western Australia (WA), which have participation requirements for holding a sporting shooters' licence. NSW licences require the licence holder to participate in "not less than 4 shooting activities of an approved shooting club" in a given financial year.¹¹ Each club must keep track of its members' participation in shooting activities and notify the Police Commissioner each year of any member who fails to meet them.¹² However, it is unclear if, or how effectively, this is checked and enforced, so this requirement may not be as strong as it appears.

WA implemented a similar policy in 2025 as part of reforms to the state's firearm laws, which now require that licence-holders "participate in at least 6 shooting competitions in each 12-month period of the licence".¹³ WA is also the only state that requires a supporting letter from the shooting club alongside proof of membership in an application.¹⁴

While WA's approach is not perfect, it is significantly better than the evidence required by most states and territories.

¹⁰ Council of Australian Governments (1996) *National Firearms Agreement*, p 3-4

¹¹ *Firearms Regulation 2017* (NSW) s107

¹² *Firearms Regulation 2017* (NSW) s100

¹³ WA Law Enforcement (2025) "Individual Licence"

¹⁴ WA Law Enforcement (2025) "Individual Licence"

HUNTING AND RECREATIONAL SHOOTING

As shown in Table 2, genuine reason requirements for game and hunting licences in all states and territories are even weaker than those for sports shooting.

Table 2: Category A/B Hunting genuine reason requirements

	Land-holder permission	Financial club membership	Support Letter from club	Active participation
NSW	Required (as one option)	Required (as one option)	Not required	Two times a year (for club option)
VIC	Required (as one option)	Required (as one option)	Not required	Not required
QLD	Required	Not required	Not required	Not required
WA	Required	Not required	Not required	Not required
SA	Not required	Not required	Not required	Not required
TAS	Required	Not required	Not required	Not required
ACT	Required (as one option)	Required (as one option)	Not required	Not required
NT	Required	Not required	Not required	Not required

Source: *Firearms Regulation 2017* (NSW); Victoria Police (n.d.) “Genuine reason requirements to hold a firearm licence”; *Weapons Act 1990* (QLD); WA Law Enforcement (2025) “Individual Licence”; SA Police (n.d.) “Firearms Licence Eligibility”; Tasmania Police (n.d.) “Supporting evidence [proof]”; ACT Policing (n.d.) “Firearms Licences”; NT Police Force (n.d.) “Licence and Permit Applications and Information”

Most states and territories only require permission from (or being) a rural landowner in order to prove hunting as a genuine reason for owning a gun, with some also allowing membership in a hunting club as an alternative. These are not immune to abuse. WA, for example, reformed its landowner permissions system in 2023 after “property letters” were found to be sold by farmers for a profit, often to people with no real intention of shooting on that property.¹⁵

South Australia has the weakest genuine reason rules, having no proof requirements for hunting or target shooting.¹⁶

Without stricter requirements for genuine reasons, a person can list sports shooting or hunting as their genuine reason to acquire a firearm, while having no intention of using it for the stated purpose.

¹⁵ Varischetti (2023) “WA farmers’ firearm ‘property letter’ system to be overhauled amid claims of abuse” <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2023-06-02/wa-farmers-gun-reform-property-letter-system-licence-overhaul/102421670>

¹⁶ SA Police (n.d.) “Firearms Licence Eligibility”

Licences and participation

The ease with which a person can potentially circumvent the genuine reason requirement when applying for a firearm licence is concerning on its own, but even more so when considering the scale of the problem.

It is difficult to get an accurate picture of firearms licencing in Australia due to a lack of quality data released by most states and territories. The only state to publish figures on the number of licences broken down by genuine reason and the category of firearm is NSW.

Because licences can list more than one genuine reason, it is not possible to calculate a firm total for both reasons, but it is possible to calculate the minimum possible number using the reasons given for category A licences. In NSW, at least 60,170 licences listed sports target shooting as a genuine reason for category A licences in December 2025, as did at least 215,835 for recreational hunting and vermin control.¹⁷ Together, between 215,835 and 253,670 firearms licences use one or both reasons.¹⁸

Yet as Figure 1 shows, only up to 35,761 people in NSW (including the margin of error of 5227 for each category) participated in either activity at least once from June 2024 to July 2025, according to the Australian Sports Commission's *AusPlay* survey.¹⁹ *AusPlay* is a large-scale national population tracking survey that informs government investment, policy and programs.²⁰ The 35,761 total for NSW assumes the maximum margin of error, so it represents the high-water mark of *AusPlay*'s figures. It also combines the categories of "shooting" (which includes range shooting sports) and "shooting sports" (which includes field shooting sports and recreational hunting), meaning that it would double-count those who participated in both, suggesting that even this figure is overestimated.

¹⁷ NSW Police Force (2025) *Firearms Licensing and Ownership Statistics Dec 25*, https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/927971/NSW_Firearms_Licensing_and_Ownership_Information_Dec25.pdf

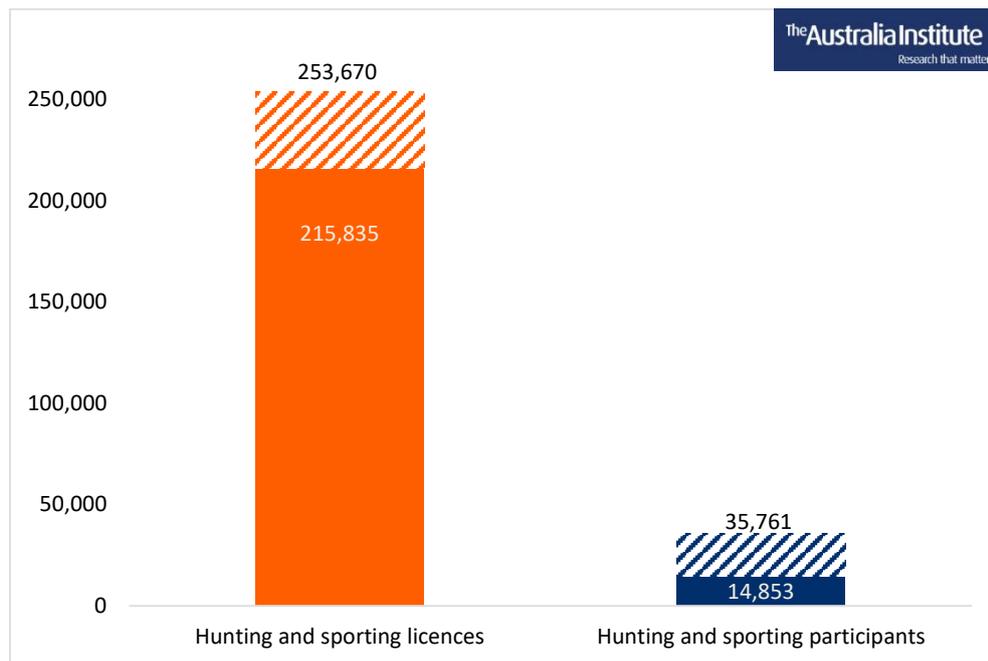
¹⁸ Note: 253,670 is the total number of Category A firearm licences in NSW. Because the number of sports and hunting licences exceeds that total, it is the theoretical maximum number of licences that use either reason.

¹⁹ AusPlay (2024) "NSW data tables – January to December 2024", Participation by activity (adults), <https://www.ausport.gov.au/clearinghouse/research/ausplay/results>

Note: Minimum and Maximum calculated using reported margin of error.

²⁰ AusPlay (n.d.) *Clearinghouse for Sport* <https://www.ausport.gov.au/clearinghouse/research/ausplay>

Figure 1: Hunting and sport shooting licences vs participation in NSW (min/max)



Source: NSW Police Force (2024) *Firearms Licensing and Ownership Statistics Dec 24*, 1.2; AusPlay (2025) “NSW data tables – July 2024 to June 2025”, Participation by activity (adults)

There is a gap of over 200,000 people between the number of people holding licences for sporting shooting or hunting and the number of people actually pursuing those activities. This is particularly significant given that NSW is one of only two states and territories with participation requirements – four events a year for sports shooting, and two a year for hunting. This raises the question of whether the requirements for participation are being enforced.

Without detailed national data on genuine reasons, it is uncertain how many Australians own a firearm without using it for the purpose stated on their licence application— especially because, as Australia Institute research has shown, other states and territories fall short in comparison with NSW when it comes to reporting.²¹

However, there is no reason to believe that NSW would be unique in having a significant gap between licences and participation. This suggests that there may be a significant number of such license-holders around the country.

One potential reason that someone might hold a sports shooting or hunting firearms license without actually carrying out either activity is having retired from active shooting. However, in such cases, the person no longer needs their firearm and can end their licence.

In any case, it would be ambitious to suggest retired shooters make up the entirety of the over 200,000 in NSW alone who fall into this category. Another possibility is that some of

²¹ Gottshalk, Clarke, Chollet and Grundy (2025) “Gun Control in Australia”

these people have taken advantage of the ease of proving a genuine reason for a firearms licence, and some may never have intended to use it for that purpose in the first place.

There are multiple tragic examples of cases where bypassing the genuine reason requirement has had fatal consequences. One 2022 coroner's report into a suicide by firearm found that the deceased had successfully lied about having a genuine reason for his firearm licence, listing hunting despite telling friends that he "only ever shot at trees".²² In a 2022 murder-suicide, the perpetrator acquired the firearm he used with the stated reason of "Recreational Hunting/Vermin Control", satisfying the genuine reason requirement by joining a NSW gun club before travelling to Victoria to commit his planned acts.²³

Comprehensive, publicly available data on firearms and firearm licences in all states and territories would make it easier for governments to make sound decisions on firearms legislation and for the general public to let lawmakers know whether or not they are comfortable with the level of gun ownership near them.

²² Antoniadis Spanos (2022) *Finding into the death of Mr HP*, 26, https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/Finding%20into%20the%20death%20of%20Mr%20HP_1.pdf

²³ Gebert (2023) *Finding into death without inquest*, p. 12, https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/Coroners%20Findings%20-%20Martin%20SHEAHAN%20-%20COR%202022%20532_Redacted_0.pdf

Regulation of gun clubs

One of the elements of the gun control reforms passed in NSW after the Bondi massacre is “making gun club membership mandatory for all firearms licence holders”.²⁴ While this may be aimed at strengthening requirements around proving a genuine reason, it will have unintended consequences, especially if used as a model for laws in other states and territories. It could serve to funnel millions of additional dollars into gun clubs, filling up the gun lobby’s war chest to fight against and roll back strengthened firearm laws.²⁵

CREATING A “WAR CHEST”

Shooting club membership has flourished since 1996, not least because firearm owners who lacked any other genuine reason to own a gun could simply join a gun club and preserve their arsenal.²⁶ The SSAA, for example, had “around 30,000” members in 1996.²⁷ Today, it is Australia’s largest gun club, boasting approximately 220,000 members—an over sevenfold increase since Port Arthur.²⁸

This boom in gun club membership has been an unintended consequence of the introduction of genuine reason requirements. It has meant creating a guaranteed stream of financing for the gun lobby, and that today, gun clubs have substantial financial resources.

The extent of those resources is difficult to assess—not least because, despite receiving tens of millions of dollars in public funding and being heavily integrated into firearm law enforcement,²⁹ gun clubs have no mandatory public reporting requirements about either their membership or financials. The SSAA’s Victorian branch is the only branch to publish its financial reports, and it reported \$9,721,411 in revenue for the year ending April 2025.³⁰ Of

²⁴ Premier of NSW (2025) “NSW Government to introduce toughest gun law reforms in a generation”, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/ministerial-releases/nsw-government-to-introduce-toughest-gun-law-reforms-a-generation>

²⁵ Alpers (2016) “Australian gun laws may seed their own destruction”, <https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2016/12/04/australian-gun-laws-may-seed-their-own-destruction.html>

²⁶ Alpers (2016) “Australian gun laws may seed their own destruction”

²⁷ Oxborrow (2021) “SSAA a target as anti-gun lobby calls for funding”, https://www.ssa.org.au/?ss_news=ssaa-a-target-as-anti-gun-lobby-calls-for-funding

²⁸ Author estimate based on national figures from 2020, and growth in Victoria, NSW and Queensland branches; SSAA Victoria (2025) “Annual Financial Report”, <https://ssaavic.com.au/about-us/financial-reports/>; Talbot (2020) “The numbers don’t lie – 200,000 strong and counting”, https://www.ssa.org.au/?ss_news=the-numbers-dont-lie-200000-strong-and-counting

²⁹ Gun Control Australia (2019) “\$77 million in taxpayers funds to Australian gun clubs”, https://www.guncontrolaustralia.org/_77_million_in_taxpayer_funds_for_australian_gun_clubs

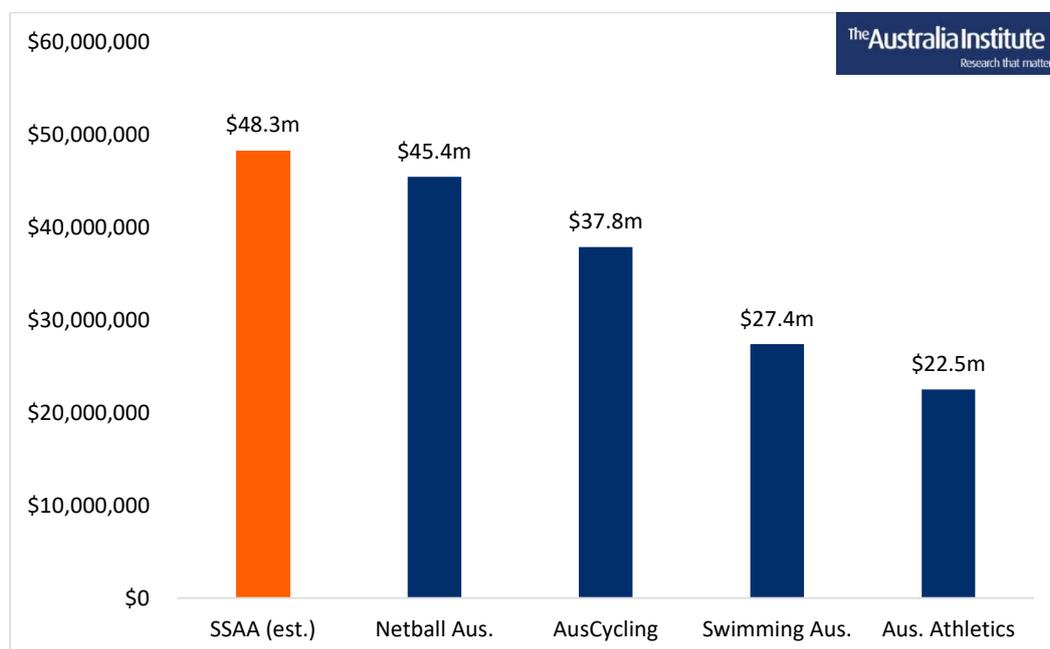
³⁰ SSAA Victoria (2025) “Annual Financial Report”, <https://ssaavic.com.au/about-us/financial-reports/>

that, \$3,769,043 came in fees from 44,206 members, with other revenue sources including the sale of goods, range fees and passes, and training income.

Assuming the SSAA's other state branches have revenue roughly proportionate to the size of their membership, it is possible to estimate their collective revenue using Victoria's figures. Using this method, the SSAA's total membership of approximately 220,000 nationally would mean a collective revenue of \$48.2 million.

This is a very large sum for a sporting group; Swimming Australia, Australian Athletics, Netball Australia and AusCycling, organisations which represent far more popular sports, all had significantly lower revenue than the SSAA in their last reporting.³¹

Figure 2: Revenue of selected national sporting bodies



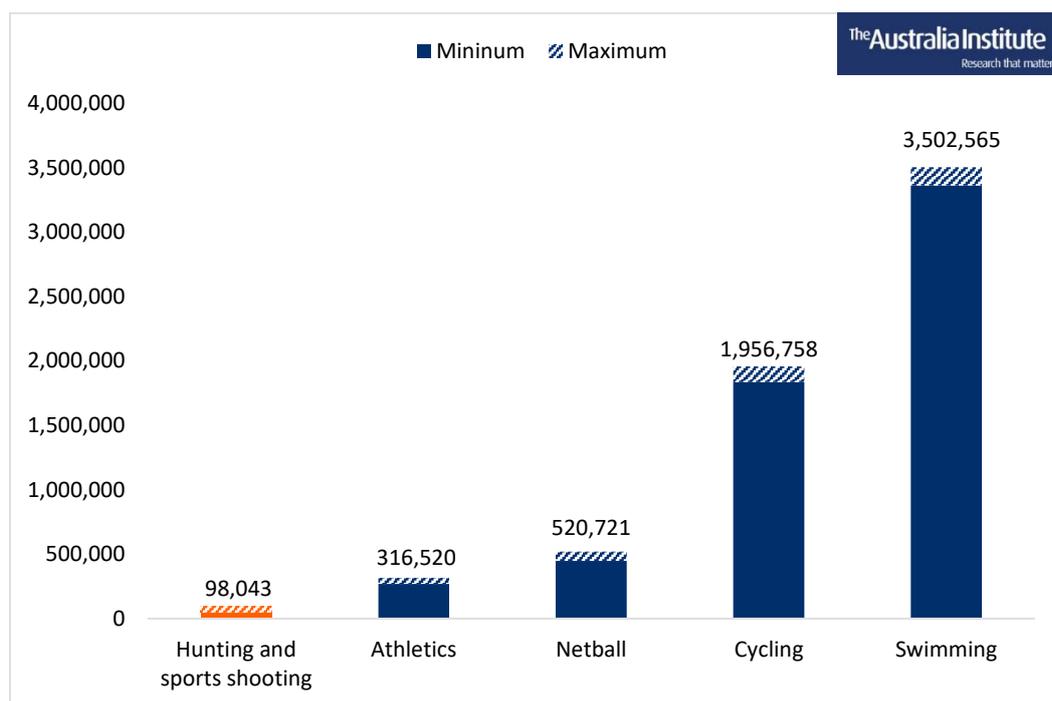
Source: SSAA: Author estimate based on national figures from 2020, and growth in Victoria, NSW and Queensland branches; SSAA Victoria (2025) "Annual Financial Report"

Others: Swimming Australia (2025) "2025 Annual Report"; Australian Athletics (2025) "Annual Report 2024-2025"; Netball Australia (2025) "Netball Australia Annual Report 2024"; AusCycling (2025) "AusCycling Annual Report 2024"

Figure 2 shows how disproportionate the SSAA's high level of revenue is to the popularity of shooting. Netball Australia, for example, has approximately \$3 million less in revenue than the projected revenue of SSAA's branches, but netball is five times more popular than shooting and hunting as a sport, as shown in Figure 3.

³¹ Swimming Australia (2025) "2025 Annual Report", <https://www.swimming.org.au/about/annual-reports/>; Australian Athletics (2025) "Annual Report 2024-2025", <https://www.athletics.com.au/annual-reports/>; Netball Australia (2025) "Netball Australia Annual Report 2024", <https://netball.com.au/annual-reports/>; AusCycling (2025) "AusCycling Annual Report 2024", <https://auscycling.org.au/about/annual-report>

Figure 3: Participation in selected sports (nationally)



Source: AusPlay (2024) “NSW data tables – January to December 2025”, Participation by activity (adults); Minimum and Maximum calculated from AusPlay margins of error

Importantly, those organisations also have significantly different roles to the SSAA and spend their money in very different ways. Unlike most sporting organisations, which are centred on the sport they represent, the SSAA exists both to “promote the shooting sports” and “protect firearm owners’ interests”.³² In this way, the SSAA is much less like a sporting organisation and more like a special interest lobbying group. In that context, it is no surprise that the SSAA diverts 4% of its income—approximately \$1.9 million per year by our calculations—towards “lobbying and research”.³³

MISSING DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

Gun clubs are not the only third-party organisations in Australia that individuals are legally compelled to fund.

Third-party car insurance is mandatory for all cars that are used on public roads.³⁴ While not compulsory, private health insurance is heavily encouraged through a 1.5% Medicare levy

³² SSAA (n.d.) “About Us”, <https://www.ssaa.org.au/members/about-us/>

³³ SSAA (2017) “Where does your SSAA spend its money?”, https://www.ssaa.org.au/?ss_news=where-does-your-ssaa-spend-its-money

³⁴ NRMA Insurance (2025) “How CTP works in Australia: a guide for each state and territory”, <https://www.nrma.com.au/blog/on-the-road/how-ctp-works-in-australia>

surcharge on taxable income.³⁵ The funding stream of gun club memberships has also been compared to that of university student unions prior to 2005, when membership and membership fees were compulsory.³⁶

However, both automobiles and health insurance are heavily regulated industries with strict reporting requirements, and student unions are registered charities, meaning they have to comply with the requirements for a charitable organisation. Gun and hunting clubs, on the other hand, have no such requirements for public accountability and transparency. Most are constituted as companies under the *Corporations Act*, which creates some requirements, but not to the level the public might expect from organisations so intertwined with Australia's regulation of firearms.

FAR-RIGHT LINKS

One concern about the low level of transparency of gun and hunting clubs is the incursion of the far-right into their ranks.

Perhaps the best example of this is that of the far-right "Australian Natives Association", which is an Approved Hunting Organisation (AHO) in NSW. This means that membership of the ANA fulfils the genuine reason requirement for a firearm licence under recreational hunting. The ANA, however, is no ordinary gun club: it has been described by the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism as "anti-immigrant, white nationalist, [and] anti-woman".³⁷ Despite being made aware of the organisation and its far-right nature in 2023,³⁸ the NSW Department of Primary Industries has not removed it from the list of AHOs almost three years later.³⁹

Another example is the Zastava Hunting Association, which first came to wider attention after it emerged that its membership included one of the Bondi shooters.⁴⁰ It is unclear if the shooter used his membership to fulfil the genuine reason requirement, and the club's president has stated that it "neither support[s] nor associate[s] with such crimes and it is

³⁵ Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (2025) "About private health insurance", <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/private-health-insurance/about-private-health-insurance?language=en>

³⁶ Alpers (2016) "Australian gun laws may seed their own destruction"

³⁷ GPAHE (n.d.) "Far-Right Hate and Extremist Groups, Australia", <https://globalextrmism.org/australia/>

³⁸ McKenzie & Galloway (2023) "Senior neo-Nazi slips out of Australia hoping to fight Russian army", <https://www.smh.com.au/national/senior-neo-nazi-slips-out-of-australia-hoping-to-fight-russian-army-20230322-p5cudj.html>

³⁹ Department of Primary Industries (2026) "Approved Hunting Organisations directory", <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/hunting/clubs-and-associations/approved-hunting-organisations-full-listing>

⁴⁰ Bucci, Beazley and Bogle (2025) "The quiet bricklayer, his father and a leave of absence: the duo accused of killing 15 people in Bondi", <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/dec/17/bondi-beach-terror-attack-duo-accused-of-killing-15-people-sajid-naveed-akram-ntwnfb>

terrible what happened”.⁴¹ According to an investigation by *The Australian*, the club has had several prominent far-right nationalists as members, and was “[born] out of Serbian Chetnik nationalist migrants”. The Chetniks were a Serb-supremacist group that committed ethnic cleansing and collaborated with the Axis powers in World War II.⁴² Zastava’s contemporary far-right links include Simeon Boikov, aka “Aussie Cossack”, a far-right Russian ultranationalist currently hiding in Sydney’s Russian consulate after allegedly assaulting a pro-Ukrainian protester.⁴³

While there is no suggestion that far-right associations are commonplace in shooting organisations, even two organisations with far-right links being able to fulfil genuine reason requirements is highly concerning. Perhaps more concerning is the fact that, without most jurisdictions publishing lists of registered gun and hunting clubs and transparency requirements, there is no way of knowing whether this problem is isolated just to these two examples, or extends further.

⁴¹ Magnay and Mendes (2026) “Bondi gunmen and far right share Sydney gun club links”, <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/bondi-gunmen-and-far-right-share-sydney-gun-club-links/news-story/46b82e4bb0b8e6710f2779f78d4f6463>

⁴² Bećirević (2014) *Genocide on the Drina River*, “The Dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Propaganda of Dehumanization”, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1bhknqx.7>

⁴³ Magnay and Mendes (2026) “Bondi gunmen and far right share Sydney gun club links”

Conclusion

Australia's firearm laws are rightly a point of national pride, but they can only keep Australians safe if they remain ironclad—and at present, the genuine reason requirements are far from ironclad. The ease by which these requirements can be circumvented has allowed hundreds of thousands of people to obtain a firearm without using the weapon for the reason specified on their licence.

Meanwhile, gun club membership requirements create a guaranteed funding stream for organisations that have a vested interest in undermining Australia's gun control laws, and are not subject to significant legal requirements on public accountability. Despite some of these clubs having clear links to the far right, holding a membership is enough to “prove” that someone has a genuine reason to own a gun.

This system needs urgent reform.

Stronger laws around proving genuine reasons would close a gaping hole in Australia's gun control regime. One possibility for reforming these laws is re-examining what constitutes a genuine reason for gun ownership: some politicians and advocates, for example, have proposed eliminating the hunting category entirely.⁴⁴ This category has the most severe issues with requirements for evidence, and removing it would be a significant step forward in strengthening genuine reason requirements.

Regardless, the system needs comprehensive inquiry and reform. Implementing NSW/WA-style participation requirements in the other states and territories would make it more difficult to fake a genuine reason to acquire a firearm licence. Such requirements, of course, are only useful if they are enforced. Additionally, if gun and hunting clubs are to continue to act as a central part of Australia's firearm licencing laws, they should be regulated in kind. Otherwise, the gun lobby's “war chest” for lobbying against firearm regulation will continue to grow, they will continue to have little to no requirements for public accountability, and organisations with far-right links will remain among their ranks.

Ever since the Port Arthur massacre, Australia has been united behind the principle that strict firearm controls are important for public safety. The easily circumventable genuine reason requirements for obtaining a firearm licence are not in the spirit of that principle and represent an erosion of Australia's gun control regime.

⁴⁴ Higginson, Shoebridge and Waters (2025) “Media release: Time for new gun laws to limit gun numbers and keep Australians safe”, <https://greens.org.au/news/media-release/media-release-time-new-gun-laws-limit-gun-numbers-and-keep-australians-safe>