

SE News
HD **A gun called the 'hand cannon' capable of firing five shots in less than one second is still LEGALLY for sale in Australia... and the anti-gun lobby wants it banned now**
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- * More than three million guns are in Australian hands
- * Over 250,000 firearms are traded on the 'black market' each year

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- * Gun Control Australia wants immediate ban on semi-automatic handguns
- * One of the most powerful is the 'Desert Eagle' which can fire five shots in less than a second
- * Pro gun groups insist the problem is the importation of illegal weapons not the theft of licensed firearms
- * At least 1800 firearms are reportedly stolen from licence holders each year
- * Semi-automatic rifles were banned after the 1996 Port Arthur massacre

Semi-automatic handguns, including one described as a 'hand cannon', should be banned immediately in Australia - even if it means the death of the sport of shooting.

That's the call from Gun Control Australia as a Senate Committee looks into 'the ability of Australian law enforcement authorities to eliminate gun-related violence in the community'.

'They are the weapons of choice for gangs, especially for drive-by shootings,' group spokeswoman Samantha Lee told Daily Mail Australia.

One semi-automatic handgun readily available is the Desert Eagle.50 calibre, which is referred to in some quarters as a 'hand cannon' and is capable of five shots in less than one second and according to one enthusiast 'can punch holes in an engine block'.

'They are so lightweight and easy to conceal and easy to use in a moving car,' Ms Lee added.

She claims that there are between 40,000 to 50,000 registered handgun owners in most states and territories.

'There's been a significant increase in New South Wales alone, and the figures have risen in Victoria and Queensland too,' she said.

But the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) which represents 160,000 plus members has countered by saying 'they are very high on rhetoric and very shallow on evidence'.

Tim Bannister of the SSAA told Daily Mail Australia 'it's ideological, based on no real argument'.

He says the problem is at the borders and the illegal importation of weapons.

'Handguns are the least likely firearm to be stolen from licensed owners. Banning self-loading handguns from civilian ownership would have little effect on the number of illegally held firearms in

Australia, when Customs is so ill-equipped and under-resourced to capture any more than 13 per cent of prohibited items that are imported into Australia on an annual basis,' Mr Bannister said.

He cited a raid in Sydney's south in 2012 where 'police were able to break an importation ring in Sylvania Waters, seizing 140 Glock pistols'.

Mr Bannister said 'criminals use handguns mostly as a status symbol and using them against other drug dealers'.

Ms Lee claims that 'there were some restrictions placed on handguns after 2002 when a student in Monash University opened fire using semi-automatic handguns - however the restrictions that were placed are pretty much useless - they are still widely and legally available right across Australia'.

She also warned authorities that 'they're the same type of firearm used in the Port Arthur massacre, except they are smaller, which in some ways makes them even more dangerous because they are easier to conceal'.

The Howard Government banned semi-automatic rifles in 1996 after the Port Arthur massacre, in which Martin Bryant killed 35 people and wounded 23 more.

'The main concern is the proliferation of semi-automatic handguns, that ban (1996) was for semi-automatic long-arms and shotguns but did not extend to handguns,' Ms Lee said.

'We did have some strong laws for handguns then, however since those laws have been superseded by laws around semi-automatic rifles.'

GCA says Australia should follow the UK **lead**, which effectively wiped out the private ownership of handguns after the Dunblane massacre, also in 1996, in which Thomas Hamilton opened fire at Dunblane Primary School, killing 16 children and a teacher before turning the weapon on himself.

'The UK banned semi-automatic handguns and banned the sport which uses handguns,' Ms Lee said.

'The problem is how these guns fall into the black-market, one is theft but the other is the main serious concern, there are rogue firearms dealers who have passed on large numbers of firearms into the black-market.'

But Mr Bannister added 'less than point two of a per cent of Australia's licensed firearm owners are affected by theft each year'.

'Handguns, and particularly self-loading handguns, are the most highly regulated of all firearms in Australia,' he said.

'Target shooting with self-loading handguns is an area of international competition that Australia excels in.'

'The Commonwealth and Olympic Games feature several events that require the use of self-loading handguns.'

'There has been various cases across Australia where firearms dealers have been charged with moving handguns into the black-market. So what we need to do is ban them, the same way that we banned semi-automatic long-arms,' Ms Lee continued.

'There's absolutely no difference between the two firearms except for length, yet we have a situation in Australia where the semi-automatic long-arms are banned because they are too dangerous yet hand-guns are legally available.'

Ms Lee says she is not advocating the end of gun ownership in Australia.

'In terms of the handgun, it's the same as the rifle, you can get a single shot handgun,' she said.

'The main reason they are used in Australia is for shooting sports, we're not saying we should get rid of that sport, all we are asking for is that for the high-powered military style hand-gun to be banned.'

'Single shot rifles are more widely owned across Australia but the concern with the semi-automatics is the massacres because they are so high-powered they can kill and maim a number of people in just a short amount of time. The community safety issues regarding them are the main concerns.'

And she doesn't accept the notion that a new ban would cripple the local gun market.

'Most guns are not produced in Australia, most come through **China** and the US - the main concern would be coming from sporting shooters who desire the semi-automatic handguns,' Ms Lee insisted.

'But we say that sport should take the lesser position, if you compare it with public safety. Again we're not saying you can't use a handgun for sport but not for competitions which require semi-automatic handguns.'

Ms Lee claims her point has been made by some sporting shooters who have told her 'that it isn't a problem because sporting shooting is about accuracy not about power of the firearm'.

'We do have to be sensible about this issue.'

Gun-makers say Australia could miss out on major weapons manufacturing opportunities if stricter gun ownership restrictions including a ban on hand guns are introduced.

Beretta International says there is potential to open a plant in Victoria, but would reconsider if legislative changes had an effect on its business models.

'Beretta International is seriously considering locating a manufacturing plant here, in Victoria in particular,' said Beretta Australia general manager Greg Chan.

'A **company** as big as Beretta and as old as Beretta would seriously look at Australia if they changed the legislation in an adverse way (and say) 'why would they want to come here? Why would they want to build a massive facility here if that's going to affect us?'

Winchester Australia also says its existing manufacturing business could also be affected if further restrictions on gun ownership were brought in.

'Any changes would obviously put our business at some sort of risk,' sales and marketing manager Jeffrey Gordon said.

Gun manufacturers and consultants told the Senate inquiry that processes already in place could be improved to prevent registered firearms being stolen and used to commit crimes.

'If you're worried about firearm theft, enforce the law that's already there,' Mr Chan said.

Manufacturing consultants criticised Australia's existing registration processes.

'The quality of information gathered by most of the registries in Australia are pathetic,' Beretta consultant Russell Pearson said.

National Firearm Dealers Association president Luca Scribani Rossi said responsibility for the management of firearm registries should be removed from police and passed to authorities responsible for operating and managing licensing systems.

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