

**The firearms debate in Australia has sunk to a new low this week with the spruiking of half-truths and bare faced lies on who can own a firearm and the police vetting procedure to ensure they are of good character.**

**Gun Control Australia Chairperson Samantha Lee has appeared in the media since the recent shootings in Oregon, USA, and spreading false information on the state of our gun laws for the sake of scaremongering and calling on further bans.**

Appeared on the Today Show on Saturday.

Gun Control Australia takes every opportunity, no matter how irrelevant, to push its agenda of complete prohibition of firearms ownership for the general community.

It's time for Ms Lee to stop using the media as a platform to spread lies, murky half-truths and more propaganda, and start being accountable.

*Ms Lee said: "Australia did some great work back in 1996 after the Port Arthur Massacre and we did have very strong laws however next year will be 20 years since the Port Arthur Massacre and we do have a well-financed, well-connected gun lobby here in Australia that has successfully eroded our gun laws and we need to have an audit of our gun laws in Australia to make sure we need to maintain our commitment to strong gun laws."*

When Today Show presenter Deborah Knight asked: "So are you concerned that potentially gun crime, gun violence, massacres like that we're seeing happening on a far too frequent basis in the US could happen here again?"

*"Well they could because we no longer have criminal record checks for people gaining access to firearms, people can gain access to multiple firearms without having any checks done and they can also gain access to firearms without having a licence."*

*"We should also live by example and ban any donations by firearms industry to Australian political parties. – The donations issue is at the core of this – There's no limits and there are millions of dollars that are donated by the NRA particularly to the Republican Party, mainly in terms of trying to prevent any gun laws passing Congress is the Republican Party because they get a huge amount of money from the NRA. In Australia we need to be cautious that we also don't take any donations from the firearms industry and we need to push this issue in the US."*

**Three main points that Ms Lee made need to be corrected for the public record:**

**"Most states no longer have a 28 day waiting period to own a firearm."**

**This is false. All states in Australia continue to apply a 28 day waiting period for the first firearm a licensed recreational shooter applies for and this is only after that applicant has been approved as a fit and proper person to have a firearms licence.**

1. As for people being able to gain access to multiple firearms without having any checks done – this is an outright lie. All firearms must be registered with Victoria Police and all licence-holders must apply for a permit before purchasing any new firearm. The NFA states:
  - a. States and territories to establish an integrated licence and firearms registration system or review existing registration systems to ensure compatibility.

- b. Separate permits will be required for the acquisition of every firearm and the issue of a permit should be subject to a waiting period of at least 28 days to enable appropriate checks.

**“Anyone can access a firearm without a licence.”**

**Only a licensed person can own a firearm, no ifs or buts. If they steal a firearm or obtain it illegally from the black market this is a criminal offense.**

Under very few controlled conditions are people allowed to access a firearms without a licence. Members of the Navy, Military, Air Force, police force, recruits, employees or contractors of the Chief Commissioner of Police, protective services, Office of police integrity and the Director of police integrity, can use firearms only when required for their work.

Among other exemptions in the Firearms Act 1996:

A person who is of or over 18 can shoot a handgun without a licence only at an approved shooting range, while receiving instruction. The shooter must fill out a Notification of Receiving Instruction form prior to shooting and that form must be given to police within seven days. A person can only have nine unlicensed shoots with a handgun.

At an approved range, any person who is of or over the age of 18 years who is receiving instruction in the use of a Category A or B firearm by or under the immediate supervision of the holder of a Category A or B long-arm licence.

A person who is older than 12 and under 18 who is receiving instruction on the use of a general category handgun by or under immediate supervision or a person who is the holder of a category handgun licence and who has written consent from a parent or guardian; who has not receiving any such instructing on more than two previous occasions.

A person who is over 12 years and under 18 who is receiving instruction in the use of a category A or B long-arm by or under the immediate supervision of the holder of a category A or B long-arm licence and who has writing consent.

**“There is no longer a criminal record check [for a person to obtain a firearms licence or own a firearm].”**

**This is probably Ms Lee’s most outrageous bare faced lie. Anyone who applies for a firearms licence is required to undergo a police check, show that they are a fit and proper person, demonstrate that they can secure any firearms properly and show a genuine need for owning the firearms. In the case of a handgun licence a probationary period also applies.**

2. Not only do law-abiding firearms owners have criminal record checks carried out by Victoria Police but they must undergo a safety course before applying for a firearms licence, have a genuine reason to obtain a firearm. The NFA states:

- a. 'Genuine reason' must be demonstrated to own, possess or use a firearm. Applicants for a licence for a Category B, C, D and H firearm must also demonstrate a 'genuine need' for the particular type of firearm. Category C firearms will be limited to primary producers.
- b. A licence applicant should be aged 18 years or over, be a fit and proper person, be able to prove identity (ie 100 point system) and undertake an adequate safety test.
- c. All jurisdictions require the completion of an accredited course in safety training for firearms for all first time licence applicants.

**The question of private firearms ownership for recreational shooting and hunting in Australia and the legislation surrounding it should never be based on misdirection and half-truths. The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) is happy to correct the public record and calls on our legislators to ensure the licensed shooter is not overly burdened by red tape and that the majority of police resources, time and money is spent on pursuing the illegal gun user, often intertwined with the illegal drug trade and serious and organised crime.**

## **SYDNEY SHOOTING**

The shooting incident in Sydney was a really tragic incident and we trust the authorities will find some answers to that in the coming weeks.

But, let's be clear, that 15-year-old boy, Farhad Jabar Khalil Mohammad would, got that handgun illegally and went on a suicide mission. We don't know who helped him get the handgun, and we hope police bring that person to justice, but we do know that firearms laws – no matter how restrictive – won't stop criminals from killing.