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If police and government can't control Sydney gun crime, local communities must

AUTHOR

**Hugh McDermott**

Senior Lecturer at Charles Sturt University

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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Sydney is currently in the grip of a series of shooting attacks, particularly drive by incidents like this April 20 incident in the western suburbs. AAP/Dean Lewins

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The **spiralling rise** in shooting crimes in Sydney's western suburbs requires strong and sustained political, community and police action to make suburbs safe for families.

I happen to live in a suburb that has been ringed by shooting incidents, and recent was just around the corner from my home. Like many of my neighbours, I can see that politicians are seeking, but are not really offering, new strategies or solutions to fight the gun crime that is plaguing Sydney.

It's not just well organised bkie gangs to blame, but a range of criminals and business rivals, all with access to guns. They are escalating, rather than settling, all manner of disputes by targeted shootings.

The **NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research released new statistics** on 17 April 2012 – a day on which five shootings were reported in Sydney.

The figures show the offence of "discharge firearm into premises" rose by 41% (from 71 incidents in 2010 to 100 incidents in 2011) in the two years to December 2011. Approximately half of the NSW recorded incidents of "discharge firearm into premises" in 2011 was recorded in the three

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There have been at least 52 shootings in Sydney so far in 2012. It will probably be more by the time this article is published.

It is just a matter of time before hand guns become more widely used in disputes by traditionally law abiding members of the public, as a result of "normalisation", and before shootings follow the US trend and occur in places such as Australian high schools.

We are not talking about rifles here, but concealed weapons – pistols. We need new and tighter controls on pistols and ammunition. This should include a new buy-back scheme for pistols, a national register and should include strengthened border control strategies because all hand guns come from overseas suppliers.

There also needs to be a greater high-profile police presence in the suburbs most affected by these shootings, and the police response to shooting incidents needs to be immediate and unrelenting. The community will support strong and hard action by police against these criminals.

Criminals are reacting to the lack of enforcement, the lack of police in key target suburbs, and what appears to be a lack of political will by the State Government to really take on the issue of gun crime and criminal gang activity.



NSW police officers arrest a man as part of an operation against bike gangs suspected of committing many of the recent shootings in Sydney

An example of such is the recent announcement that, in response to a recent batch of shootings (five in one day), **the law would be changed** so that outlaw motorcycle gang members would not be able to wear their "colours" in the nightclubs of Kings Cross. This announcement was met by both police and criminals alike with howls of laughter. How does changing a dress code stop gun crime? And King's Cross is in the eastern suburbs – not anywhere near where the shootings are occurring.

During the 1990s, Victoria faced a similar dilemma from smaller organised crime gangs, which resorted to shootings and

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bombings to settle disputes. The police response was slow as the view among most officers was that as long as it was criminals shooting criminals then it shouldn't, or wouldn't, concern the general public. This view drastically changed after **Jason Moran** was shot in a minivan at a children's sporting event, while children sat terrified in the backseat.

It has now become clear that if politicians won't take on those using guns to settle their disputes and give police the support and direction needed then it is time for local community organisations to take up the challenge.

The most enduring "fix" will come from the combined effects of public and community groups exerting pressure, on the government and police, to break the culture of gang and criminal activity that sponsors gun use as an acceptable recourse for dispute resolution.

Communities in western Sydney need to start taking action to organise and reclaim street safety in their suburbs. If politicians and the government can't fix this escalating problem, the community must stand up and demand an end to gun violence.

It was this type of community action that helped fight the devastating impact and control of the heroin trade and **Vietnamese crime gangs in Cabramatta**. We need to send a clear message to the government and the gun-wielding criminals that that we will support whatever action is needed to make our streets safe again.

What is it going to take for us to act to solve the gun problem – a Port Arthur style massacre in western Sydney?

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**Adrian Vazquez**

Student

This article like the rest of the media, as usual, completely misses the point of gun crime. That is gun control doesn't and hasn't worked. The prohibition of drugs has not stopped people from obtaining illegal drugs. The prohibition of guns has not stopped people from obtaining them. No matter how "tough" our gun laws are, people (criminals) will always be able to get them. New Zealand hasn't banned semi-automatic rifles or pump-action shotguns, and they haven't had a mass shooting since 1996 and they have lower gun crime than Australia. Personally I'm sick and tired of reading knee-jerk reactions based upon fear of how we "need to ban all guns".

over 1 year ago • report

**Jonathan Ely**

Student

In reply to [Adrian Vazquez](#)

It could easily be argued that gun control has been successful in Australia, in particular in the wake of the Port Arthur massacre and legislation regarding the ownership of automatic and military style firearms. Since the Howard government buyback of these weapons Australia has not seen anything near to a repeat of the devastation caused by Martin Bryant, nor can I say that I've heard of an incident involving these style of weapon.

I dispute your assertion that no matter how tough gun laws...

[Read more](#)**Adrian Vazquez**

Student

In reply to [Jonathan Ely](#)

"I can't grow a gun in my back yard".. Actually it is very possible to make guns in one's backyard. This has happened in Australia before. An example

<http://www.blacktownsun.com.au/news/local/news/general/homemade-machine-guns-seized-in-police-raids/1968093.aspx>

"At Wentworthville, police seized two home-made Mac 10 Sub Machine guns".....

The rest of your argument is that "gun control" has stopped mass shootings. Once again I say, New Zealand, hasn't had a mass shooting despite not banning automatic and military style firearms. Your argument is based upon fear more than anything.

over 1 year ago • report

**Jonathan Ely**

Student

In reply to [Adrian Vazquez](#)

You say that as if you could just duck out into the back shed now and whip up a Mac 10 in a couple of hours. Of course it is possible to make a gun, it requires a great deal of know how as well as thousands, if not tens of thousands of dollars worth of machinery, whereas I can grow pot in my backyard virtually for free.

You are correct that New Zealand has not banned automatic weapons, however, in the aftermath of the Aramoana massacre the NZ govt did introduce legislation that restricted the...

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Adrian Vazquez
Student

In reply to [Jonathan Ely](#)

"Sigh"... you are just projecting again. Its classic psychology of anti-gun people. They always project, like "imagine if..." and it is despite what you say, based on fear. I'm not sure if you know the specifics of the Bryant case, but the underlying cause was a failure of the mental health system.

"individuals are not able to access guns then they cannot shoot others with them"... Hmm shouldn't we then ban all knives, the most weapon used in violent crime (murder, armed robbery)? Why not ban...

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Jonathan Ely
Student

In reply to [Adrian Vazquez](#)

I'm not sure what self help/ motivational videos you've been watching that allow you to determine that my position is one derived from fear. Fear of what? Of guns? Of being shot with a gun? Of clowns owning guns? As a serving member of the Australian Defense Force it is possible that I know more about guns than you.

I'm not clear as to what your position is, that people like Bryant should be allowed to own a gun, as long as our mental health system is there to babysit them? Guns don't kill people...

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elbatxeb
logged in via Twitter

In reply to [Adrian Vazquez](#)

Comparing NZ and Australia is apples and oranges. It kinda annoys me that everyone seems to think the two countries are the same - my experience is that the lifestyle and culture are *quite* different.

For example, police in NZ don't run around with firearms on their hips 24/7 - they are required to have any firearm locked in the station or in boot of the police car unless its actually "in use", and as I understand they need authorisation. In NZ there are probably more firearm-related deaths from...

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David Jarvie
logged in via Facebook

In reply to [Jonathan Ely](#)

What unit are you in mate, I'm sure the rest of your "ADF" mates would love your left wing ideas. The simple FACT is gun control doesn't work, harsh penalties DO.

I own several guns, however they are not used to "kill" as you put it, I shot targets, I don't need a gun, but as a responsible member of society (and former soldier) I LIKE shooting and owning guns and no one should be able to take that hobby away from me. Ironically people like you don't like facing the fact that places like NZ and Switerland...

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Jonathan Ely
Student

In reply to [David Jarvie](#)

I'm a Combat Engineer; you don't need to know which unit. Why do you care?

I don't actually think gun control is a left wing idea, but whatever.

The FACTS, as you put it, are a handful of statistics interpreted by the author of a US gun advocacy website. This makes them, basically, opinions. My opinion is that gun control, along with a whole lot of other stuff, saves lives. My opinion is that this make is worthwhile, many people disagree and that's fine.

The same goes for the "harsher..."

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James Wookey

Paramedic

The notion that further gun control will do anything to curb the number of shootings in Sydney is wishful thinking at best and would have as much impact as the equally pointless idea of banning bikie "colours" in Kings Cross. The recent seizures of illegally imported AR15's, Glock handguns and associated ammunition are the best evidence that stronger "gun control" legislation will have zero effect on criminal access to firearms and ammunition.

A recent article published in "Security Solutions" magazine points out that less than 3% of shipping containers entering Australia are subject to any form of search and any action to do so is only taken on the back of significant intelligence. In this light any draconian measures that target the relatively small number of licenced firearm users (Farmers, Hunters and Sportspeople) are laughable and will only inconvenience legitimate users while leaving the criminal element untouched.

over 1 year ago • report



Peter Bruce

Software Engineer

Hugh,

I agree with much of what you have written, and I share your sentiment.

There is just one basic premise that seems to be missed by so many commentators.

Sydney does not have a "gun problem". It has a criminal problem.

Is the logic GUN = CRIMINAL

or

SHOOTER = REDNECK?

If either or both then the reader really needs to get a life and learn a little about the world we live in. Perhaps leaving the Sydney metro area occasionally and going somewhere that is not a winery or a fine dining experience. Places where Amex and Diners are not accepted.

over 1 year ago • report



Dean Ashby

Company Owner at [Ezestore Storage Sydney](#)

I recently encountered a news item about break-ins in a self storage facility in Sydney, I was a bit concerned about it. The break-in involved two persons, one carrying a gun. Luckily no one was hurt when the security personnel spotted one of the persons in the CCTV and immediately had the security staff mobilize. The two were apprehended immediately, and just in time the police came. The police seized the gun and had both men under custody. I am glad that so far none has happened in any of our self storage facilities in Sydney, though there are a few reported cases of break ins in the Northern Beaches area, but none involved any guns.

6 months ago • report



Edward Thirlwall

Storage and Removal Expert at [Self Storage Sydney](#)
CBD

I totally agree on the fact that the community as a whole should get involved since the situation in the whole of Sydney has gotten from bad to worst. This concerns innocent lives, and more would definitely be lost should the residents rely solely on

the police/government. Official policies and laws need some time before being fully implemented, thus members of the general public need to take initiative while waiting.

4 months ago • report

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