

SSAA UN speech 2010

Mr Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to address the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States.

Mr Chairman, every day and every night in my home country of Australia, tens of thousands of firearms are used by men and women and even youths.

Sometimes, they carry their firearms under the cloak of darkness. Sometimes, in broad daylight and often with little regard for concealment from the public of their activities.

That is because these men and women are part of the three quarters of a million of licensed, law-abiding firearm owners in my country.

Firearm owners from all walks of life play a front-line role in protecting our native flora and fauna from introduced species, such as foxes, feral cats and feral pigs. They are wildlife custodians and conservationists, volunteering their time and money to manage and protect animals, habitat, stock and crops from these damaging introduced species.

Others simply use their firearms for competing in their sport of choice. My organisation, the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia, with more than 130,000 members, manages more than 20 shooting competitions, ranging from clay target shotgun shooting, handgun competitions and rifle competitions. We compete at a local club level and for the serious competitors, this can graduate to state, national and international competitions. We are the seeding ground for those elite athletes who go on to international competitions, such as the Commonwealth and Olympic Games.

Other Australian firearms owners simply enjoy hunting, the same as those who enjoy the pastime of fishing. Many Australians have reached a maturity of self-responsibility where they wish to take control of the process in which their food is harvested and prepared. They wish to make their own moral judgments and to collect fresh, free-range, organic food, rather than always rely on the plastic-wrapped, agriculturally-intensive and chemically-tainted meat offered to us in supermarkets.

The recreation of target shooting, the pastime of hunting and the responsibility of protecting our native animals are the freedoms available to us in a stable, liberal, democratic country, such as Australia. These activities are a far-cry from the misuses and hurt caused by those utilising firearms and other means to seek political and financial power often, sadly, in fragile and developing states.

As a United Nations NGO, it is our role to ensure the protection of our sport and recreation, while also offering our depth of knowledge and experience in firearms to assist those who are the subject of firearms misuse and violence.

Just as those who wish to reduce vehicle injuries and deaths consult the motor vehicle industry and user groups, we encourage you to look past prejudices and stereotypes and to consult with us for a common good.

I thank you, Mr Chairman.