Latest Government Gun Figures Lack Credibility
CrimTrac Data Require Explanation

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University of Sydney gun policy expert, Associate Professor Philip Alpers has questioned the accuracy of registered firearms data published by CrimTrac, the federal agency responsible for counting gun owners and their firearms.

In Table 2.23 at page 63 of its 2015-16 Annual Report, the following conclusions seem to lack credibility:

- An increase of 1.2 million registered firearms in Australia in the past three years
- A sudden decrease of 900,000 registered firearms from 2012-13 to 2013-14
- A sudden increase of 1.4 million registered firearms from 2013-14 to 2014-15

The 4.6 million ‘Total number of firearms’ registered in Australia in 2012-13 is also out of line with the 2.75 million figure quoted by the Australian Crime Commission for the same year, and the tally it gave to the same Senate hearing of a million fewer gun owners than gun licenses.

CrimTrac reports in Table 2.23 that only 711,215 firearms were added to firearm registries from 2014-15 to 2015-16. If true, this suggests that last financial year, both firearm registrations and gun imports reversed their upward climb and plunged suddenly by 50 per cent.

It could be misleading to quote CrimTrac without considering at least these variables:

- A licensed gun owner can have several firearm licenses, each for a different category of weapon. CrimTrac’s ‘Total Number of Licences’ cannot be assumed to indicate the number of individuals permitted to possess a firearm.

In at least one state, the official count of registered guns includes “lost, missing and stolen firearms.” When Prime Minister John Howard returned from the Port Arthur funerals he pressed the states for a reliable, national registry of firearms. Twenty years later, despite the best efforts of CrimTrac and its predecessors, states and territories with inaccurate registries, incompatible systems, persistent inter-agency rivalries and obstructive management continue to defeat that aim.

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