

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This AGM sees my 3 year term as SSAA Sydney President come to an end. This is a role that I have grasped enthusiastically with both hands, in an effort to turn the Branch around and make it the premier Branch within Australia. I'm pleased to say that I am confident that is exactly what I have achieved.

The SSAA Sydney Committee continues to work together in an efficient and cohesive manner and we have achieved so many things that the Branch was desperate for, but was previously unable to do, due to the past internal political issues plaguing the Branch. The Committee Members, Executive Officer and Staff need to be commended for their professionalism and hard work to bring us to where we are today, a place with direction and vision that was nowhere to be seen 3 long years ago.

This past year saw SSAA Sydney Shooters return to Anzac Rifle Range, Malabar. What started out as somewhat a personal mission for me over 4 years ago, was finalised after dealing with 3 Federal Government Departments, several Ministers and Bureaucrats and negotiating with the New South Wales Rifle Association (NSWRA). SSAA Sydney has a new found friendship with the NSWRA and associated clubs and I hope this relationship continues, as we all must work together if we want to succeed in this sport. I would like to congratulate the NSWRA on their recent announcement of a 50 year lease over the headland. What an achievement!

We continue to look for new range sites and this year I have looked at 2 golf courses and a large plot of land in Southern Sydney. For various reasons, they all turned out to not be suitable. The acquisition of new sites continues to be a focus, however the complexities in this process, including the cost of Sydney property is not helping. The complexities involved are demonstrated by a discussion at the recent SSAA NSW AGM wherein we were advised that 2 properties that were purchased in regional areas over 2 years ago, are still trying to get approval for the development of range facilities. SSAA Sydney cannot simply afford to hold on to a parcel of land for years, attempting to seek approval. As Director of SSAA Pty Ltd, I am looking at ways of using this entity to replicate St Mary's Indoor Shooting Centre somewhere else in the Sydney area. I suppose I am saying, we have all bases covered and I hope this remains a focus in the future.

SSAA Sydney continues to be a progressive Branch, louder and prouder than other areas of the SSAA. I reported last year that SSAA Sydney was pushing for SSAA NSW to come to a position to lobby for the removal of compulsory attendances. After a yearlong battle, we finally had an outcome at the 2016 NSW AGM where a motion was passed that effectively means that SSAA NSW will start to advocate and lobby for the removal of compulsory attendances. It amazes me that some Branches fought hard against this, but right prevailed!

I have also had a series of meetings with Deputy Premier Troy Grant over reducing the regulations and red tape for law abiding shooters to gain access to sound moderators, as well as conversations with various Politicians over access to semi-automatic firearms. We need to keep making noise on these issues and I hope work continues with contacts at State and Federal levels.

SSAA Sydney continues to push our State and National representatives to be more proactive and vocal. I have on many occasions, questioned the apathy and lack of action on certain issues in an effort to spur on a response. SSAA Sydney has definitely noticed an increase in advocacy and lobbying activities, however we still have a long way to go!

SSAA Sydney continues to represent our members in the public by sponsoring events such as Huntfest and appearing at trade shows like Shot Expo. We have been somewhat diligent in chasing up negative media and issuing press releases on specific issues that affect our members. I have been interviewed several times this past year expressing the opinion that, it is criminals who are responsible for gun crime and not, licensed gun owners!

At the time of writing this report, we are in the process of the rolling out of our "Everyday Sport, Everyday People" campaign which consists of billboards on the M5 and will be backed up by radio ads. I would really like to see the SSAA as a whole adopt an advertising strategy where we focus on pushing our agenda and educating the non-shooting public that we are just everyday people taking part in a legal, safe and fun sport.

As I finish my term, I leave the Branch finances in an extremely healthy position. Profit is up, assets are up and cash at bank holdings are up over 100% from when I took over as President. SSAA Sydney has also undertaken significant upgrades to our current facilities and I hope will continue to look at ways of increasing their usability for other disciplines and events. We have hired more staff to serve our members and have ensured that the Branch now has a focus on customer service. We can never please everyone, but we will try our best!

We continue to promote activities like Deer caping and butchering and were excited to host a SSAA NSW Junior Camp at Silverdale earlier in the year, which was by all accounts a major success! We also had another volunteer recognition dinner which was well received by all who attended. I hope this tradition that I reintroduced continues!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for their support as well as Pamela Reeves, Executive Officer for all her hard work, along with the Range Managers, Chris Deluca (Holroyd), Robert Bernard (Hornsby), Andy Mallen (Silverdale).

A special mention to all the volunteers who often without question give up their weekends to open ranges, conduct training and attend maintenance days and working bees. Without you all we wouldn't be what we are today! I am proud to be a SSAA Sydney member, and look forward to assisting the Branch where I can over the coming years.

James Walsh
PRESIDENT