

Another year passes, one that has not been without significant challenges for law abiding shooters and SSAA members.

I'm sure everyone is well aware that we have just been through the most significant review of firearms laws since 1996, and this review has highlighted how we must all work together otherwise we simply won't achieve anything.

SSAA Sydney has been on the front foot throughout this review, representing our members through marketing campaigns, advocacy to Government, and vocally opposing any further restrictions on our members. Even though things haven't gone our way as yet, we are still pressing on and determined to keep the fight up on behalf of our members.

At the last AGM, I was pleased that the members shared our vision for the SSAA when I asked for a show of hands of those present, who wanted SSAA Sydney to continue to be vocal advocate and to get more involved politically, as well as, continue to market the shooting sports and our members to the public. The request was met with unanimous approval from those present and I can say that SSAA Sydney has been pushing ahead with this agenda loudly and proudly!

#### **Political meetings:**

SSAA Sydney has met with all sides of Government, and for many different reasons, the main being; the Adler debacle, the NFA review and Anzac Rifle Range.

We have written to all Sydney based MP's, both State and Federal, on numerous occasions resulting in several meetings with MP's and bureaucrats that gave us a direct opportunity to represent the Sydney Branch interests. It was disappointing to note that some never even bothered to reply and it is these that we will remember come election time. Those who allowed us to have our say gave us further opportunity to ask for a common-sense approach to law abiding shooters.

No matter how many meetings we have, it is clear the major parties (Liberal, Nationals and Labor) don't care about shooters, in fact even those who initially showed some interest in the cause just towed the party line. This highlights a need for our members to only vote for pro-gun politicians and parties who respect law abiding shooters.

SSAA Sydney has also been approached by One Nation seeking assistance in drafting their NSW Firearms Policy, and in this regard, we have met with several members of One Nation including Senator Brain Burston who is an advocate for sensible firearms laws. We will continue to work with them and any other party who wants our help to develop sensible firearms policies.

#### **Internal lobbying efforts:**

Lobbying for change is required both externally and internally! I constantly get calls, emails and social media comment from members who are dismayed at the SSAA for many reasons, the biggest though is that members feel that they are not being listened too.

We understand that THE MEMBERS WANT ACTION, they want the SSAA to proactively defend their rights as shooters and law-abiding citizens, and to tackle head-on, the Governments that seek to disenfranchise them, and not 'work behind the scenes'! I can assure you that SSAA Sydney is listening and we are determined! We are pushing the SSAA at all levels and desperately trying to change what we see as a reactive culture within the Association. It is the opinion of SSAA Sydney that the entire SSAA needs to be a unified, loud and proud lobby group.

The SSAA needs to play a key role in uniting shooters. With the number of shooters in Australia publicised at around 1,000,000, we could be the largest political movement in the country, yet we still struggle at all levels, to keep the status quo. We all need to unite and punish Governments that seek to unjustly restrict us and our sport.

SSAA Sydney sees itself as leading the way for change within the Association and we will make it clear that those within who don't support the change, need to listen to what their members want! It is good to note that this is catching on as I have received calls, from other leaders and committees from outside of NSW and across Australia who share our vision and want to work with us to move the Association forward.

### **Marketing:**

SSAA Sydney has continued with its advertising of the shooting sports and our Sydney members with several billboards across the Sydney area promoting hunting and target shooting. These campaigns have attracted attention internally within the SSAA with other State and Branch stakeholders getting in touch to discuss how they too can promote the sport. We have offered any assistance we can to get other areas of the SSAA on the front foot, and will continue to lead the way loudly and proudly!

### **Ranges:**

Ranges and facilities always remain a high priority for us. The difficulties that I have reported in the past remain. They are primarily, the costs involved of Sydney real estate and the availability of suitable sites. SSAA Sydney has investigated a few sites over the past year, but again for some reason or another they end up being not suitable.

We have been in talks with our friends at the NSWRA to extend the use of ANZAC range and are pleased to announce that SSAA Sydney currently opens the headland for shooting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of every month. If members want more access then they need to start to attend Sundays so that we can justify opening it more frequently.

### **Other activities:**

Over the last year, the Branch has continued to take part in other promotional opportunities including the sponsorship of Huntfest and SSAA Shot Show. I also had the opportunity to present a session on "The Right to Shoot" at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Friedman Conference with Senator David Leyonhjelm, and representatives from Shooters Union Australia.

I have been contacted by several Branches and Disciplines across Australia to get more competition in the Sydney region and we hope to work with them to get a couple of State title matches at our Sydney Based Ranges.

We continue to promote deer caping and butchering demonstrations and are always looking for ways of getting more events and opportunities for our hunting members.

### **Branch Management:**

The Branch has undergone several key staff changes this year and I would like to welcome Matthew Geracitano to the SSAA Sydney family. Matthew is our new Executive Officer, taking over from Pam Reeves. Matthew has hit the ground running and will be a fantastic asset to SSAA Sydney. I would like to thank Pam Reeves for her service to the Branch as EO and look forward to working with her as the new volunteer Hornsby Range Manager, after the retirement of Rob Bernard and Peter Downey who we owe great thanks to for their service to the Branch over many years.

We also lost another volunteer Range Manager after 15 years in the job; Chris Deluca, our Holyroyd Range Manager left us to retire up North. This left us with big shoes to fill and I know it left a void in the very close-knit Holyroyd Range crew. I'd like to thank Chris and his better half Marlies for their service to SSAA Sydney.

In closing, I would like to thank the Sydney Branch Committee for their support over the last year as without this team and their support, we wouldn't have the Branch where it is today. We truly have come a long way, but there still is a long way to go, and I look forward to working with them to achieve our goals.

I'd also like to thank all our range staff for all the work that they do for the Branch and the services that they provide for all our members and visitors.

A special mention must go out to all our volunteers. They are the true life-blood of the Association and without them, we would cease to function!

James Walsh

President