



Branches in all  
States and Territories

# Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (W.A.) Inc.

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SSAA WA is pleased to confirm the recent changes to the WA State Government restrictions that were introduced under the declaration of a State of Emergency declared on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this testing time we understand the restrictions have been frustrating for many and as a community we have all been affected with these unprecedented changes to our daily lives. We would like to convey our sincere appreciation for the thousands of messages of support received from SSAA members and firearm owners across the state whilst we have negotiated and navigated a path through this ever changing environment and sought to resolve the impacts we have endured as law abiding licensed firearm owners.

The collective measures implemented by all SSAA WA clubs to postpone competitions and mitigate the risk to all members across the state has ensured we have played a crucial part in stopping the community spread of this virus. Subsequently the outcomes of these steps taken over the course of the last seven weeks, has been extremely positive for the State of Western Australia as a whole and we are beginning to see a return of some activities.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020, the Premier of Western Australia introduced a Roadmap for WA that outlined the process for the easing of restrictions with a strategy of phases to provide a steady increase in the sizes of mass gathering and the resumption of as many recreational activities as possible. This Roadmap includes a plan to recommence community and national sports and a return to work for as many people as possible over the coming months. There is light at the end of this, however we are not quite there yet. We ask that clubs remain patient with the resumption of competitions to ensure we get back to shooting sooner rather than later. More details below.

## **Gun Shops Re Opening**

Further to the directive issued by the State Emergency Coordinator under the direction of the Premier Mr. Mark McGowan to close gun shops immediately and without notice effective the 28<sup>th</sup> March 2020, it was a fantastic result to see the recent immediate revocation of this decision, as a result of our consultation with Senior Members of WA Police- Licensing Services Firearms.

We respectfully observe that decisions are often made under duress and we will not always agree with those decisions, however it was very pleasing for the SSAA WA President Mr. Ron Bryant to be invited to meet with senior members of the WA Police in late April 2020 and receive confirmation that this decision was to be reversed effective the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

As the preeminent representative association of licensed firearm owners in Western Australia the credibility, history and solid reputation of the SSAA WA holds the association in extremely good stead with WA Police Licensing Services Firearms. We look forward to strengthening our working relationship with WA Police and thank the senior officers involved for their work in resolving this issue for the WA Firearms Industry.

Now is the time to support the WA Firearm Industry retailers that have been doing it tough like many other businesses. The WA Firearm Traders Association continues to partner with SSAA WA on matters relating to the Ballistic Sports and Shooting Activities throughout Western Australia. WAFTA have also been instrumental in the cohesive approach to resolving this issue and as always we thank the Committee and Members of WAFTA for their continued support of the SSAA WA and firearm owners in WA.

### **Firearm Applications Re activated**

Further to our meeting with Senior Officers from WA Police Licensing Services-Firearms, we have seen the welcome news that a resolution to re activate all suspended firearm licence applications during the height of the COVID-19 crisis is now in effect. By now most applicants will have been contacted by WA Police Licensing Services- Firearms and we have been assured that all applicants will have received the refund component of their original application fee. WA Police Licensing Services- Firearms are now contacting all applicants and confirming with them if they would like to proceed with the original application. This process will not involve applicants having to reapply at Australia Post outlets or being financially penalised in the reapplication and we are extremely pleased to see this resolved.

This is a fantastic result and a measure of the success that can be achieved with a sound and diplomatic approach to issues that affect firearm owners in Western Australia. We are assured in our discussions with senior WA Police that all firearm applications will be processed in a timely manner and we urge all members to embrace this resolution with both hands and encourage all members with an application pending to continue with the process to legally and lawfully own, possess and use a licensed firearm.

We have received confirmation that the validity of Firearm Serviceability Certificates will be extended to cover the period of time that applications were held in suspension and in addition there will be no effect on the validity of Property Letters submitted as part of all original Firearm applications during this period.

A great result for all concerned and to all those members that contacted us in the initial stages of the licence rejections, we thank you for your patience and trust in our advice to stay the course with the SSAA WA whilst we were working diligently and effectively with WA Police to actually resolve this matter on your behalf, as opposed to grandstanding that achieved no result from many other apparent representative bodies.

### **Clubs and Competitions**

We have received plenty of emails, phone calls and messages from across the state with the million dollar question "when can we re open our club?"

Our previous advice and recommendations issued to all SSAA WA clubs was to suspend all club operations and competitions from the 23<sup>rd</sup> March through to the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020.

The support and solidarity of all SSAA WA clubs, committees and members on this course of action has been fantastic and our sincere thanks are extended to all clubs with their commitment to protecting our Sport. These measures were directly in line with the best advice from the WA Health Department and the WA Government directives that were introduced to drastically reduce mass gatherings to help stop the spread of COVID-19. At this point there have been no reported issues or infections at any SSAA WA club whilst everyone has been in competition hibernation and many clubs have also followed the advice to provide range access for members on an individual basis to allow for sighting in, practice and maintenance of firearm proficiencies.

Again we sincerely thank everyone for standing together and looking out for the best interests all members with the tremendous support shown by backing this recommendation.

Commencing Monday 18 May 2020, the WA Governments Roadmap to Recovery Phase Two comes into effect. Indoor and outdoor non-work gatherings of up to twenty people are allowed and people must maintain social distancing limits of four square metres per person. Consideration must also be taken for the fact that many Metropolitan and Regional clubs operate under licences and agreements set with Local Councils and in many cases these approvals have yet to be reinstated.

We appreciate that some SSAA disciplines and matches at some clubs can be held that may satisfy the current social distancing and mass gathering guidelines without limitation, however the fines and penalties for breaching these rules are substantial and the last thing we want to see is for any club to be financially penalised for the sake of a few more weeks.

It is the recommendation of the SSAA WA that all clubs remain closed for competitions until the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020 with the expectation that the WA State Government may progress quickly through a greater easing of restrictions as we move to Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020 and beyond.

The SSAA WA is committed to working with all clubs to develop an action plan that will be required for the anticipated reopening of club competition very soon. To this end we are currently drafting a set of Health and Hygiene guidelines in conjunction with WA Health Department advice to ensure that as we move back into normal club activities, our Sporting Competitions can operate in the safest possible manner for the health of all members.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RB' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ron Bryant

State President