



15th World Congress on Public Health

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Gun Violence Prevention as a Public Health Issue: Learning from Australia's example

Wednesday 5 April, 1330 – 1530, Plenary Hall 2

Lead Professor Joel Negin, Head of School of Public Health, University of Sydney

Speakers Professor Joel Negin, University of Sydney
Professor Charles Watson, Curtin University
Professor Rebecca Ivers, George Institute for Global Health
Adjunct Associate Professor Philip Alpers, Sydney School of Public Health

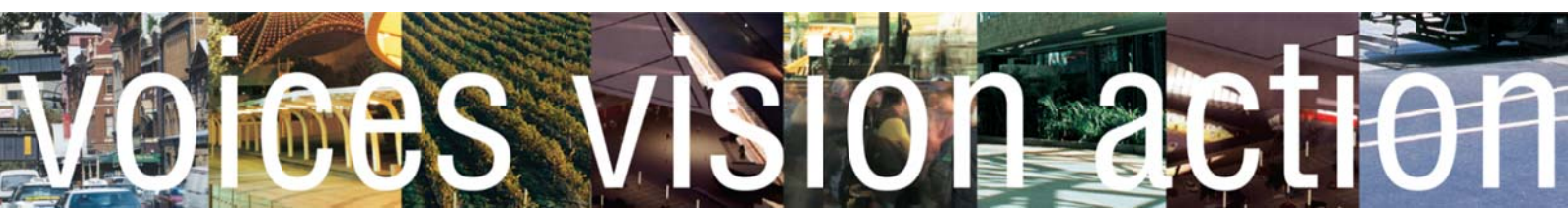
Australia has demonstrated how strong public health-oriented gun control initiatives can reduce firearm violence rates and injuries. In addition, Australia has been integrally involved in Pacific regional and global disarmament efforts. Sustainable Development Goal 16 highlights the importance of injury prevention and firearm violence reduction to achieve peaceful, just societies. This Dialogue will situate gun violence prevention as a core public health issue with proven capacity to save lives world-wide.

Chair: Joel Negin

The Chair will introduce the linkages between public health leadership, policy reform and sustainable development and will introduce the broad issue of gun violence as a public health challenge that has been largely neglected. Australia's leadership will be highlighted within a global framing of the challenges of gun violence.

Panellist 1: Philip Alpers

Twenty years ago, Australia had suffered a spate of 13 mass public shootings which cost 112 lives. In 1996, public health professionals drove a campaign for gun control, providing clear examples of best practice in firearm injury prevention. In the 20 years which followed, no mass shooting occurred and the risk of an Australian dying by gunshot fell by more than half. In the same period, Pacific island nations developed a consensus for disarmament as an essential precursor to health care delivery, security reform and sustainable development.





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Panellist 2: Charles Watson

Gun violence is a public health issue that should be addressed with a full range of public health strategies. Although many practitioners have been reluctant to engage with this issue due to its political and social complexities, gun violence needs well-informed professionals who understand research and who are skilled at advocacy and public education. Unless public health practitioners become better informed and identify opportunities for action, we cede control to the gun industry and to vocal advocates of unfettered gun ownership.

Panellist 3: Rebecca Ivers

For the first time a global UN framework, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recognises the link between public health and armed violence. SDG 16 promotes peaceful and safe societies by reducing arms flows and gun injury. The recent Arms Trade Treaty and the UN small arms Programme of Action also aim to curb the illicit gun trade which devastates communities, destroys health facilities and injures mostly civilians. The opportunity is ripe to link public health policy and sustainable development to build and preserve peaceful societies.

