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media release

Tougher Gun Laws needed to Make Far South Coast Safer

Greens candidate for Bega, Harriett Swift today called on Labor and the Coalition to commit to strengthening gun laws in the lead up to the March 2011 election, including ending the self-regulation of gun clubs and banning semi-automatic hand guns, to better protect public safety.

"Strengthening NSW gun laws is a sure step towards making the community safer for all," said Ms Swift.

"The Labor Government has been a captive to the Shooters Party which has held the balance of power in the Upper House.

"Both Labor and coalition parties should give voters a guarantee that they will not be held hostage by the Shooters Party as the last Government has been.

"In 2008 the Shooters Party achieved a weakening of gun laws in exchange for supporting the Labor government's sale of state electricity assets.

"It also secured access to State Forests for hunting in exchange for support in the Upper House.

"The Greens are concerned about the continuing influence of the Shooters Party in firearms policy making and its impacts for public safety across NSW.

"I am also concerned that the Shooters Party may exert the same power over a coalition government in similar circumstances."

"Current laws in NSW allow unlicensed shooters to join a gun club after filling in a questionnaire declaring relevant convictions, apprehended violence orders, or mental-health issues.

"In the Bega Valley Shire the council has recently approved an interest free loan from ratepayers to a Bermagui gun club, which is further support to the gun culture," Ms Swift said.

"Our government should be regulating the use of firearms in the interest of public safety, not leaving it to private clubs.

"This election period provides an opportunity for Labor and the Coalition to move away from the rhetoric on law and order to commit to real action to reduce the number of firearms in circulation," she said.

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