



SAGA Snippets

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Australian Crime Myths – When Statistics Don't Fit the Disarmament Narrative

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For decades, Australians have been sold a neat political story: strict gun control made Australia safe, while America's firearm culture condemned it to exceptional violence.

It is a useful slogan. It is not a serious measurement of public safety. That same slogan is repeatedly imported into South Africa by firearm-control activists under the language of "best practice." The message is simple: copy the Australian model, restrict the law-abiding and safety will follow.

We reject that shortcut. Best practice is not a foreign slogan with better branding. Best practice must be evidence-based, locally relevant, operationally credible and directed at the actual sources of violence.

In South Africa, those sources are not difficult to identify: illegal firearms, criminal networks, state leakage, corruption, smuggling, failed investigations, failed evidence-store control, repeat violent offenders and a Central Firearms Registry that must actually function.

Punishing the compliant because the state cannot control the criminal is not policy. It is displacement.

The Narrative Activists Want Protected

In a recent Spectator Australia article, Senator Malcolm Roberts and Ameri-

can criminologist Dr John Lott challenged one of the central assumptions behind the Australian gun-control narrative.

Their question was direct: **what if Australia has been measuring crime in a way that flatters the policy narrative?**

Their exact comparative ratios should be treated with methodological care. Australian Bureau of Statistics victimisation data and the United States National Crime Victimization Survey are not identical. They use different age bands, definitions and counting methods. In other words, the underlying data sets are not identical. But that caution does not rescue the disarmament narrative. It exposes it.

The central point remains sound: **police-recorded crime is not the same as actual crime. It is only the portion of crime that reaches the police, is recorded by police and is then published as a statistic.**

While police data matters, they remain incomplete. A crime must first be reported before it can become a police statistic. Reporting behaviour differs between countries, offence types and communities. Sexual offences, domestic violence, threats, assaults and some property crimes are often under-reported. Fear, embarrassment, distrust, inconvenience and the belief that nothing will happen all influence whether a victim reports.

Intimidation also plays a major role. That is why victimisation surveys mat-

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- *Fact Sheet 504: Signal Flares and Flare Launchers under the Firearms Control Act*

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ter. They do not solve every measurement problem, but they expose a wider victimisation picture that police records alone cannot show.

What Australia's Own Data Still Shows

Australia's crime levels are not South Africa's, but that is not the point. The point is that Australia's own official data does not support the simplistic claim that strict firearm control automatically produces broad public safety.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2024-25 Crime Victimisation survey estimated that more than 861,000 persons aged 15 years and over experienced one or more selected personal crimes during the year. It also estimated that more than 913,000 households experienced one or more selected household crimes.

Those figures included physical assault, threatened assault, robbery, sexual assault, break-in and attempted break-in. Separately, Australia's police-recorded crime data for 2024 reported more than 40,000 victims of sexual assault, the highest figure recorded in that series. Australia records a lower homicide burden than the United States. That should be acknowledged plainly. But homicide is not the whole public-safety picture.

The woman threatened or assaulted. The family burgled repeatedly. The pensioner beaten in his home. The young person robbed in the street. The victim of sexual assault who never becomes a neat police statistic. These victims matter too.

A country cannot declare victory merely because one category of violence is lower while citizens remain vulnerable to other forms of violence, intimidation, invasion and repeat victimisation. Public safety must be measured across all victims, not only through the statistics that best serve a political narrative.

South Africa has a crime-measurement and firearm-tracing problem – not a lawful-firearm problem.

The Australian Model Is Not a Magic Wand

For years, activists for stricter firearm controls have pointed to Australia as the model South Africa should copy. The argument is presented as settled fact: Australia restricted lawful firearm ownership after Port Arthur, therefore the policy must be treated as a proven public-safety success. That is too convenient.

The question is not whether Australia changed its firearm laws. It did. The question is whether South Africa should accept an imported disarmament model as "best practice" without demanding proof that it will reduce total victimisation here, under South African conditions.

Strict control over the law-abiding does not automatically produce safety. Compliance by the compliant is not control over criminals.

If activists want to rely on international "best practice," they must accept the whole discipline of best practice, not only the part that suits a campaign.

1. Best practice requires a clear problem statement, reliable evidence, trace data, implementation capacity, proportionality, measurable outcomes and accountability when the promised safety benefit does not materialise.
2. Best practice is not reducing lawful ownership because it is politically easier than confronting illegal supply, state leakage, gang armouries, failed prosecutions, corruption and repeat violent offending.

No serious country should make lawful citizens pay for the State's failure to control criminals.

South Africa Cannot Afford Copy-Paste Policy

South Africa is not Australia. We face a vastly different: criminal environment, policing constraints, geography, levels of organised crime and very different levels of violent victimisation.

The latest SA crime-statistics briefings continue to confirm what citizens already know: firearms are used in murder, robbery and organised crime. That matters. But the policy response must be directed at the actual problem and not conflate the legal with illegal.

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The proper target is illegal firearms, criminal networks, corrupt diversion, state leakage, smuggling routes, gang armouries, failed investigations, weak prosecutions, repeat violent offenders and failed controls over state and evidence-store firearms.

That is where public safety is won or lost. Not by making lawful citizens jump through another round of procedural hoops while criminals ignore the law entirely.

The State Arrives Late. The Victim Is There First.

The firearm debate often presents citizens with a false choice: either trust the State completely or embrace chaos.

That is not the real choice. The real issue is simpler. Government cannot be everywhere. Police officers routinely arrive after crimes have already occurred. Even in countries with professional and dedicated police services, the first person present at violent crime is usually the victim. South Africans understand this instinctively.

That is why households and businesses spend heavily on alarms, armed response, private security, electric fencing, cameras, community patrols and emergency networks. These are not ideological privileges. They are practical responses to reality. Lawful self-defence is not a substitute for policing. It is an acknowledgement that no state can guarantee immediate rescue at the point of unlawful violence.

The Questions Activists Must Answer

Before South Africa accepts another round of disarmament policy, activists and every other restriction lobby must answer these questions:

- * Which criminal pipeline will the proposed restriction close?
- * Will it remove illegal firearms from gangs, syndicates and violent offenders?
- * Will it stop state leakage, corrupt diversion, smuggling or failed evidence-store controls?
- * Will it reduce overall victimisation, or merely change the method by which violence is committed?
- * What immediate protection will vulnerable citizens receive when danger is already at the door?

- * What evidence shows that responsible licensed owners are the problem being solved?
- * What operational capacity exists in SAPS and the CFR to implement another restriction fairly, lawfully and efficiently?
- * What accountability will follow if the promised safety benefit does not materialise?

If those questions cannot be answered, the proposal is not a safety plan. It is political theatre.

The Advocacy Position

Responsible ownership is different from collective blame. South Africa does not need another round of emotional disarmament politics. It needs competent policing, functioning intelligence, professional investigations, prosecutions of violent offenders, armoury accountability, evidence-store audits, real tracing of crime guns, recovery operations and a working CFR.

No serious country should build public-safety policy on selective statistics. No serious government should confuse reducing lawful ownership with reducing criminal violence.

We will not accept disarmament narratives dressed up as best practice. If the proposal does not close criminal pipelines, fix enforcement failure, stop state leakage, target repeat violent offenders and protect victims in the real world, it should not be sold as safety.

Bottom Line

The Australian experience does not prove that firearm ownership solves crime. But it also **does not prove that disarming responsible citizens creates safety**. It proves something narrower and more important: public safety must be measured honestly, across all forms of victimisation, not only through the statistics that best serve a political narrative.

If the goal is genuinely to protect innocent people, governments must confront an uncomfortable possibility: **restricting the means of lawful self-defence may reduce the number of firearms in responsible private hands without reducing the number of victims.**

That is the distinction firearm-control activists avoid. Fewer lawful firearms do not automatically mean

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less crime. Reducing illegal firearms in the hands of gangs, syndicates, repeat offenders and violent criminals does.

Those two propositions must not be conflated. It's easier for the State to police the compliant than to confront the criminal, but convenience is not public safety. For those whose safety depends on the ability to defend themselves when the state is not yet there, that distinction is not academic. It is the difference between policy rhetoric and survival.

– Drafted by Shaun Lyle, Saga Trustee

Sources & Acknowledgements

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Wildland Magazine June 2026

As part of SAGA's collaboration with Wildland here is the link to your free copy of Wildland magazine, June 2026.

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<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/71120695/wildland-junie-2026>



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When NOT to Draw Your Gun

<https://www.nrawomen.com/content/when-not-to-draw-your-gun>

by Jo Deering
19 June 2026

If you carry concealed, we hope you've given some thought to the circumstances under which you'd draw your gun. But have you thought about when you WON'T?

There is precisely ONE reason and one reason only to draw your concealed-carry gun from its holster outside a range or controlled at-home setting, and that's this:

You are prepared to fire it because you feel you or someone else is in danger of immediate great bodily harm or injury. That's it. That doesn't mean it's the only possible outcome, but if you pull your gun out for any other reason, you're toeing the line right up to and possibly past serious trouble.

Here are a few examples of times you DON'T draw your gun.

1. You Want to Show Your Buddies Your Cool New Gun

This is the most innocent reason on this list and the one least likely to land you in serious trouble, but it makes the list because it's almost always done carelessly and with dubious regard to safety.

I was once sitting in the church lobby chuckling at the old-man banter of several gentleman around me when one of them whipped out his pistol with a "Hey, check out what I bought this week" and handed it, loaded and without regard to where it was pointing, to the guy sitting next to him, who proceeded to turn it over in his hands to look at all sides of it, again without regard to where it was pointing. Don't do that! Act like a grown up and keep your CCW status and certainly your gun to yourself.



2. You Want to Scare Someone Away

Don't get me wrong: You might very well pull your gun and it will be enough to scare the bad guy away. If that happens, great—you've won and you didn't have to fire a shot. But you should never draw your gun if your sole aim is to scare him, especially if you're not in fear for your life. If your brain is telling you, "I don't need to shoot this panhandler, but if I point a gun at him he'll probably leave me alone," or "I could never shoot someone, but hopefully this will scare a mugger off," you're treading in dangerous waters. Either someone needs to be met with deadly force to save you from great bodily harm, or they don't.

Only draw the gun if you're prepared to fire it. If you're not, or if you wouldn't be legally justified in doing so, don't draw it hoping you won't have to fire it. Now you've introduced deadly force to a situation that didn't require it, and you have no way of knowing how that will escalate things.

3. You Want to Stop Someone from Running Away

Hey, that guy just stole my purse and is running away with it! He can't get away with that!

This and any other form of firing on someone who is retreating, except in rare circumstances (like active shooters or kidnappers), is going to be really hard to justify as a defensive gun use. If a bad guy is leaving, let him leave. Make a mental note of as many details as you can and be a good witness for police later when you report the incident.

Continued...When NOT to Draw Your Gun

4. You Want to Hold Someone for Police

Similar to the point above, catching a bad guy in the act and holding him at gunpoint for police is very tricky business. This isn't a "never do," but it's a "think very carefully" before you pull your gun for the sole purpose of holding someone for police.

If the person in question is a threat to your life and you manage to point a gun at them and convince them to stop, disarm and sit still while you call 9-1-1, OK. At that point you will obviously need to remain extremely vigilant and make it abundantly, immediately clear to responding police that you are indeed the good guy with a gun.

However, if the person is not a threat and you're holding them because they committed a "lesser" crime like theft, you are NOT justified to use deadly force against them, so pulling your gun out is very dicey. Depending on how it plays out, you could potentially face charges for something like unlawful restraint or assault. Consider what you'd do in a situation like this, and you might or might not decide that it simply isn't worth the legal quagmire you could be opening up.

5. You're Mad and You Want to Make a Point

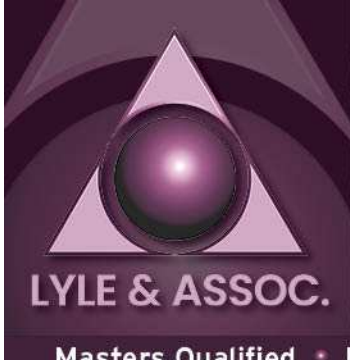
We do not use deadly force over property or pride. We do not pull a trigger because our ego was insulted and we can't stand the thought of someone getting away with a crime or affront against us.

I know how difficult it would be to watch someone across a parking lot actively stealing your car, and how tempting it would be to point your gun at them and order them to stop. Letting your car get stolen is going to lead to a huge insurance hassle, and we'd all feel a certain amount of "no one is going to do that to me and get away with it" righteous indignation. But stealing an unoccupied vehicle (occupied is a different story!) is generally not a threat of great bodily harm or death, unless the thief is trying to run you over with it. Drawing a gun in a case like this has the potential to escalate the situation and can lead to all kinds of legal headaches.

Don't draw your gun strictly to protect your stuff or your pride.

6. You Want to Win an Argument or Fight That's Not Deadly

I can't say this enough: You are only justified to use deadly force if you are in reasonable fear of immediate great bodily harm or death to yourself or someone else. Proportionality is a major factor here. Like I said in the point above, you don't draw your gun because you're mad in an "I'll show you who's tougher!" bluff, and you don't draw your gun in an attempt to one-up somebody who is not a deadly threat to you. If a fight is not deadly, you don't want to make it so. If a drunk girl at a bar gives you an open-handed slap across the face, you generally can't just pull your gun out in some kind of "I'll end this real quick" bravado. That's a legal nightmare, and don't forget, anytime YOU introduce deadly force into the situation, your changes



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Signal Flares and Flare Launchers under the Firearms Control Act

Purpose

This factsheet considers whether signal flare devices, flare guns, flare launchers and flare cartridges fall under South African firearms legislation, and whether an FCA firearm licence is required for the device or the cartridges.

This factsheet deals with signal and distress devices. It does not deal with ordinary firearms, blank-firing firearms, converted devices, or devices adapted to discharge conventional firearm ammunition.

Signal devices may include:

- handheld flare sticks or disposable emergency flares;
- one-shot disposable signal devices;
- pencil launchers with screw-on rimfire cups;
- 12-gauge plastic flare pistols;
- 26.5mm Very pistols or military-surplus flare guns; and
- marine, emergency, rescue or distress-signal flare cartridges.

Short Answer – FCA Licensing

A genuine flare gun is not a firearm for purposes of the Firearms Control Act 60 of 2000. The FCA expressly lists “a flare gun” as one of the devices not regarded as firearms for purposes of the Act. On the ordinary reading of the Act, a true signal flare gun or signal flare launcher should therefore not require a firearm licence under the FCA.

That does not mean that flares, flare cartridges, pyrotechnic signal cartridges or launch charges are uncontrolled. They may still be controlled under explosives legislation, maritime safety rules, municipal by-laws, import rules, supplier controls and ordinary public-safety laws.

The practical distinction is this: the device may be excluded from FCA licensing if it is a genuine flare gun, while the flare cartridge or pyrotechnic signal article may still be regulated under other laws.

Core FCA Position

The FCA defines “firearm” broadly. It includes devices designed to discharge or propel a projectile through a barrel or cylinder by means of burning propellant, as well as devices designed to discharge rimfire, centre-fire or pin-fire ammunition.

However, the definition must be read with section 5 of the FCA.

Section 5 is headed:

Devices not firearms for purposes of this Act

It lists various devices which are not regarded as firearms for purposes of the FCA, including: “**a flare gun**”

On the ordinary reading of section 5, a genuine flare gun is therefore not a firearm for FCA licensing purposes.

That conclusion depends on the item being a true flare gun or signal flare launcher. It should not be applied to converted, adapted, modified or dual-use devices.

Device-by-Device Guide

<u>Device Type</u>	<u>FCA licence for device?</u>	<u>SAGA Comment</u>
Handheld flare stick / disposable flare	No	Not a firearm. It is a pyrotechnic or emergency-safety article. Other safety, transport, storage or disposal rules may apply.
One-shot disposable signal device	Usually No	If self-contained and not a reusable gun-type launcher, it is not normally an FCA firearm. It should still be treated as a pyrotechnic safety item.
Pencil launcher with screw-on rimfire cups	Caution	The launcher may be intended as a signal device, but rimfire cups, primers or launch charges create a more complicated FCA and explosives-law question. Do not assume these are automatically licence-free.
12-gauge plastic flare pistol	No, if it is a true flare gun	Section 5 excludes a flare gun. However, if the device can chamber or discharge ordinary 12-gauge shotgun ammunition, or has been modified or adapted for that purpose, the risk changes sharply.
26.5mm Very pistol / military-surplus flare gun	No, if it is a true flare gun	A classic signal flare gun is excluded by section 5. Surplus military status may create import, storage, cartridge, provenance and explosives-law issues.
Modified or converted flare launcher	High Risk	A modified, adapted or converted device should not be treated as a simple flare gun. Written clarity should be obtained before purchase, possession, importation or use.
Device capable of firing conventional ammunition	High Risk	If the item can safely or practically discharge conventional firearm ammunition, it may fall outside the ordinary flare-gun exclusion and may create serious FCA risk.

Important Warning on Modified or Dual-Use Devices

SAGA's position applies only to genuine signal flare devices.

It **should not** be applied to:

- modified flare guns;
- converted flare launchers;
- sleeves or inserts intended to fire conventional ammunition;
- devices capable of discharging ordinary shotgun, handgun or rifle ammunition;
- surplus military devices without clear provenance;
- projectiles that are not ordinary signal or distress flares; or
- any item marketed as a flare gun but practically capable of firearm use.

Note: Creative and innovative criminals may adapt any seemingly legitimate device for illegal purposes which makes safe storage and control paramount.

Note: Where there is any doubt, the member should not rely on informal advice. Written clarification should be obtained before purchase, possession, importation, storage or use.

Cartridges, Flares and Launch Charges

This is where caution is required.

A genuine flare gun may be excluded from the FCA firearm definition, but that does not automatically mean that every flare cartridge, launch cup, primer, rimfire charge or pyrotechnic signal article is unregulated.

The FCA defines “ammunition” as a primer or complete cartridge. It also defines “cartridge” as a complete object consisting of a cartridge case, primer, propellant and bullet.

Section 90 of the FCA then provides that no person may possess ammunition unless that person has the required firearm licence, permit, dealer authority, manufacturer authority, gunsmith authority, import or export permit, transporter permit, or is otherwise authorised.

Ordinary marine or emergency signal flares should not automatically be treated as ordinary firearm ammunition merely because they may be launched from a flare device. A signal flare cartridge is normally a pyrotechnic signal article rather than a cartridge intended for use as firearm ammunition.

However, caution remains necessary because some signal systems may involve:

- primers;
- rimfire cups;
- launch cartridges;
- blank-type launch charges;
- 12-gauge format flare cartridges;
- pyrotechnic projectiles;
- military-surplus flare cartridges; or
- cartridges that physically resemble firearm ammunition.

For this reason, SAGA's practical advice is conservative:

Do not assume that all flare cartridges, cups, primers or launch charges are automatically licence-free or uncontrolled.

They should be acquired, stored, transported, used and disposed of only through lawful suppliers and lawful safety channels.

Explosives and Pyrotechnic Controls

Flares and flare cartridges may fall under explosives or pyrotechnic controls even where the flare gun itself is not a firearm under the FCA.

Explosives legislation deals broadly with substances or articles used to produce an explosive or pyrotechnic effect, and includes rockets, cartridges and adaptations or preparations of explosives.

This means that signal flares, pyrotechnic distress flares and flare cartridges may be subject to controls relating to:

- manufacture;
- sale;
- supply;
- acquisition;
- storage & transport;
- importation & exportation;
- use, expiry and disposal.

Members should therefore avoid treating flare cartridges as ordinary consumer goods. They are safety items with legal and practical risks.

Maritime and Emergency Use

In the boating and maritime context, flares are also treated as safety equipment.

SAMSA and small-vessel safety materials refer to projectile flare sets and other distress-signal equipment in relevant vessel categories. Members who carry flares for boating, offshore, coastal, rescue or emergency use should distinguish between three separate questions:

1. **FCA licensing:** Is the device a firearm under the FCA?
2. **Explosives/Pyrotechnic control:** Are the flares or cartridges controlled as pyrotechnic or explosive articles?
3. **Maritime safety compliance:** Are the correct approved, unexpired flares carried for the vessel and operating category?

Compliance with one area does not automatically mean compliance with the others. For example, a flare gun may not require an FCA firearm licence, but the flares may still need to be approved, unexpired, lawfully acquired, safely stored and properly disposed of.

12-Gauge Flare Pistols

Particular caution should be applied to 12-gauge flare pistols. If the device is genuinely designed and used only to project signal flares, it should fall under the FCA section 5 flare-gun exclusion.

However, risk changes if:

- the device can chamber ordinary 12-gauge shotgun cartridges;
- the device can safely discharge ordinary shotgun ammunition;
- the device has been sleeved, reinforced, altered or adapted;
- the device is used with non-signal cartridges;
- the device is marketed as a flare gun but functions as a firearm; or
- the user attempts to fire conventional ammunition through it.

A plastic flare pistol is not a shotgun merely because it is in a 12-gauge format. But a device that is capable of discharging ordinary shotgun ammunition, or has been altered to do so, should be treated as a serious legal risk.

26.5mm Very Pistols and Military-Surplus Flare Guns

Classic 26.5mm Very pistols and similar flare guns were designed for signalling. If they are genuine flare guns, the FCA section 5 exclusion should apply.

However, military-surplus items require special caution. Members should consider:

- provenance & import history;
- proof that the item is a flare gun and not another launcher;
- whether any projectiles are explosive, smoke, illumination or pyrotechnic articles;
- whether the cartridges were lawfully imported or supplied;
- storage, transport, expiry and disposal requirements; and
- whether written clarity is required.

Military-surplus does not automatically mean unlawful. But it does mean higher risk and a greater need for documentation.

Pencil Launchers, Rimfire Cups and Launch Charges

Pencil launchers and similar emergency signal devices require special care. Some systems use small rimfire cups, primer-type components or launch charges. Because the FCA definition of ammunition includes a primer, these items may raise a more complicated legal question than an ordinary handheld flare.

SAGA does not recommend advising members that rimfire cups, primer cups or similar launch charges are automatically free from FCA or explosives-law control.

Where a member has such a device, or is considering buying one, the cautious approach is:

- buy only from a lawful and reputable supplier;
- keep proof of purchase and product information;
- use only the correct signal components;
- do not modify the device;
- do not substitute firearm components;
- do not reload or improvise components;
- store safely and separately from firearms and ammunition where appropriate;
- dispose of expired or damaged items through proper channels; and
- obtain written guidance where classification is unclear.

Practical Compliance Guidance for Members

Members dealing with flares or flare launchers should follow the following practical steps:

1. Confirm the device type.

Is it a genuine flare gun, disposable flare, pencil launcher, Very pistol or something else?

2. Check whether the device is modified or dual-use.

Any alteration, insert, sleeve, strengthened barrel or adapted chamber changes the risk.

3. Confirm the cartridge type.

Is it an approved signal flare, pyrotechnic article, launch cup, rimfire cup, blank-type launch charge, or something else?

4. Use lawful suppliers & retain documents.

Buy only from reputable marine, emergency, safety or authorised suppliers. Keep invoices, packaging, product descriptions, safety data sheets, approvals and any written supplier advice.

5. Store safely and dispose of expired or damaged flares properly.

Store away from heat, flame, children, unauthorised persons, firearms and ordinary ammunition where appropriate. Do not fire expired flares casually. Do not throw them into ordinary refuse. Follow supplier, maritime, municipal or explosives guidance.

6. Get written clarity where uncertain.

For unusual, imported, military-surplus, modified, rimfire-activated or cartridge-based systems, obtain written confirmation from the lawful supplier, SAPS Explosives and, where necessary, the DFO or CFR on the firearm-classification question.

Common Questions

1. Do I need a firearm licence for a genuine flare gun?

Ordinarily, no. A genuine flare gun is listed in section 5 of the FCA as a device not regarded as a firearm for purposes of the Act.

2. Does that mean I can possess any flare cartridge without concern?

No. The device and the cartridge are separate questions. Flares and flare cartridges may be controlled as pyrotechnic or explosive articles, and some launch systems may raise ammunition or primer issues.

3. Are marine flares firearm ammunition?

Ordinary marine or emergency signal flares should not automatically be treated as ordinary firearm ammunition. They are generally pyrotechnic signal articles. But their sale, storage, transport, importation, expiry and disposal may still be controlled.

4. What about 12-gauge flare cartridges?

A 12-gauge flare cartridge used in a genuine flare pistol is not the same thing as ordinary shotgun ammunition. However, because of the 12-gauge format, members should take care to ensure the device and cartridges are genuine signal items and are not capable of ordinary firearm use.

5. What about 26.5mm military-surplus flare guns?

A genuine 26.5mm flare gun should fall within the flare-gun exclusion. However, surplus status increases the need for proof of provenance, lawful supply, lawful importation, correct cartridge classification and safe storage.

6. What about pencil launchers and rimfire cups?

These require caution. Rimfire cups, primers and launch charges may raise FCA and explosives-law issues. They should not be assumed to be uncontrolled.

7. May I modify a flare gun to fire other ammunition?

No. Modification or conversion may remove the device from the ordinary flare-gun position and may create serious criminal and safety risk.

8. May I use a flare gun for self-defence?

This factsheet does not recommend or advise the use of flare devices for self-defence. Flare guns and flares are emergency signalling and safety devices. Misuse can cause serious injury, fire risk and legal consequences.

SAGA's Position

SAGA's position is practical and compliance-based:

- A true flare gun is not a firearm under the FCA.
- A true flare gun should not require an FCA firearm licence.
- Flare cartridges and pyrotechnic signal articles are not ordinary consumer items.
- Some cartridges, rimfire cups, primers or launch charges may create additional legal questions.
- Explosives, pyrotechnic, maritime, import, storage and disposal rules may still apply.
- Modified, converted, dual-use or uncertain devices should be treated as high-risk until written clarity is obtained.

Bottom Line

Device:

A true flare gun is not a firearm under the FCA and should not require an FCA firearm licence.

Cartridges / flares:

Ordinary marine or emergency signal flares should not automatically be treated as ordinary firearm ammunition merely because they are launched from a flare device. However, they may still be controlled as pyrotechnic or explosive safety articles. Their possession, sale, supply, storage, transport, importation, use and disposal may be controlled under other legislation or safety rules.

Red flag:

Anything modified, dual-use, able to discharge conventional ammunition, military-surplus without clear provenance, or using rimfire cups, primers or separate launch charges should be treated as high-risk until written clarity is obtained.

This factsheet is for information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.

Issued as part of the SAGA Educational Series to guide firearm owners on compliance and responsible firearm ownership.

Acknowledgements and Sources:

- Drafted by SMS Lyle – reviewed by S Grobler SAGA Trustees
- Firearms Control Act 60 of 2000 - definition of firearm, definition of ammunition, section 5 and section 90.
 - Firearms Control Regulations, where relevant.
 - Explosives Act and applicable explosives regulations, where relevant.
- SAMSA and small-vessel safety material, where maritime distress flares are concerned.
- SARS customs tariff material, as a supporting classification reference only and not as the primary firearm-law basis.

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