



Information Guide

Handgun target shooting & participation conditions

Handgun target shooting is a sport of skill and precision that is enjoyed by many people around the world. The popularity of this sport in Australia can be evidenced by recent successes at Commonwealth and Olympic Games.

The *Firearms Act 1996* (the Act) requires handgun target shooters to be licensed in Victoria, and as a condition of that licence attend a minimum amount of target shooting events each calendar year. These participation requirements are the minimum standard for determining whether a handgun target shooter has an ongoing genuine reason for his/her licence.

The following guide has been published by the Licensing Services Division of Victoria Police. It incorporates all recent amendments made to the Act. The guide has been prepared to assist licence holders to determine their participation obligation and answer frequently asked questions in this area. Please note that this guide does not apply to paintball activities or paintball markers.

Exceptions:

The participation requirements do not apply in the following circumstances:

- **Junior** handgun licence holders
- Holders of a licence to possess or carry a handgun **on behalf of a junior** for target shooting purposes
- Holders of a General Category Handgun licence with a genuine reason other than handgun target shooting
- Handgun target shooters who **do not own** any handguns under the licence
- Licence holders that are not natural persons (i.e. organisations)

Approved Matches and Shoots

Licence holders can meet this part of their licence obligations by participating in a defined number of approved matches or approved shoots. These 'events' are defined in the Act as follows:

Match -

A competitive target shooting match that is approved by the Chief Commissioner, organised by an approved handgun target shooting club and takes place at an approved shooting range. The Chief Commissioner must be satisfied that the matches will be conducted at an approved shooting range by an approved club. The classes of matches that have been approved by the Chief Commissioner are published in the *Government Gazette* from time to time. For a full list of approved matches in the State of Victoria, go to www.police.vic.gov.au.

Shoot -

A shoot conducted for the purposes of preparation for participation in an approved handgun target shooting match and is organised by an approved handgun target shooting club and conducted on an approved shooting range.

Approved Ranges and Clubs

Ranges -

An approved range is a site that has been inspected by Victoria Police and approved by the Chief Commissioner's delegate as a venue that is safe to conduct certain target shooting events (approved matches or shoots). Target shooting events can only be conducted at such a site.

Clubs -

Handgun Target Shooting clubs are approved by the Chief Commissioner because of the number of roles and responsibilities they perform under the Act. These legislated roles and responsibilities include (but are not limited to):

- Keeping accurate and legible participation records in accordance with the Act, and, making such records as soon as reasonably practicable after an event.
- Notifying Licensing Services Division within 7 days of the details of persons who have surrendered their club membership or have had their membership suspended or cancelled.
- Reporting to Licensing Services Division the names of any club member that the club believes is not a fit and proper person to possess, carry or use a handgun.
- Ensuring that prohibited persons are not admitted as members of the club.
- Ensuring that persons with a suspended or cancelled licence do not take part in handgun target shooting matches conducted by the club.
- Reporting to Licensing Services Division the annual participation details of members who have nominated that club as their principal club. This report needs to be completed in the Regulated format and submitted by 31 March each year.
- Nominating officers of the club who will be responsible for carrying out these functions and, notifying Licensing Services Division of any changes.
- Endorsing members' applications for a General Category Handgun or Provisional Handgun Licence or permit to acquire.

Specified Classes of General Category Handguns

The Act divides the types of handguns that are used for handgun target shooting into 4 categories or 'classes'. These classes are important because the amount of participation that a licence holder is obliged to complete is solely determined by the number of classes of handguns that are 'owned' by that person – not the actual quantity of handguns owned. The classes prescribed in Schedule 9 to the *Firearms Regulations 2008* are as follows:

1. Air handgun
2. Rimfire handgun
3. Centrefire handgun with a calibre of .38 inch or less or a black powder handgun
4. Centrefire handgun with a calibre of more than .38 inch but not more than .45 inch

How do I determine my participation requirements

Handgun Participation Table

Number of Classes of handguns owned (A)	Required number of matches (as a competitor) (B)	Required number of handgun target shoots or matches or combination of both (C)	Total participation in matches and shoots combined (D)	Minimum separate days (E)
1	6	4	10	10
2	6	8	14	10
3	6	12	18	10
4	6	16	22	10

The above table summarises the participation conditions as set out in the Act.

- **Step 1:** Using the above information as a reference, determine how many classes of handguns you own in column (A).
- **Step 2:** Scroll along the corresponding row to column (B). All owners of handguns for target shooting are required to participate in at least 6 matches as a competitor, regardless of the number of classes of handguns owned.
- **Step 3:** Column (C) specifies the amount of additional events you are required to complete. This is determined by the amount of classes you own (4 for each class). You have the choice to meet this requirement by participating in any combination of matches or shoots you wish however they must equate to 4 within each class.
- **Step 4:** Column (D) specifies the total participation you must complete over the calendar year. This is determined by adding columns (B) and (C).
- **Step 5:** Column (E) specifies that you must complete your participation over a period of no less than 10 days. This applies regardless of the number of classes owned.

Handgun Participation Requirement Examples

Example 1 -

Tony is a handgun target shooter and owns 3 Rimfire handguns. No other handguns are owned by Tony. As Tony is deemed to have only 1 class of handgun, he is able to determine that he is required to participate in 10 events that are suitable for use with his handguns. This comprises of 6 matches that he must participate in as a competitor and the remaining 4 can be shoots or matches. In any case, Tony must attend at a club on at least 10 separate days.

Example 2 -

Kate is a keen handgun target shooter and owns 3 Centrefire handguns, 3 Air handguns and 5 Rimfire handguns. As Kate is deemed to have 3 classes of handguns, Kate is required to participate in a total of 18 events that are suitable for use with her handguns. Using the table, Kate can determine that she must compete in 6 matches (of any class) as a competitor however she must also compete in at least an additional 4 events (shoots or matches) for each of the 3 classes of handguns that she owns. Kate must attend at a club on at least 10 separate days.

Special arrangements for Club Officers and Safety Course Instructors

Special arrangements apply to licence holders who participate in shooting competitions as a referee, supervisor, competition judge or range officer. They must complete 6 of the matches and shoots as a competitor however they can meet their remaining participation requirements in their official capacity.

Safety course instructors are deemed to have competed in an approved handgun target shooting match for each safety course they conduct of a class approved by the Chief Commissioner.

What if I cannot meet the annual participation requirements?

The Act recognises that there may be legitimate reasons why persons may not be able to meet their participation condition and accommodates these situations by providing the Chief Commissioner with the discretion to modify or exempt the licence holder from the participation condition. The circumstances where this discretion can be applied are set out below.

The Chief Commissioner has discretion to exempt participation for a period greater than 1 month but less than 12 months if:

- The person has a temporary physical incapacity that will result in the person not meeting annual participation and they can provide a current medical certificate from their treating doctor to show how the medical condition will preclude the licence holder from undertaking handgun matches or shoots and the duration of that incapacity. The medical condition must relate to the licence holder.
- The person will be absent from the state for a substantial period of time that will result in the person not meeting annual participation and can provide proof of absence from Victoria (such as a copy of a travel itinerary).
- For any other reasonable reason that will impact on the person's ability to meet the annual participation requirement and that reason can be supported by providing sufficient information and documentation to satisfy the CCP that they are unable to comply.

Please Note: Persons who have been granted an exemption from the Chief Commissioner may be required to store handguns with a licensed firearm dealer or another licence holder for the duration of the exemption.

The Chief Commissioner also has discretion to modify or 'vary' the participation for a calendar year if:

- The person is unable to participate in matches or shoots for reasons outside their control; or
- The person is unable to complete any such match or shoot which they were participating in and where the person officiating reasonably believed that they attempted to complete their participation; that is to say that the licence holder has made all reasonable attempts to arrive at an approved range and something has occurred outside of their control.

If a licence holder is subject to any of the above, they are to take the following actions:

- Write a letter to LSD providing the reason why their application has been made and attach the supporting evidence outlined above.
- Provide a letter from their principal club stating the number of matches/shoots already undertaken for that year and the number of matches and shoots held at the club for the remaining part of the year.

Key points -

- Applications for modification or exemption should be submitted within 2 weeks of becoming aware that you will not meet requirements. Applications submitted the following year will not be accepted.
- Applications for exemption on medical grounds as a general rule must relate to the licence holder. Should there be any other medical reasons (i.e. illness of family members), these will be considered on a case by case basis.
- Applications for other exemptions will be assessed on a case by case basis, and only accepted if the reason is outside of your control and evidence is attached of your attempts to find alternative clubs to participate.
- If an application is approved, the licence holder will be advised of their varied participation requirements for the remainder of that year.
- Prolonged absences from the state or medical conditions may necessitate review of the licence under the normal residency and fit and proper provisions. This will be assessed on a case by case basis.

What happens if I fail to meet the participation requirements?

The annual participation requirements are legislated and designed to ensure that licence holders continue to have a genuine reason for retaining their licence. The Chief Commissioner is obliged under the Act to take action if persons cannot demonstrate an ongoing reason for their licence by failing to meet their minimum annual participation requirement. If Licensing Services Division identifies that handgun licence holders have not met their annual participation requirement; the following enforcement actions are taken:

- In the event that the licence holder has not met the bare minimum conditions for one class of handgun (i.e. has not participated in at least 10 matches or shoots over 10 days and at least 6 of those were as a competitor), the Chief Commissioner **must cancel** the licence subject to any appeals.
- In the event that the licence holder has met the bare minimum conditions for one class of handgun (i.e. has participated in at least 10 matches or shoots over at least 10 days and at least 6 of those were as a competitor) but has not met the requirements for additional classes owned (i.e. 4 matches or shoots for each class), the CCP has discretion to either cancel the licence or impose a condition to vary the licence so that the holder must not possess, carry or use the class(es) of handgun (relevant to the failure to comply) for the duration of the licence and require that the holder surrender any handgun and ammunition.

Controlled Handguns

It is an offence to possess, carry or use certain handguns for the purposes of handgun target shooting without the express authorisation of the Chief Commissioner. These types of handguns are often referred to as 'controlled handguns'. Handguns that have a magazine with a capacity of more than 10 rounds are banned for target shooting purposes and the Chief Commissioner cannot give authorisation for these under any circumstances.

The other three types of controlled handguns where authorisation can be granted are:

- In the case of a semi-automatic handgun, a handgun that has a barrel length of less than 120mm.
- In the case of a revolver or single shot handgun, a handgun that has a barrel length of less than 100mm.
- Any handgun that has a calibre of more than .38 inch.

For existing holders of a general category handgun licence, an authorisation is not required in the following circumstances only:

- For the purposes of determining whether or not to purchase the handgun or apply for an authorisation at an approved shooting range.
- For the purposes of instructing another person in the use of the handgun.
- As a result of a malfunction of another handgun being used by that person in that match at an approved shooting range.
- For the purposes of storing that handgun where they already have an authorisation for that class of handgun.

Licence holders can apply for an authorisation to possess, carry or use a controlled handgun through the permit to acquire process but must have their application endorsed by a handgun target shooting club confirming that the handgun is required for participation in an appropriate match approved by the Chief Commissioner.

Please Note: Black Powder handguns are no longer controlled handguns. A black powder handgun means a handgun that uses black powder to propel a projectile and is not capable of being loaded with or discharging breech-loaded metallic cartridges.

A Summary of Licence Holders Responsibilities

Handgun target shooters have responsibility for:

- Being aware of, and complying with their participation obligations.
- Complying with the conditions on their licence more generally in respect to carriage, safekeeping, etc.
- Being aware of the calendar of events at their clubs and ensuring there is sufficient time to meet their requirements allowing for unforeseen circumstances.
- Continuing to be a member of an approved handgun target shooting club.
- Nominating a principal club to Licensing Services Division if they are a member of more than 1 handgun target shooting club for reporting purposes.
- Passing records of participation at other approved clubs to their principal club for reporting purposes.
- Maintaining their own records of their participation for verification purposes.
- Notifying Licensing Services Division at the earliest opportunity of any request to have their participation requirement modified or exempted.

The Chief Commissioner's Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Chief Commissioner's Delegate include:

- Approving clubs and ranges.
- Approving the types of matches and publishing their approval in the *Government Gazette*.
- Taking appropriate action when a licence holder fails to meet their participation condition.
- Notifying each club as soon as practicable where a member of that club has had their licence cancelled or suspended or has their licence subsequently reinstated.
- Ensuring that only genuine target shooters are granted a licence.
- Ensuring that approved clubs comply with their recording and reporting obligations specified under the Act.
- Publishing an annual report to the Minister by 30 June in regards to handgun participation.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I have to demonstrate that I participate with each handgun I own?

No, however you must continue to demonstrate a genuine need for each handgun you own and meet your annual participation requirements for each class of handgun owned.

Can I participate in multiple events (matches or shoots) on the 1 day?

Yes, however it will only be counted as an attendance for 1 day out of the 10 you must attend. Participation in multiple classes will be recognised.

What happens if my match or shoot takes place on more than one day?

The Act clarifies that an approved handgun target shooting match or a handgun target shoot that takes place on more than one day is to be taken to be, for each day on which the match or shoot takes place, a separate match or shoot. For example, if you attend one match that is conducted over 2 days, this is counted as two separate matches over 2 separate days.

What happens if I hold my licence or a class of handguns for less than a year?

If a licence holder holds the licence for less than a calendar year or owns a class of handgun for less than a calendar year, then participation is applied proportionately. The Act applies a formula based on whole calendar months, for that year, after rounding down to the nearest whole number of such matches and shoots.

Will my participation in events conducted interstate or overseas be counted?

No. The Act clearly states that participation must take place in a match approved by the Chief Commissioner and at an approved range, therefore it must be in Victoria to be recognised. Only a limited amount of interstate clubs are approved by the Chief Commissioner to accommodate persons living on the border. Subject to the requirements of an interstate/overseas jurisdiction there is nothing preventing persons from participating outside Victoria however it won't be recognised. If persons are away for extended competitions they may apply for an exemption for being outside of the State.

Do Provisional general category handgun licence holders have a minimum participation requirement?

Yes. During the term of the licence (no less than 6 months and no more than 12 months), a Provisional General Category Handgun licence holder must have safely participated in at least 5 approved target shooting matches before an application for a General Category Handgun Licence can be endorsed by a nominated officer of an approved handgun target shooting club.

Can I carry and use controlled handguns under a Provisional licence?

Yes, but only for the purpose to make a decision as to whether in the course of applying for a full licence, to purchase the handgun and seek authorisation off the Chief Commissioner. You cannot own handguns of any type under a Provisional licence.

What is the situation with temporary visitors to Victoria?

Interstate visitors to Victoria who are holders of a corresponding handgun target shooting licence may take part in a shooting competition conducted by an approved club or organisation. The Act has recently been amended to include officials who hold the position of instructor, referee, supervisor, competition judge or range officer. Overseas visitors may also participate in competitions provided that they have been issued with the appropriate visitors permit.

Will I be able to re-enter the sport if my licence is cancelled?

Yes, however you will not be able to re-enter the sport for a period of 12 months from the date of cancellation. This includes participating in any events that requires the possession, carriage or use of a handgun. Upon completion of the cancellation period, you will need to apply for a Provisional Licence and satisfy the requirements for such a licence (i.e. complete a handgun safety course, hold the licence for at least 6 months but not less than 12 months and participate in at least 5 approved matches) before applying for a General Category Handgun Licence.

Further Information

Please contact your local approved handgun target shooting club or the Licensing Services Division on:

Phone: 1300 651 645

Mail: GPO Box 2807, MELBOURNE VIC 3001

E-mail licensingervices@police.vic.gov.au