



Western Australia Airsoft Club Inc.

ABN 43950909848

86 Regency Drive, Thornlie, WA, 6108



AirsoftWA.com.au



[@AirsoftWA](https://twitter.com/AirsoftWA)



airsoft4wa@gmail.com

The Case for the Sport of Airsoft in Western Australia

What is Airsoft

Airsoft is a shooting sport similar to Paintball, however safer, cheaper and more convenient. Airsoft originated in Japan in the early 1980's when ownership of guns by citizens was made illegal. Since they did not have access to firearms, the demand for replicas grew. It is from this demand that the sport of Airsoft surfaced. Paintball is illegal in Japan, being considered too dangerous.

The sport of Airsoft has three main disciplines:

- **Re-enactment (historical or fictional)** : takes place in wide open areas, with opposing teams, up to hundreds of players or more, competing against each other or to complete set objectives over the course of several hours or days;
- **Competitive target shooting**: players compete against each other on a time or points based system. There are currently three types of international Airsoft competitions.
- **Speedsoft**: a fast paced tournament style competition usually played by teams of 5 on a symmetrical course with artificial obstacles.

An important part of the sport of Airsoft is the aspect of **Cosplay**, where players dress up in a variety of costumes, appropriate for the different disciplines of Airsoft. **Live action role playing** (LARP) is also part of Cosplay and Airsoft.

The Western Australia Airsoft Club Inc.

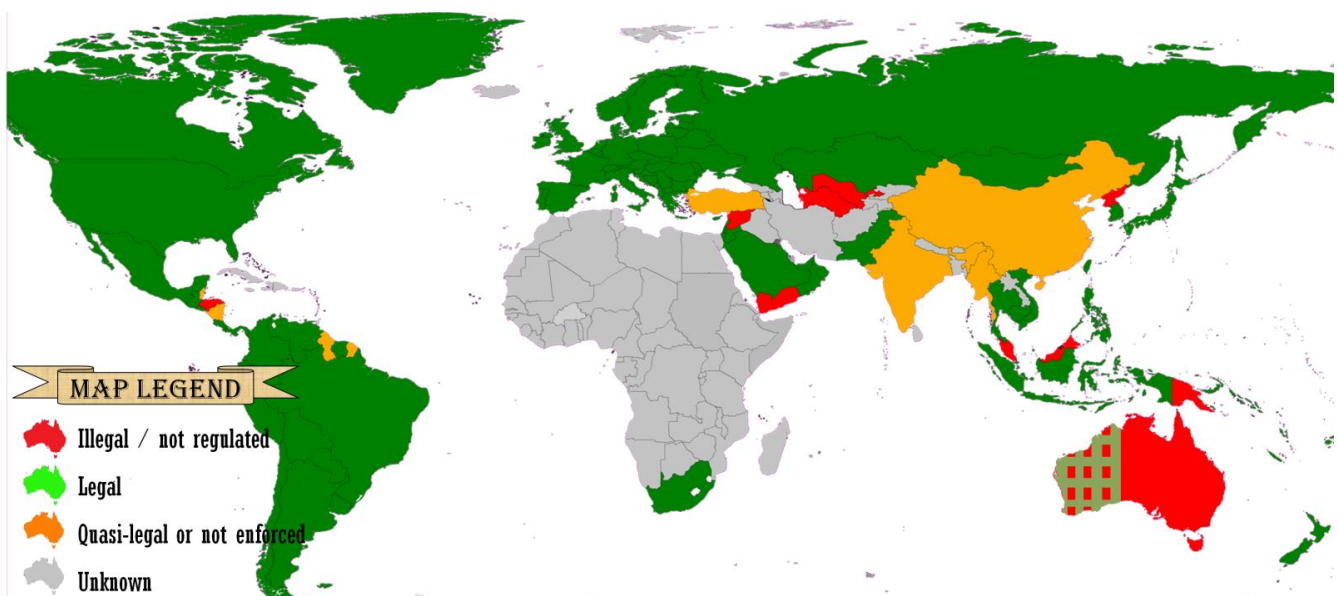
The Western Australia Airsoft Club Inc. is a not-for-profit community organisation established under the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015* with the objectives of public education and promotion of the sport of Airsoft, advocate for the regulation of the sport in WA, as well as development and enforcement of rules for regulating the sport for safety, competitiveness and enjoyment purposes.

We represent our club members and our **2,400 Western Australia petitioners** supporting the sport of Airsoft in WA.

The sport of Airsoft in Australia is currently not regulated.

As can be seen from the map below, the sport is very popular around the world and Australia is the only Western society and part of only 7% of worldwide countries where the sport of Airsoft is currently not regulated, alongside North Korea, Uzbekistan, Papua New Guinea and others.

Some Governments have also formally recognised Airsoft as a sport and regularly sponsor events (i.e. New Zealand, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Italy, etc.).



Perception of public risk

The wide distribution and acceptance of the sport on a world wide scale shows that the **sport of Airsoft presents no real public risk**. This can be further substantiated by some recent regulatory changes such as below.

New Zealand, in their recent review of Firearms legislation, has adjusted importation requirements for Airsoft devices and permitted fully automatic function, based on *'lower power and reduced ability to cause harm'*¹⁾.

Furthermore, The European Union, through the latest amendment of the *Firearms Directive* (March 2017) has specifically excluded Airsoft devices of all types from the Directive's scope for not corresponding to the definition of a firearm (i.e. by the action of a combustible propellant). This decision was made despite the numerous terror attacks that have recently plagued Europe and the initial proposal to regulate Airsoft devices as firearms.

What are Airsoft Devices

Airsoft devices are non lethal copies of firearms which shoot 6 mm biodegradable non destructive round projectiles called BB's. These biodegradable plastic BBs hold a very low weight ranging from 0.2 to 0.4 grams, and speeds between 100-150 m/s. Airsoft Devices are constructed of plastic, pot metal or aluminium, use similar components as remote controlled toys and are predominately powered by electricity. Springs and compressed gasses are also used as a source of propulsion.

The Equivalence Principle (form and function)

Airsoft devices cannot be converted to fire real bullets, mostly due to their design and weak construction.

Imitation firearms with a more realistic appearance than most Airsoft devices are freely available for purchase in Western Australia. Gel Ball Blasters have recently been allowed for unrestricted importation at Federal level, sale and use in all Australian states. These items have the same functioning mechanism and appearance as Airsoft devices.

Airsoft devices are **10 (ten) times safer** than paintball markers, having an average muzzle energy of 1.44 Joules.



Imitation firearms freely sold in Perth



Airsoft sport player with Airsoft device

Furthermore, the South Australian Police has recently allowed purchase of paintball markers with military arms appearance.

Why is change needed?

Internationally, governments and the sporting community have long ago concluded that the sport of Airsoft presents no real public or societal risk, however Australia has not yet embraced this view and the sport of Airsoft is currently still not regulated. Below are some factual benefits to the State and the community, which the sport of Airsoft can bring, and the state of Western Australia is currently **missing out** on and are aligned with WA Labor Platform.

State revenue: The UK government estimates 60,000 Airsoft players in the UK and the *UK Airsoft Players Union* advises of yearly turnover of 40 million pounds (equivalent to **69 million AUD / year**), not including revenue from tourism activities, events and field entry fees. This revenue is generated by small businesses.

Physical exercise: Australia has an obese and overweight population on its own and compared globally. This is supported by data from the *World Health Organisation's Global Health Observatory* and the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*: almost 2 is 3 Australian adults (63%) and 1 in 4 children are overweight or obese.

In Australia, overweight and obesity is the second highest contributor to burden of disease, after dietary risks. Smoking is the third highest.

The sport of Airsoft is a very enjoyable outdoor activity with friends, requiring good stamina and endurance. The sport provides for full body workout: running, crawling, kneeling, jumping, etc. The usual games go on for 3-4 hours and large events go on for several days. The weight of the average Airsoft kit carried by a player is around 10 kilos.

Tourism: There is great tourism potential should the sport of Airsoft be legalised in Western Australia. In order to grasp the potential scale, the largest Airsoft event to date drew in about 6,400 players over the length of 3 days.

When Paintball was legalised in 2004, the Minister for Police announced it as a *'popular tourist attraction'* ²⁾.

International / Inter-States Tourism: Australians are currently travelling to New Zealand to enjoy the sport of Airsoft in the range of 100 players / event at least twice per year. This represents an increase of over 100% compared to 2016. The cost of such a trip is in the 1500-2000AUD price range not including expenses from visiting the surroundings.

Furthermore, there are currently 3 global Airsoft target shooting competitions which WA has the capacity to host and draw in international competitors.

Local Tourism: Experience from countries that enjoy the sport of Airsoft shows there is great opportunity in clubs organising local events and drawing in crowds from the metro area to more remote regions and vice versa.

Mental Health: There are a number of ways in which the sport of Airsoft can help improve mental health.

Stress Relief: complete detachment from reality and everyday worries coupled with outdoor physical activity surrounded by friends and family (i.e. escapism).

FIFO Workers: The age, gender and educational profiles of WA FIFO workers show demographics matching with those of Airsoft players ^{3) 4)}.

Furthermore, *'80% of FIFO employees are male and the stigma adjoining mental health is a barrier to men discussing this topic'* ⁵⁾. As one of the main reasons / benefits for engaging in the sport of Airsoft is mateship, the relationships that are built within a team foster a trusting environment for difficult conversations to be had and for people to open up.

PTSD: There is proof coming from the US and the Netherlands that the sport of Airsoft helps managing Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) in military personnel.

Expatriates: Migrants that have enjoyed the sport of Airsoft in their home countries advise that not being able to undertake their favourite hobby in Australia is demoralising, makes social integration more difficult and is also one of the main reasons for wishing to go back to their home countries.

Environmentally friendly: Airsoft is more environmentally friendly than other similar sports. Biodegradable BBs have been proven to degrade to 85% of their size within one year ⁶⁾. For comparison, NERF darts are made of foam and paintballs have been designed for wetter conditions, where they would be washed away by rain.

Participation to international competitions: Airsoft sport enthusiasts are unable to practice, participate, organize or represent Australia at international competitions, and thus uphold our national pride.

The Australian Airsoft Situation

Australia is the only Western society and part of only 7% of worldwide countries where Airsoft is currently not regulated alongside North Korea, Uzbekistan, Papua New Guinea, etc. The WA Law Reform Commission's (LRC) review of the *Firearms Act 1973* has recommended options for regulating Airsoft.

However, some of the LRC recommendations come with great regulatory burdens which seem not to be worthy of **evidence based legislation**, do not follow current international legal practice in the field and also seem contrary to the Government's current agenda of **red tape reduction**. These recommendations do not seem proportionate to the risk and will significantly reduce the benefits expressed above by over-regulating the sport.

Solution for the Sport of Airsoft in Western Australia

When Paintball was legalised in 2004, the Minister for Police announced that *'Common sense has prevailed'* ²⁾.

The Western Australia Airsoft Club Inc. is in the position to provide a solution that would allow the State and community of Western Australia to fully capitalize on the benefits that the sport of Airsoft brings. Our solution is based on trialled **international regulatory practice** from the European Union, United Kingdom and New Zealand and ensures **effective, evidence based and proportionate Regulations**.

References:

- 1) *Arms (Military Style Semi-Automatic Firearms and Import Controls) Amendment Bill — First Reading; 11 May 2011 Hansard;*
- 2) *Michelle Roberts, Paintball recognised and regulated by the Gallop Government, 23 December 2004 Media Statement;*
- 3) *Final Report of the WA Education and Health Standing Committee on The Impact of FIFO Work Practices on Mental Health 2015;*
- 4) *Global Airsoft Survey Project, Popular Airsoft, 2008;*
- 5) *Lifeline WA FIFO/DIDO Mental health Research Report 2013;*
- 6) *California State Science Fair, Project J1319, Airsoft and the Environment: What Happens to all the BBs?*