



## **Media Statement: Children cannot be gun-proofed**

*20 September 2013:* September 16-22 is the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence; which makes Wednesday's shooting, in which a 13-year-old accidentally shot his friend with his father's gun and then shot himself, even more tragic. The gun, which by law should have been stored unloaded in a safe, was left under a mattress. In a similar incident last month, a 6-year old shot and killed her best friend with her grandfather's gun - which was also not safely locked away.

"Tragedies like these highlight that children and guns are a deadly combination, and the consequences - the resulting trauma and devastation - unquantifiable, from which no one recovers," says Gun Free South Africa's spokesperson Pamela Crowsley, who lost her son through negligent gun use.

She urged gun owners to not rely on gun-proofing their children; gun proofing involves telling children to leave a gun alone and not touch it, if they find it. "Gun proofing children is ineffective and dangerous; it makes children responsible for an adult gun owner who has violated the law by failing to store his gun unloaded and locked in a safe."

Research shows that parents believe their children are at less risk to gun injury than they really are. One study showed that 74% of parents believed their child would leave a gun alone, while a further study asked parents of boys aged 8-12 to rate their son's interest in guns. The boys were then left to play with a friend or a sibling in a room containing two toy guns and a real gun. Of the boys whose parents thought their sons had a low interest in guns, 65% handled the real gun and 35% of boys perceived to have a low interest pulled the trigger.

Crowsley also warned that children are curious, "children know their parents' hiding places, including where they hide safe keys."

"The bottom line is that not having any firearms at home when children are around is by far the safest alternative."

*Ends*