



## Crime experts debate approach to guns on our streets

By **Ben Chenoweth**

IF TWO leading policing experts can't agree on the solution to western Sydney's gun crime, what hope do the police have?

Greystanes resident Hugh McDermott, a senior lecturer in law enforcement, and policing academic Michael Kennedy from the University of Western Sydney expressed opposing views about recent shootings.

Dr McDermott said shooting incidents had become so common, people were becoming desensitised to the situation.

He also said the current rate of shootings may lead to an American-style attitude towards firearms and warned

this could lead to a Port Arthur-style massacre in Sydney.

"What has happened in suburbs is the normalisation of shootings," he said.

"What is it going to take for us to act to solve the gun problem, a Port Arthur-style massacre in western Sydney?"

Dr Kennedy dismissed Dr McDermott's comments. "How can people be desensitised when they have a daily dose?"

"We are not even in the same league as [America]," Dr Kennedy said.

"The availability [in the US] is nothing like that compared to what we have.

"You can buy them in Walmart over there.

"Can you imagine going to Big W to

buy a handgun?"

Dr Kennedy, a former police officer, said the police were doing a good job considering the pressure they were under.

"I think the progress they have made is quite good considering the pressure they have been under politically and from the media. These things take time," he said.

"They shouldn't be reactionary, that is not what our legislation is about."

Dr McDermott disagreed.

"Police need to target key suburbs, have a higher profile in those suburbs and have an immediate and unrelenting response," he said.



### **Straight shooters:**

Michael Kennedy (left) and Hugh McDermott offer expert opinions on how to police the shootings.



**The incidence of the offence "discharge firearm into premises" rose from 71 in 2010 to 100 in 2011 – a 41 per cent increase. On April 17, Strike Force Kinnarra was formed to investigate shootings involving bikie gangs, Hells Angels and Nomads.**