

# COLFO News Issue 4 – August 2017

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## **Hon Paula Bennett's Response to the Law & Order Select Committee Report**

Minister of Police Hon Paula Bennett released her response to the Law & Order Select Committee's report on 14 June 2017. The Minister is rejecting twelve of the recommendations outright, accepting seven and accepting one other with modification. We note that the Minister has also made two further recommendations from advice from her independent advisors. That Police have the power to suspend licences instead of only revoking and that Police are directed to consult with the firearms community.

**THIS IS THE MINISTER'S RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS, NOT NEW LAWS.**

New law can only be made by the passing of legislation by majority vote in Parliament. The Minister has indicated that an Arms (Firearm Prohibition Orders and Firearms Licences) Amendment Bill is on the horizon. Neither COLFO nor members of the Firearms Community Advisory Forum (FCAF) have yet seen an Amendment Bill. Do not be concerned as there will be plenty of opportunities for the public to make submissions on any future amendments. COLFO will keep you advised, will support you with information on how to be heard and will continue to advocate on behalf of all licensed firearms owners.

COLFO is pleased to see that Federated Farmers, Rural Women NZ, Act, NZ First, National, Labour and the vast majority of firearm owners mostly support the Government's response to the Law & Order Select Committee's recommendations. COLFO encourages all firearms users to seek out and read New Zealand's political parties' policies on firearms before voting in the election this September.

## **New Man in Charge of Arms Act Administration at Police National HQ**

Several COLFO Executive have individually met with Superintendent Mike McIlraith who was appointed in mid June to head the new Arms Act Service Delivery Group at Police National HQ. At these meetings our concerns over the current administration of the Arms Act by Police were conveyed. He was receptive to what we told him, acknowledged he was hearing it often and advised us that his first priority is to improve communications with the firearm community. He will initially start with getting information out through the FCAF representatives. Staff changes and new administrative procedures will take time to implement so he asks the community for patience as he goes about setting up structure and business.

## **Firearms Safety Training, MSC to continue for another 12 months**

COLFO is concerned to learn that delays at Police National HQ have meant that the future model for the Firearm Safety Training and Licence Testing Programme is on hold for another twelve months. Police have asked Mountain Safety Council (MSC) to continue to deliver the programme until 30 June 2018 using their dwindling army of volunteer instructors. MSC announced in 2016 that the future model for delivery of the programme did not include these volunteer instructors that they are now relying on. Many instructors have not been allowed to recruit new instructors for their areas, have had no updated training or moderation and some instructors have voiced outrage that the delay will total three years of little, if any, community instructor support. Firearms Safety Specialists NZ will continue to deliver the Whakatūpato Firearms Safety & Licensing Programme to rural and isolated communities for New Zealand Police. New Zealand Police warranted firearms safety instructors will continue to deliver instruction for Police directly. COLFO is thankful for the good will and experience of the dedicated community volunteers who have helped keep our firearms user's safe over the last 50 years and during this turbulent period.

## **Official Opening of Auckland Shooting Club**

Three of the COLFO Executive were in Auckland on 7 July 2017 to support the opening of the Auckland Shooting Club's (ASC) new range at Makarau which is north of Auckland. The Deputy Prime Minister Hon Paula Bennett officially opened the range and she recognised the initiative and hard work of the ASC committee. A lot of sweat has gone into making this a viable range now and for future generations. The ASC are concentrating on getting the Pistol ranges up and running first. The requirement for all pistol shooters to complete 12 visits at a pistol range every year makes it essential to have such a facility available in the Auckland region. The Minister also took the opportunity to thank the shooting community for sharing their thoughts and emails on firearms issues.

## **Firearms in Schools**

You may recall in June 2017 media reported our New Zealand Defence Force visited a school near their army base and showed the children there the tools of their trade including their firearms. The media published some photographs of grinning kids handling the Army weapons and published a story on the Defence Force visit.

In response to the article public debate on the matter hit main stream media questioning the Minister of Education Hon Nikki Kaye whether firearms should be allowed in schools. The Minister immediately tasked the Ministry of Education to develop a set of guidelines and consultation process for firearms in schools.

COLFO was pleased to be invited to attend a workshop on this in July 2017. The meeting was attended by a big section of the education and firearms communities as well as NZ Police and NZ Army. The school representatives indicated their need for simple yet clear guidelines to be developed. They require a common sense approach for activities to *CONTINUE* in a safe, legal and supportive environment.

Now that the initial meeting has been held and the scope of the work has been determined the Ministry of Education will draft some guidelines and send it back out to the sector for comment. A five week review period of the draft by the sector will be offered. The final guidelines for schools are expected to be published mid to late February 2018.

It was acknowledged by those attending the meeting that firearms are a piece of New Zealand's landscape. The reality is that there are a lot of firearms users in all our communities from all walks of life but more so from our rural environment. There are many school shooting teams, firearms safety education courses, school fundraising initiatives, history lessons, auctions, pest control and Defence Force visits to schools that simply must continue for the benefit of our communities. COLFO are pleased to be a part of this process and will work with the education sector in the hope that common sense will win the day.

## **COLFO Chair Discusses Firearms with Prime Minister**

COLFO Chair Paul Clark has had several informal meetings with both the Prime Minister Bill English and his Deputy Paula Bennett at which issues affecting the firearm community were discussed.

## **Sika Show**

COLFO will be present at the Sika Show in Taupo on 30 September & 1 October, come along and say hello.

## **Trade Me and Your Firearms Licence**

You may have read in the media that Trade Me is to be given access to the Police Firearm Licence database.

This is how the process will work says [Acting Superintendent Mike McIlraith, Officer in Charge | Arms Act Service Delivery Group | New Zealand Police](#):

[“Whenever someone asks a question, bids or buys a firearm on Trade Me they will need to enter their firearms licence number and the name on that licence. This new system will send a query to the Police database to check the licence is legitimate. The query sent from Trade Me will contain only the name and number of the submitted licence, and will be responded to with a simple “yes” or “no” answer from Police. If the licence has expired or the details aren't correct, the submitter will not be able to go further.”](#)

## National Party position on Firearms in New Zealand

New Zealand has a strong culture of recreational hunting, a vibrant and active sport shooting community and many farmers and professional hunters who work to keep our forests and farms pest free, and who hunt to feed their families and friends.


National believes that semi-automatic firearms are a legitimate tool for pest control and we won't be proposing a blanket ban on them.

However we take the responsibility of protecting the public from gun crime very seriously and believe in the need for restrictions on the most dangerous firearms and other weapons.

National believes the vast majority of licenced firearms owners take care to keep their firearms safe and to stay within the law. We value the relationship with the firearms community as important partners in the fight against illegal firearms and criminal activity.

We will:

- Improve the firearms licencing regime by upgrading Police systems and modernising permitting and import processes.
- Ensure firearms activity is appropriately funded and that fees for applications and permits are set on a cost-recovery basis and do not subsidise non-firearms related Police activities.
- Work with the firearms community towards a fit-for-purpose legislative framework that gives as much clarity as possible, while being able to deal with technological changes and new parts and products.
- Aggressively pursue illegal firearms and target criminals wishing to obtain firearms to commit crimes, including bringing in Firearms Prohibition Orders for patched gang members with serious offending histories.
- Make it clear that patched gang members and prospects will not be considered 'fit and proper' people to hold licences
- Continue to restrict access to the most dangerous firearms in the interests of public safety – but we will ensure any changes to these restrictions will be consulted and carefully considered
- Change the Arms Act to give Police a new power to suspend a licence. We will also introduce a 12-month stand-down after a licence is revoked.
- Direct Police to first consult with the firearms community before they propose any changes to policy. The Minister of Police will have the final sign off.
- Introduce new checks to ensure firearms brought in on visitors permit are exported or transferred legally
- Work with the legal firearms owners to prevent them becoming targets of criminals seeking firearms



Paula Bennett, MP

*The above was first published in 25 August 2017. Ed*