



VERBAL SUBMISSION

To

The Law and Order Select Committee
Regarding

The Arms (Military Style Semi-
automatic Firearms and Import
Controls) Amendment Bill

The New Zealand Council of Licensed Firearms
Owners Inc (COLFO)

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NZ COUNCIL OF LICENSED FIREARMS OWNERS INC

The New Zealand Council of Licensed Firearms Owners Inc (COLFO) was formed in 1996 by a meeting of the majority of New Zealand's major firearms user organizations.

The organization was formed for the following reasons:

- To represent the collective interests of members through the preservation of the rights and privileges of licensed firearms users and collectors, promote responsible gun ownership and act as a central reference point for government, police and the media;
- To be recognized as the collective organization whose views and opinions on firearms legislation and related matters are considered representative, authoritative and responsible;
- To affiliate firearms user groups and firearms related organizations which are supportive of the first objective and which collectively seek to advance that objective;
- To undertake such actions, research and inquiries that are necessary to achieve the first objective;
- To prepare and disseminate any information that would enhance the well being, rights and obligations of members.

CURRENT: (COLFO)

COLFO is the largest collective representation of firearms users in New Zealand.

Our membership primarily consists of the individual members of the following national associations.

- The New Zealand National Rifle Association Inc
- The New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association Inc
- Pistol New Zealand
- The New Zealand Black Powder Shooters Federation Inc
- The New Zealand Antique and Historical Arms Association Inc
- International Military Arms Society Inc
- New Zealand Service Rifle Association Inc
- Sporting Shooters Association to New Zealand Inc

We are recognised as an NGO in Roster Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. In that capacity we nominated and support a serving Police Officer in bringing consistent firearms laws to the United Nations by contributing to the Coordinating Action on Small Arms, or CASA Program.

COLFO believes the foremost reasons for the success of New Zealand's Firearms legislation are:

1. Clear and easy to understand legislation focused on safety;
2. Licensing individual firearms users - fit and proper person, fit and proper purpose;
3. Cooperation between firearms users with the licensing authority, New Zealand Police.

The current Board have a variety of skills and background. There are Company Directors, a CEO of a major National Shooting Organisation, a Financial Adviser, Auctioneer, Information Technology Consultant, Logistic Consultant, a Senior Medical Officer with a Regional Health Board, a Chemist, Firearms safety Officer and Firearms Retailer.

One third of them have either a background in either Military or Police.

They also have contributed with Voluntary services to such organisations as Victim Support, Air Training Corp, Army Reserves, International Standards Organisation, Community Alcohol and Drug Service as well as a number of Firearms related group. The Board members are volunteers giving many hours of time and expertise tot her benefit of their sport and interests.

Their interests in Firearms vary from Collectors to Competitor to Hunters, many have enjoyed a range of competitions and sports over the years. Most, if not all, have used airguns in either a competition or a training capacity.

COLFO was established as a resource to Firearms, group, Police and Government to access specialist firearms knowledge and ensure we continue to develop the best firearms laws in the world. One of my colleagues commented that the scandinavian approach to legislation is to take an issue the interested parties, allow them the time to consider all the alternatives and negotiate and agreed way forward, when this is found it is delivered to Government made into law then passed back to the interested groups who are directed the make it work.

This seems a logical approach because while an adviser can research a subject or issue the one who know the subtly of the issue best is the specialist who encounters it on a regular basis. This is then gets depth when a n umber of specialist bring their knowledge to solve a problem with the least amount of unintended consequence.

General Observations of the Bills' ability to achieve objectives

A. In regard to Military Style Semi Automatic Firearms, (MSSA) - "...to bring clarity to the definition of MSSAs so that Police can correctly identify firearms that should be categorised as MSSAs...", "...also a need to clarify the magazine capacity that qualifies as a MSSA."(RIS)

We understand this change is as a result of interpretation of existing laws not as a result of new risks being considered or crimes committed. The issues raised are not new and were referred to in the 1992 amendment as well as the Thorpe report.

1. COLFO believes any change to the legislation should be restricted to defining clearly what the 1992 parliament intended and or what this committee and this parliament now intends to be the meaning of 'Free-standing Military Pattern Pistol Grip' ie, easy to understand legislation.
2. COLFO believes it would be more practical and easier to understand if Sporting Semi automatics were limited to 10 Rounds or less and Military Semi Automatics were increase to more than 10 rounds.

B. In regard to airguns that look like real pistols – "...to reduce the risk to public safety associated with the import of airguns that replicate pistols, MSSAs and restricted weapons.", and "...to align the treatment of all airguns used in milsim sports with the treatment of other airguns in the Arms Act to better reflect their reduced ability to cause harm."(RIS)

While we understand the concern with regard to Police callouts for incidents involving airguns we do not believe the amendment offered will achieve the objective in relation to reducing the risk to public safety.

1. COLFO is concerned that no evidence of the operational justification offered for the amendment other than anecdotal that is of such a small number that could be considered within the margin for error for the specified airguns in relation to the total number of airguns in circulation. It is also worth noting that while there are around 1000 reported violent crimes each week valuable time and resources have been used to justify changes based on an estimated 1 non violent call out each week where there in fact may have been no crime committed.
2. COLFO is concerned that the full impact of this these regulations have not been considered in preparation, we have estimated the financial impact in our submission.
3. COLFO is concerned that the objectives of the amendment will not be met by the suggested changes, we have outline why in our submission.

You will see on the last page of our submission there COLFO's Suggestions to achieve the Bill's Objectives, some of which support the amendment others reject the amendment and then others suggest another course of action.

COLFO suggests:

1. Define Military Style Semi-automatic Firearms in the positive form
2. Define Sporting Semi-automatic Firearms.
3. Limit Centre fire sporting semi-automatic magazine capacity to 10 rounds in the same way as rim fire firearms are defined.
4. Define a military pattern free-standing pistol grip in regulation or remove the definition of that feature if it reduces clarity.

We believe the majority of the issue relates to one of understanding the existing laws in relation to safety and the correct supervision of minors in their use of airguns.

COLFO suggests:

1. Develop an Education Program to inform the General Public of the 'Rules' of both Safety and Law that pertain to possession and use of air guns, as well as the seven basic rules of firearms safety. This could include a one page point of sale acknowledgement of the laws relating to airgun use which retailers requires purchasers to acknowledge their own responsibilities at the time of purchase.
2. Require that a purchaser of an airgun provide a copy of a form of identification that includes a photo of the purchaser.
3. Develop an airgun safety course specifically for airgun users, similar to the elective course on firearms safety offered in Schools now.

Our greatest concern is that the amendment was developed without robust discussion amongst firearms interest groups.

In our opinion New Zealand has the most effective Firearms laws in the world because these laws have been developed by coordinating the opinion of all interested parties to create a framework that recognizes compliant and law abiding behaviour and penalized non-complaint behaviour.

When an individual proves they are "fit and proper" in attitude and competence with firearms they are given access to a greater range and complexity of firearms. Those that are not "fit and proper" are not given the same access.

I will finish with a request and a quote from Ann Widdecombe, formerly a Minister of the House of Commons, now a Columnist for the International Express. This was in an article she wrote June the 15th 2010 after the Cumbria murders. "The gun laws introduced after Dunblane did nothing to control the shooting frenzies of the insane but did damage Britain's ability to compete in lawful international shooting contests."

Please pause to consider the unintended consequences on law abiding firearms users and engage the all interested parties in a more robust impact assessment to determine the best course of action to achieve the objectives.