

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 & Licencing 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.