

COLFO News Issue 2 – April 2018

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Will Registration work in New Zealand?

With the recent tragedy in the United States, a certain media outlet has been pushing the agenda of registration of all firearms. As we know, this was abandoned in New Zealand in 1983, but has bubbled to the surface again. So why are we, in COLFO, so much against it?

Registration will not prevent the criminal misuse of firearms.

It is absurd to suggest that criminals will register their firearms. That being the case, then it follows that only the law abiding “fit and proper” will do so. A thin argument can be made that if a person’s firearms licence is revoked (say because of a protection order) then it will enable the police to seize ALL their firearms. This assumes that the registry is accurate (and you can’t assume that) and also that the person has no other means of getting a firearm. Given how the Police routinely talk about how they are finding firearms with drug dealers, it is pretty safe to conclude that a person bent on harm is going to get a firearm, as a recent tragic matter in Invercargill has shown.

Registration will not prevent terrorist or mass shooting incidents.

For registration to prevent a mass shooting all the following must happen before the event:

- 1/ The individual must signal their desire to do harm in some way;
- 2/ Law enforcement must act on the threat;
- 3/ The registry must be accurate;
- 4/ The individual somehow cannot access other weapons; and
- 5/ The individual must be detained in some way.

We consider this series of events to be unlikely.

Registration costs money that should be used elsewhere.

Registration is likely to be very expensive and even with “user pays” (and we note that if the price is too high, cost will act as a disincentive to register) it will use Police money and time to enforce. This is money and time that should be spent on investigating the theft of firearms, the illegal importation of firearms or those who are “telegraphing” a risk to themselves or others. It’s not hard to think of a situation where police time is spent chasing registration that simply should be used elsewhere.

The Registry must be 100% accurate or be pointless.

If the registry is not accurate, then it achieves nothing. Anyone with endorsed firearms will have had the experience of an inspection and firearms you no longer own coming up. Given the current shambolic state of import licences we can safely assume that there is no possibility of an accurate record.

The Police have no sensible mechanism to ensure compliance.

Short of randomly visiting FAL holder’s houses without warrant and demanding to see their firearms, it is hard to see how the police can enforce registration. Moreover, that would mean that you, as a FAL holder would have less rights than a person who the police suspect of a crime who do need a search warrant.

Registration always leads to confiscation. Always.

Once firearms are registered, and if there is a knee jerk reaction (which there always is) then the FAL is the low hanging fruit for political gain. COLFO is in little doubt that firearms of certain types would be “banned” and confiscated with or without compensation. Only the law abiding would suffer, and huge numbers of firearms would join the existing “grey” pool in this country.

A Canadian Professor who has studied the failure of the Canadian registry said:

*“The evidence shows that the long-gun registry has not been effective in reducing criminal violence. Nor is the Canadian experience unique. **No international study of firearm laws by criminologists or economists has found support for the claim that restricting access to firearms by civilians reduces criminal violence.** And so ending the long gun registry is consistent with the basic principles of good fiscal management. Arguably any government program that fails to achieve its objectives should be shut down”.*

So how do you help us prevent this? You need to encourage anyone who does not know about the shooting sports to try. They may not take it up as a hobby, but they may be more sympathetic to our passion for the sports. You need to ensure your security is adequate. Have a good hard look at how you store your firearms to make it harder for any thief, and that can be as simple as changing how you store the bolts. Keep a record of all of your firearms: Make, Model, Serial No and Calibre. Lastly, look out for each other. If you or someone you know has access to firearms and may be having a tough time, ensure they get some help. If we all did these things we will continue to enjoy our sport for generations to come.

Police reveal the shape of future licence testing

In the last issue we posed some questions concerning the implementation of the new process, this was published before Police had been given time to respond. We apologise if this gave the impression that Police were not responding to our questions, which was certainly not the case. Here are the answers to our questions:

COLFO's questions, Police answers in Italics:

- **Does the applicant have to pay the licensing application fee before sitting the theory and practical courses?**

Each year there is somewhere between 10,000 and 11,000 first time firearms licence applicants. From 1 July members of the public that wish to obtain a firearms licence will have to commence the application process, including paying the application fee, before being able to undertake either the theory or practical training.

- **Is the application fee going to change from \$126.50 to something more substantial?**

Police are governed by the fee schedule set out in the Regulations and the current licensing fee is \$126.50.

- **What qualifications does the writer/s of the online and practical courses have in firearms safety?**

The development of the new training has been undertaken by suitably experienced and qualified police trainers and training developers

- **Will there be consultation?**

A sub-group of FCAF has been set up to review the Arms Code re-write. In addition, this group have also been asked to provide Police with a draft of what the two hour practical session should contain. Going forward all FCAF members will be provided with relevant material to provide feedback.

- **Is there any ongoing safety education for those renewing their licences?**

Further training at point of licence renewal is not something that we do now and is not something that we are looking at.

- **What provision will be made for those who cannot use web based learning?**

There is the ability to print the Arms Code and learn from that. FCAF have also asked that we consider making printed copies of the Arms Code available and we are presently investigating our options here.

From 1 July first time firearms licence applicants will be undertaking both theory and practical training requirements. From all the discussions Police have had with firearms community users this approach has been well received as it is seen as an enhancement to firearms safety. We look forward to working with the community to deliver this programme across New Zealand.

COLFO reminds readers that the 2017 Arms Code was withdrawn by Police after shooters pointed out that it contained errors.

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