

Government response to firearms select committee report

Police Minister Paula Bennett has today responded to the Law and Order Select Committee report on issues relating to the illegal possession of firearms.

The Select Committee's terms of reference were to focus on how widespread firearms possession is amongst criminals – including gangs, how those people who don't have a firearms licence come into possession of firearms and what changes, if any, would restrict the flow of firearms to criminals, gangs and people who don't hold a licence.

"The committee made 20 recommendations. After careful consideration I've accepted seven, rejected 12, and recommended one proceed with changes," Mrs Bennett says.

"We needed to strike the right balance between public safety and the rights of legal firearms owners. Although the report was well intended, I believe many of the recommendations would not decrease the flow of firearms to criminals and gangs but would unduly impact on legally licenced firearms users.

"I appointed two independent firearms experts to advise me. I've listened to their advice, advice from Police, read the recommendations from the select committee and I've taken on board feedback from the public.

"After careful consideration I have added two more recommendations to my response. One proposes the introduction of the power to suspend licences pending decision on revocation. This will give Police an alternative to cancelling a licence, for example in situations where someone has been charged with family violence, or where there are security issues that need to be resolved.

"I'm also proposing a Ministerial direction to the Police to require consultation with the firearms community when considering changes to the Arms Act and the interpretation of it.

"Nobody wants firearms getting into the hands of violent gang members but we also don't want over the top rules and restrictions to be placed on hunters and shooters who manage their firearms responsibly."

"My response to the report has been tabled in Parliament. We will now begin a policy process around the recommendations we are progressing which will involve consultation, looking at costs and any regulatory impacts before coming back to Cabinet for approval later this year," Mrs Bennett says.

Summary of the Government Response

Recommendation Number	Summarised Recommendation	Government Response Summarised
Sale and supply of firearms and ammunition		
1	A firearms licence required to possess ammunition	Reject
2	A dealer's licence required to sell ammunition	Reject
3	Dealers required to keep records of ammunition sales	Reject
4	Registration process for websites facilitating trading in firearms, parts, or ammunition	Amend recommendation - Do not introduce registration but clarify 'mail order' process applies to online sales in Arms Amendment Bill
5	Permit to procure extended to cover all sales or transfers of firearms (i.e. include A category firearms)	Reject - but improve efficiency in current licensing and permitting processes.

Definition of military-style semi-automatics		
6	Investigate the creation of a category of restricted semi-automatic rifle and shotgun	Reject
Effectiveness of licensing, training, and registering firearms		
7	Implement firearm prohibition orders	Accept - include in the Arms (Firearm Prohibition Orders and Firearms Licences) Amendment Bill
8	Codify the 'fit and proper' criteria in the Arms Act	Reject
9	Implement a stand-down period after licence revocation	Accept - include a 12 month stand -own period in the Arms (Firearm Prohibition Orders and Firearms Licences) Amendment Bill
10	Clarify that gang members or prospects must not be considered 'fit and proper' to possess firearms	Accept - include in the Arms (Firearm Prohibition Orders and Firearms Licences) Amendment Bill
11	Require Police to record serial numbers of all firearms upon renewal of licence or inspection of premises	Reject – voluntary process to continue
Criminal offending with firearms		
12	Review the penalties in the Arms Act	Accept - progress in Arms Amendment Bill
13	Treat dealer offending as aggravated at sentencing	Reject
14	Determine appropriate security standards for A category licences	Accept - Police/firearms community advisory forum already commenced this process
15	Secure storage confirmed before licence or endorsement received	Reject
16	Allow Police to enter premises to inspect security of A category firearms	Reject
17	Failure to comply with storage regulations to result in mandatory revocation	Reject - but note new suspension of licence
Reducing the number of grey firearms		
18	Clarify and publicise the extent of amnesty provisions in the Arms Act 1983	Accept - to progress in Arms Amendment Bill
19	Police publicise amnesty provisions	Reject
20	Check that firearms brought in on visitors permit are exported or transferred legally	Accept (administrative)
Additional Government Recommendations		
1	Provide the power to suspend licences	Include in the Arms (Firearm Prohibition Orders and Firearms Licences) Amendment Bill
2	Police to improve its consultative processes with the firearms community	Propose to give a Ministerial Directive to this end