

SSANZ News May June 2017

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Volunteering for Political Parties

With a General Election on 23 September now is a good time for all shooters to get involved with political parties in order to promote our cause. One practical way you can do this is by volunteering your time to assist with such things as putting up billboards or delivering party brochures.

As an example of this SSANZ Northland has for the past 18 years assisted the Whangarei MP in erecting election billboards and as a result established a good relationship with the local MP. This proved fruitful recently when two SSANZ committee members were invited to a party function at which Police Minister Paula Bennett was a guest, this allowed us to discuss a couple of topical issues with the minister.

SSANZ Brief Meeting with Police Minister Paula Bennett

SSANZ pointed out to the minister the concern held by many shooters that the Select Committee Inquiry into illegal possess of firearms would recommend new restrictions that only affect licensed firearm owners. The minister responded by saying that regardless of what recommendations the Select Committee make the National government is only interested in measures that target criminals and gangs. Although she did feel it was important that lawful firearm owners make every effort to keep their firearms secure.

We also told the minister about the frustration that many firearm owners felt in relation to administration of the Arms Act, particularly long delays in issuing permits and licences, she was not aware of this and offered to look into it.

Gun Club banned police training from their range.

SSANZ is not surprised by the action of a Wairarapa shooting club to ban police from using its range for training. It is a sad reflection on the state of trust and confidence that currently exists between firearm owners and police firearms administration.

There is a growing frustration among many shooters over the police administration of the Arms Act, which has resulted in long delays to permits and licence applications. Added to this police have put in place a number of policy changes in relation to firearms without adequate consultation with the firearm owning sector.

At the same time firearm owners are concerned over calls by the Police Association for tougher gun laws that will only impact licensed firearm owners and do nothing to curb the criminal use of firearms.

The current arms legislation is working well, evidenced by a steady decline in firearm homicide and unintentional shootings over the past several decades. What is needed now is firm action to be taken by the police and justice system against those who chose to steal firearms and use them to further their criminal activities.

Meanwhile the police management should endeavour to rebuild the formerly good relationship with the sport shooting community.

Why have shooters trust and confidence in police got so bad?

For many years the Licensing and Vetting office at Police National HQ was lead by Inspector Joe Green, and while not all decisions made by his office pleased everyone there was respect and a good relationship with the firearm community. When Joe Green was moved to other police work the post was filled by a number of temporary incumbents and there appears to have been other staff changes dealing with firearms administration. Thus following a long period of stability and consistency of firearm administration there is now a period of new people trying to stamp their brand on the job.

So why have so many shooters become frustrated and annoyed with Police Management:

- First there was the semi auto thumbhole stock debacle.
- Followed by the MSSA pistol grip definition nonsense.
- Then the Mountain Safety Council sacked the two firearm program managers and followed this with a plan to do away with all the volunteer firearm safety instructors, all according to MSC supported by police managers. When many instructors resigned from MSC in protest at this action some police districts refused to work with those volunteers who were willing to continue delivering the program.
- The Firearms Community Advisory Forum set up after the last Arms Amendment Bill has been seen by many as a less than genuine exchange of ideas and views.
- Many firearm owners and dealers have experienced long delays in permits to import, sometimes as long as 9 months. Delays have also occurred to licence applications and renewals.
- Police have made a number of policy decisions without fair consultation with the firearm community these include: refusal to grant retrospective import permits, certification of existing gun safes, changing the way MSSAs with retractable stocks are measured, special reasons required to import a .338 - .50 calibre bolt action rifle and more.

Added to the above the Police Association is calling for the registration of all firearms and putting the blame for illegally held firearm in the hands of criminals on the lawful licensed owners, without suggesting any ways to combat the criminals.

Legal Action Pending

The **New Zealand Licenced Firearms Dealers (NZLFD) Trust** has instructed **Barrister Nicholas Taylor** to be preparing for a Judicial Review proceeding (pursuant to the Judicature Act 1908) to be filed in June of this year against the Commissioner of Police. The NZLFD Trust is a registered legal entity for the purposes of this action. It has now received for legal services, from a total of **28 licensed firearms dealers, organisations and individuals** in New Zealand, a total of approximately \$30,000, the trusts target is \$50,000. As with any litigation that is commenced, it is critical to have enough funds to pay for legal costs, court fees, witness expenses, but in addition, to have sufficient available if the decision goes against you to pay for costs if awarded. Obviously if successful, then an award of costs will be folded back into the Trust for potential action for another time, or appeals if appropriate. The Trust seeks Nicholas Taylors' advice and guidance on the matters that **could benefit all New Zealand licensed firearms holders**.

The current issues that the Trust is asking Nicholas to seek clarification on, by way of declarations from the court, are the following Police policies lawful or ultra vires their authority under the Arms Act 1983 or Arms Regulation 1992?

1. Police policy in regards to "Safes and Security."
2. Police policy in regards to the measurement of MSSA firearms.
3. Police policy in regards to the imposition of conditions on the importation of firearms.
4. Police policy in regards to the mail order purchase form.

Nicholas has begun to draft and correlate information, affidavits and documentary evidence to support each of the above mentioned issues for the June (target) action to commence. If you have had any issues or have documents in support of any of these issues please contact Nicholas by e-mail. Nicholas Taylor: n.taylor@civicchambers.co.nz

If you support this legal action and would like to make a donation you can do so by direct credit to the trust fund: Account number: **06 0193 0122740 04**, using reference: **16110001 – NZLFD – your name**.

SSANZ, COLFO and Pistol NZ have already made substantial contributions to this trust fund, it is up to the rest of us to see that it reaches its target.