

SSANZ News January February 2018

www.sportingshooters.nz SSANZ, PO Box 275, Whangarei 0140



Follow us on Facebook

A Whole New Ball Game

With a new government sworn in all that has gone on in the past year is now up in the air again. At the time of writing we have yet to see, whether the recommendation of the Select Committee Inquiry into illegal firearms that were rejected by Paula Bennett will be back on the agenda now that Stuart Nash, one of the authors of those recommendations, is Police Minister. Added to that with the Greens now forming part of the Labour lead government will there be more restrictions placed on lawful firearm owners or will NZ First live up to their pre election promises and curb the Green excess?

Meanwhile a number of firearm advocacy groups are working together to plan future strategies for dealing whatever new challenges eventuate in 2018.

SSANZ has provided every MP with a simple guide as to what it takes to lawfully own a firearm in New Zealand.

Arms Act Service Delivery Review

On Monday evening 16 October Superintendent Mike McIlraith joined the SSANZ committee for just over an hour to talk about the new Arms Act Service Delivery project that he is heading. He told us that the aim is to bring administration of the Arms Act up to date, make it fit for purpose, improve efficiency and to meet the expectations of customers in terms of delivery times. For example the target delivery for licence renewals is 30 days, currently it is taking an average of 42 with the expectation that this will improve by next year.

With the exception of A category firearms, which will be handled by District Arms Officers, all permits for Endorsed firearms are being handled by staff in Wellington, with the intention of making this an online service and phasing out a paper based system. Some new staff members are being recruited and once training is completed will lead to more consistency across the country. Some improvements will require additional funding above that already allocated however it is anticipated that all improvement measure will be in place by mid 2019.

Security requirements are currently under review and it is intended to complete in December 2017. Police are taking a pragmatic approach to ensure that the safety of young children and anyone else that shouldn't have access to firearms is safe and the prevention of opportunist theft, is maintained at a reasonable cost commensurate with the number and type of firearms held.

Mike impressed on us the need for all firearm owners to record make, model and serial numbers of their firearms. Currently for the vast majority of firearms reported lost or stolen the owner cannot provide this basic information therefore if later seized by police there is little opportunity to reunite them with their owner.

Licensed Firearm Owners Are Not the Problem But....

Figures provided by Police in November show that of the most recent 100 cases involving the use of a firearm in an assault, robbery or homicide only one perpetrator was a firearm licence holder at the time of the offence. In the same 100 cases an MSSA was used in only two cases. Notwithstanding these encouraging figures an inquiry by the Independent Police Complaints Authority to investigate a recent spate of Police shootings has, we understand, been widened to focus on whether enough is being done to control the availability of guns rather than how police are using them. Remember this is what lead to the Thorpe Report 20 years ago and the subsequent Arms Amendment Bill. SSANZ thanks Kiwi Gun Blog who shared this information with us.

New Tougher Firearm Security Requirements

While SSANZ would encourage all firearm owners to keep their firearms secure from being accessed by young children, opportunist thieves and any other person not authorised to have access, we recognise that no level of security will prevent a determined robber given time and opportunity from relieving us of our treasured possessions.

It is with some concern that in mid November police released two draft documents detailing new security requirements for public consultation, with only two weeks allowed for people to respond. Further these documents appear to be an attempt to modify the Arms Act and Regulations by “policy”.

Points of note for A cat firearms are, a phasing out of gun racks and wooden cabinets, with only steel cabinets being acceptable, and a stricter regime for semi autos compared to other A Cat firearms (steel cabinets) to take effect immediately.

For Endorsed firearms the requirement largely remain the same, although no detailed specification is provided for steel cabinets/safes or strong rooms. As written the document indicates that steel cabinets and safes must be contained within a room or building of “stout construction” to a specified standard again this is in conflict with the current Regulations.

SSANZ has made submissions on both documents, objecting to changes to Regulations by policy, pointing out a certain number of anomalies and objecting to a number of impractical requirements in each document.

Firearms Seized and Recovered Compared to Stolen Firearms (figures provided by NZ Police November 2017)

| Calendar Year | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | Total |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Seized Firearms | 835 | 907 | 974 | 950 | 1,242 | 866 | 5,774 |
| Firearms recorded stolen | 428 | 507 | 667 | 741 | 830 | 527 | 3,700 |
| Firearms recorded stolen in a residential burglary | 326 | 409 | 555 | 561 | 703 | 449 | 2,370 |

Despite claims to the contrary made by some in the media, what these figures show is that guns in the hands of criminals and those not “fit and proper” to own them have NOT increased in any significant way over the past 6 years. Similarly while 75-85% of stolen firearms are taken in residential burglaries, the numbers entering the criminal pool are also NOT increasing significantly. In fact over the past 6 years Police are to be congratulated for having removed 2,074 guns from the black and grey market. It is perhaps worthy of note that while stolen guns represent only 0.04 % of the total national gun pool, stolen vehicles, often used in crime and police pursuits ending in death, at 20,000 per year equate to 0.5 % of the national vehicle stock.

With very few unintentional shootings and firearms only representing 1.4% of all violent crime and only 10% of all homicides, we can be comforted that New Zealand gun control laws are working well and are still fit for purpose.

Calls from the likes of Philip Alpers (yes he is sticking his oar in again) and professor Gillespie for all firearms to be registered are clearly unwarranted. However with around 600 guns stolen each year we must also take the security of our firearms seriously and do all we reasonably can to keep them safe.

SSANZ Annual General Meeting

This will be held at Forum North, Rust Avenue, Whangarei, at 2.00 pm on Saturday 24 February 2018. All members are encouraged to attend if able to do so.