

SSANZ News March & April 2019

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Health and Safety

All shooters will recognize the need for safety rules when handling firearms, which is why we have a firearms safety test as part of the process for gaining a firearms licence. It is also why club ranges have safety rules and gun shows have precautions in place to prevent misuse in the presence of the general public.

Now it seems that people in a position of authority are using Health and Safety as a reason to bring about the closure of a long established gun show, simply because they don't appreciate the service gun shows provide to the community, as the next item will explain.

Annual Whangarei Gun Show Killed Off by Council Staffers

After holding eighteen previous gun shows, 16 of them at council administered Forum North, and all without incident, the Northland Branch of Sporting Shooters Association of New Zealand have effectively been told they are no longer welcome to use the council exhibition hall for their event by the venue managers.

Branch Secretary Phil Cregeen said - Having made our booking for 2019 we were advised in October that – “there are to be no guns or ammunition on site at Forum North going forward.” – Which makes a gun show pointless. When we queried this decision with the Mayor we were told that “a Health and Safety review was underway for our gun show.”

The result of the Health and Safety review was that council staff imposed a number of additional conditions on our use of the hall which include: No ammunition sales, No firearms or ammunition to be brought into the show by visitors, all visitors to pass through a metal detector and have any bags searched, no return to the show after leaving, Council contracted Security Staff to be on site throughout. The manager has also removed the organisers discounted rate for a community group to hire the hall, failing to recognise the benefits provided to the community in allowing local shooting clubs to promote their activities and for Northland shooters to buy and sell their firearms and associated gear in a safe controlled environment, as well as educating the public on firearm safety matters. To the best of our knowledge no council manager has ever visited one of our shows to see for themselves what goes on and no consultation was held with us the organisers.

The effect of these new conditions, while greatly inconveniencing both vendors and up to 700 visitors is to quadruple the operating cost of the show making it financially impossible for a small not for profit community organisation to exhibit and educate. The Council have lost sight of the fact that most exhibitors and vendors are private individuals lawfully trading their sporting and collectable goods in the same way as a community Antiques & Collectables Fair.

From the conditions imposed it would seem that Council Managers have been spooked by recent tragic shooting incidents in the USA, and now wish to cover themselves, just in case it should happen here. What they fail to realise is that New Zealand has a strict “fit and proper” person firearms regime vastly superior to and absolutely incomparable to the USA. Gun shows in New Zealand are approved by police and all sensible precautions taken by organisers to ensure public safety. The question has to be asked - will similar security conditions be applied to all future events at WDC venues and if not why not?

The Whangarei Gun show will go ahead on 8 June at Barge Showground Event Centre, hosted by Northland Branch NZAHAA and sponsored by SSANZ.

The Problem of Age

In case you hadn't noticed, for many shooting clubs the average age of members is getting older, and there is a tendency for the same officers and committee members to stay in post year after year. While this may be good for a stable club and make life easy for the members the problem arises when the oldies become too frail to carry on or finally pop their clogs. When this happens the club is likely to fold through lack of people experienced in club management.

Younger shooters with energy and new ideas need to step up and take on responsibility for our sport and its survival in all its aspects, just as we need to attract young people to take up shooting if the sport is to survive.

Police Announce Changes to Licence Safety Testing

From 1 March 2019, the Firearms Safety Course will be a **three and a half** hour session delivered by firearms instructors from the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council at venues across the country.

The course will consist of two parts

- Firearms theory test (30 multiple choice questions) - to confirm understanding of the Arms Code and firearms safety practices and legislation requirements.
- Firearms practical training session – covers hands-on safe-handling of common firearms types.
- Those who fail the test will get a second attempt after the practical training.

We understand the number of testing/training locations is being increased to 66. While shooters may think this appears a bit like a return to the old style of safety lectures, we should all embrace the new concept and encourage new shooters to take the course in the interest of the future of our sport.

How conscientious are you about security?

Police advise that when they investigate burglaries involving firearms it is too often determined that the firearm was not secured as required by regulations at the time of the theft. So please always secure your guns when not actually in use.

Get Real Me

If you wish to take advantage of the digital application process for Firearm Licences and the various permits that is being rolled out later this year you will need to be signed up to Real Me. Real Me is a government sponsored identity system that verifies who you say you are when dealing with agencies on line. Find out more here:

<https://www.govt.nz/browse/passports-citizenship-and-identity/proving-and-protecting-your-identity/what-is-realme/> .

Fees likely to rise soon

With the Firearm Licence fees only meeting about half of the Police budget for Arms Act administration it is predicted that these will be increased and charges made for other services, such as permits. Before this can be implemented the proposed new regulations must be approved by Cabinet before being put up for public consultation, then reassessed in light of feedback before gaining final government approval. Be prepared to have your say when the time comes.