

SSANZ News May & June 2019

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He was not one of us

While the monster that gunned down innocent worshipers in Christchurch on the 15 March held a firearm licence **he was not one of us**. He was a foreign national who by his own admission came to New Zealand with the express intention of preparing for and planning a terror attack. He chose to carry out his attack in New Zealand because this country was not prepared and we were an easy target. He chose to use firearms in order to create the maximum shock and division within our society. In all these things he has been successful.

By rushing through legislation, supposedly to prevent another attack, the government is performing to his agenda.

Without first considering these basic questions it is likely that the new laws will also have loopholes that can be exploited or have serious unintended consequences.

- Was correct process followed in granting the Monster a Licence?
- What changes are needed in the Arms Act to make it harder for a foreign national to gain a licence?
- Why was it possible for him to wilfully convert an A-category firearm into an MSSA by the procedure of illegally inserting a magazine of capacity greater than 7 cartridges?

Banning Semi Automatics

Within days of the Christchurch terrorist attack the Prime Minister announced that semi-automatic firearms would be banned and legislation would be rushed through under urgency to achieve this. Within a day of this an Order in Council had created a regulation making centre fire A category semi auto rifles and shotguns with detachable magazines into MSSAs and therefore illegal, requiring them to be first registered and then surrendered to Police.

The result of this hasty action without first preparing the legislation to support it left affected firearm owners, confused, bewildered and angry. Even police seemed unable to answer simple questions about exactly which guns were affected.

All major parties, with the exception of ACT indicated their support for such a ban, and the following legislation passed through parliament to become law on the 12 April.

SSANZ working closely with COLFO campaigned for the following:

- Adequate time to debate the issues and provide submissions to Parliament.
- Consultation with the Firearm community in drafting Bills.
- Adequate compensation for those whose property is confiscated.
- Adequate time for owners to comply with the surrender of their firearms.

The Devil is in the Detail

The **Arms (Prohibited Firearms, Magazines, and Parts) Amendment Bill** was introduced to Parliament on 2 April and was passed to the Finance and Expenditure Select Committee for consideration. Submissions were received over just two days and the Bill passed into law on 12 April.

SSANZ encouraged all its members to make submissions in the short period available. We extend our thanks to all those who made the time to do so.

Even in the short time frame allowed to study the Bill, a number of serious issues were identified, that if not changed would lead to poor outcomes for many more firearm owners than those targeted by banning semi autos. These included historic sporting semi auto shotguns, lever and pump action rifles and shotguns with fixed tubular magazines, bolt action target rifle that employ AR15 components to name a few. All of this indicative of rushed drafting by Police to meet the political agenda of the government.

SSANZ along with many other submitters highlighted these deficiencies, sadly our concerns were ignored.

More Hardship to Come

The government has already indicated that a further arms Bill will follow and become law before the end of the year. As indicated in a Police impact statement this could include the following:

- Registration of all firearms –making it easy to confiscate them later.
- Firearm sales only through a dealer – making second hand guns more expensive.
- Banning sales through websites - making it harder to buy and sell guns.
- Stricter vetting of Licence applicants.
- Tougher security for firearm storage.
- Tougher penalties for offences.

We Must Get Back to Normality

Licensed firearm owners were not to blame for the tragedy of 15 March, but you could be forgiven for thinking otherwise by the amount of vilification that has been heaped on the shooting community by media and social media in recent weeks.

Many shooting club events and gun shows have been cancelled, at first out of a sign of respect to the fallen and latterly out of fear of retaliation by extreme anti gun protesters, or confusion over what will be allowed to be sold and who by.

Of course we must take all reasonable precautions to ensure our own and public safety, but as a community of law abiding people we must not be cowed by those who chose to demonise us, that is not our New Zealand. We must insist that normality returns soon and do this by supporting the activities of our local clubs and organisations that promote our sport. Guns are normal in New Zealand and part of our culture.