

## Summary of the Firearms Community Advisory Forum Meeting: Thursday 18 August 2016

### 1. THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING WERE CONFIRMED

### 2. ACTION POINTS FROM LAST MEETING

- a) **WILDLIFE (POWERS) AMENDMENT BILL:** The Select Committee is currently considering this Bill. The proposed amendments enhance rangers' ability to detect and investigate offences against the Wildlife Act. No consequential amendment to the Arms Act required. Rangers already have the ability to seize firearms in the course of their duty under the Wildlife Act and the current section 73 of the Arms Act covers the situation.
- b) **PERMIT DATE RECORDED ON IMPORT PERMITS TO BE DATE OF ISSUE (NOT DATE OF APPLICATION):** Police reported that this has been actioned and will now apply to all future applications for import permits.
- c) **OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT DATABASE:** A Police action point is to record all OIA requests on firearm issues and the response to these on its website. Police will follow the example of other government agencies and redact the names of the requesters. It should be noted that Police deals with far more official information requests than other agencies.

**3. CROSS-AGENCY FIREARMS WORKING GROUP UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS:** The Working Group is working with Customs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), and the Department of Internal Affairs. Customs is reviewing internal processes and the Group is still following up on MFAT and the Department of Internal Affairs. A bulletin was sent to Police staff on 16 August, and the Group seeks input from relevant stakeholders.

The firearms system suffers from a number of clear inefficiencies. In theory, Police believes that better use of technology would benefit both Police and the wider firearms community. The Better Business Case framework will ensure clearer thinking and prevent failure in the future. There are five key sections that have been identified for development in the Firearms Business Case, including strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management cases. Multiple government bodies will be involved, including Police, Treasury and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). Police is currently consolidating the strategic case and has completed Investment Logic Mapping workshops, visited Districts to hear from the Firearms team members who provide services, and begun preparing the ground work for the economic case. There will be consultation on the strategic case before it is signed off by a Deputy Commissioner.

Police outlined that \$4,226,946 was collected in 2014/15 from firearm licence fees and endorsements, and indicated that fees and costs are being further analysed as a part of the Firearms project. This figure can also be found at <http://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/publications/firearms-community-advisory-forum-minutes-may-2016.pdf>. Police confirmed that fee transparency is going to be looked at in the project.

**4. LAW AND ORDER COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF FIREARMS:** On 10, 17 and 24 August, oral submissions on the 'Inquiry into issues relating to the illegal possession of firearms' were presented to the Law and Order Committee. Police is currently preparing a Departmental Report based on the issues raised in the written and oral submissions. Common themes from the submissions include improving burglary resolution rates and more frequently noting the serial numbers of firearms. It is unclear when the Committee will report back. A number of submitters fear that Police's firearms database is vulnerable to being hacked. Police continues to focus on maintaining safe and secure information to minimise the risk of successful hacking. There have also been several comments about Police resourcing of firearm matters. Police acknowledged that the mail order system, required in

section 43A of the Arms Act, could be more user friendly. Police will tidy up the mail order system to ensure that it will be run more smoothly.

**5. MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL REVIEW:** MSC continues to review its programme, which includes engaging with partners and anybody that has a vested interest in firearms. Its main focus remains on educating the firearms community and educating prospective firearm licence holders. MSC has started consulting the rural community. Police is not involved in the review.

**6. UPDATE ON FIREARMS LEGISLATION:** There have been no changes since the previous forum. The Minister of Police will probably discuss this with Police, but it is unlikely to happen until after the completion of the Select Committee's 'Inquiry into issues relating to the illegal possession of firearms'. Firearm Prohibition Orders may potentially proceed before other amendments to the Arms Act. A separate paper on this is being prepared for Government. Police confirmed that it has not been recommending a formal registration of all firearms that might be in the system. However, registration will probably be considered by the Select Committee. There is a general fear within the firearms community that full registration will lead to confiscation of firearms, but this has no basis. Recording more serial numbers may potentially assist Police with matching more seized firearms with those lost in burglaries. Police confirmed that there is no proposal being finalised with Government for the reclassification of all semi-automatic weapons. Police is in the process of noting issues and mooting possible options to present to the Minister.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

**7. SAFES:** Members were advised that the public wants more information on safes and storage requirements. The firearms community is frustrated with the requirements for what constitutes a legitimate safe. Some expressed concerns that some safes were deemed legitimate 2-3 years ago, but now fail tests. Police, however, notes that there are no new storage requirements – the same criteria continue to apply. If security standards are not met, then the onus is on the owner to prove that the safe is secure, as approved by a suitable engineer. If someone has an issue with a decision relating to a safe, they should discuss the issue with an Arms officer who will contact Police National Headquarters. Forum members should expect to hear more on this issue in the next few weeks, although this could be longer if an appeals process needs to be ironed out. A checklist for firearm officers and dealers on safe specifications is being prepared in the shorter term.

**8. IMPORT PERMITS:** There is general dissatisfaction with how long it takes to get firearm import permits. Often lawyers are getting involved because it is a slow and onerous process. Police commented that it is working to resolve this issue, and that the waiting time has reduced significantly. Remaining permits that have lengthy waiting periods should be processed in the next two weeks.

**9. FIREARMS LICENCE RENEWALS:** Last year there were some issues with firearm licence renewals, which stemmed from staffing issues within Police and having reached the peak of the ten year bell curve relating to the number of applications received. Delays have now been reduced to normal waiting times.

**10. DEALERS FEES:** There have been rumours that dealers' fees will be increased substantially. Police advised that it is not possible for them to unilaterally and arbitrarily raise fees associated with getting firearms or dealers' licences.