



Summary of the Firearms Community Advisory Forum Meeting: Thursday 12 May 2016

THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING WERE CONFIRMED

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE: Any firearm that is being exported from New Zealand requires an export permit (under the Customs and Excise Act MFAT is mandated to do this). There are exemptions from this requirement such as sporting firearms (not semi-automatics) being taken overseas for use for hunting or competitions if being bought back into NZ. NZ as a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty has responsibility for reporting on the number of exemptions from export permits. MFAT has developed an exemption form. Once completed by the person with an exemption the form is emailed to exportcontrols@mfat.govt.nz. MFAT noted that the resulting compliance has been exceptionally good.

NATIONAL MULTIAGENCY FIREARMS WORKING GROUP (NMFWG): Police provided an update on the firearms administration and management project and introduced two new project members. The five workstreams are: People; Processes; Systems; Environment; and Alignment. It is a large undertaking and is still in the planning stages. Stakeholder input will be a required part of the work going forward, which will include the Firearms Community Advisory Forum. A further quarterly update will be sent out and put on the Police website by July end 2016. An email has been set up specifically for information around the firearms change project, you can email: project.firearms@police.govt.nz

SELECT COMMITTEE: Police has provided an initial briefing to Parliament's Law and Order Committee for their Inquiry into the illegal possession of firearms and a further additional briefing responding to questions and request for statistics around firearms. The Committee visited three police sites on Wednesday 11th May. They went to Wellington Central and were showed the process of licensing and on to the Upper Hutt Armoury for a demonstration of different types of firearms. They then went to National Headquarters where they were shown processes and finished with a question and answer discussion.

FIREARMS PROHIBITION ORDERS: Police has been asked to provide advice to the Minister of Police on options around firearm prohibition orders, which could prohibit serious offenders from acquiring, possessing or using firearms. The purpose is to keep firearms out of the hands of those people who should not have them. The detailed policy work is underway.

CONSIDERATION OF DISCUSSION DOCUMENT ON FIREARMS ISSUES TABLED AT LAST MEETING: Discussion of whether to re-consider registration of all firearms? Technology has changed significantly and keeping more accurate and detailed records is easier with current database technology (as opposed to index cards). Other views are that it is still impractical and also costly to set up and maintain. Further discussion was had regarding firepower which has a direct correlation with magazine size. Pistol grip or thumbhole makes no difference. This led to a question of why not restrict purchase/possession of large magazines to those with endorsements, countered by someone saying there are already thousands of such magazines out there that could thereby become illegal. A view was expressed that if there was any consideration of doing this a 'buy-back' would be required with fair compensation given. A further comment was that this would lead to many firearms going 'underground'.

UPDATE ON FIREARMS LEGISLATION: Police will be advising the Ministers in about June 2016 and seeking direction on how she wants the legislative process to occur, e.g. whether there should be a public discussion document. Firearm Prohibition Orders may be progressed through a separate Bill.

AMMUNITION: Should ammunition require a permit to import? Is ammunition an issue? It was suggested that this would lead to people manufacturing their own ammunition. However, this was countered, yes there is manufacturing legislation that covers this and importing powder etc is covered under the Hazardous Goods legislation (HASNO). General agreement that requiring an import permit for parts and ammunition would make it easier as many exporting countries require permits prior to shipping such goods and this has financial implications, especially for businesses.

OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS: Police has been overwhelmed with the number of OIA requests and is finding it hard to continue BAU due to time being taken to complete the process required to respond. This is by no means indicating that we do not want to give information; however, sometimes emailing us directly (rather than making it a formal OIA request) means a faster response without the added steps required.

Someone suggested a specific area in the firearms section of the police website where all OIAs relating to firearms were available for everyone to view.

THE WILDLIFE (POWERS) AMENDMENT BILL: The Wildlife (Powers) Amendment Bill was introduced on 2 December 2015 and it was mentioned at the December 2015 Forum meeting that if, under the new provisions, a Department of Conservation ranger seized firearms and did not have a licence they could be acting unlawfully. Police has subsequently identified with Police Legal that a change to Arms Act 1983 section 3 would be required. This has been referred back to DOC for consideration.

OTHER BUSINESS:

PERMITS: Some confusion had come about due to people having imports permits issued with the date they put their application in, sometimes six months previous. Was this intentional? Police stated that the date of issue should be on the permit and that this will be followed up and rectified. Some further discussion was undertaken regarding the delays in issuing permits. Police stated that this has reduced and will continue to do so as new staff come on board.

NZ SPORTING GOODS ASSOCIATION: The Association has written asking about becoming a member of the Forum. The Association represents over 260 suppliers and retailers of sporting goods, including sporting and hunting firearm retailers. The letter the Association wrote was read to the meeting and there was discussion about their request for membership. The Forum agreed to their request and Police will advise the Association accordingly.