

COLFO News Issue 1 – February 2019

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Arms Act Administration

In January of this year new Regulations took effect which allow Police to process applications for licences and permits through a purpose built website. It is hoped that this will speed up the process for many applicants and provide for more consistency of decisions. However for those without the necessary skill or access to computers it will still be possible to making application using paper forms through local Arms Officers.

Police have advised that the new online processes will be rolled out during the course of this year, starting with visitor permit applications in about March.

A Reduction in Firearm Licence Applicants since the Introduction of the New Testing Regime

In the first five months of operating under the new regime there has been a marked decline in the number of applicants. For the past 10 years there have been typically 8,000 applicants annually, in the 5 months from 1 July when the new regime started, only 1,404 applicants have taken the online test and 874 of those completed the practical.

Police are now looking at combining the theory test and practical session into one extended session under the supervision of an instructor at one of the 45 venues that have been established. You may be forgiven for a feeling of *déjà vu*.

Firearm Owners display Low Trust and Confidence in NZ Police

With a number of licensed firearm owners expressing dissatisfaction with the service they are receiving, COLFO decided to undertake a survey of where licensed firearm owners trust and confidence is, in relation to Police administering the Arms Act 1983. This took place in September and was completed by 1270 licensed firearm owners. The Council acknowledges that police are investing heavily in improving the services. Therefore this will serve as a baseline, when run annually, to reflect the improvement in the service over 12 month periods.

The survey asked questions around the accuracy of administration, services being provided within a reasonable time, consistency, absence of bias, competence and being treated fairly. The survey also made the distinction between service delivery at a national level versus a personal level. There was also an opportunity for individuals to give examples to support their view.

The results may be viewed here: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1vz5oIORJZ_WCnr3281p3y9TUNKhHwo01

The outcome of the survey showed that for national service delivery licensed firearm owners have 28% confidence in police ability. When considering questions relating to personal service the weighted average is 47%. This tells us that at an individual level licence firearm owners have more confidence in the performance of police then they do at a national level.

Of the 361 who raised issues the majority gave examples of where the local arms offices had been giving advice or acting inconsistently with their peers or where police in general had limited understanding of the licence firearm owner's obligations. Typical comments were – 'Massive inconsistencies between multiple arms officers, each officer has interpreted the law differently...' Others were in relation to processes for permits for import, inspections of security and the consultation processes. Comment was also made on media statements from the Police Association President and sentences handed down for firearm crime.

IS WINTER COMING?

No doubt most of you will have read or seen media or social media articles suggesting that the Police have presented a paper to the Minister outlining changes to the Arms Act. We do not, at the time we write this, know exactly what they are asking of the Minister. We do think, given the media spin set in place by the Police Association that there will be restrictions and extra costs to you, the law abiding firearms owner.

We assure you that COLFO will not take this lying down, if any changes are unreasonable or unnecessary. We have a huge depth of research, international contacts and the contacts in place across the media and political spectrum and most importantly a dedicated and knowledgeable board who will do all we can. We are ready.

But we cannot do this without you. And by you it is not just the firearms owner, but the clubs and dealers. As the saying goes, we must swim together or we shall most assuredly sink together. So what can you do? The thing to remember is facts are on our side. We can persuade. We can do this.

Write to your MP and their opposition counterpart.

COLFO will not be providing a form letter for this purpose. We will use our social media page to provide suggestions when the facts are known, but what you say is up to you. Be polite, be respectful and show that we are great in numbers. The ten minutes you spend writing a letter may save you a great deal of time in the future.

Visit your MP

Your member of parliaments' office hours should be easy to find. Think how many hours you spend a year on the range or hunting. A 30 minute trip to your MP's office may enable you to continue just that.

Encourage all your shooting friends to help

This is a numbers game. Some may not even be aware that a law change could be possible. Use social media or social contacts to reach out to everyone you know who has a firearms licence and explain to them what this will mean. Would it mean you need a \$3,000 safe for your \$350 old semi auto .22 for example?

Encourage your shooting club to help- or join a club and then encourage them

If you are in a club, you should ask your secretary to write to the Minister or an MP. If you are writing on behalf of an organisation with 100 members, then this has huge impact.

Do not criticise other shooting disciplines

YOU may genuinely believe there is no "need" for a MSSA for hunting. That is your right. However, many other shooters would strongly disagree with you. While we do not ask you to give up your beliefs, a disunited front would be dangerous for us all. Only consider and comment on the things that you think affect you.

Speak to the Select Committee

In our democracy, law changes have to go to a select committee, which will, in the appropriate case, travel around the countryside and meet with submitters. This is not for the faint hearted, as you will need to speak very publically. We encourage you, or a member of your club to do this. This will need to be carefully practised and what you say is very important. It is vital that as many of us as possible do this. If we get to this point we will use our social media outlet to update you.

If you haven't joined COLFO the time is now. Keep an eye on our website and Facebook page and we will update as soon as we can.

For only \$ 23 you can become an individual supporter of COLFO here: <http://colfo.org.nz>