

COLFO News Issue 2 - April 2019

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COLFO deals with the aftermath of the Terrorist Attack and changes to the Arms Laws

Since the terrorist attack in Christchurch on 15 March COLFO has been busy preparing for the inevitable backlash on our chosen sport and pastime. True to form the Government in a knee jerk reaction has announced its intention to ban most semi automatic centre fire rifles and shotguns. They followed this on the 21 March with new Regulations by an Order in Council that was rushed in without the normal 28 days notice, declaring A category semi automatics to be MSSAs and therefore illegal to hold without an E endorsed licence. Affected owners are required to register these new MSSAs with police via an online form prior to handing them in for confiscation. This was followed on 2 April with a new Bill that makes most semi automatic firearms and large capacity magazine in to prohibited items.

To handle the inevitable demand for reaction to these changes from the media the COLFO Board decided to have one person act as spokesperson so that a consistent theme would be provided to represent the united views of the shooting groups that make up COLFO. We are very proud of the cool and professional persona that Nicole McKee has maintained in dealing with literally dozens of media interviews and enquiries each day. She has been supported by a small media team preparing key messages.

Meanwhile Board members worked hard to keep their constituents and the shooting public informed via e-mail and Facebook as knowledge was gained on the changes to come.

Since shooters represent only 5% of the population the chances of swaying public opinion in our favour are negligible, so our effort must be in influencing politicians and the new laws they propose. To this end COLFO has campaigned for more time to be given to allow for any new legislation to be digested and commented on by those most affected. We have encouraged all shooters to make submissions to parliament at the appropriate time and provided advice on how to do this. We have also asked to be consulted in drafting legislation in the hope of averting any stupid errors.

With all major political parties supporting a ban of semi autos our only hope, as responsible firearm owners, is to see that the resulting legislation is effective and fair and does not result in unintended consequences. We must insist that fair compensation is provided for those whose personal property is confiscated.

Be in no doubt that once the current Bill becomes law there will be further restrictions dreamed up by Police and Government. The Prime Minister has already told us this.

Arms (Prohibited Firearms, Magazines, and Parts) Amendment Bill

Having its first reading on 2 April this Bill was immediately passed to the Finance and Expenditure Select Committee for consideration. Just 2 days were allowed for public submissions! With the bill expected to become law by 12 April.

COLFOs submission to the bill has been to object to the speed at which it has been implemented, pointing out that little time has been allowed for consultation, and that hasty drafting has resulted in poor legislation with unintended consequences and could result in low levels of compliance. Examples were provided and some recommendations made for change.

Examination of the Bill has revealed numerous cases of ambiguous clause resulting in unintended consequences whereby many popular sporting or historic A Category (non semi auto) firearms become prohibited.

Since all major political parties have indicated their support for this bill it is probable that by the time you read this it will be law.

At the time of writing there has been no indication as to what and how compensation will be paid to those required to hand their now prohibited firearms to Police.

Further law changes

The government has already signalled that there will be another Arms Amendment Bill that will be passed before the end of the year.

This will include such thing as;

- Registration of all firearms
- A ban of all private sales of firearms
- A ban of online sales of firearms
- And much, much more.

What we have seen in the most recent Bill is only the thin end of the wedge that is being driven through the firearm community.

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