



MINUTES: Firearms Community Advisory Forum

SUBJECT	Firearms Community Advisory Forum meeting
DATE	Thursday, 24 March
TIME	09:30 – 12:30
VENUE	By WebEx
ATTENDEES	Mike McIlraith (Chair), Steve Goodman, Ross Mason, Gwyn Thurlow, Steve O'Donnell, Andrew Edgcombe, Gary Elmes, Ewan Kelsall, Joe Green, Jared Wright, Angela McLeod, Don Rood, Roger Duxfield, Andrew Bakker, Piripi Curtis, Michael Sparrow, Darryl Sweeny, Lachlan Marshall, Michael Sparrow, Peter Furley, John Herbert, Catherine Petrey, Jennifer Locke (Secretariat)
GUEST ATTENDEES	Phil Hanlon
APOLOGIES	Peter Furley

Agenda item 1: Welcome, introduction of new member, apologies and meeting rules

The Chair welcomed everyone, apologies from Peter Furley were noted. It was also noted that Angela McLeod and Roger Duxfield would leave the meeting at 10.15am. The Chair reminded the group to keep items discussed confidential, the minutes will be made public.

Agenda item 2: Confirm previous minutes and update action points

Previous minutes confirmed and Action Points discussed.

FIREARMS COMMUNITY ADVISORY FORUM – ACTION POINTS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

ACTION POINTS FROM DECEMBER 2021 MEETING	ASSIGNED TO	STATUS
POLICE TO SHARE LINKS TO ADVERTISEMENTS FOR THE ARMS ROLES AS THEY COME AVAILABLE	SECRETARIAT	ONGOING
POLICE SEND LINK TO ARMS AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2021 WHEN THEY ARE GAZETTED	SECRETARIAT	COMPLETE
POLICE TO SEND LINK TO RELEVANT LEGISLATION FOR CLUBS AND RANGES	SECRETARIAT	COMPLETE
CIRCULATE SLIDES FROM CLUBS AND RANGES PRESENTATION	SECRETARIAT	COMPLETE

The Chair noted that the Deputy Commissioner reinforced that Police need to actively communicate Arms roles with FCAF as they come available. Police noted that over the next few months there will be some fixed term and permanent roles being advertised, they will continue to share these roles as they come available.

Agenda item 3: Disability representative and Registry Development

- COLFO have taken an action to provide some names to FCAF for a disability representative. FCAF members should provide suggestions directly to the COLFO Secretariat.
- Registry Development: Police have asked FCAF members to volunteer to join a registry development group. This group will help navigate the specifics of the firearms registry and make sure it is fit for purpose. There has been a good cross-section of the community that have agreed to be part of the development. The registry needs to be in place by June 2023, more on this will be covered under agenda item 5.

Agenda item 4: Update on firearms licensing pipeline

Police noted they are awaiting confirmation of funding in order to add capacity, which will help get on top of the licensing pipeline. However it will take some time to recruit new staff before we will start to see a reduction in the pipeline. The Chair advised the following firearms licensing pipeline figures:

- Renewal applications: 5005
- First time applicants: 4820

There are approximately only one third of first-time applicants signed up to a safety course.

There was detailed discussion regarding the pipeline. Members asked the following questions or made the following comments:

- People that have applied for a B or C endorsement, where do these fit in the pipeline? If they are a renewal endorsement, the application for endorsement would be considered together with the licence renewal. An endorsement applies only to the extent of the licence and if seeking renewal it must be applied for at the same time as the licence.
- Has the requirement for documentation for referees been made redundant? Police has paused the practice of sending out questionnaires, this is for unrelated referees only. This is part of the effort to make the vetting process quicker.
- Updated indication on wait times for licence applications? In February Police communicated to licence holders that the processing time is approx. 12 months for first time applications and 6 months for renewal, this timing stands. Currently 50% of applicants apply for renewal under 3 months before expiry, this provides a processing challenge for Police.
- If an application for renewal is applied for much before the expiry date of the current licence, what will the expiry date be? Expiry will stand as the date of the old licence. It was noted that this is worth communicating this to licence holders, as they are worried they will lose time from their licence.
- There are a lot of concerns around transporting firearms to another licence holder when a licence has expired. Transporting elsewhere raises safety problems which would be avoided if allowed to be locked up and held in the normal secure safety. The logistics around transporting firearms, and trying to rehouse firearms if you have a collector are challenging and introduces risks. Need a realistic solution that isn't going to result in a security issue. One organisation has written to the Minister to suggest using powers to extend licences.

Police responded that previously extensions were provided through the Regulations developed due to COVID, where people were not able to get to post offices and vetting officers were not able to undertake face-to-face interviews etc. Omicron does not have the same restrictions. The Regulation making power was written quite tightly and is not available for a general extension. Therefore, the ability through the Act to extend is not available to the Minister.

- This pipeline is having an impact on firearms dealers, it is adding stress to businesses as those who are waiting for their licence to be renewed are wanting to purchase ammunition prior to the start of the Roar and duck shooting.
- Is it standard practice to interview a family referee in the presence of the person seeking the licence? Police responded that this should never happen, people should be interviewed separately. Please let Superintendent Mike McIlraith know if you hear of separate interview not occurring.
- With Police seeking increased funding and resource, what impact will this have? The intention is to bring on new people which will provide sufficient staffing to help get the pipeline to a manageable level, and get on top of the backlog and will be able to manage the increasing licensing demand which is expected to peak in 2026.
- What happens to people that have a licence that has expired and fail to re-apply. Police do have visibility over this, the information is fed out to the districts to follow up.
- Would it not be prudent to put through an amendment to allow for extension of licences – to have a backup plan? Police have looked into this, the current environment hasn't been positive towards this. The focus has been increasing resourcing. There is a reluctance to extend 10-year licences.
- Government, with the advice of Police, have made decisions and rushed legislation. They need to rebuild the trust with firearms community and Police. Current focus is to develop the Regulations that are needed to implement the 2020 changes to the Act.
- It would be good to have a temporary licence, that shows licence is in the process of renewal, such as what exists for dealers. Dealers only have 1 year licence. The Act provides for that licence to continue to apply provided an application for renewal has been made before the expiry of the previous licence. This means dealers are not required to move firearms and find alternative secure storage.
- A member asked what the maximum amount of time to apply for licence in advance of the expiry date? 12 months, no longer as Police need to be undertake the fit and proper assessment as close as possible to the date of licence issue.
- Will the clubs and ranges work impact licence application resourcing? There will be dedicated clubs and ranges team, this won't have an impact on the processing of licences in the pipeline.
- While it is an inconvenience for recreational users to not have a licence, it impacts on businesses that must have a firearm to euthanise animals or rely on a firearm for their business. Priority is given to people that identify a licence is needed for work purposes. This needs to be communicated so applicants know to make this clear in their application forms.

Agenda item 5: Update on the Arms Transformation Programme

Phil Hanlon, Director of Change, Arms Group, joined the meeting.

The Detailed Business Case (DBC) was endorsed by Cabinet in early March, it is now part of the budget 2022 process, before it is confirmed.

There are three key workstreams:

1. Building additional capacity to deal with backlog and keep up with incoming licences. Bringing in incremental changes to improve efficiency to improve current service offering.
2. Setting up the Branded Business Unit (BBU) – this will sit within Police, but will have separate funding, resourcing, branding, name, structure, onboarding new staff etc
3. Delivery of technology – Arms information system, online capability. The Registry. This is to implement the arms information system. Police have contracted a supplier, who started in February 2022. Once the budget is confirmed, they can announce who the supplier is.

Work on the vision, mission and purpose for the BBU has commenced. Additional capacity and capability is being brought in to ensure it will operate as an effective regulator.

For the registry development and service design, the team are currently planning what the workshops will look like to discuss some of these specific items. The workshops are likely to be in April / May.

A member commented that their organisation had recently introduced an app and it has not been widely used by their members. Police need to remember that a lot of licence holders are rural and may have difficulty with broadband. The system design needs to reflect this. 50% of farmers don't have cell phone coverage across their farms. Police responded that they have this front of mind. They will be introducing online capability but will continue to provide paper format. The registry will provide a better service experience but understand this may not work for everyone.

Action – send dates for the Registry Workshops.

Agenda item 6: Update on the review of the fees for firearms licences, permits, approval and certifications

A lot of work has been done gathering information that was required for the Detailed Business Case. This identifies what full cost recovery would be to deliver a licence, for every type of fee that exists.

The public consultation document will include various options, including a comparison with the as fee remaining as it is (status quo). Every fee will include what the estimated range of cost for delivering the licence. The document will consider what the extent of cost recovery would be.

So far Police have taken Treasury through the process. It will go through rigorous assessment before it goes out for consultation. Police are trying to be as transparent as possible, all assumptions will be identified. Cabinet has not yet agreed to consultation document. It will be made public once Cabinet has approved it.

A member asked if they would be able to do independent analysis on the work that has been done on fees? Police responded that the detail will not be in the consultation document, but it will list activities and what is included in the development of the options for the proposed fees.

A member asked if a wellbeing assessment has been undertaken for this work. This should go beyond a pure economic statement, the fees will have a big social and wellbeing impact, which should be a key criteria. Safety weighting / leisure / environmental impact. Need to think holistically around the licence, beyond just economic. Police responded that yes, for each fee there is a requirement to state the advantages, disadvantages and impact. It will be for Cabinet to decide their degree of comfort regarding risk of non-compliance etc.

Agenda item 7: Any other business

- A member commented that they are finding inconsistency with Arms Officers, such as dealers being told they need to have their information for the register in an electronic format. Send concerns to Mike.
- For a dealer, disabling firearms in storage or on display is a challenge. There is a lot of misinformation and lack of clarity. Police have recognised there are challenges, they are updating secure storage guidance. The aim is to have this available in April, with videos for clarity. A word version of the secure storage guidance will be out soon, fully formatted version will come out later. Any comments please email Mike, this will be a living document, so open to feedback.

- Permits to possess – there are delays in getting permits approved and posted, the permit is only issued for one month. Could consider allowing time for delivery. It is taking up to 8 weeks to get permit issued.
- Dealers licence for museums, there is a need to have a different approach for these. Looking at operationalise differently for museums. The retail format doesn't fit in museum. Police are considering how best to manage museums.

Meeting concluded 12:00 hrs

Next meeting: 21 July 2022 by WebEx.

ACTION POINTS MARCH 2022 MEETING	ASSIGNED TO	STATUS
POLICE TO SHARE LINKS TO ARMS MANAGER ROLES AS THEY COME AVAILABLE	SECRETARIAT	ONGOING
POLICE TO CONFIRM WORKSHOP DATES FOR THE REGISTRY DEVELOPMENT	POLICE	COMPLETE