



Summary of the Firearms Community Advisory Forum Meeting: Wednesday 16 August 2017

The Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed

Arms Trade Treaty update

Police and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFAT) have completed the second Annual Report on the ATT. This can be found on the MFAT website. It was noted that there is work to be done around Police collection of import figures, a work in progress.

The Brokering (Weapons and Related Items) Controls Bill has started the parliamentary process – it had its first reading in the House on the 15th August and was referred to Select Committee. It will now be after the September 2017 Election before anything further is done and it is some way off becoming an Act. A question was asked about goods that are transhipped through New Zealand? The answer was that this was not brokering and was covered by NZ law on importing and exporting.

Subcommittee firearms storage

The first meeting has been held and minutes were being circulated to subcommittee members (to date not all members have reviewed them). The next meeting is to be 15 September 2017.

Many ideas and issues had been discussed at the first meeting including having easier guidance with tidier categories, the requirements for E Category safes, and what is best handling, and issues around those whose safes had been approved in the past and which were not considered adequate now. There was mention that there was 'noise' around courioring of firearms, carriage on ferries and in campervans. The subcommittee will also look at security in these situations.

A question was asked, should the number of firearms someone has make a difference to the level of security needed to match the level of risk?? It was mentioned that Arms Officers have difficulty with measuring thickness of safes and are inconsistent in application of 'rules'; this requires an easy guide for them to ensure the same standards are applied across New Zealand. Further discussion was had around thickness <6mm vs >6mm. It was suggested that the measure should be based on the product and not only on the thickness. It was asked that if an angle grinder was used to cut them could we work out some measurements to make it much harder.

It was asked if there were figures on the number of safes not approved now that were in the past. There are no figures on this.

Firearm security is always going to be about stopping the opportunistic thief; someone who is 'targeting' firearms will have established best times to 'hit' and if intent on stealing firearms the thief will work out a method regardless. The best to be done in these cases is to make it harder for them.

A member asked why vettors are in some cases rejecting previously approved safes when the policy around safes had not yet been finalised? In the interim – PNHQ will answer any questions regarding any confusion in the application of rules around safes. Police accepts that the application of standards needs clarity and consistency.

Police Armoury Statistics

A sample of statistics for seizures of firearms that were sent to the Police Armoury for examination purposes was circulated for review by members. Other Police seizure statistics cover a wider group of firearms seized

with and without warrant and include seized and returned firearms, and those not needed to be examined (although not surrendered firearms).

A couple of case examples were discussed:

1. A case where 60 firearms had been purchased in the preceding 12 months and their A category parts had been used to construct E Cat firearms. Police asked the supplier if they had become at all suspicious about the purchases, they said no.
2. Two undercover police officers posed as offering to purchase two fully automatic firearms. The person who was to sell them was charged, although has now got their licence back.

FCAF member noted that these type of people give the majority of 'fit and proper' people a bad name and cause restrictive rules for all.

Discussion took place on the frequency of Arms Officer visits to dealerships and clubs and that there are differences in each Police district.

There was a discussion around Webley revolvers and post war family inherited firearms that used to be able to be bought without a licence. There are many in the community already and not everyone is likely to have handed these in when the rules changed.

There was a question asking if 'pistols' in Police armoury seizure statistics included sawn off firearms that are under 762mm. The Police response was that in all likelihood the firearms would be entered as sawn offs, not pistols. It was stated that there is an issue if 'sawn offs are being classified as pistols.

MSSAs were also discussed. Police pointed out that A Cat firearms seized with high capacity mags were automatically MSSAs, although there are other MSSA features such as pistol grips, flash suppressor etc. Police reaffirmed that firearms are classified as they are seized.

Discussion was had that it is useful to look at the percentage of MSSAs seized compared to what is 'out there'. Some committee members felt that MSSAs are under scrutiny at present due to high profile incidents (recent Whangarei homicide and Morrinsville shooting). Police confirmed they supplied data to Select Committee on previous years. A question was asked regarding how many MSSAs are smuggled over the border. Simple answer is it is impossible to know. Customs is happy to receive any information that will help target this type of smuggling. However, it is likely there would be more evidence of illegal importation if it was prolific. The borders are also monitored by MPI (physical searches) and Police.

Shared a challenge: FCAF members were invited to consider a couple of examples of firearms that Police has concerns over. The question was should these be accepted? This was a positive opportunity to share knowledge and thoughts on firearms and for FCAF to see the issues police face.

Arms Act Service Delivery Group

The change of name for the group that includes a number of workstreams relating to the management of firearms-related issues is to emphasise that it is customer focused. It will include work toward a centralised permit hub and business improvements.

TradeMe

Police has been working with TradeMe to improve the process for establishing the licencing process of those purchasing firearms on TradeMe.

TradeMe has completed an update to advise that all persons wishing to ask a question, bid or purchase a firearm will be asked for the name and number on their firearms licence. This will be the subject of a query to Police

to search on the Police database for confirmation that the information TradeMe has is correct. Only a Yes or No answer will be received so information (other than licence currency) will be withheld.

Police would like to see this taken up by other online sellers of firearms.

Social Media and Organisation View

Police will not comment on what is in social media as it is often unbalanced.

We will educate and inform people by putting more information on the Police website and encourage people to ask questions.

Opportunities for AGM or Similar

Police has undertaken to attend AGMs of firearms organisations and similar if invited. Mike McIlraith will attend Pistol NZ AGM on 23 September 2017.

MSSA Parts Importation

Police need to look at importation of parts from several perspectives.

A comment from a committee member was if I am a fit and proper person and I say I am importing parts for A Cat, should that not be trusted? If not this could be a subjectively based view on what 'might' happen. There is a lack of trust and it is very confusing. The firearms community needs consistent and timely permitting, based on accepting the stated intention of fit and proper persons to sell parts they wish to import as A Cat parts.

Police position is to look at each import application on its merits. There is an issue with not knowing how parts will be used (intention).

MSSA controls are about ensuring safety and that these firearms are in the hands of fit and proper people. A comment suggested that Police should have no involvement (in import of A Cat parts) and it was Customs that should be involved when the items come in. Further comment was that the market has changed significantly and so has technology.

Someone asked "why are we talking about permits for parts that do not require permits at the moment?" FCAF could come up with a solution. It could mean better education. There are currently three firearms manufacturers in NZ.

The onus should rest squarely with the firearms user to ensure they comply with the current law and get correct information.

High capacity magazines require no licence to purchase in NZ. This is significant when it comes to people assembling MSSAs. A committee member commented that they should be restricted.

A committee member stated that the continuous shift of police personnel makes consistency very difficult. This area needs people who have in-depth knowledge and stay. Police commented that this is the reason there is investment in the ASAC project, which will include career roles. The Police Executive have recognised this area needs investment. Currently things look like they always have but the Police are looking at a number of potential changes. One possibility is that there could be graduated applicant tiers, with new licence applicants having greater scrutiny while current licence holders have a streamlined process when they renew their licence. The project is a huge undertaking and will likely take longer than we would all like. Police notes that processes will work better when firearms users bring issues to Police's attention, eg when the licence number was visible in the clear view panel of the envelopes they were sent out in. This was fixed on the same day it was brought to police attention. We will continue working together jointly to fix things.

Training Provider RFP

Police has extended its use of current training providers to 30 June 2018 in order to sort firearms training properly rather than rushing into a RFP. It was acknowledged that it is a complex area and personnel new to the role are doing their best to come up to speed and learn the ropes. Discussion is welcome.

Fish and Game New Zealand Membership on FCAF

Police to send letter for FCAF members to seek feedback on membership of Fish and Game NZ.

Other Business

MSSA parts: It was noted that there has been no change in policy; but it is acknowledged that a change in process in some areas has occurred and that it was noted that FCAF members were disappointed that there was no prior consultation. It was pointed out that the Police website had been updated in June with a media release on this issue. It was agreed that further consultation with FCAF members and Response and Operations Group be undertaken.

Chamber safety devices: Agreed that Wellington District would provide tags to Whakatupato. Other Organisations can send their name to PNHQ and will be given the right to purchase the chamber safety devices (not including the cost of the mould) directly from the manufacturer.

2013 Arms Code re-write: Once this has been drafted it will be consulted with FCAF members and then a wider consultation process will be undertaken. Looking at getting a document out for consultation in October 2017.

Select Committee Inquiry into Illegal Possession of Firearms: With regard to the Committee recommendations and Government response, no further decisions will occur until after the election.

It was noted that the Armourer does not classify firearms on requests from the public; these need to go through PNHQ.

Meeting Concluded 1250 hrs.