



Te Tari Pūreke
Firearms Safety Authority

Guidance on the display and storage of military artillery and firearms

For Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association



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Te Tari Pūreke – Firearms Safety Authority, a business unit of New Zealand Police



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Guidance on the Display and Storage of Military Artillery and Firearms in New Zealand



Te Tari Pūreke – Firearms Safety Authority recognises the historical significance of the firearms and other arms items displayed at Royal New Zealand Returned and Services Association (RSA) venues and the unique position RSA branches hold in New Zealand society.

To help RSA branches meet the requirements of the Arms Act 1983, this guidance provides practical information on maintaining up-to-date security measures for all arms items, whether functional or rendered inoperable. It sets out the requirements for the display and storage of military artillery and arms items in New Zealand, so RSA branches can continue to honour their historical and commemorative significance while remaining compliant with the law.

How RSAs fit within the Arms Act 1983

RSA branches play an important role in honouring service and commemorating significant events, the fallen, and RSA members. In this context, firearms or arms items held, displayed, or stored at RSA branches are considered mementos rather than part of a formal collection.

To meet legal obligations:

- » RSA branches are required to have a firearms licence holder (with appropriate endorsements) responsible for these items.
- » While RSA branches do not meet the recognised criteria of a bona fide museum¹, collector², or a theatrical body³ under the Arms Act 1983, [endorsements](#) for the possession of mementos are considered more appropriate, as they better reflect the commemorative nature of these items.
- » All items must comply with the security requirements of regulations [19](#) and [28](#) of the Arms Regulations 1992 (the Regulations).

RSAs primarily serve to support veterans and their communities, and their role in displaying arms items is commemorative rather than fitting into the categories set out in the Act (see footnotes for details).

1 **Museums** – Under the Arms Act 1983, a person holding a dealer's licence as a director or curator of a bona fide museum may display certain classes of arms items. Te Tari Pūreke – Firearms Safety Authority applies established criteria to determine whether an organisation qualifies as a bona fide museum. Most RSA branches do not meet these criteria. For more information, refer to [Te Tari Pūreke's guide for museums possessing and displaying arms items](#).

2 **Collectors** - Firearms held by RSA branches are typically displayed to honour and commemorate significant events, the fallen, and RSA members. These displays do not meet the requirements of bona fide collections under the Arms Act 1983. Accordingly, where required, endorsements for the possession of heirlooms or mementos may be more appropriate, as this better reflects the commemorative nature of these items rather than a formal collection.

3 **Theatrical Bodies** - RSA branches do not meet the requirements to be considered a bona fide theatrical body under section 29(2)(e) of the Arms Act 1983. They are not permitted to stage or oversee any *re-enactments* or *theatrical events* involving firearms, including events where blank ammunition is used. For such events to proceed, the RSA must engage a bona fide theatrical body approved by Te Tari Pūreke – Firearm Safety Authority under section 29(2)(e). These events must be planned and managed by a licence holder who holds an endorsement issued under section 30(1)(c) of the Act. The endorsement holder is also subject to the conditions set out in regulation 22A, which relate to the Theatrical Armourer endorsement). *Note: this restriction does not apply to ceremonial salutes.*



Firearms and arms items at a RSA

Firearms and arms items displayed at an RSA branch must be **rendered inoperable**. Different individuals and organisations use various terms to describe this state, including:

- » **Innocuous:**⁴ A firearm rendered completely harmless and incapable of being restored to working condition. This term is used by the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF).
- » **Disabled:**⁵ A firearm physically modified so it can no longer discharge a shot or projectile, typically through alterations that make the immediate function of a firearm impossible.
- » **Deactivated:**⁶ A firearm physically modified or altered to a state, so it is no longer functional, typically by being sectioned through its length (cut in half lengthways).

For RSA branches, Te Tari Pūreke – Firearm Safety Authority will use the term **disabled** to describe firearms made temporarily non-functional or in a non-working condition by removing certain parts of the action, with the remaining action parts also rendered non-functional. Despite being disabled, these firearms are still considered arms items under the Arms Act 1983 and must meet the storage requirements in [regulations 19](#) and [28](#) of the Arms Regulations 1992.

The Arms Act does **not** recognise the status of “deactivated” firearms, as some may be capable of being converted back to live firing status. The only situation where a firearm is accepted as “deactivated” in New Zealand is when it has been **sectionalised from end to end**, rendering it permanently inoperable.

Non-prohibited firearms on display

Non-prohibited firearms, such as bolt-action rifles, displayed at an RSA branch must comply with the secure storage requirements in the Regulations. Specifically, [regulation 19\(2\)\(a\)\(iii\)](#), requires non-prohibited firearms on display must be **immobilised**⁷ so they cannot be fired, and must be kept in a rack or display cabinet.

Because RSA premises are often unoccupied for long periods, Te Tari Pūreke expects that firearms on display will also be **disabled** as an added safeguard. The method of disabling will be agreed on a case-by-case basis with the responsible firearms licence holder and may include steps such as removing the bolt or firing pin. In some cases, more permanent modifications may be considered appropriate depending on the firearm and its display context.

The rack or cabinet in which immobilised non-prohibited firearms are displayed must also meet the requirements of [regulation 19\(1\) of the Regulations](#).

4 **Innocuous** – A term used by the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) to describe a firearm that has been rendered completely harmless and cannot be of being restored to working order. The Arms Act 1983 does not recognise this state. If a firearm can be restored to working order, it continues to be treated as a firearm under section 2(b)(ii)–(iii) of the Act.

5 **Disabled** – Te Tari Pūreke – Firearms Safety Authority uses the term disabled to describe a firearm that has been physically modified so it can no longer immediately function. Returning it to working order would require significant work and trade-level skills. Although disabled, these items remain firearms for the purposes of the Arms Act 1983 and must meet the secure storage requirements in the Arms Regulations 1992..

6 **Deactivated** – In New Zealand, deactivated means a firearm that has been sectioned through its entire length. Once sectioned, it is no longer a firearm for the purposes of the Arms Act 1983. This option is available to RSAs for the display of any class of firearm.

7 **Immobilised** – The Arms Regulations 1992 require that non-prohibited firearms on display are immobilised so they cannot be fired. Immobilisation means the firearm cannot be discharged in its displayed state and may be achieved by removing or securing a vital part such as the bolt, firing pin, or trigger mechanism, or by using a locking device that prevents the action from operating.



A collection of military rifles mounted on a display rack showcasing secure, organised storage for multiple firearms.



A close-up of a mounted receiver and trigger assembly, illustrating secure positioning.



A detailed example of a mounted barrel and sight assembly using support brackets.

Pistols, prohibited firearms, prohibited magazines, and restricted weapons on display

These items must comply with the requirements of [regulation 28](#) of the Arms Regulations 1992. They must be stored in a stout or strong room with controlled access. Access to this room must be managed by the responsible licence holder with the appropriate endorsements and must follow the conditions of their licence and endorsements.

Because of these requirements:

- » RSAs may retain these arms items, but they **cannot be made available for general viewing** by anyone other than the responsible licence holder with the relevant endorsement.
- » Prohibited firearms and restricted weapons must have a **vital part removed**, as required by [section 32](#) of the Arms Act 1983 (the Act), and these vital parts must be stored at another suitable location.

Te Tari Pūreke – Firearm Safety Authority strongly prefers that these firearms and weapons are also **disabled** in addition to the security measures above.

Ammunition

No live ammunition⁸ is permitted at a RSA branch. Ammunition that has been **disabled**⁹ (primer and propellant removed) may be held at a branch.

⁸ For **ammunition** to be considered live, it must contain a projectile, propellant, primer, and casing.

⁹ **Ammunition** is disabled when the primer and propellant have been removed.



A 25-pounder field gun displayed in compliance with Regulation 19(1) of the Arms Regulations 1992, secured to prevent unauthorised movement or use.



A close-up of the brackets securing the 25-pounder field gun's axle to the concrete plinth.



Detail of the 25-pounder field gun's axle secured with brackets, immobilised on a reinforced concrete plinth to meet the regulatory requirements for public display.

Artillery, cannons, and anti-aircraft weapons on display

Artillery and cannons, classified as non-prohibited firearms, are displayed at some RSA branches. To comply with [regulation 19\(1\)](#) these items must be disabled and securely mounted on a concrete plinth or fixed to a concrete or asphalt surface.

Anti-aircraft weapons, such as Oerlikon and Bofors, are classified as restricted weapons. To meet the requirements of [Regulation 28](#), they must be disabled and securely mounted on a concrete plinth or fixed to a concrete or asphalt surface. Disabled anti-aircraft autocannons, once securely mounted, may be considered for exemption from [Regulation 28\(1\) and \(2\)](#) under [Regulation 28\(4\)](#) following an inspection by Te Tari Pūreke – Firearm Safety Authority staff.

For information on ceremonial use of artillery during commemorations, see the section on ANZAC Day and Armistice Day salutes



A 20 mm Oerlikon anti-aircraft gun mounted on a concrete plinth, demonstrating compliance with Regulation 28 of the Arms Regulations 1992 for restricted weapons.



A close-up of a 40mm Bofors showing secure mounting and disabled operational components, as required for public display.



Detail of mounting brackets securing the 40mm Bofors to a reinforced concrete plinth, ensuring compliance.

Replica Firearms

A **replica firearm** is an exact, working copy of an original firearm that can fire live ammunition. Under the Arms Act, replica firearms are treated the same as real firearms because of their ability to function as such.

RSA branches displaying replica firearms must comply with the licensing, storage, and display requirements that apply to functional firearms. Replica firearms must be stored in compliance with [regulation 19](#) or [regulation 28](#) of the Arms Regulations (as appropriate).

When not on display, they must be kept in a locked secure cabinet or stout room (depending on its classification). When displayed, they must be secured in a locked display cabinet or similarly fixed enclosure so they cannot be physically handled or accessed by unauthorised persons, including the public. This requirement applies to standard non-prohibited firearms and replicas. Prohibited firearms, pistols, or restricted weapons cannot be displayed unless the RSA operates as a bona fide museum.

Imitation Firearms

An **imitation firearm** is a non-functional model or representation of a firearm, typically made from inferior materials, and cannot fire live ammunition. While imitation firearms do not require the same regulatory controls as replica or functional firearms, their realistic appearance means they may still be mistaken for real firearms.

RSA branches are encouraged to clearly label imitation firearms and to display them securely – for example, affixed to a rack or within a locked cabinet – to prevent confusion with real or functional firearms. Refer to [non-prohibited firearms on display](#) or [regulation 19\(2\) of the Arms Regulation 1992](#) as a benchmark for good practice when displaying imitation firearms.

Antique Firearms

RSA branches may display antique firearms that are exempt from the Arms Act 1983, provided they meet the exemption criteria.

Exemption criteria

To be considered an antique firearm¹⁰, the firearm must be:

- » manufactured before 1900; **and**
- » not designed for, and not capable of firing, rimfire or centrefire cartridge ammunition; **and**
- » held in the possession of any person solely as an antique (but not as a copy or replica of an antique).

Antique firearms that meet these criteria are not subject to the same licensing requirements of the Act. Even if exempt, RSA branches should apply the same secure display standards similar to those for non-prohibited firearms to maintain public safety.

Commemoration Events (ANZAC Day and Armistice Day)

Defence personnel

- » New Zealand Defence and Cadet Force personnel performing official duties involving firearms, cannons, or other similar items are exempt from Arms Act requirements.¹¹

Non-defence personnel requirements

For ceremonial salutes involving non-prohibited firearms (including cannons/artillery):

- » compliance with the Arms Act 1983 is required.
- » RSA branches are encouraged to engage a bona fide theatrical society or endorsed theatrical armourer (best practice, not a legal requirement).
- » restrictions on theatrical bodies outlined in section 29(2)(e) of the Arms Act do **not** apply to ceremonial salutes.

¹⁰ Arms Act 1983, section 2 – Interpretation: definition of “antique firearm”.

¹¹ Arms Act 1983 section 3 Act to Bind the Crown

Where a bona-fide theatrical society or endorsed theatrical armourer is not engaged, RSA branches must follow the requirements set out in this guidance, including:

- » use non-prohibited firearms only for ceremonial salutes.
- » appoint an experienced person arrange and supervise the salute.
- » do **not** use endorsed firearms (pistols, restricted weapons, or prohibited firearms).
- » only individuals holding a valid firearms licence may participate in, and handle or operate non-prohibited firearms, during these events.
- » each participating licence holder must comply with all licence conditions.
- » liaise with your local Arms Office about the plans for the use of firearms at the commemoration.
- » contact NZ Police in advance by calling **105** with the details of the planned activity you are undertaking (location, time, activity).
- » before firing, warn everyone in the immediate area before firing to ensure safety and prevent unnecessary alarm

Artillery display and safety:

- » artillery pieces used in commemorative salutes should remain in a disabled state when on display (e.g., vital part such as firing pin removed, securely affixed to a concrete or asphalt plinth per regulation 19.
- » for commemorative salutes, artillery may be temporarily enabled to fire blank cartridges under the direct control of a responsible licence holder with the appropriate endorsement, or under Defence Force arrangements.
- » after the event, the artillery must be returned to its disabled state with vital parts removed.

When not in use, firearms must be rendered inoperable to minimise risk. This can include actions such as:

- » remove firing/breech block from artillery during storage/transport.
- » remove bolt or vital parts from firearms in secure storage or transit.
- » ensure firearms cannot discharge accidentally or intentionally.

More information on these requirements can be found in [regulation 19](#) of the Regulations.

A RSA can still elect to operate as a bona-fide museum

In the past, RSA branches displaying firearms were treated as museums and issued endorsements under the 'C' museum category. Following amendments to the Arms Act, museums are required to operate under a [firearms dealer's licence](#). While some RSA branches may have obtained a dealer's licence (as a museum) in recent years, it is unlikely most RSA branches meet the current criteria of a bona fide museum.

If an RSA wishes to operate as a museum, it must comply with all relevant provisions, including holding a firearms dealer's licence, having the dealer present on-site each day, and meeting additional security requirements.

Important!

If a RSA wishes to display pistols, prohibited firearms, prohibited magazines or restricted weapons, they must first become a bona fide museum. This involves more than simply obtaining a dealer's licence and naming a curator or director. Establishing and maintaining a museum comes with specific criteria and responsibilities to meet legal and professional standards.

Key aspects of becoming a museum:

- » **Governance:** the museum should possess a written constitution outlining its charter, goals, and policies, or that it falls under broader governance (such as a council) that explicitly states its commitment to the Museums Aotearoa or ICOM code of Ethics and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- » **Qualified staff:** the museum should employ at least one person qualified via relevant study and / or on the job experience, to manage the collection.
- » **Acquisition and deaccession strategy:** the museum should have a collection management policy for acquiring new items and deaccessioning (removing items from collections/inventories) items that no longer meet the policy. This includes procedures for acquiring and deaccessioning arms items to ensure they are transferred only to current firearms licence holders (and if applicable with the correct endorsements and permits to possess)
- » **Collection focus:** the museum should collect, preserve, and display items of scientific, historical, or cultural significance to support study, education, and public enjoyment.
- » **Financial stability:** the museum should have sufficient funding to support its operations and growth, defined by its capacity to meet ongoing operational needs.
- » **Facilities:** the museum must maintain secure storage and adequate facilities to perform its core functions. It should include collection management, research, preservation, education, and exhibition.
- » **Public accessibility:** the museum must provide ready access to exhibitions and the collection. Having regular public opening hours is a way of demonstrating accessibility to the public.
- » **Smaller community and volunteer-based museums:** community-run and volunteer-based museums may operate differently from larger institutions but are still expected to demonstrate official recognition from local communities and councils. While they should aim to meet the criteria listed above, they may require additional professional support to manager specific collections – particularly those involving firearms. For expert advice and support, these museums are encouraged to contact National Services Te Paerangi (NSTP), at Te Papa, which provides specialist knowledge and facilitates professional exchanges
- » **Verification and recognition:** Te Tari Pūreke will assess whether the above criteria have been met and may consider the institution to be a bona fide museum as envisaged in the legislation. These museums remain subject to the same licensing requirements under the Arms Act and Arms Regulations.

Important

Becoming a museum is a significant undertaking that requires planning, resources, and a commitment to meeting professional and legal standards. RSA branches should assess whether they have the capacity and resources to meet these requirements before pursuing this path.

Refer to:

- » For more detailed guidance on operating as a firearms dealer refer to our [Firearms dealer requirements](#) on our website
- » For more information on security for firearms and arms items that require endorsements, please refer to Section 4 of [the Secure storage and transportation guide](#).

Te Tari Pūreke – Firearm Safety Authority values the historical significance of these items and is committed to working together to ensure their responsible preservation.

*Images provided by Andrew Edgcombe – New Zealand Antique & Historical Arms Association Inc.
Thank you for your support in creating this guidance.*