

COLFO News Issue 3 – June 2017

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TURNING THE TIDE

COLFO congratulates firearms users for being vocal on recent firearms issues. This is a good start to what will end up being a long campaign.

Over the past year firearm owners have felt as though their sport, hobby or lifestyle was under serious threat from changing policies introduced by New Zealand Police. Our media have been fed propaganda by the Police Association for tougher gun control which when printed has sent alarm throughout the ill-informed public and non-firearms using communities. The Police Association's consistent misinformation has resulted in the firearms community being demonised when they are in fact vetted to be some of the most responsible, law abiding citizens in this country.

We all hoped that the Select Committee Inquiry into how criminals arm themselves with firearms would report a fair and just way forward so that we could battle the issues hand in hand with our Police and Government. What the Committee's report showed us is that Police appear hell bent on curbing the civilian use and ownership of firearms, that we fit and proper owners are no better than criminals and our Government were supportive of these attitudes. With your voices of concern and reasoning being expressed loud and strong you have changed the tide and thinking of our Members of Parliament. It appears however that there is no change of tide within the New Zealand Police.

The publication of the 2017 Arms Code with the printed requirement to "justify" the number of firearms you own is just one example of Police high handed behaviour. When media asked Police about the vetters that are already threatening consequences of not obliging their "justification" requests the response was disappointing. Instead of looking to rectify a vetter's wrongful demands Police merely said they hadn't been told about it. Just as they appear not to have been told about the "draft" code being printed thousands of times and distributed at their direction and at tax payers expense.

YOU MADE THIS HAPPEN

The combined efforts of the many members of COLFOs various associated organisations, individual members, like-minded pro-firearm users mobilised through social media networks, forums, blogs and emails made this happen. You voiced concerns to Ministers, their advisors, other politicians, the Police commissioner and the media. Because of this we are having an effect. We are now being listened to.

Our plight has reached overseas agencies who are watching and reporting to their memberships what is happening here. The NRA-ILA and Australian shooting fraternities to name two. Correlations between actions taken in Australia, Britain and Canada are also being published. There are media that are now questioning some of what the Police Association say before they publish it. There are Government Ministers asking for input and ideas from us before responding to arms issues.

FIREARMS COMMUNITY ADVISORY FORUM

Those that belong to organisations that are represented on the Firearms Community Advisory Forum (FCAF) may have recently doubted the effect of the forum. COLFO also sits on the forum and can tell you that those representatives are doing the best they can with the little information they are given by NZ Police. Your representatives cannot argue or make comment on situations that they are not made aware of while sitting around a table. It's been mentioned to Police

hierarchy that us having to advise them about a change of policy after a complaint shows a lack of transparency at our meetings. It is not the ideal way forward and we resent being treated this way.

The current group of FCAF representatives are certainly outspoken and passionate advocates for your sports. It is important that you continue to back your representatives so that the forum maintains its strength and integrity as a whole group while at times being dealt a backhand.

FCAF members and NZ Police have discussed this lack of transparency and Police are now making a conscious effort to communicate and hear advice from the firearms community. A virtue that was a given in (retired) Inspector Joe Green's time but immediately lost upon his departure. The Forum has recently seconded two sub-committees with Police. One is to address future security requirements and the other was to address Police response to the Law & Order Select Committee's recommendations.

WHAT ABOUT EVERYONE ELSE?

COLFO and the FCAF representatives speak on behalf of a good number of firearms licenced users. Encompassing nearly all that are in some sort of shooting organisation. But there are still tens of thousands of users that are not in a club or organisation. We need them to hear the messages for a call to action when they are heralded. We need your help to spread our messages. Social media works well and reaches tens of thousands of people in a short time frame. COLFO has successfully worked with Facebook firearms advocates FOUNZ to keep users informed. It helps us if you share our posts and encourage others to sign up to our social media page for up to date information. COLFO also publishes these bi-monthly newsletters which are printed by NZ Guns & Hunting, placed on our website and circulated to our member organisations.

WHAT IS COLFO DOING?

We are constantly lobbying members of parliament. We are in the ears and in front of the faces of important that people that are a part of some important decision-making processes. Our chairman Paul Clark meets frequently with members of our Government. One of our Board members Nicole McKee was appointed as one of two independent advisors to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Police Paula Bennett. Fellow advisor Geoff Thomas and Nicole's role was to comment on the Police report to the Select Committee's Recommendations. Nicole tells us their comprehensive and detailed report to the Minister was supported by the huge feedback they received from the firearms community. Most of which reinforced her personal views and gave the advisors examples that they could write about. Nicole would like to thank all those that took the time to write in. Your emails made a huge difference to how the advisor's report was presented.

WHERE TO NOW?

It's election year. Our Members of Parliament are out lobbying and want your vote. We have reminded those prospective parliamentarians that there are 242,000 law abiding, fit and proper, eligible to vote firearms owners out there and we haven't counted their families yet. We will continue to lobby government on your behalf and we would like you to continue to do the same. Visit our COLFO website where you can select an email topic, amend or add to the content and send it to all current Members of Parliament.

After the Minister of Police Paula Bennett has released the Government's response to the Law & Order Select Committee's report we expect things may go quiet for a short time. It may even stay quiet until after the election. COLFO would like to rally as many people as possible to get on board with us during this time in preparation for the discussions and prospective Arms Amendment Bill that may lie ahead. If you like what we are doing then come and join us and bring a mate with you. When talking law changes, there is power in numbers especially when those numbers are voters.

Keep up the good work everyone and thanks for your support.