

COLFO News Issue 2 – April 2017

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FCAF WORKSHOP

In February 2017 members of the Firearms Community Advisory Forum were invited to Police National HQ to take part in a Firearms Workshop for the Arms Safety and Control group (ASAC). A full day was put aside where identified issues were discussed at great detail.

Included in the discussions were:

- Lack of Police resourcing with cut backs of staff both at PNHQ and out in our communities.
- The inconsistency of arms administration by Police staff around the country.
- The constant requests for A Category firearms details and the threats associated with those demands.
- Arms Officers not having enough staff, resources or financing to affect their jobs in a timely fashion.
- Arms officers not being able to get out into the community of users any more.
- Senior Police attitudes in the Districts towards licensed owners, with many treating us like criminals.
- Police Association's inaccurate and misleading information.
- The downgrading of partnership relationships between Police and firearms community.
- Security of licence holders who have to bring firearms into a Police station in full view of the public.

So then we looked at what would be required to fix some of these and other issues with discussions around:

- Whatever is done must be affordable
- Police need buy-in from the firearms community so stop alienating them
- Consistency around the country is an absolute requirement
- Integrity needs to be built back up
- Stick to the law and its intentions
- Communicate
- Be accurate and efficient in tasks such as Import permits
- Focus on the criminals not the fit and proper community.

The workshop then delved further into these topics and expanded on them with suggestions such as:

- Education is a big factor and a requirement. Look at training children through schools as they also need safety training. Parents should know how to access information and attend also.
- When dealing with the media advise them whether a person is licensed or unlicensed and the importance of this.
- Treat firearms owners with respect and partner with them, do this visually and vocally so that the media pick up on it.
- Improve the relationship between owners and Police that has deteriorated over the last few years.
- If using online services ensure that they are not the only means to receive service as so many users are not computer literate or have access to computers.

At the end of the day we were able to ask questions of Assistant Commissioner Mike Rusbatch, Response and Operations Superintendent Chris Scahill and Miss Julia Penney of the Arms Review.

COLFO believes that while the workshop was a great first step in trying to re-build relationships, we will need to see some sort of demonstrative action from Police for our raised concerns. It's one thing for Police to say they consulted it's another thing for them to show us that they heard.

COLFO REP TAKES FIREARM COMMUNITY CONCERNS TO PARLIAMENT

COLFO Board member Nicole McKee was invited to parliament in March to speak to one of Deputy Prime Minister Paula Bennett's senior ministerial advisers on firearms issues.

The subjects included Police policy implementation, security changes, permit issues, MSSA lengths, the Firearms Community Advisory Forum, United Nations standards, the firearms safety training and licencing demise, the Firearms Safety Council of Aotearoa New Zealand and lack of Police personnel and resourcing at PNHQ and in the districts. The concerns of the firearms community were summarised and delivered to a welcoming and listening advisor.

The Minister's office is taking the concerns of the firearms community very seriously. They have received multiple communications from aggrieved users. It was also noted to Nicole that they are receiving complaints from a wide sector of the firearms community, from all disciplines which they've not experienced before. Questions are being asked by the Minister's office of both Police and the community so that they may understand reasons for Police policy changes and the impact of those changes on the firearm community.

Nicole is one of many people that the Minister's office has contacted and is hearing from. Now is a good time to get writing to your local Member of Parliament and the Minister of Police Hon Paula Bennett to voice your concerns, the Minister's office is listening - paula.bennett@parliament.govt.nz

PISTOL CLUB BANNING POLICE

At the beginning of March the Wairarapa Pistol & Shooting Sports Club (WPSSC) following consultation with its membership decided to discontinue Police training at their facility. This ban of Police was the direct result of member's frustrations at failures by PNHQ to administrate the Arms Act in a reasonable and timely manner. These frustrations span the entire gun club membership with Pistol, Service Rifle and New Zealand Deerstalkers all using the range.

WPSSC felt that there was no other way to bring these frustrations to the attention of PNHQ and the Minister of Police other than by direct means. It was felt that although organisations (including the COLFO member groups) had tried to air their concerns these had largely been ignored. A meeting was held the day following the ban between WPSSC members, the Police Wairarapa Area Commander Inspector Donna Howard and others. The President of WPSSC advised the Inspector that the ban was not directed specifically at the Wairarapa Police with whom they had a good relationship. The Inspector promised to take the concerns of the club to PNHQ and ask for a meeting that included PNHQ, members of WPSSC and a representative of the Firearms Group who use the facility. WPSSC expressed that an improvement would be increased communications between Police and the national Firearms Community. As a show of good faith the Committee allowed Police back onto the range for their March training session, with the proviso that a meeting would need to be held prior to the April training date. A meeting between the WPSSC and PNHQ has been organised to take place shortly.

COLFO PREPARES FOR WFSA

Grant F is well on the path for organising the World Forum for Shooting Activities (WFSA) conference which is to be held in New Zealand for the first time. This is a unique moment for New Zealand shooting sports and a chance to highlight our unique gun laws, hunting, and militaria interests. The conference will be held in Millbrook, Queenstown in the last weekend of October. Once we have the details finalised we will be in touch regarding the opportunities that this presents for all of us. We are hoping to have industry and guiding representatives at the opening cocktail function where there will be chance to discuss what we have to offer globally. Expect more information as we prepare. We all owe a big thanks to Paul C for putting New Zealand well and truly at the forefront of world shooting. You will be hearing from us in the next few months regarding sponsorship. If you want more information please email: wfsa@colfo.org.nz