



28th February 2025

Firearms Policy
Ministry of Justice – National Office
Wellington

Firearms Act Rewrite – consultation February 2025

These comments are made by the Parish Council of St Andrews on The Terrace in response to the public consultation on the Arms Act Rewrite from the Ministry of Justice.

St Andrew's on The Terrace is a progressive and inclusive faith community in central Wellington, the capital city of Aotearoa New Zealand. Our community is committed to acting for a just and peaceful world and being a catalyst for discovery, compassion and celebration in the capital.

On 8th August 1983 St Andrews on The Terrace was declared a Peace Church, a commitment that was reaffirmed by members of the congregation in August 2023 to mark 40 years of working for a more just and peaceful world.

The horrific act of terrorism on 15th March 2019 perpetrated against people at their place of worship in Christchurch remains seared into our national consciousness. It must serve as a constant reminder of the need for effective and rigorous gun control regulation.

The St Andrews Parish Council has considered the consultation information supplied and wishes to express our concern that despite changes made since the 2019 terror attack, there is still a need to further strengthen the current regulations and laws to increase public safety.

We consider that gun ownership is a privilege and not a right and it is good that the Firearms Act currently makes this clear in its purpose statement and we do not want this to be changed. Firearms are lethal weapons and possession of such weapons represents a constant risk to those owning them as well as those around them and their communities.

We urge the Government to retain the ban on semi-automatic firearms and indeed strengthen the ban to ensure the permanent disabling of any weapons included in private collections, museums and other similar settings. We note the recent example of a Christchurch licensed gun collector who used a semi-automatic pistol from his private collection in an attempted murder. Had the weapons in his collection been required to be disabled, this would not have been possible.

The creation of a gun register that was introduced in mid-2023 is a very welcome development and we note the good progress that is being made to register the estimated 250,000 gun owners and their weapons in this country. The enormous number of guns estimated to be at least 1.2 million in this country and the lack of information about who owns these weapons is a continuing risk to public safety. It is also a source of deep sorrow that 80 percent of deaths by gunshot are suicides, which underlines the fact that gun owners are as much a danger to themselves as to others.

We welcome the fact that the license period for gun owners is now limited to 10 years, but we are of the view that the renewal period should be reduced to 5 years. People move frequently in this country and a person's address and personal circumstances can change considerably in ten years. A more frequent renewal would help ensure that the gun register remains up to date and tracing gun owners easier and would be more consistent with practice on other countries such as Australia and the UK.

The access to firearms by children is a very concerning part of the risk posed in our communities by firearms. We ask that the minimum age to hold a firearms license be raised to 18 years, the generally accepted age of adult responsibility in this country. In addition, it should be made clear that no child under the age of 10 years should be permitted to use a firearm.

We are concerned about the increasing danger posed by lethal airguns. Some high-powered airguns can cause lethal injuries at closer distances. We consider that the purchase of high-powered airguns should also require a firearms license.

Firearms regulation is a complex area and we make these comments as members of the community who wish to live in safety and support peaceful and caring community life on our city and country. We pray for wisdom and guidance for all those involved in the review of firearms legislation.

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