

Te Kāhui Tapuhi O Aotearoa Nurses Society of New Zealand

submission to the proposed rewrite of the Arms Act 1983

1. The Nurses Society of New Zealand holds serious concerns regarding some of the proposed changes to the Arms Act 1983 (hereafter referred to as “the Act”) and their implications for the public healthcare system of Aotearoa New Zealand. Clearly gun safety control directly impacts the health system and work of nurses and other health professionals, and as such we believe it is imperative to offer input on the proposed changes.
2. Our response to the proposed changes is divided into seven themes as delineated by the discussion document.

Theme 1: Purpose of regulating firearms access, possession, and use

3. We consider the main purposes of the Act should be to enhance personal and public safety by ensuring responsible and appropriate firearm use. We agree that the Act should promote the safe use of firearms for farming, pest control, sport, and recreation at all times. In this way we agree with the current purpose statement in the Act.

Theme 2: Products controlled by the Act

4. It is the position of the Nurses Society of New Zealand that the term “firearm” is defined appropriately by the Act, and we consider the control of products based on risk to be appropriate.
5. We strongly support the current regulation of prohibited semi-automatic firearms. This is in keeping with widespread international data on the relationship between stronger regulation of semi-automatic firearms and reduced gun-related injuries, fatalities, and mass shooting events. Any attempt to loosen these regulations would be in direct opposition to the good of public health.

Theme 3: Responsible possession and use

6. We support reducing the length of time a person may hold a firearms licence to five years, to increase oversight and reduce risk. Furthermore, we support increasing the minimum age for holding a full firearms licence to 18 years and increasing the minimum age for supervised use to 10 years, as is the law in Australia. This is due to evidence showing increased risk of the irresponsible or criminal use of firearms for teenagers, and the worrying statistics around harmful and fatal incidents involving children and firearms.
7. When the consequences for irresponsible or unintentional use of firearms are so severe, robust measures must be implemented to ensure personal and public safety.
8. Firearms licensing systems are insufficient to ensure public safety and need to be supported by other public safety measures. These measures may include registration of firearms and the ban on semi-automatic firearms.

Theme 4: Supplying, importing, and buying products

9. In the interest of public safety, we support recordkeeping of all sales of firearms. This will minimise the risk of inaccuracies in the register due to private and unrecorded sales.
10. We support the current dealer licence endorsement and permits system, and we find the current licensing requirements for employees to be adequate.
11. We recognise that emerging technologies may pose unprecedented risks with regards to 3D printed firearms and new measures and regulations must be put in place to mitigate these risks.

Theme 5: Compliance, offences, and penalties

12. We consider it important that appropriate penalties are applied in order to encourage compliance with the law and further enhance public safety.

Theme 6: Cost recovery

13. Although we support the current cost recovery framework, we believe a significant incremental increase of licencing fees is vital, as they have not been changed since 1999. This puts undue burden on taxpayers to fund the firearms regulatory system.

Theme 7: Agencies that control the possession and use of firearms

14. We do not support the proposal to move the Firearms Safety Authority (FSA) away from Police to a different department. This is primarily due to the integrated manner in which organisational, administrative, and IT systems of both the FSA and Police operate, and secondly due to a lack of evidence of this type of shift succeeding in other countries.
15. We are concerned regarding the negative impacts this proposed regulatory change will have on public health and safety, and suggest alternative solutions be explored.
16. Any changes made to the Act should only be made with the aim of enhancing public and personal safety. The most critical components of Aotearoa New Zealand's firearms law include the licensing of firearm owners, the registration of all firearms, and the prohibition of semi-automatic firearms. These protections are most effective when implemented together, and the administration of the firearms regulatory system needs to be adequately funded and resourced in order to be fully effective.

Footnote:

Nurses Society of New Zealand Te Kāhui Tapuhi O Aotearoa and Te Uniana o NSNZ Incorporated. We are the second-largest professional nursing body and union in Aotearoa New Zealand.

NURSES SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND Te Kāhui Tapuhi o Aotearoa & Te Uniana o NSNZ

