



## NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND INC.

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# National Rifle Association of New Zealand (Inc) submission to The Arms Bill 233-1 (2025)

**This submission is presented to the Select Committee for The Arms Bill 233-1 (2025) by the National Rifle Association of New Zealand (Inc).**

The National Rifle Association of New Zealand wishes to be heard before the Select Committee in support of this submission.

### About the National Rifle Association of New Zealand

- Originally founded in 1878 as the New Zealand Rifle Association.
- 1901-1909 as New Zealand Defence Rifle Association.
- 1909-1923 as New Zealand Dominion Rifle Association.
- Since 1923 as National Rifle Association of New Zealand (NRANZ).
- For most of our first 100 years we had a close relationship with the NZ military, particularly the NZ Army, and strong support from the NZ Government.
- Our National Rifle Range at Trentham is jointly run by the NZ Army and NRANZ.
- NRANZ is a foundation member of the International Confederation of Fullbore Rifle Associations (ICFRA).
- NRANZ is a member of the New Zealand Shooting Federation (NZSF)
- NRANZ is a member of the Coalition of Licenced Firearms Owners (COLFO).

The shooting sport we administer is long range target rifle shooting.

- Target shooting is the oldest organised competition sport in New Zealand and has an impeccable safety record.
- We use centre fire rifles of various calibres.
- Our sport is about precision and accuracy in the prevailing conditions.
- We shoot at inanimate targets at various distances on designated and approved shooting ranges as a recreational and competitive sport.
- Our members and competitors use predominantly handloaded ammunition.
- We have member clubs that have been in existence for over 130 years.
- Our principal trophy is the world-renowned Ballinger Belt. The Ballinger Belt was gifted by the NZ Government to the NZ Rifle Association as a competition prize in 1873. It is New Zealand's oldest national sporting trophy. With the exception of the first and second World War periods, the Ballinger Belt has been competed for annually since 1873.
- We have NZ teams and individual members regularly travelling to international competitions, and we regularly have competitors from overseas attend our annual national championship.

NRANZ supports the writing of a new Arms Act as the current Arms Act has been changed and modified in a haphazard manner making it hard to read and understand, and therefore leaving enforcement open to interpretation, and lawful firearms owners at risk of unintended technical breach of the law.

The changes made in the wake of the 2019 Christchurch Shootings were rushed and a knee jerk reaction to a heinous crime. The law changes were all made before the Royal Commission report was published, and the new Arms Bill is being done before the Coronial Inquest Report is released.

Licensed Firearms owners and shooting clubs have been scapegoated and blamed for many of the problems with firearms, when it is the criminal community that blatantly ignore the laws, that are the main problem.

It took NZ Police hierarchy until the Coronial Inquest into the Christchurch shootings to admit that the perpetrator should not have been issued with a firearms licence by NZ Police. The vetting process had not been correctly followed. It took Police 5 years to own that, while law abiding licensed firearms users and shooting clubs bore the consequences.

NRANZ strongly supports the separation of the Firearms Safety Authority from NZ Police. FSA should be the regulator for this new Arms Bill. The FSA needs to be a separate legal entity with a distinct separation of powers between the FSA as regulator and administrator and NZ Police as law enforcement.

NRANZ supports the detailed submission of COLFO on this Arms Bill.

NRANZ supports the submissions from other National Shooting Organisations including New Zealand Deerstalkers Association, New Zealand Clay Target Association, New Zealand Pistol Association, Target Shooting New Zealand, New Zealand Antique and Historical Arms Association, and Sporting Shooters Association of New Zealand for the specialised knowledge that they bring in their areas of expertise. Their expertise comes from lifetime involvements and knowledge bases.

NRANZ supports the submission of Grant Fletcher, Barrister, as an expert in the area of firearms law, and consistency within the law.

## **Specific comments.**

### **Clause 67 (1) Application for a firearms license**

Add additional clause “67(1)(e) is a member of an enrolled non pistol shooting club or they require a firearms licence for a business or employment purpose”

NRANZ believes that if a non pistol shooting club must be enrolled then it should be a mandatory requirement for all applicants for a firearms licence to be a member of an enrolled non pistol shooting club unless the person can demonstrate that they require the licence for a business or employment purpose. Non pistol shooting clubs provide a safe environment to learn about and use firearms and provide a first layer of reference for a person’s mental state and fitness to possess firearms.

### **Clause 67 (2) (c) Name and contact of Health Practitioner.**

Healthy people may not have visited a health practitioner for many years and having a dedicated health practitioner is often not possible with telehealth and locums used in many practices.

We are also concerned with the security of information and data about who holds a FAL and therefore where firearms might be held. A health practitioner holding this information represents another location that is exposed to data breach and the loss of critical information to undesirable persons.

**Clause 69 Fit and Proper persons to hold a FAL.**

**69 (1)(a-c)** The presumption inferred by the Bill is that if you are “charged”, you are guilty and therefore not Fit and Proper. Having been charged should carry no weight unless there is a conviction.

**69 (1)(d-g)** While in no way endorsing any of the actions, protection orders and claims of violence have been used against FAL holders by former partners to “get back” at them. If the complaint has been withdrawn or proved to be malicious then it should not affect an application.

**69 (2)(c) Any other matters.....** This clause should be deleted as it is open ended and subjective.

**69(3)(b).** Information to be considered should be from a “verifiable” source.

In all clauses in this Bill the onus off proof should at all times be on the prosecutor to prove the guilt rather than the defendant to prove that they are innocent.

**Clause 70 (3) Notification to a health practitioner of an applicant receiving a FAL.**

As with clause 67 we are concerned about the security of the information about the FAL status of the person and the possibility for that information to be intercepted and fall into the hands of undesirable parties.

**Clause 73. (1) g. Inform the Chief Executive if the Health Practitioner changes.**

Health Practices may not notify their clients when the practitioner changes and the client may only find out when they need to attend a practitioner. Without a requirement for a health practice to notify FAL holders of a change in practitioner, which would require a practice to maintain a record of their clients who are FAL holders, it is very difficult to comply with the law if you have no knowledge that you are in breach of it.

This clause is impractical, creates an unnecessary data breach risk to be workable, serves no worthwhile purpose, and should be deleted.

**Clauses 76 - 78. Licence duration.**

Agree with the proposals.

**Clause 123. Visitors Fit and Proper assessment.**

Being charged with an offence should not carry the same weight as being convicted of an offence. It is basically being guilty even if you prove you are innocent or the charges are dismissed for whatever reason.

**Clause 130 (3) Duration of Visitor Licence**

A visitor license issued for 2 or more visits to New Zealand should be issued for a period of 2 years from the date of issue. NRANZ has international competitors that attend our annual championship in successive years. A 2 year visitor licence period would reduce the overheads of administration associated with repeat applications within a relatively short period of time and help maintain an efficient and timely licencing process.

**Clause 131. Visitor may not take ownership.**

This clause is conflating the very separate issues of ownership and possession. The purpose of the Act and the arms registry is to regulate the possession of arms items, not the ownership of them. This clause is the only place in the Bill that mentions ownership. If the purpose of clause 131 is to emphasise that a visitors license does not confer or imply a permit to possess a restricted weapon then it should simply say that.

A visitor to NZ intending to hunt or compete would normally bring their own firearm, as permitted by the conditions of the visitors license and NZ Customs requirements, or hire or borrow one from a NZ FAL holder. If the period of loan of the firearm is greater than 30 days the obligations to update the register apply. At the conclusion of the visit the firearm will either be exported from NZ with the visitor, transferred back to a NZ FAL holder if borrowed, or sold and transferred in the registry to a NZ FAL holder.

There is no reason to restrict a visitor from taking ownership of a standard firearm or pistol, as permitted to possess by the visitors license, provided the normal obligations of the register are met and the item is exported or transferred to a NZ FAL holder at the end of the visit. There is no reason to restrict the sale of a visitors arms items to an NZ FAL holder with the appropriate licence.

Persons emigrating to NZ with firearms enter with a Visitors FAL, if they have arms items, before obtaining a NZ FAL. They have a year to do so. There is no reason that they be restricted from purchasing or selling during that period.

**Clause 164. Disposal of arms items after visitor licence expires, surrendered or revoked.**

As with Clause 131, the visitor should be able to arrange the sale or disposal of the Arms Items or Ammunition within NZ to an NZ FAL holder with a licence that is appropriate for the possession of the arms items.

**Clauses 218 – 224. Non pistol shooting clubs.**

Non pistol shooting clubs have been providing education, training, and a safe place for the recreational use of firearms for over 130 years. Non pistol shooting clubs have an impeccable safety record. Apart from some controls around the supply of ammunition, the only real purpose of these sections is for the Chief Executive to have a list of non pistol shooting clubs and shooting ranges, and to be able to charge clubs fees for that privilege. NRANZ does not support the requirement for non pistol shooting clubs to be enrolled.

**Clauses 234 – 241. Non pistol shooting ranges.**

Non pistol shooting ranges have been providing education, training, and a safe place for the recreational use of firearms for over 130 years. Non pistol shooting ranges have an impeccable safety record. The standards for safe range design have been well developed and managed by the various national shooting organisations as evidenced by the absence of injuries sustained by participants and members of the public from range shooting activities. The only real purpose of these sections is for the Chief Executive to have a list of non pistol shooting ranges and shooting ranges, and to be able to charge fees to range operators for that privilege. NRANZ does not support the requirement for non pistol shooting ranges to be enrolled.

**Clause 242 (1)(a) (ii) enter and inspect any place the club stores....**

Many clubs do not store firearms and ammunition on club premises due to security concerns. Does this right of inspection include private storage used for club firearms etc.

NRANZ believes the clause should read “ any club premises where the shooting club stores firearms ...”.

**Clause 242 (1)(c) remove any hard copy documents etc.**

242(1) (b) allows for inspection, printing or copying of documents of the club or range.

This clause allows any hard copy to be removed and taken. If a clubs documents are taken they then have no records or hard copy documents left in their possession with which to defend themselves should the matter proceed further.

NRANZ believe this clause is unnecessary as the previous clause allows for copying etc and should

therefore be deleted or at least amended to only allow the copying of hard copy documents. If hard copy is to be removed receipts must be given so that there is a record of what was taken and copies returned to the club to maintain its records.

**Clause 243 (1). Improvement Notices.**

Having the wording “likely to fail” or “likely to contravene” is making a subjective assessment based on something that may or may not happen in the future. This clause wording could be open to abuse or inconsistent interpretations, and should not need an Improvement Notice.

**Clause 268. (1). Possessing ammunition components.....**

NRANZ does not support this clause and believes it should be deleted as it is impractical and unnecessary. The offence of possession has been applied to inoffensive items that may capture an innocent member of a household who does not hold an FAL based on an assumed indication of intention to manufacture where there is no such intention. To avoid this risk to the household a FAL holder would need to lock away all components, tools and instructional material.

It should be sufficient for the Act to simply rely on the offence of possessing assembled ammunition by a person that does not hold a firearms license.

**Clause 300(2). Establishment of Arms Regulator as an autonomous agency of NZ Police.**

NRANZ does not support the Arms Regulator being an autonomous agency of NZ Police.

NZ Police are not regarded as experts in the field of firearms usage and safety, nor as experts in the field of effective arms control and regulation.

NZ Police have a long history of repeatedly deficient, unlawful, and prejudicial administration of the Arms Act and negligent discharge of their obligations under the Act. This has resulted in great loss of life and harm to New Zealanders, and deep mistrust of NZ Police by lawful firearms users.

The Arms Regulator must be an autonomous organisation that answers to a different Minister and must not be an agency of NZ Police. Regulation and criminal enforcement need clear separation. Anything less will maintain the mistrust and impair the implementation of effective arms control.

**Clauses 303 – 312.**

Various clauses should be altered to reflect the autonomous organisation not being a part of NZ Police and remove references to the Policing Act 2008.

**Clauses 313-319.**

NRANZ supports the establishment of a Licencing Review Committee and its makeup and function. This committee should have the power to seek expert opinion on technical matters beyond their knowledge or expertise.

**Clauses 320-323.**

NRANZ supports the continuation of the Arms Advisory Group , its operation and guidelines.

**Clause 341. Appeals to District Court.**

Any of these appeals should first be able to go to the Licencing Review Committee, as they are all various types or forms of licences, before taking up District Court's time and the incurred cost for both parties of court action.

The Licencing Review Committee's remit should be expanded to include these categories of reviews. This would show a willingness to resolve matters expediently without incurring serious

expense to both parties.

### **Clause 347-360 Arms Registry**

NRANZ does not support the maintenance of the arms registry. There is no evidence from anywhere in the world that an arms registry is an effective element of arms control that reduces or eliminates the criminal misuse and harm caused with firearms. It is an expensive and error riddled folly imposed upon only those that have an intention and desire to use firearms lawfully.

Data and privacy breaches of information held in the registry are a virtual certainty and put FAL holders at risk. NRANZ is concerned about who has access to the registry and when and why they might access the information.

### **Clause 358 (f). Content of direct access agreements.**

We are concerned with who has access to the registry and when and why. Each time that the registry is accessed by NZ Police, Dept of Conservation, NZ Customs or Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the name of the person accessing the registry must be recorded and whose records were accessed. It cannot just be a group of people with a blanket approval to access without individualised recording of that access. This access is one of the big holes for security of FAL holders personal data, especially for those having endorsed licences.

### **Clause 374 Priority applications by persons travelling overseas**

NRANZ supports this clause.