



## **Submission from Gun Control NZ to the Finance and Expenditure Select Committee on the Arms Legislation Bill Supplementary Order Paper 408**

### **Who supports this submission?**

8,405 people signed up to the Gun Control NZ summary submission on the Arms Legislation Bill. We have not consulted them on this submission but they agree with the general principle that stronger gun control is needed in New Zealand.

We commissioned an opinion poll from UMR, which shows that 71% of people support the semi-automatic ban and the gun buyback programme. This level of support has declined only ten per cent since April, which is impressive and suggests that people's strong emotions in the immediate aftermath of the Christchurch attacks reflect ongoing concern. Only 20% were opposed to the semi-automatic ban and the gun buyback programme with 9% feeling unsure. The full results are attached to this submission and are also available at <https://www.guncontrol.nz/media/most-new-zealanders-back-stronger-gun-laws>

### **About Gun Control NZ**

Gun Control NZ advocates for stronger gun laws to make us safer. Gun Control NZ provides a voice for the majority of New Zealanders who want change. The ban on most semi-automatic weapons was a good first step but much more needs to be done. The gun lobby is fighting hard to oppose the stronger gun laws wanted by most New Zealanders. We need to ensure they don't succeed, as they have done in the past.

We are not opposed to gun ownership. We support properly vetted people being able to own registered rifles and shotguns, so long as those guns are not semi-automatic.

Gun Control NZ is a not-for-profit organisation run by volunteers. We are not aligned with any political party or government body. The leadership team have backgrounds in public health, public policy and social change. Hera Cook is a public health researcher at the University of Otago. Nik Green started a petition to ban semi-automatic weapons. Philippa Yasbek has significant experience in regulation and legislation. Jerome Mika has spent 15

years working for Pacific and Maori communities, in various political, business and community advocacy roles.

## Changes to the definition of “prohibited firearm”

We fully support the changes to the definition of prohibited firearm. Given the speed with which Parliament responded to the Christchurch terror attacks, it was inevitable that loopholes would be left open. One of Gun Control NZ’s central aims is to strengthen the ban on semi-automatic firearms.

### Pistols

We fully support a prohibition on shorter semi-automatic rifles, which may currently be classified as pistols.

### Lower receivers

We fully support a prohibition on centrefire lower receivers. It is very important that the prohibition covers all critical parts of AR-15 style weapons. We have unfortunately witnessed the devastating power of these firearms in Christchurch. It is important to clarify that the lower receivers are prohibited and remove any uncertainty that may currently exist.

### Regulation-making powers

We fully support the expansion of the regulation making power in the Arms Act 1983 to prohibit categories of firearms through Order in Council. We agree that centerfire pump-action shotguns and pistols should be able to be prohibited by Order in Council.

## Pistol carbine conversion kits

We support greater controls on pistol carbine conversion kits (PCCKs) but recommend that they should be banned outright and subject to a six month amnesty and buyback, like other prohibited weapons and parts.

All pistols in New Zealand that are owned by civilians are solely for sporting purposes. Pistols are not tools used for other purposes such as pest control. By their very nature, sports are created through the development of rules or customs to ensure fair competition and allow for the judgement of winners. Most sports self-regulate and generally put in place rules to ensure the relative safety of participants. Sports are generally not as good at self-regulating to ensure the safety of non-participants. It is sometimes necessary for Parliament to step in and regulate sports to ensure the safety of the general public. For example, street racing is illegal because of the risks to bystanders.

We urge Parliament to step in and prohibit PCCKs given the risks that these parts potentially pose to the general population. The effect will be to place some limitations on those who participate in pistol and Airsoft type sports. But these limitations will not eliminate or

endanger those sports. They will merely affect the range of sub-disciplines accessible to participants. We believe that this is an acceptable trade-off for public safety.

A PCCK's main function is to simulate the experience of firing military style assault rifles:

One Glock 17 conversion kit available from Guns NZ says it turns a "standard handgun into a rock solid personal defense and special operations weapon system". It looks and works much like the now-banned military-style assault rifles and according to Jim Yates, chief executive from Guns NZ, who is among retailers selling the kits, that's the point. "This is one of the few things that we can do to simulate the use of what we used to do with AR-15 rifles using your existing licence-permitted pistol ... and the pistol carbine kit."<sup>1</sup>

We do not see any need for anyone to be simulating the experience of shooting banned military style semi-automatic rifles with only slightly less dangerous firearms and accessories.

We note that in the wake of mass shootings in the UK, their Parliament banned all pistol sports. UK shooters wanting to train for the Olympics or Commonwealth games have to train in other countries. Special exemptions were created to enable the Olympic Games to be held in London in 2012. We are not proposing the wholesale banning of all pistol sports in New Zealand.

The pistol shooters affected by the SOP changes do not compete in the Olympics or Commonwealth Games. Nor are these affected disciplines ever likely to be included in those competitions. The shooters affected are those who partake in the euphemistically named "Practical Shooting". "Practical shooting" is better described as combat shooting. Here is a description of practical shooting by Philip Alpers<sup>2</sup>:

"Practical" shooting is almost the complete opposite of traditional target shooting sports. Competitors conduct their activities over a "run-and-gun" obstacle course where they face a variety of "real-world" or "practical" shoot/don't shoot situations, such as firing at the human silhouette of a "hostage-taker" while sparing the "hostage." Unlike traditional target sports, the weapons used are most often large caliber pistols, assault rifles, and riot shotguns. And although participants use the more innocuous term "practical" when dealing with the general public, among enthusiasts routinely refer to their pastime as "combat" or "tactical" shooting.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkinson, Jeremy "Kits to convert pistols into weapons similar to military style semi-automatic firearms still legally being sold" *RNZ* 30 August 2019  
<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/397773/kits-to-convert-pistols-into-weapons-similar-to-military-style-semi-automatic-firearms-still-legally-being-sold>

<sup>2</sup> Alpers, P and Sugarmann J *Gold Medal Gunslingers: Combat Shooting Targets the Olympic Games* July 1999  
<https://www.gunpolicy.org/fr/documents/890-gold-medal-gunslingers-shoot-to-kill-at-the-olympic-games/file> Accessed 14 October 2019.

In a typical "course of fire," contestants begin with a rapid draw from a holster, and are then timed as they run, crawl, and sometimes climb through a shoot-'em-up scenario, all while firing at human-scaled head-and-torso targets. Human targets intended to be shot are often referred to as "bad guys." "No-shoot" targets are often called "hostages." The highest scores are awarded to "head shots" and "heart shots" because of their heightened lethality, with points awarded for speed of shooting as much as for accuracy.

A landscape of wrecked cars, dangerous dark alleyways, ubiquitous home invasions, and crime-ridden businesses dominates the world of the combat shooter. With titles like "Save the Bank," "The Bodyguard," "Cartel House Raid," and "Carjacked by Gang Members," courses of fire often reflect the self-defense fantasies of the combat shooter.

We also recommend Pistol NZ's 3 Gun and Multi Gun promotional video, available at <https://youtu.be/5NxxeE1DX58> for an insight into the nature of the "sport".

We do not support the use of firearms in "sports" that are designed to simulate the experience of killing people in combat type situations. There is no need for the practitioners of these activities to have any exemptions from laws designed to protect the general population from the misuse of the most dangerous firearms.

We believe that the Police have given too much weight to the interests of pistol shooters in their proposal to regulate PCCKs. We urge the Select Committee to instead prioritise the right to life of all New Zealanders and ban PCCKs.