



21 October 2019

**Submission to the Finance and Expenditure Committee
Re: Arms Legislation Bill**

The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine would like to thank the Finance and Expenditure Committee for the opportunity to make a submission on the Arms Legislation Bill.

The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine (the College) is the professional body representing the medical specialty of public health medicine in New Zealand. We have 222 members, all of whom are medical doctors, including 185 fully qualified Public Health Medicine Specialists with the majority of the remainder being registrars training in the specialty of public health medicine.

Public Health Medicine is the branch of medicine concerned with the assessment of population health and health care needs, the development of policy and strategy, health promotion, the control and prevention of disease, and the organisation of services. The NZCPHM partners to achieve health gain and equity for our population, eliminating inequities across socioeconomic and ethnic groups, and promoting environments in which everyone can be healthy.

Background

Gun control is an important public health measure, and the College [again strongly supports](#) the Government's moves to strengthen the regulatory framework controlling the use and possession of arms in New Zealand. This legislation has the potential to prevent suicide deaths as well as preventing gun violence directed against others and accidental deaths.

We support the submissions on the Arms Legislation Bill of the Suicide Mortality Review Committee (Health Quality and Safety Commission) and the New Zealand Medical Association.

General points

We are supportive of the Bill's main provisions, including the following:

- Creation of a firearms registry
- Strengthening licensing regimes to filter out high-risk people (although we do have concerns at the reference to mental health issues – see our specific suggestions later)
- Reducing the license period to five years (we would support a further reduction to three years as recommended by Gun Control New Zealand)
- Improving the tools available to the Police to enable them to function better as a regulator
- Introducing an advisory group
- Introduction of new offences and penalties and strengthening existing offences and penalties

Specific issues

We commend the plan to move to a shortened period of firearm licensing (from ten to five years). We consider that the current procedure of **in person and usually in-home vetting** is the best method to assess current risk and we therefore strongly recommend continuation of this regime.

We recommend **removing reference to mental illness and substance use** as considerations in granting a licenses. We recommend that these are replaced by considerations of behaviour and risk. We support the suggestion by the NZMA to make reference to risk to self or others.

Thank you again for the opportunity for the NZCPHM to submit on the Arms Legislation Bill. We hope our feedback is helpful and are happy to provide further clarification on matter covered in this submission. We would be grateful for the opportunity to present our submission at an oral hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'FD', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Felicity Dumble, President, NZCPHM