



NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS
Te Kauae Kaimahi

Submission

of the

New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi

to the

Finance and Expenditure Committee

on the

Arms (Prohibited Firearms, Magazines, and Parts) Amendment Bill

P O Box 6645

Wellington

4 April 2019

1. The NZCTU, Te Kauae Kaimahi, supports this legislation....

- 1.1. This submission is made on behalf of the 27 unions affiliated to the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi (CTU). With over 310,000 members, the CTU is one of the largest democratic organisations in New Zealand.
- 1.2. The CTU acknowledges Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand and formally acknowledges this through Te Rūnanga o Ngā Kaimahi Māori o Aotearoa (Te Rūnanga), the Māori arm of Te Kauae Kaimahi (CTU).
- 1.3. Firstly, it is with profound sadness that we acknowledge the people whose lives were taken in the 15 March 2019 terrorist shooting in Christchurch, among whom were two members from our affiliated unions. We acknowledge all of the bereaved families and communities and their grief. We also acknowledge those who were injured and those who are, and who will be, psychologically affected by the trauma of the attack. And we acknowledge those who were the first responders on that afternoon, many of whom were members of our affiliated unions.
- 1.4. This is the background to this Bill and the reason behind the urgency to pass laws that will, to the best extent possible, prevent such an event ever happening again in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 1.5. We are not normally supportive of legislation being rushed through Parliamentary processes and timeframes. But exceptional circumstances justify the need for an urgent Government and Parliamentary response.
- 1.6. Despite the tight time frame, CTU affiliated unions have responded swiftly to support this CTU stance. Some affiliated members have made their own submissions and others have contacted us immediately to endorse this CTU position. E tū New Zealand's largest private sector union with its membership of 54,000, sent its support for the CTU position on the proposed legislation around gun reform stating that "as a country, (we) need to do all we can to ensure that there is not another domestic terrorist attack like the one that occurred in Christchurch on the 15th March".

- 1.7. The Bill amends the Arms Act 1983 to tighten gun control and increase the safety and security of citizens and reduce the risk of death or injury from guns. It recognises the extreme harm that results from the misuse of semiautomatic firearms and removes them from circulation and their use by the general population.
- 1.8. The amendments are consistent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16, which is to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- 1.9. People in this country are still reeling from shock as a result of these attacks. Our member unions were and are among those affected – both directly and indirectly. As a trade union movement we have met and discussed what our collective response should be to these attacks. There are many responses that are needed. They include regulation but as well education, challenging islamophobia and racism, building relationships, attitudinal changes and social media restrictions.
- 1.10. Changing the firearms legislation laws is now at the forefront and is a first step in responding to the terrorist attacks. Most Kiwis are shocked that the weapons that were used in the March 15 2019 attack could be acquired so easily and done so legally.
- 1.11. It is widely accepted that New Zealand’s gun laws are grossly inadequate. In October 2017 an opportunity was missed to reform our gun laws. It has emerged that changes and recommendations have not been acted on as far back as 1997.
- 1.12. We are aware that this legislation will be opposed by some gun lobbyists and that they will be backed by other radical lobbyists such as the US National Rifle Association. We endorse the sentiments of the President of the New Zealand Police Association, Chris Cahill, who said in a press release,

“There is no place in the upcoming debate for the radical gun lobby which has made its presence felt in previous attempts to make our country safe. We

have seen what happens in the United States when gun radicals are involved. Nothing. That is not good enough in New Zealand.”¹

- 1.13. It is in the interest of peace and security for working people that CTU unions support this legislation. Trade unions are committed to peace and to the rights of working people to decent lives and to safe haven. As the Prime Minister the Hon. Jacinda Ardern said at the National Remembrance Service for the victims of the Christchurch mosques terrorist attack,

“Violence and extremism is not welcome here....the world has been stuck in a vicious cycle of extremism and it must stop.”

- 1.14. We commend the New Zealand Parliament and the establishment of cross party political support to urgently change and amend the firearms legislation for the safety and security of working people and their families, for all of our communities and all the people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

¹ <https://www.policeassn.org.nz/news/police-association-fully-supports-pms-call-for-gun-law-changes>