

4 April 2019

Finance and Expenditure Committee
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

fe@parliament.govt.nz

Christchurch City Council submission to Finance and Expenditure Committee: Arms (Prohibited Firearms, Magazines and Parts) Amendment Bill 2019

Introduction

1. The Christchurch City Council thanks the Government for taking urgent action in response to the terror attacks in Ōtautahi/Christchurch on 15 March and acknowledges the cross-party support that has enabled this proposed legislation to be brought before the House and move through all stages quickly.
2. The Council also thanks the select committee for the opportunity to make a submission to the Arms (Prohibited Firearms, Magazines and Parts) Amendment Bill (Bill); and for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Submission

3. The Council fully supports the prohibition of semi-automatic firearms, magazines, and parts that can be used to assemble prohibited firearms.
4. Military style semi-automatic firearms were used by a terrorist to gun down 50 members of our Muslim communities, and seriously injure many more in their places of worship at their time of prayer.
5. This cowardly attack on unarmed people in a place they were entitled to feel safe and where they had no possibility of beginning to defend themselves was also an attack on us all; on our shared values and on our way of life.
6. Christchurch, New Zealand, now sits next to Parkland, Florida, in the list of places that have received a Lei of Aloha in the wake of such an attack. The city has received many messages of support since the 15 March attacks, with the most poignant coming from the students and staff of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The poignancy comes from the fact that they visited Christchurch to share their experience with the Student Volunteer Army and to debate the leadership role that had been their response to the tragedy. From their darkest days, emerged young people determined to give effect to their school motto: “be the change you want to see in the world”. This is what they said:

“On behalf of the Stoneman Douglas student body, we would like to send our deepest condolences to all those affected by the terrible tragedy. We know the impact it holds on not only a city but a nation as a whole. We want all our New Zealand friends to know we are right behind you and support you all. The same way you had our back during our time of sorrow, we have yours. We also wanted to state that we admire you immensely for the quick response in gun control. The legislation introduced to ban military style semi-automatic and assault rifles is an outstanding solution to the obvious problem. We commend your government for putting the citizens of New Zealand first and acknowledging those affected. We hope that in the light of events, our government learns from the laws implemented to protect the people. Don't forget to stay strong and check up on those affected. You will all get through this and come out stronger than ever before.

With love,

Ana Solano, Arvind Greer, and Joey Cordover

On behalf of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas high school family and Student Leaders who participated in the University of Canterbury Youth Leadership Summit, Christchurch, July 2018”

7. This Bill is an important step towards strengthening New Zealand firearms laws, and restoring public confidence that all New Zealanders no matter where they were born or how they express their faith can live and gather in safety.
8. The Council also supports the proposed amnesty provisions that will reduce the number of firearms in circulation. Semi-automatic firearms have no place in the hands of those who do not require them for legitimate use.

Conclusion

9. The Council notes that the Government intends to introduce further amendments to firearms legislation and that this is likely to include consideration of a national register of firearms and the vetting process for those applying to obtain a gun licence.
10. The Council urges the Government to give immediate attention to these further reforms. Comprehensive firearms reforms are critical to ensuring similar attacks do not and cannot happen again.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to this submission.

Yours faithfully



Lianne Dalziel
Mayor of Christchurch

Appendix one:

Christchurch City Council oral submission to Finance and Expenditure Committee: Arms (Prohibited Firearms, Magazines and Parts) Amendment Bill 2019

1. The Christchurch City Council thanks the committee for the opportunity to speak to this submission.
2. I am accompanied today by Dr Alistair Humphrey, Canterbury Medical Officer of Health. This is a public health issue as well and he has agreed to attend with me today in support of the Council's submission and to answer any of the committee's questions.
3. The messages in the Council's submission that you have in front of you today are simple.
 - We thank the Government for taking urgent action in response to the terror attacks in Ōtautahi/Christchurch on 15 March
 - We acknowledge the cross-party support that has enabled this proposed legislation to be brought before the House and move through all stages quickly
 - And we urge the Government to give immediate attention to these further reforms to firearms legislation. Comprehensive firearms reforms are critical to ensuring similar attacks do not and cannot happen again.
4. Christchurch, New Zealand, now sits next to Parkland, Florida, in the list of places that have received a Lei of Aloha in the wake of such an attack. I have received many messages of support for our city at this time, however the most poignant came from the students and staff of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The poignancy comes from the fact that they visited Christchurch to share their experience with the Student Volunteer Army and to debate the leadership role that had been their response to the tragedy. From their darkest days, emerged young people determined to give effect to their school motto: "be the change you want to see in the world". This is what they said:

"On behalf of the Stoneman Douglas student body, we would like to send our deepest condolences to all those affected by the terrible tragedy. We know the impact it holds on not only a city but a nation as a whole. We want all our New Zealand friends to know we are right behind you and support you all. The same way you had our back during our time of sorrow, we have yours. We also wanted to state that we admire you immensely for the quick response in gun control. The legislation introduced to ban military style semi-automatic and assault rifles is an outstanding solution to the obvious problem. We commend your government for putting the citizens of New Zealand first and acknowledging those affected. We hope that in the light of events, our government learns from the laws implemented to protect the people. Don't forget to stay strong and check up on those affected. You will all get through this and come out stronger than ever before.

With love,

Ana Solano, Arvind Greer, and Joey Cordover

On behalf of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas high school family and Student Leaders who participated in the University of Canterbury Youth Leadership Summit, Christchurch, July 2018”

5. I have said from the start that Christchurch will not be defined by what happened on the 15th March – we are defined by our response – the love, the compassion and the kindness – and New Zealand won’t be defined by what happened on that day either – we are defined by your response - your willingness as a Parliament to take action to fix a wrong that should have been remedied 27 years ago.
6. I sat where you sit in 1992, listening to submissions, after a determined Minister was unable to muster the numbers on the government benches, let alone across the House for the Military Style Semi-Automatic ban that needed to happen in the wake of the tragedy of Aramoana. It was heart-breaking to read the Hansard entries for the debate.
7. This is what a submitter said in 1992: “It was most disappointing to see on television recently a hesitant Minister of Police evading the issue after all the brave words he spoke a few months ago. If the Aramoana experience has failed to teach our legislators that these and similar weapons must be banned, regardless of the power of the lobby opposing such action, one can only speculate on the extent of the tragedy needed to spur our politicians into positive action to protect lives”.
8. It is tragic to now know what that has meant. Fifty people have died, there are many more injured and over a hundred families affected.
9. I see that Hon John Banks has now spoken out about why he failed to deliver the law change we needed then. This was his greatest regret. I want him to know that his words now give every reason for the House to act as it has. This law change must happen without delay. Give no time to those who seek to defend the indefensible. The ban will save lives.
10. This is what Australia did in the wake of Port Arthur. The then Prime Minister, John Howard regarded this as his finest achievement in his entire political career. And look what it has meant for Australia – the terrorist could not have amassed these weapons in his own country; he could not have committed this atrocity there. He could here. He said he came here because it was a safe country – what he didn’t say was ‘safe for him to perpetrate this crime’. By taking this step today, you are showing the courage to act immediately. And when you look back on your time here you can do so with no regrets. You can all be proud of having played a role in giving effect to the Prime Minister’s commitment made decisively in the wake of what occurred in Christchurch on the 15th March 2019.

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Christchurch City Council supplementary submission to Finance and Expenditure Committee: Arms (Prohibited Firearms, Magazines and Parts) Amendment Bill 2019

Introduction

1. The Christchurch City Council thanks the Government for taking urgent action in response to the terror attacks in Ōtautahi/Christchurch on 15 March and acknowledges the cross-party support that has enabled this proposed legislation to be brought before the House and move through all stages quickly.

Supplementary submission

2. This submission is in addition to the Council's earlier submission tabled with the Finance and Expenditure committee 4 April. The following paragraph is provided to clarify an error in the final paragraph of the Council's principal submission and should be read with that submission.
3. This is what Australia did in the wake of Port Arthur. The then Prime Minister, John Howard regarded this as his finest achievement in his entire political career. And look what it has meant for Australia – the terrorist could not have amassed these weapons in his own country; he could not have committed this atrocity there. He could here. He said he came here because it was a safe country – what he didn't say was 'safe for him to perpetrate this crime'. By taking this step today, you are showing the courage to act immediately. And when you look back on your time here you can do so with no regrets. You can all be proud of having played a role in giving effect to the Prime Minister's commitment made decisively in the wake of what occurred in Christchurch on the 15th March 2019.

Yours faithfully



Lianne Dalziel
Mayor of Christchurch