

## **Game Animal Council working to improve new rules for firearms users**

The Game Animal Council (GAC) is applying its expertise in the use of firearms for hunting to work alongside Police, other agencies and stakeholder groups to improve the compliance provisions for hunters and other firearms users.

The GAC has been a part of the Firearms Community Advisory Forum (FCAF) since 2018 and along with other hunting sector stakeholders successfully advocated for a number of practical changes to the Arms Legislation Act.

“While we continue to have concerns over the fairness and practicality of some aspects of the legislation we are working with Police and other groups seeking to develop practical rules and guidance going forward,” says Game Animal Council General Manager Tim Gale. “A major part of this work is making sure Police fully understand the impact of the new rules from a user’s point of view and apply them fairly.”

A significant concern for the GAC has been the complexity and objectivity of the proposed new firearms licensing application process designed to identify whether an applicant is a ‘fit and proper person’.

“So far we have succeeded in getting aspects of the application process made more reasonable and additional changes we are working through will further simplify and enhance the natural justice provisions of the questionnaire without compromising public safety.”

The GAC also represents hunting interests on the Range Certification Engagement Group that is tasked with determining the appropriate application of recent legislative changes for shooting ranges.

“As drafted, the Arms Legislation Bill went beyond the intention to certify the activities of formal permanent ranges and instead sought to impose unnecessary and onerous compliance on informal and temporary ranges.”

“Clarification is necessary to make sure that hunters can conduct appropriate safety training and have somewhere to sight their rifles before going hunting. We know that having an accurately sighted-in rifle

is essential for the ethical harvesting of game animals and that hunters require safe and compliant places to do this.”

“Positive progress is being made through the Range Certification Engagement Group to sort out some of these issues and it is expected that it will report back by June 2021 with recommendations that will then go out for public consultation,” says Gale.

The GAC wants to remind hunters and other firearms users that a number of changes relating to the licensing system came into effect on 24 December 2020. These are available at

<https://www.police.govt.nz/advice-services/firearms-and-safety/new-firearms-laws-and-what-they-mean/24-december-2020>

There are also changes regarding the possession of centre-fire pump action rifles with some requiring an endorsement and a special permit. More information on eligibility for these and how to apply is available at

<https://www.police.govt.nz/advice-services/firearms-and-safety/new-firearms-laws-and-what-they-mean/prohibited-firearms-added>.

*The NZ Game Animal Council is a statutory organisation responsible for the sustainable management of game animals and hunting for recreation, commerce and conservation.*

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