

29 November 2018

Our Reference: IR-01-18-11101

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

I am writing to you in response to your request dated 14 September 2018. You asked nine questions which are listed below, followed by my response to each one.

1) The number of legal firearms in New Zealand

Police does not know how many legally owned firearms there are in New Zealand. The Arms Act 1983 does not require firearms licence holders to register firearms that they possess, therefore, there is no record of the majority of firearms possessed in New Zealand. Justice TM Thorp in his 1997 *Review of Firearms Control in New Zealand Report of an Independent Inquiry* commissioned by the Minister of Police estimated the number of firearms in the civilian armoury in 1996-1997 to be between 700,000 to 1 million. In 2016, using the same methodology, Police estimated a maximum of 1.2 million legal firearms existed in the civilian armoury in 2014.

A specific endorsement is required for each military style semi-automatic, pistol, and restricted weapon. There are currently 65,837 MSSAs, pistols, and restricted weapons linked to active firearms licence holders with endorsements.

2) The number of current gun licences in New Zealand

As at 31 Oct 2018, there are 248,764 active firearms licences. This includes dealer, standard, and visitor licences. It also includes all current licences and those that have recently expired or are in the process of getting a new licence issued. To obtain a dealer's licence a person must first hold a standard licence, so there are slightly fewer individuals holding licences than there are firearms licences.

3) The current or an estimate of the illegal firearms in New Zealand

The number of firearms that are held illegally in the civilian armoury is impossible to estimate. This question is refused in accordance with s18(e) of the Official Information Act 1982, as the requested information does not exist. You have the right, under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act 1982, to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision.

4) How many illegal firearms where [sic] surrendered if there was an illegal firearms amnesty done?



Justice TM Thorp, in his 1997 *Review of Firearms Control in New Zealand Report of an Independent Inquiry* commissioned by the Minister of Police, estimated the number of illegal firearms in the civilian armoury in 1996-1997 to be between 10,000 and 25,000. Police has not attempted to estimate that figure but the number of reports of stolen firearms and the numbers of firearm seized (see the response to Question 7 below) suggests that the number of illegal firearms held will be greater than that estimated by Thorp.

Police holds no information on what would happen were an amnesty to be held. This question is refused in accordance with s18(e) of the Official Information Act 1982, as the requested information does not exist. You have the right, under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act 1982, to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision.

5) How many crimes committed using firearms were committed with an illegal firearm in the last five years?

For the purposes of answering this question, I interpreted "illegal firearm" to mean "firearm held by a person who did not hold a firearms licence at the time". Offences involving firearm include violence offences such as homicide with a firearm or aggravated robbery with a firearm, as well as Arms Act offences such as unlawful possession of a firearm or carry a loaded firearm in a vehicle.

Between 1 Jan 2014 and 30 Oct 2018, there have been 15,534 firearms-related offences where an alleged offender has been identified and did not have a current firearms licence at the time of the offence. Please note this is a count of offences, not people, prosecutions, or convictions.

6) How many crimes committed using firearms were committed with a legal firearm in the last five years?

For the purposes of answering this question, I interpreted "legal firearm" to mean "firearm held by a person who held a firearms licence at the time". Offences involving firearm include violence offences such as homicide with a firearm or aggravated robbery with a firearm, as well as Arms Act offences such as unlawful possession of a firearm or carry a loaded firearm in a vehicle.

Between 1 Jan 2014 and 30 Oct 2018, there have been 1,176 firearms-related offences where an alleged offender has been identified and held a firearms licence at the time of the offence. Please note this is a count of offences, not people, prosecutions, or convictions.

7) How many firearms were confiscated in the last five years? Breakdown of what type of firearms and where they were confiscated from?

Provided below are the numbers of firearms seized from warrantless searches or searches under Sections 6 and 18 of the Search and Surveillance Act 2012, between 1 Jan 2014 and 30 Oct 2018, by District and firearm type.

District	Handgun	Imitation	MSSA	Rifle	Shotgun	Total by District
Northland	15	4	10	163	111	303
Waitematā	46	16	10	219	137	428
Auckland City	34	19	39	89	71	252
Counties Manukau	45	15	18	165	145	388
Waikato	32	13	9	196	150	400
Bay of Plenty	28	9	6	367	188	598



Eastern	24	11	10	400	151	596
Central	42	14	9	337	142	544
Wellington	24	19	7	142	93	285
Tasman	9	9	8	211	71	308
Canterbury	49	13	19	417	267	765
Southern	11	9	13	337	223	593
Total by Type	359	151	158	3,043	1,749	5,460

8) *The youngest offender to be caught with a firearm?*

The youngest person who was found in possession of a firearm in the last five years was seven years old at the time of the incident.

9) *How many police officers have been threatened with firearms and injured in the last five years?*

There have been 57 instances between 1 Jan 2014 and 30 Oct 2018 where one of the offences was Use firearm against law enforcement officer, Use firearm to resist arrest/detention, or Assault police with a firearm (there are two offences with this name – one in Crimes Act and one in Summary Offence Act).

In addition to this, there is an offence of presenting firearm but without mention of police, and there have been 295 of such instances during the same time period. Sometimes, these offences have police officers as the person who was presented at, but not specifically mentioned in the offence wording. For us to identify the number of police officers in each instance and how many of them were actually threatened during each instance, we would need to review each individual file. This part of the request is refused in accordance with section 18(f) of the Official Information Act 1982 as the information cannot be provided without significant collation and research. In deciding whether to refuse this part of your request, I have considered whether fixing a charge or extending the time limit (or both) would enable the request to be granted and concluded that it would not. You have the right, under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act 1982, to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision.

When a police officer is injured, they can report it to the Police Health and Safety team. The injury/no injury/near miss is a selected field, but the detail of the circumstances is free text. The officer may not describe it specifically as being threatened and injured with a firearm or may have misspelled some words. As this data requires word searching to identify relevant records, the results may not be exact. Having manually reviewed all incident reports between 1 Jan 2014 and 30 Oct 2018 that mention the word firearm, I have identified six reports of a firearm being fired and police officers who sustained injuries as a result. It is clear all six reports refer to the same incident, but it is not clear whether all six people sustained injuries. I have also identified 23 incidents where a firearm was pointed or shot at police but no injuries as a result of that firearm action was sustained by the officers.

Yours sincerely



Superintendent Chris Scahill
National Manager: Response and Operations

