

16 February 2026

**Submission** to the Committee Secretariat of the Justice Committee on the **Arms Bill**.

The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of Auckland greatly welcomes this opportunity to comment and submit our recommendations on the Arms Bill which proposes a substantial reform of New Zealand's firearms law. This reformation is well overdue, as it intends to repeal and replace the Arms Act 1983, with the aim to strengthen public safety, simplify regulation, and improve compliance. This represents the most comprehensive rewrite of the Arms Act in over forty years. Overall, we support the intention and direction of this Bill.

Following our double submissions on the Arms Act Rewrite Public Consultation process in February 2025, we continue to evaluate the development of public policy through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), particularly in its attention to human dignity, the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, and a preferential option for those most vulnerable. These themes collectively emphasise the protection of life, the building of safe and just communities, and the governance structures that best promote human flourishing.

The Bill's first intention to strengthen safeguards to ensure responsible gun use, while noble in proposition, is vague in implementation. We need only turn our sights to our neighbours in Australia, and the recent gun massacre in December 2025, to disprove the definition and notion of a 'responsible registered gun user,'<sup>1</sup> as the perpetrator of the Bondi shootings was a licenced, registered, multiple gun holder, and member of a shooting club. Excluding gang members from holding a gun licence is a given, but is the Arms Bill in its current form stringent enough to prevent guns from 'falling into the wrong hands?'

The establishment of an independent (rather than police-centric) Firearms Regulatory Agency and a Firearms Licensing Review Committee may strengthen accountability and trust in decision-making. We recommend that the new regulator be required to publish consistent, accessible, public reports on compliance, licensing decisions, enforcement activity, and risk trends. Transparency strengthens trust that is essential for the

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<sup>1</sup>Callinan, R. (2025, December 18). *Bondi gunman Naveed Akram trained in firearm safety and hunting, Sydney shooting club president reveals*. ABCNews. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-12-18/bondi-naveed-akram-firearm-hunting-training/106159540>

Taylor, H. (2025, December 15). *Bondi Beach terrorist Sajid Akram had firearm licence and gun club membership*. 7News. <https://7news.com.au/news/bondi-beach-terrorist-sajid-akram-had-firearm-licence-and-gun-club-membership-c-21008111>

legitimacy of a regulatory system. This reflects the principle of subsidiarity, ensuring regulation is handled by competent and specialised authorities at the most basic level.

Furthermore, we acknowledge the Bill's efforts to support responsible firearm use for hunting, sport, pest control, collecting, and cultural purposes such as simplifying business licences and improving import processes. However, we encourage continued consultation with Māori and Pasifika communities, and rural firearm users. Culturally informed implementation supports the common good by ensuring policies are practical, respectful, and equitable. In the same vein, reassurance must be made that 'improving import processes' does not create commercial avarice and an overabundance of firearms in our communities.

We understand that firearms reforms will introduce numerous changes for licence holders. Therefore, comprehensive public education is also essential, particularly in rural communities, hunting, and Māori communities who rely on firearms for cultural and survival purposes. Fair and effective implementation of education must be accessible and equitable (open to all).

Research shows firearm-related deaths, especially by suicide outnumber homicides<sup>2</sup> in our country. Strengthening collaboration between the regulator, firearms organisations, and mental health professionals should support harm prevention. This aligns with CST's call to safeguard the vulnerable and uphold human dignity. Policies must prioritise those most at risk of violence, suicide, or firearms harm.<sup>3</sup>

We support:

- Introducing graduated and proportionate enforcement tools
- Updating offences and penalties, including the 60 amended offences and eight newly introduced
- Creating a new infringement offence regime

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<sup>2</sup>Lucy Telfar-Barnard, Annette Beautrais, Andrew Anglemeyer. *Firearm-Related Hospitalization and Death in Aotearoa New Zealand, 2000 to 2023: A Cohort Study*. *Ann Intern Med*.2025;178:1571-1579. (Epub 2025, 23 September). doi:[10.7326/ANNALS-24-03483](https://doi.org/10.7326/ANNALS-24-03483) <https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/ANNALS-24-03483>

Clark, G. (2025, September 23). *Gun-related deaths in NZ dropped after gun laws passed*. Medical Press. <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2025-09-gun-deaths-nz-laws.html>

Health Quality & Safety Commission: Te Tahu Hauora. (2021) *Response to Public Consultation on Gun Regulations – Joint Response from the Family Violence Death Review Committee, Suicide Mortality Review Committee and the Child and Youth Mortality Review Committee*.

[https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/assets/Our-work/Mortality-review-committee/FVDRC/Publications-resources/Submission-on-firearms-regulations\\_2021.pdf](https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/assets/Our-work/Mortality-review-committee/FVDRC/Publications-resources/Submission-on-firearms-regulations_2021.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Blackwell. F. (2024, October 13). *Gun crime on the rise in Auckland; majority of offences involve illegally owned firearms*. RNZ. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/crime/gun-crime-on-the-rise-in-auckland-majority-of-offences-involve-illegally-owned-firearms/5V2P2GWKN5CDNGQVFFZ2K5FVKU/>

Macdonald. F. (2026, February 10). *The 4 big changes to gun laws that would make NZ safer*.

<https://theconversation.com/the-4-big-changes-to-gun-laws-that-would-make-nz-safer-275085>

- Introducing processes to bring unlawfully held firearms into legal possession
- Addressing new technologies such as 3D printing of firearms, and
- Requiring business licence holders to notify the regulator of surrendered arms items.

Protecting life is foundational to Catholic Social Teaching. We advocate for measures that reduce the likelihood of firearm misuse and promote the dignity of every person, especially those most at risk of violence. Ensuring that access to firearms is limited to responsible individuals upholds the common good by prioritising safety over individual convenience or commercial value and interest.

Moreover, the Church teaches that people should be supported in carrying out legitimate work and cultural activities, provided these do not endanger others. A balanced regulatory environment can protect the common good while avoiding undue burdens on those acting responsibly.

### **Conclusion:**

There is no doubt in our minds that the Arms Act of 1983 must be updated. As a society and country, we cannot afford another ‘good intentions’ amendment or rewrite. The Arms Act must be firm, concise, and clear. We acknowledge that some require firearms for subsistence, others for culture, leisure and pleasure. However, gun licencing, ownership, registration, and use should not take precedence over, nor endanger, human life. A weapon is specifically designed or used to inflict bodily harm, create physical damage, used to gain advantage or defend oneself in conflict or contest. Guns are designed to damage, if not maim and kill. Thankfully, it is not a human right to keep and bear arms in this country – it is a privilege of responsibility and accountability. The Arms Bill makes a meaningful contribution to building a safer and more just Aotearoa New Zealand provided it keeps a focus on public safety, transparent regulation, and responsible firearm use. We support the Bill’s overall direction and commend Parliament for undertaking this comprehensive reform.