

MEDIA RELEASE

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Firearms Safety in New Zealand

The recent tragic event in Napier where a gunman has misused his firearms has provoked questions about gun ownership in New Zealand.

Mike Spray of The Mountain Safety Council comments that “while such tragic incidents send shock waves throughout New Zealand these events are very rare in the country’s history.”

This rarity can be put down to progress in firearm safety education and New Zealand’s very high standard of firearm control. The Arms Act 1983, which defines New Zealand’s firearms law, promotes both the control and safe use of firearms. Through character vetting, licensing, establishment of safety standards and education recreational firearm use is both widespread and predominately safe. In the past 15 years homicides involving firearms have dropped 35 per cent and non intentional firearm incidents have dropped during the past 40 years from an average of one a week down to an average of one a month

Firearms licensing is predicated on a person being fit and proper to possess firearms and fit and proper status is determined through a thorough vetting process. Firearms licence applicants must meet the requirements for security of their firearms so that children and the opportunist thief are not able to access them.

Firearms licensing is also determined by the applicant receiving formal firearms safety training and passing a theoretical test on safety and their legal obligations.

Comparing the number of incidents to the amount of recreational firearms activity indicates that the vast majority of firearms owners in New Zealand are responsible users.

Mike Spray said “It would be unwarranted for this incident, caused by an unlicensed and unlawful gun owner, to provoke a stern reaction against the legitimate and safe use of firearms in New Zealand.”

ENDS

For further information or comments:

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MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL

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