



Summary

Implementing the firearms buy-back and amnesty scheme

On 15 March 2019, attacks at two Christchurch mosques left 51 people dead and a great many others with injuries that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. The violence on that day deeply affected the Muslim community, the first responders and hospital staff, the residents of Christchurch, and all New Zealanders.

As part of the response to the attacks, Parliament passed the Arms (Prohibited Firearms, Magazines, and Parts) Amendment Act 2019 on 11 April 2019, which prohibited firearms with the ability to cause harm in a rapid and highly destructive way from a distance. The Act included a provision for a firearms buy-back and amnesty scheme, which allowed firearms owners to hand in their prohibited items to the New Zealand Police for destruction. Firearms owners would receive compensation for the prohibited items they handed in.

Implementing the scheme was a complex, challenging, and high-risk task, and the Police had to do it in tight time frames. The Police managed the scheme effectively, providing people with many opportunities to hand in their prohibited items. We found that the Police, firearms assessors, and support staff treated people handing in firearms

with empathy and respect. Firearms assessors were trained extensively to make fair decisions on compensating people for their firearms.

The Police's provisional information, as at 13 February 2020, shows that 61,332 newly prohibited firearms had been collected and destroyed, or modified by Police-approved gunsmiths so that they comply with the new requirements and remain the property of their owners

However, neither the Police nor any other agency know how many prohibited firearms, magazines, and parts were in the community when the law was changed. Without this information, we do not yet know how effective the scheme was. More work should be done to find out what level of compliance with the scheme has been achieved and the extent to which it has made New Zealanders safer.

The Police should also continue to improve their understanding of the firearms environment, build on their strengthened relationships with firearms owners and dealers, and make effective use of relevant information they have gathered to support their regulatory responsibilities.

