

# Firearms and Public Health

14 February 2018

## Speakers: topics and biographies

### **Marie Russell: Current research on firearms policy**

Research on firearms from a public health point of view is in progress at the University of Otago, Wellington. Funded by Lotteries Health Research, the qualitative study explores what is happening in the firearms scene, current policy settings and likely future directions. Interim findings will be presented.

Marie Russell is a Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington, and lead researcher on the current firearms policy research project. Marie's background includes library work and documentary-making, health services research, and Public Health research on tobacco; children; urban issues and transport.

### **Nicole McKee: Firearms safety and licensing in New Zealand**

Nicole will present an outline of the licensing process in New Zealand, our current licensing regime and thoughts on safety education. She will explain the benefits of the Whakatūpato firearms safety and licensing opportunities programme and the positive flow-on effects for rural and isolated communities.

Nicole is an active firearms user in multiple disciplines at regional and national levels. There were times when hunting was the only way to source meat for the family table. Working within the firearms industry for many years, she has also volunteered and been employed within the firearms safety sector in New Zealand.

### **Deborah Read: Human health and lead – what's the evidence?**

Lead is involved in firearms use in both projectiles and primer. This presentation reviews the impacts of lead on human health and examines whether particular population groups are affected.

Deborah Read is a public health physician who is a consultant in the public sector, and Associate Professor at Massey University's Centre for Public Health Research. Her primary areas of interest are environmental health, environmental epidemiology and public health surveillance. A particular focus is translating research findings to provide robust evidence for policy.

### **Mike McIlraith: Police's administration of the Arms Act**

Mike McIlraith has been with Police for 25 years and has worked in four different districts, at the Police College, and since June 2016 at Police National Headquarters. In June 2017 he was asked to lead the Arms Act Service Delivery Group focusing on modernising the administration of the Arms Act.

## **Chris Cahill: The hidden reality of illegal firearms in New Zealand**

New Zealand's police officers report gun incidents daily. Over 50,000 firearms are imported annually, including military style semi-automatic weapons; and you must register your car, boat or dog, but no one has the right to know how many lethal firearms you own: why? We need to wake up to what is really going on.

Chris Cahill is the President of the Police Association, the voluntary professional body representing 99% of sworn officers and the overwhelming majority of Police employees – over 11,000 members. A Detective Inspector, Chris' most recent front line work was dealing with drug and organised crime as manager of the Crime Squad.

## **Philip Alpers: A disarming public health lesson from the Pacific (pre-recorded talk)**

Recent headlines are clear: our world is a fearful place, spattered with blood, angry men and loose guns. But not everywhere. Public health interventions in one sprawling region have largely avoided, and at times even reversed, the steady proliferation of illegal firearms and death by gunshot. In the south-west Pacific, reduction in firearm injury has been dramatic.

Philip Alpers is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the Sydney School of Public Health, University of Sydney. He founded [GunPolicy.org](http://GunPolicy.org), a global project comparing armed violence, firearm injury prevention and gun law across 350 jurisdictions. A New Zealander, Philip is listed among the 'Top 100: The most influential people in armed violence reduction'.

## **Louise Delany: Arms and the Law**

Central to public health and safety law is the concept of risk – its prevention, reduction and management. A proactive risk-based approach helps decide whether, why and what we regulate, with what enforcement. New Zealand has many risk-based legal frameworks; examples include food, building, worker health and safety, and arms. This talk explores explicit and systematic approaches.

Louise Delany is a senior lecturer in the Department of Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington, where she teaches public/global health law and ethics. Louise has a Masters degree in law, previously worked for the Ministry of Health, and wrote on public health law for *Health law in New Zealand* (Thomson Reuters, 2015).

## **Don Rood: The tradition of recreational firearm use in New Zealand**

New Zealand has one of the highest firearm ownership levels in the world but in an increasingly urbanised society, the need for anyone to own firearms is increasingly questioned. Why do firearms have such a strong traditional presence in New Zealand and are they a tool or a threat?

Don Rood has been a journalist and broadcaster for nearly 40 years. Much of his career was with Radio New Zealand as Head of News. He worked on *Checkpoint*, and as a reporter, special

correspondent and bulletin editor. He has won numerous journalism awards. Don is now the Communications Manager for Fish & Game New Zealand.

### **Sarah Zito: Firearms and animal welfare**

This talk will discuss how firearms relate to animal welfare. Firearms can be important for humane killing on farms and as part of 'pest' animal control operations, when an animal cannot be humanely killed another way. However, firearms can also cause animal welfare issues, particularly if improperly used.

A veterinarian with a PhD in animal welfare, Sarah works in the Animal Welfare Science and Education Department at RNZSPCA. She has worked in equine and small animal care and university teaching; set up and ran University of Queensland's Veterinary Shelter Medicine rotation, and worked as animal welfare research coordinator with UQ's Centre for Animal Welfare and Ethics.

### **Herb Christophers: Keeping the customer satisfied**

The Department of Conservation walks a fine line. DOC does not actively target deer, but encourages recreational hunting and commercial game recovery to keep deer numbers in check. DOC uses 1080 to target rats, stoats and possums to retain native species. So what happens when there is a by-kill of deer? How does DOC retain the trust of hunters?

Herb Christophers is a senior advisor in the DOC Communications and Media team. With a background in biological sciences, he has spent nearly 50 years in the outdoors. His main role is communications around pest control: advocating for threatened species and publicising the work that keeps native species from the slippery slope of decline.

### **Hera Cook: Gun culture in New Zealand**

In New Zealand firearms have traditionally been used for hunting, pest control, sports, and on farms. What are the characteristics of 'gun culture' and what is happening with firearms in NZ today? Why is there such a wide range of views about firearms?

Hera Cook works in the Department of Public Health. She is a historian whose research has been primarily concerned with the impact of changing sexual cultures on modern society.