



## New Zealand House of Representatives

### Jurisdiction Report – 50<sup>th</sup> POCC

#### **Christchurch Attack and the Arms (Prohibited Firearms, Magazines, and Parts) Amt. Act**

On 15 March 2019 an armed person carried out a mass shooting at the Al Noor and Linwood Mosques in Christchurch using legally held semi-automatic firearms. Fifty-one people were killed and a similar number suffered serious to moderate injuries.

On 21 March 2019, the Government announced changes to New Zealand's gun laws following the tragic events in Christchurch. The **Arms (Prohibited Firearms, Magazines, and Parts) Amendment Bill** was introduced to the House, and referred to the Finance and Expenditure Committee. Anticipating high public interest the Clerk provided an email address for people to send comments to, even before the bill was referred. These comments were then transferred to the committee. The committee received and considered 13,062 submissions from interested groups and individuals, it heard oral evidence from 22 submitters at hearings in Wellington. Of the submissions received, about 60 percent supported the bill, 26 percent were opposed to the bill, and 14 percent expressed another view.

As Parliament required the committee to report back within seven days, the changes it recommended were contained in a Supplementary Order Paper tabled in the House by the sponsoring Minister. The bill passed through its remaining stages, received Royal Assent, and came into force on 12 April 2019. As part of Budget 2019, \$168 million was appropriated for payments and administration of the gun buyback scheme.

Immediately following the attack, New Zealand's terror threat alert was raised to high (it remains at medium). The Speaker moved swiftly on additional security for the Parliament, like other public buildings and places, including out-of-Wellington electorate offices.

On the first sitting day, following the attack the Speaker has invited a multi-faith group into the House to join him with prayers from a local Imam leading the session, followed by prayers from both Māori and Pākehā MPs. The Speaker, Parliamentarians, and New Zealanders were overwhelmed by the international support, unity, and togetherness after the tragedy.

#### **Building a safe and healthy workplace – Francis Review**

In November 2018, the Speaker, announced the launch of an independent external review into bullying and harassment of staff within the parliamentary workplace. This was the first such review to occur in the New Zealand Parliament. The review, carried out by independent external reviewer, Debbie Francis, took five months and made 85 recommendations.

The review looked into:

- establish whether bullying and harassment (including sexual harassment) has occurred and, if it has, the nature and the extent of it within the agencies within the Parliament workplace—Parliamentary Service, Office of the Clerk, and Ministerial and Secretariat Services. The

scope of the review will include current and former staff and contractors employed across the agencies since October 2014, an estimated 3000 people.

- analyse how previous complaints have been handled to assess existing bullying and harassment policies and procedures, and test whether the related controls are effective, and whether there are any barriers to reporting or making complaints, and
- comment on the culture of Parliament as a place of work.

Evidence was gathered through written submissions, on-line surveys, one-on-one interviews and focus groups. All data was stored in a dedicated and secure ICT environment, separate from Parliament's network and treated in the strictest confidence. The final report was presented in May 2019. The Speaker, agency heads, and the Parliamentary Service Commission are now working to implement recommendations.

### **2019 “Wellbeing” Budget**

In May 2019, the Coalition Government presented its second Budget, known as the “Wellbeing Budget”. The Prime Minister noted in her foreword that the Government had “broadened [the] definition of success for our country to one that incorporates not just the health of our finances, but also of our natural resources, people and communities”. The Estimates have now been referred to select committees; once reported, the final stage of the Budget process will be the third reading of the Appropriation (2019/20 Estimates) Bill.

Related to these indicators, the **Child Poverty Reduction Bill** and the **Children’s Amendment Bill**, introduced as one bill and subsequently divided at the committee of the whole House, represent key pieces of legislation for the Labour – New Zealand First coalition government. The bills put into law provisions that require the Government to set 10-year child poverty reduction targets, develop and report on strategies to promote child well-being, and, on Budget day, report progress on its stated child poverty reduction goals. Additionally, the Bills require the Government Statistician to prepare a report measuring child poverty each financial year, independently from government, and that the report be presented to the House of Representatives. The bill received cross-party support, with 118 votes in support to 1 at third reading.

### **Medically assisted dying**



The End of Life Choice Bill is a member’s bill which seeks to give people with a terminal illness or a grievous and irremediable medical condition the option of requesting assisted dying. The bill was referred to the Justice Committee and received and considered an unprecedented 39,159 submissions from interested groups and individuals. The committee heard oral evidence from 1,350 submitters around the country.

The committee’s report to the House noted “The eight members of this committee hold diverse views. We decided to report the bill back with minor, technical, and consequential amendments only. We leave it to the full membership of the House to resolve the broader policy matters”. The bill passed its second reading, with 70 votes in support to 50, and awaits committee of the whole House stage.

### **Written questions—Standards of Accountability**

Responding to a series of complaints from members about the quality of ministerial responses to written questions the Speaker reaffirmed that Ministers are accountable through their answers to the House and to New Zealand for the public offices they hold.

Consequently, the Speaker ruled that when considering answers to written questions Ministers should meet the required standards of accountability to the House. He referred to an existing Speakers' Ruling to affirm these standards. The ruling emphasises that when framing a reply Ministers are obliged to provide informative answers to all questions and these answers are to be consistent with the public interest. Consistency can address the principles of privacy, commercial sensitivity, or national security. The absolute judgement as to whether the answer is consistent with the public interest lies with the Minister and no one else.

### **New independent MP and the Electoral (Integrity) Amendment Act**

In August 2018, information was leaked about the expenses of Hon Simon Bridges, Leader of the Opposition. The Speaker announced that there would be an inquiry into the source of the leak; subsequently suspended. In early October, Jami-Lee Ross, a member of National's front bench and former chief whip, took leave from Parliament to deal with some personal health issues. In mid-October, Mr Bridges announced that his party's investigation had found evidence suggesting that Mr Ross was likely to be behind the leak, which Mr Ross denied; this marked a public falling-out between Mr Ross and the National Party. The National caucus voted to expel Mr Ross from the party, Mr Ross returned as an independent member in 2019.

The New Zealand Parliament had only recently passed the Electoral (Integrity) Amendment Act 2018, which was intended to preserve the proportionality of political party representation. The legislation allows for a member's seat to be vacated if the member leaves their party or if they act in a way that distorts proportionality. However, these provisions are only triggered if the party leader or the member themselves gives notice to the Speaker. During the debate on the bill, the National Party expressed strong opposition to the legislation, and voted against it consistently, so there was some interest in whether the party would trigger the legislation and force Mr Ross to leave his seat. To date, the party has not done so, and Mr Ross remains in Parliament as an independent member.

### **Foresight, insight and oversight: Enhancing long-term governance through better parliamentary scrutiny**



A report has been released by Victoria University of Wellington's Institute for Governance and Policy Studies (IGPS), following a collaboration between the institute and parliamentary staff.

MPs, former MPs and other regular participants in parliamentary processes, were interviewed for the report. Lots of options and ideas are included in the report for improving parliamentary scrutiny of long-term governance. These suggestions are designed to enhance scrutiny by strengthening incentives for MPs to pay more attention to long-term policy matters, changing Parliament's rules so scrutiny of long-term governance occurs more regularly, and increasing the use of

independent research, analysis and advice. Particular options include:

- change the size and structure of select committees, for example by establishing a Committee for the Future or a Governance Committee, or adding a new committee function
- improve the Government's long-term reporting, including better reporting of progress towards long-term objectives
- enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of select committees, particularly during their financial scrutiny activities
- encourage cross-party pre-legislative consultation to foster durable legislative solutions
- encourage committees to undertake forward-looking inquiries
- track and follow up on the Government's progress in implementing select committee recommendations

- encourage greater use by committees of advice from Officers of Parliament and independent experts, including the possible appointment of a Chief Parliamentary Science Advisor
- consider establishing a cross-party futures forum of MPs working in association with respected research organisations and sector groups to examine long-term issues
- explore possible policy, legislative and constitutional reforms.

This work was done to stimulate discussion about how Parliament and the Government can more systematically deal with future issues. In particular, it provides ideas that can be considered during the three-yearly review of Parliament’s Standing Orders (rules), which is expected to begin later this year.

### Parliamentary Engagement Strategy Implementation and Speaker’s Outreach



The New Zealand Parliament Engagement Strategy 2018 – 2021, recognises that it is no longer enough to just communicate with the public. It is now crucial for Parliament to actively engage with the public in order to maintain its relevance. As part of its implementation, a joint team has now been created from Office of the Clerk and Parliamentary Service staff engaged in customer service, education, communication and outreach activities.

To help connect more people with Parliament in an approachable way, an hour-long **Parliament television programme** has been produced that shares how Parliament works, and encourages people to get involved. “Introducing Parliament” is a documentary about what happens in Parliament, the roles that make Parliament work, how laws are made, the select committee process, and provides ways the public can have their say about issues that are before the House. The programme screens on Parliament TV on sitting days, before the sitting commences.

The Speaker is leading an **outreach programme** that aims to bring ‘Parliament to the people’. This programme was launched last year in South Auckland, and has been extended with the goal of visiting six regions each year. He is joined by local MPs and parliamentary education staff.



A **Parliament VR and XR application** was created and launched, meaning children and adults from anywhere in the country or abroad can explore. It is available free of charge on the App Store or Google Play. It can be viewed on a device or for an even more immersive experience, using a cardboard VR headset.

The total audience across all **social media** channels is 55,709, up from 30,038 this time last year (representing an 85% increase in the last 12 months). Audience growth on non-Twitter platforms was even higher, at 109%. Non-Twitter audience growth has primarily been driven by Facebook (Parliament and select committee pages), which was higher still, with an overall 154% increase in our Facebook pages’ following over the last 12 months (total Facebook audience today of 17,149). At this point in 2017, non-Twitter platforms represented only 32% of our total social audience; this grew to 55% in 2018, and now non-Twitter followers make up 62% of our total social audience. The past 12 months has also seen Parliament begin using several new social channels, including Instagram and Vimeo, which have both contributed to overall audience growth and reach.

## **New qualification for MPs offered by Victoria University School of Government**

Victoria Business School's School of Government is offering a new programme of study specifically for New Zealand Members of Parliament. The Postgraduate Certificate in Public Policy (MPs) comprises four postgraduate courses presented by staff of the School of Government. Experienced politicians and civil servants will also be invited to present guest lectures.

Fifteen MPs have applied for the programme, some of whom will be doing tertiary study for the first time.



The programme has been made possible through the Parliamentary Education Trust which was launched, along with the new certificate, at an event at Parliament opened by the Speaker.

The trust is funded by a New Zealand philanthropist with the aim of ensuring that current and future leaders of New Zealand are better prepared to govern. Courses in governance and mediation for MPs are also being offered.

## **Rainbow Room Relaunch**



The New Zealand Parliament's "Rainbow Room" first opened more than ten years ago when then Speaker Hon Margaret Wilson approved the dedication of one of Parliament's 11 select committee meeting rooms to the nation's gay, lesbian, and trans-gender community and to their contribution to New Zealand society. In 2018, the Parliamentary Service and Office of the Clerk, with support from the NZ Parliamentary Rainbow Network, a network of LGBTI MPs, undertook to give the Rainbow Room a refresh to reflect the changes that have occurred since the room was first

established. "Project Uplift" concluded on 28 May 2019 with the official re-opening of the room, hosted by the Parliamentary Rainbow Network. As well as the Mana Takatāpui artwork by Elizabeth Kerekere, the Rainbow Room now includes a variety of flags representative of the rainbow community, photographs of former and current LGBTI members of Parliament, and framed copies of six bills of significance.

## **Language Diversity in the Chamber**

At the commencement of each sitting of the House the Speaker reads a prayer in one of the official languages of New Zealand—English or Māori. To acknowledge the language weeks of various cultures in New Zealand the Speaker has supported the prayer being presented by members of Parliament who are native speakers of others languages. In 2018 the prayer was said in Mandarin, Cook Islands Māori, Tongan, Tokelauan, Niuean and Hindi.

## Pacific Region Launch for Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures

In March 2019, New Zealand hosted the Pacific Region Launch for Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures. Members and staff from the Parliaments of the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Republic of Fiji, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Kingdom of Tonga, and Tuvalu came to New Zealand for the launch. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, United Nations Development Programme Pacific, and the Royal Commonwealth Society, and Pacific members of the Diplomatic Corps also attended.



Rt Hon. Trevor Mallard, Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives and CPA New Zealand Branch President, noted that the CPA Benchmarks are an important tool for Parliaments to continuously challenge themselves and identify areas for improvement.

Other speakers at the CPA Benchmarks event included Lord Fakafanua, Speaker of the Tongan Legislative Assembly; former New Zealand Speaker of Parliament, Rt Hon. David Carter, MP; and the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Pacific Chair, Anahila Kanongata'a-Suisuiki,

MP, who all called on Pacific Parliaments to keep striving for improvement and to champion the use of the CPA Benchmarks. Following the launch of the CPA Benchmarks, the New Zealand Parliament hosted some time at the parliament and then the UNDP convened workshops on the benchmarks under the Effective Governance – Pacific Parliamentary Effectiveness Initiative.

The Clerk has just signed an Memorandum of Understanding with the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, for four-years of funding to deliver more technical assistance and partnership work with Pacific Legislatures.