

ACT Neighbourhood Watch Inc. (Association)

Neighbourhood Watch in the ACT continues to grow and develop despite some logistic and facilitative difficulties with data bases, computers etc. along with some inappropriate and misleading Canberra Wide media coverage which tried to unsuccessfully undermine the relationship between ACT NHW and the AFP.

2006 to date is the second highest membership intake year in the last ten years and there are currently 48 active NHW groups comprising approximately 2200 active NHW members in the ACT. There are at least 5 new groups being negotiated or planted, 3 groups being rejuvenated and we are ever closer to a genuine push into the southern most parts of the capital which have never had active NHW groups. During this last 12 to 18 months we have had a significant turnover of Area Coordinators. We had some tired volunteers who held on through the lean times and were able to effectively hand over to a new breed of energized community leaders. To coincide with this phenomenon, we have also seen a lowering of the average age of volunteers by 3 to 5 years.

The following is an update of the other keys to the ongoing facilitation and growth of NHW in the ACT; i.e. the keys other than the volunteers at the coal face without whom, NHW in the ACT would cease to exist. We are blessed to work with such a selfless bunch of community minded people, whose tireless efforts ensure that more and more people throughout the neighbourhoods of Australia's capital territory experience an increase in safety, security and well being.

Primary Partnership

We are extremely thankful to the AFP and in particular Crime Prevention ACT for the ever increasing effort that they have exerted towards ensuring that this so called primary partnership is not only considered important but it is actively pursued with as much resource as is possible given the quirks of Commonwealth versus State / Territory Government responsibilities and the NHW Association's subsequent self determination requirements. Even despite some challenges with the provision of a dedicated NHW Liaison Officer , ACT Police have stepped up their active involvement, listening carefully to ACT NHW needs and ensuring that all needs were covered by a named officer within Crime Prevention rather than a generic responsibility. This makes communication very clean and finely tuned, easy to follow and achieves strong results for better promotion and dissemination of crime prevention and community safety messages. Detective Sergeant Katherine Murphy is a very capable and efficient coordinator of the people charged with the afore mentioned responsibilities and we have a strong and developing rapport.

Major Sponsorship

As a direct result of achieving incorporation as an association and finally having our risk management schedule accepted for Public Liability and other insurance coverage, Custom Security Services (CSS) became the major sponsor of ACT

NHW to ensure its administrative costs are covered and to help enable some creative promotion of the cause. CSS has been our major sponsor since October 2004 and we have just held meetings that not only endorse that sponsorship for the next 3 years but also open doors towards the possibility of doubling it. There is work to be done on both sides but we are energized by the possibilities.

There are a couple of other support sponsorship stories which are worth noting. Firstly the ongoing financial and involvement support of Karen Rush Real Estate who has been responsible, in partnership with one of our NHW District Delegates, for the extensive rejuvenation of the Woden District from 4 active NHW groups to 9 or 10. Secondly, to all the local sponsors who make it possible to get each area newsletter into the letterboxes of over 40 000 homes. Thirdly, we are also extremely grateful to Casino Canberra and especially its Executive Management for providing support and all the finances necessary to produce our first ever comprehensive Safety Handbook and distribute it to 120 000 homes.

This Safety Handbook initiative is by far the most extensive compilation of frequent use safety, security and crime prevention messages that has ever been produced in the ACT and the vision of our Board of Management with the support of the AFP and Casino Canberra in particular, made it possible.

Training and Volunteer Development

We have experimented with a number of training and education options and will continue to explore CPTED training for key NHW officers and the possibility of a community based and accredited certificate in something like 'Creating Safer Communities'. We have continued to pursue the possibility of including NHW and Crime prevention into Scout Badges and the like. In the near future we will concentrate on bringing together ACT Police and NHW Volunteers in planned district initiatives.

Encouraging the Heart

Alongside of the continual efforts to streamline communication between the ACT NHW Board, the AFP and the Area Coordinators in the suburbs, our President, Ursula Macdermott initiated a bi-annual event last October which recognizes the efforts and special achievements of ACT NHW volunteers and their supporters for the first time. Hundreds of gongs were awarded in a Special Ceremony held at the Royal Theatre in October last year. This event was heralded by many as a significant milestone in community connection and we will follow this up in 2007.

Graeme Hush (Rev'd)
Deputy President / Secretary
ACT NHW Inc. (Association)