

## **ACT Neighbourhood Watch Inc. (Association)**

At the 2007 Neighbourhood Watch Australasia Conference held in the beautiful city of Wellington in New Zealand, delegates were challenged to think creatively and strategically about the use and development of human capital in the many and varied facets of NHW. This timely exchange sharpened the vision for the ACT NHW Executive and has inspired us to set some parameters for discussions with the ACT NHW Board of Management over the first few months of 2008.

During the last couple of years and in a variety of forums we have consistently agreed that social inclusion; empowering people from all walks of life to participate and contribute to the growth and development of NHW, has to be the priority for the next season in the ACT. Our great hope is that as we draw closer to 2010 and beyond, we will have significantly shifted away from being a two dimensional, committee based structure which attracts 'some' people after the fact of their vulnerability. What we would like to become is a more grass roots, multiple entry point, people engaging cause which empowers everyday citizens to participate and contribute together towards creating safer communities; firstly their own and then their neighbours'.

Two key factors will be foundational. Firstly, we will need to ensure the continued development of an effective and mutually accountable & supportive partnership between ACT NHW and ACT Policing whatever the political, managerial, environmental or social circumstances of the present and the future. We believe we are well on the way down this road and we are sincerely grateful to the growing number of AFP officers who have worked hard with us to this end. Secondly, we will need to spend priority time and effort ensuring that our administrative processes are transferable and reproducible. This is a big task for volunteers and the first stage of this year will be devoted to cleaning these things up and tying off loose ends.

In accord then with this preparatory effort, ACT NHW President Ursula Macdermott and I have begun drafting a revised strategic plan which will simply promote and profile the desired end state, i.e. what we would like ACT NHW to look like in 5, even 10 years time, based on the core values of the cause. This draft will build on the shared ideals consistently articulated between members of the ACT Board of Management which has already recognised the fact that NHW has more chance of being engaged and utilized as a tool by the public if it focuses its resourcing efforts on serving communities that already exist.

For example, in previous articles we have reported about the Gungahlin Day Care project which our executive member Mrs. Christine Coulthard OAM has established within the existing ageing population of that region. On the surface it looks like a programme solely designed to provide community activity and a caring opportunity for people who otherwise would be lonely and or shut in but it also provides a very accessible entry point for ongoing dialogue about personal safety and property security where the values are lived out as much as they are discussed. This project recognizes that people who share a sphere of life and activity or circumstance can and will learn and grow together as safe community builders if they are encouraged and empowered to do so. The Gungahlin project therefore, successfully opens doors for the investigation of more opportunities that effectively engage aged persons.

Other projects are being explored in and through targeted youth and young adults' organisations, like the Scouts and PCYC; even some schools. In broader community areas we are investigating the usefulness of church and common interest groups, community support and targeted human need groups as well as workplaces. We can value all sorts of different people in our neighbourhoods more, by providing helpful resources and ongoing support for them to create their own safer communities than we can as an organization that essentially operates separately from them. Even with the right heart intention we will still presume knowledge of specific community needs instead of trusting the people who live or work in the sphere to know best.

ACT NHW in partnership with ACT Police, hopes to provide a virtual hub for supporting and resourcing people who would advocate and reproduce the NHW message wherever they are and whenever they are there. Businesses, workplaces, marketplaces, cafes, clubs and churches can be safety houses so why shouldn't they operate relationally with us (whether they are brand named NHW or not) as autonomous causal communities that proliferate the message of NHW and equip people with the tools to create safer communities in more places than we could possibly imagine.

We look forward to this vision being sharpened by the valuable input and wisdom which will flow as we continue to engage together in this strengthening Australasian NHW community.

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Deputy President / Secretary  
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