

ACT

IN OUR 25TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR, THE STAGE SEEMS SET FOR POSITIVE LONG TERM GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT, GENUINE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND AN INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN CRIME PREVENTION & EDUCATION INITIATIVES ALONGSIDE ACT POLICE ...

There are recognizable winds of change blowing through the Nation's Capital in this season. For ACT NHW this has meant a growing and sustained interest in its activities and in its advancing spheres of influence. Members of the newly appointed Board of Management which represents the most comprehensive coverage of volunteer leadership positions ever, are humbled by the attention that the organization is enjoying, but are realistic about what this means. "We need to keep the focus and stay vigilant about supporting each other as the work load exponentially increases for our committed volunteers" newly elected President Margaret Pearson said recently. "It is an exciting time for ACT NHW and all the work being undertaken by our volunteers is greatly appreciated", she added.

The 25th Anniversary Dinner held at the Hellenic Club on Wednesday 23rd September was a huge case in point. Just after stepping aside as President of ACT NHW for the past 6 years, Ursula Macdermott with help from Vice President for South NHW Districts Brian Schiller, convened a celebration of our 25 year history which probably symbolized so much of the transition she had presided over, including the time that ACT NHW went perilously close to disappearing from the community service landscape in the aftermath of the HIH debacle which forced volunteer organisations to pay impossible premiums for Public Liability insurance cover around the turn of the new millennium.

The Gala evening was a watershed event for us and was attended by a wonderful cross section of supporters. There were a bunch of 20 year plus volunteers; new recruits like our youngest ever area coordinator, 23 year old Eliza Zekalo and everything in between. But the evidence of a growing respect for ACT NHW was witnessed during her opening remarks when President Margaret Pearson welcomed the Chief Minister of the ACT Jon Stanhope MLA and the Leader of the Opposition Zed Seselja MLA; the ACT Attorney-General, Police & Emergency Services Minister Simon Corbell MLA and his opposite, Jeremy Hanson CSC MLA; several other members of the ACT Legislative Assembly, the Chief Police Officer of the ACT Michael Phelan APM, Crime Prevention Superintendent Kate Buggy and a couple of tables worth of dedicated Suburban Policing Strategy Coordinating Officers and other Police Officer mates of ACT NHW.

We shared in a wonderful meal, received a well prepared address by the Chief Minister and immensely enjoyed the banter between Ursula Macdermott and Phil Morrall OAM as they told stories about how it all began and shared anecdotes from their 50 years of combined service to ACT NHW. Phil and ACT Police Officer Bill Mackie commenced the first NHW group in the southern Territory precinct of Kambah on the 25th September 1984. During the evening, patrons listened to live café style background music from my beautiful wife Karen and I whilst taking a moment to publicly thank Ursula Macdermott for her leadership and long service; presenting her with flowers and a specially worded plaque. One other presentation was made to our Farrer NHW Area Coordinator Christopher Hudson, in appreciation of the phenomenal amount of time and effort he put in to re-writing the ACT NHW Constitution which was formally endorsed recently.

(INSERT **PHOTO # 1** HERE SOMEWHERE / see photo detail credits below – THANKS)

ACT NHW President Margaret Pearson and long time ACT NHW Executive member Christine Coulthard OAM, flank the ACT Attorney-General Simon Corbell MLA at the 25th Anniversary Dinner.

(INSERT **PHOTO # 2** HERE SOMEWHERE / see photo detail credits below – THANKS)

Assistant Commissioner CPO Michael Phelan APM congratulates Ursula Macdermott on her 25 years of service to the community through NHW, with Simon Corbell and ACT NHW Secretary Ruth Oldfield looking on.

En Route to the Next 25 Years

ACT NHW is utilizing the strength drawn significantly from its close partnership with ACT Policing as well as from the commitment made by the ACT Government to provide minimum funding of \$20 000 per annum (for this 4 year term) in support of our Territory wide oversight and administrative operations. As such we have forged ahead with intentional planting and rejuvenation initiatives which have sparked the interest and active response of a growing number of young adults as well as previously disinterested older residents and an emerging new support base of schools, clubs and commercial enterprises.

Board members have been busy networking with community support agencies, mentoring and partnering with new area coordinators in new and revisited localities and working alongside police officers at school fetes and open day type stalls.

It is fitting at this point to once again congratulate the AFP on its 30th Anniversary and in this Australasian forum acknowledge the amazing contribution that Australian & New Zealand police officers make to our lives on a daily basis.

There is in all of this, a feeling around Canberra that people are desirous of healthier neighbourhoods and safer more user friendly public spaces. In our southern most suburbs where NHW has never been, Nick Tsoulas, who has been relentless in his efforts to establish an active NHW presence, echoes the above sentiment as he reflects upon the many consultations he has facilitated between residents, government representatives and business people in that region. Similarly in the north at the September launch of the Belconnen ACT NHW Rejuvenation campaign convened by recent recruit Matthew Watts and graciously hosted by the Belconnen Community Council, the summary comments made by concerned residents revolved around believing that all of this was timely and it seemed to those present that there was a rising hunger in the community for things which will actually facilitate appropriate relationship building.

Residents right across the ACT are starting to recognise NHW as a relatively simple and effective conduit for developing a deep sense of community and well being. Here is just one example ...

Caring for Our Environment – Caring for Our Community

Farrer NHW is the largest and most active NHW group in the ACT. Recently it donated \$1000 of the funds that its hard working volunteers had raised, to the local Primary School towards the successful establishment of a Carbon Forest.

Farrer Area Coordinator Christopher Hudson says, "The donation is consistent with our philosophy of promoting and supporting a sense of well being and cohesion in our local community." Farrer NHW is a partner in this venture alongside Farrer Service Station and CSIRO Carbon Kids. Together they will encourage the whole community to share in the responsibility for observing and overseeing the Forest in the long term, particularly after hours and during non-school periods.

(INSERT **PHOTO # 3** HERE SOMEWHERE / see photo detail credits below – THANKS)

From the Left: Christopher Hudson (Farrer NHW Area Coordinator) Jeanette Logan (Farrer NHW Secretary) Maureen Brown (Farrer NHW Treasurer)
Front Centre: Farrer Primary School Senate Captains; Mischa Rippon and Katarina Stavrides.
Right Rear from the left: Principal Wayne Prowse, Ross Kingsland (CSIRO Education Manager) and Ruben Rycroft (Farrer Service Station representative)

Farrer NHW members enjoyed planting trees with the children on the 31st July at the official opening of the Carbon Forest by the ACT Minister for Education Andrew Barr MLA. The funds donated were raised from raffles in the area and the Farrer NHW group is very thankful to residents of the community for their contributions.

"We want to show that we care about what is happening in our neighbourhood and that we are visibly active in developing community spirit." Mr Hudson said.

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