

ACT Neighbourhood Watch Association Incorporated

Annual General Meeting 2024

16 October 2024

ANNUAL REPORT TO MEMBERS

Introduction

2023-24 has been a challenging year with personal distractions for members of the Board as well as some turbulence around volunteers and partner agencies.

Board of Management

I would first like to thank the members of the Board of Management for their support and assistance throughout the year.

We farewelled Inspector Craig McPheron from the board on his retirement from the AFP and we welcomed A/ Inspector Anna Daw as his replacement.

At the end of the 2023-24 FY, the Board of Management was made up as follows:

Laurie Blackall – President, NHWA Board
Clare McGrath – Vice President North, Director
Albert Orszaczky – Vice President South
Angela Di Pauli – Secretary
Lily Wang - Treasurer
A/Inspector Anna Daw - ACT Policing Rep
Maria Adams – Public Officer and Regional Representative Inner North
Elias Hallaj – Regional Representative Belconnen
Sep Westerhuis – Regional Representative Gungahlin

The Board also acknowledges the continued and considerable contribution of Jude Bowman (Membership Secretary) and Ian McLean (Media Advisor) throughout the past year.

Strategic Planning and Activity

The Executive met in February 2024 to review our 3-year Strategic Plan and develop the Operations Plan and budget for 2024-25. The Strategic Plan establishes our way forward and sets priorities for the next three years. The Operational Plan was updated to reflect achievements from last FY and set the work plan and budget for 2024-25.

Flowing from the strategic planning activity are three initiatives that have been forecast for progress during FY 2023-24:

- a. Update of the Constitution to address legislative changes, member and community expectations, and advances in technology since the Constitution was last updated in 2011. While some minor progress has been made, this remains on our priority for the next FY.
- b. Update our membership database to reduce the risk around personal information and facilitate distribution of NHW material and information.

New Office

Our tenure at Havelock House came to an end during last financial year. Unfortunately, our tenure at the new site within the old Erindale Police Station at 2 Grattan Ct, Wanniasa has again been thrown affected by the decision of our host to hand back a portion of their lease (which includes the area

currently occupied by NHWACT). An application to ACT Government Facilities Group to remain at this location is pending although, unlike our current arrangement with Support Link, there will be some as yet to be determined ongoing lease costs should this application be successful. Support Link have provided a supporting argument for us to retain this facility under a separate lease arrangement.

Public Events and Functions in 2023-24

The following activities were attended by NHWACT last Financial Year:

- Seniors Expo – September 2023
- NHW attended two information stalls at Bunnings – Gungahlin and Majura Park – during Bunnings Crime Prevention Week - November 2023
- ACT NHW Awards Presentations – November 2023
- NHW assisted at the ACT Policing booth at the Royal Canberra Show - February 2024
- Volunteering ACT Symposium and Expo – March 2024

Awards

Chief Police Officer of the ACT, Deputy Commissioner Neil Gaughan APM presented the NHWACT Member of the Year Award to Sharon Leigh-Hazell from Florey and the ACT Police Recognition Award to Adrienne Carey, at the time the A/Senior Digital Engagement Officer, at an award presentation evening held at the Canberra Southern Cross Club, Jamison in November 2022. I would like to congratulate the award winners as well as all those who were nominated for these awards for their outstanding contribution to the NHW and their respective communities.

The Good Neighbour Award was not awarded in March this year, with the Board deciding to include it in the nomination round for the other two NHW awards, to be announced and presented at the annual Awards Presentation event in November 2023.

Partnerships and Corporate Memberships

Neighbourhood Watch Australasia: NHTWA is the peak body representing NHW in the Australasia region and currently has membership encompassing Australian NHW jurisdictions (including NHWACT) and Neighbourhood Support New Zealand. We have participated in a number of NHTWA sponsored initiatives throughout the year, most notably the inaugural Secure Your Home Day in September 2023 and the SAFE (Safer Australia For Everyone) cash back offer to boost home security for victims of home burglary. A an awareness campaign raising issues of child exploitation was produced by NHTWA in partnership with the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation and aired on local TV stations during 2024. I attended the Neighbourhood Support NZ Conference in Wellington in March. This was a beneficial meeting as we were able to gain some additional insights into how our sister organisation in New Zealand approaches community engagement in neighbourhood safety and security.

ACT Government - Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACS): Our relationship with JACS has strengthened significantly this year, with thanks to Anna Lee from JACS taking a very pro-active approach to engagement with us throughout the year. We have established a regular bi-monthly meeting involving JACS, NHWACT, ACT Policing Strategic Comms team and Crimestoppers to assist in coordination and collaborating on Projects of interest to the group.

ACT Policing: Our relationship with ACT Policing has continued to strengthen. We received the requested grant of \$25,000 to enable us to continue to produce information and promotional material, and to develop and maintain a credible information technology environment to expand our reach across the community.

I attended the farewell function for the out-going Chief Police Officer of the ACT – Neil Gaughan – in March and met the in-coming Chief Police Officer for the ACT to discuss the roles of NHW in the community and seek his ongoing support to the organisation. The meeting was most positive and I

look forward to us having continued support both from him personally as well as through his command.

Officers in Charge of ACT Police Stations continue to provide invaluable support and assistance, with attendance at Area activities and ongoing engagement despite the high work tempo required of ACT Policing, as do our key contacts within the Strategic Communication and the Education and Diversion Teams within ACT Policing. Particular thanks to the OIC and staff at Belconnen Police Station who continue facilitating our regular Board meetings. The value of this practical demonstration of the relationship cannot be underestimated, and continued engagement by NHW Areas with the relevant Police Stations by members is strongly encouraged. I also wish to acknowledge the assistance provided throughout the year by Emma Bailey from the Strategic Comms team and Lina Webber from the Education and Diversion Team.

Crime Stoppers: Angela Di Pauli remains our representative on Crime Stoppers ACT (CSACT) Board as our close partnership continues to grow.

Volunteering ACT: We joined Volunteering ACT, giving us access to a range of services and resources to continue developing our governance, management and operational capabilities to enhance our support to the ACT community. While we have not made optimal use of this resource during the year, we have taken steps to ensure value from this membership is improved in coming years.

Membership

NHW ACT attracted 113 new members in FY 2023-24. This is almost double the numbers for each of the previous two years FY2021-22 (60) and Fy2022-23 (62). Applications are almost exclusively via our online web form which has made it easier to submit an application and for the relevant information to be forwarded to the ACT Policing vetting authority.

We have improved our membership application process to collect information on applicants' interests and skills that they see themselves contributing to the organisation as a volunteer. However, this remains an area of concern for the future of NHW in the ACT as we still do not attract active volunteers in areas of need.

This year we completed a major project to validate our membership database. Following an initial mailout to members for whom we had email addresses, we followed up with letters to those for whom we had no email. The outcome is a more accurate reflection of our membership numbers with an added benefit that we have much improved connectivity with our members. This has been an enormous undertaking, and I would like to acknowledge the significant amount of work put in by our Membership Secretary, Jude Bowman. This will be an ongoing focus for the Board as we strive to maintain accurate records and to also ensure that we comply with privacy and data management requirements surrounding our membership database.

Communications

With completion of our membership review, we have been able to better utilise email capabilities to reach our membership group and to Our social media profile has continued to raise awareness of, and support for NHW with the ACT Facebook page attracting a growing following. While we now use email as our primary connectivity with our membership group, we still get a larger than satisfactory bounce of emails sent to the whole group. Many of these are due to understandably strict filters which come to the fore with, but are not exclusive to business email addresses. This may need to be a focus for further enhancing our reach and engagement with members.

As previously mentioned, the number of Areas choosing to establish local FaceBook groups as a means of connecting with their members and communities has also increased.

We continue to get exposure to our activities through regular contributions to the NHW Australasia Journal thanks to the efforts of our Media Advisor, Ian McLean, who ensures we meet publication deadlines.

Conclusion

In 2023-24, NHWACT continued consolidation of processes and improving communication to our membership group. As familiarity and use of new information technologies and communications capabilities increases, our ability to reach a much broader cross-section of the community will improve. This will ensure that ACT NHW is well positioned both organisationally and with appropriate capabilities to meet the challenges of the future.



Laurie Blackall
President