



Neighbourhood Watch (NSW) Guidelines

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Neighbourhood Watch (NSW) Guidelines

Part A: NSWPF support to the NHW Groups

Introduction

Crime prevention and community safety is about recognising the need for all sections of the community to take responsibility for creating a safer environment in which people can live and work. This means building partnerships between police, government agencies, local councils, community organisations and individuals within the community. NSW Police Force (NSWPF) is committed to maintaining and enhancing crime prevention and community safety through strategies that encourage all sections of the community to build a safer environment in which to live and work.

The Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) program is one of a range of crime prevention and community safety strategies currently in use within NSW. Since 1984, when the program was first introduced, NSWPF has supported the NHW program in those communities that have demonstrated their ongoing support for it. The program itself is not funded at a community level by NSWPF, or any other government organisation. Instead, NHW is resourced through fund-raising, sponsorships and grants and has at its core, dedicated volunteers in each local community.

NHW is a community based, crime prevention organisation that aims to reduce localised crime and fear of crime by promoting and coordinating multi-faceted approaches to prevention and problem solving. It is part of the broader Neighbourhood Watch Australasia organisation, of which, NSWPF is a participating Board member.

Guiding Principles

The key operating principles for NSWPF with NHW groups in NSW are:

- *NSWPF supports the NHW crime prevention initiative in NSW*
- *Local Area Commands (LACs) are the point of contact with NHW*
- *NHW groups are not governed or operated by NSWPF*
- *NHW groups may engage with NSWPF in crime prevention initiatives through Eyewatch and Community Safety Precinct Committees (CSPC) and meetings*
- *LACs will consider NHW as part of their community engagement strategy*
- *Operational Programs, Crime Prevention Team will provide advice and support to LACs regarding NHW*
- *LACs will maintain contact with the NHW groups operating within their Command*

NSWPF Contacts:

Local Police Station – Crime Prevention Officer (CPO)
Operational Programs - Crime Prevention Team
Level2, 20 Charles Street
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150
Ph: 9768 – 0722 Fax: 9768 – 0721

What are the objectives of NHW?

The overall aim of the program is to encourage individual and community participation in preventing and reducing property crime and improving personal safety.

There are five objectives:

- 1. To encourage community participation in the NHW program*
- 2. To encourage a higher level of household, business and personal safety and security amongst NHW members*
- 3. To encourage crime prevention and work with the local community to reduce crime*
- 4. To encourage NHW members to report crime and suspicious activity to police*
- 5. To encourage NHW members to build links between the NHW program and the broader crime prevention and community safety environment*

Who is involved in NHW?

The Community:

NHW is a community program, run by members of the community. NSWPF does not manage the individual groups, but will provide assistance and support where possible. Members of the community should be encouraged to participate within the NHW program. No one seeking to join or who is part of the program shall be discriminated against on the grounds of gender, race, sex, religion, disability, or politics. The NSW community is diverse and this diversity should be reflected in the NHW program.

The Local Area Command / Crime Prevention Officer:

The CPO implements and supports crime prevention programs and projects, of which NHW may be one within the local area.

The CPO may provide the following assistance to NHW Groups by:

- Acting as a contact point within the LAC's for inquiries from the community or NHW
- Attending NHW meetings (*as required*)
- Disseminating information on local crime and policing issues to NHW groups
- Monitoring local crime trends and encouraging NHW activities that aim to prevent and reduce crime
- Participating in crime prevention initiatives authorised by the LAC Commander

Please note:

- Care must be taken to ensure that the release of information does not breach the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 No 133 (NSW)*
- Each NHW Group is responsible for managing their own accounts and under no circumstances should NHW Group funds be held by the NSWPF

- Police should not involve themselves in matters of a political nature that may be raised at a NHW meeting. CPO's and other police should avoid making comments or giving personal opinions on political issues or other matters that may divide the community
- NSWPF will not participate in NHW Group activities if those activities involve individuals or sponsors whose involvement in the NHW Group may bring the NSWPF into disrepute

NSW Police Force Operational Programs / Crime Prevention Team

In consultation with the NSWPF Corporate Spokesperson for Crime Prevention, the Crime Prevention Team is responsible for the corporate management of several projects and programs which have a focus on crime prevention. The team provides operational support and advice to all CPO's and other police units.

Active community participation is critical to the success of the program in both its crime prevention and community engagement objectives. NSWPF is committed to supporting and assisting the broader NHW organisation with that endeavour.

NSWPF do not prescribe the activities to be undertaken by any local NHW group. One advantage of the NHW program is that it has at its foundation a 'local solutions for local problems' model. This non-prescriptive approach is intended to empower communities and community groups to determine which issues of crime and public safety are most important to them, and share those concerns with local police.

Eyewatch

At the request of a NHW Group, the CPO may offer to create a closed group on Facebook for the local NHW group through the Eyewatch program. This is an alternative to 'face-to-face' meetings, where a simple on-line forum can occur in a less formal context, in a way that suits modern communities. This allows people to be involved and stay informed, but who have less time to devote to 'face to face' community activities due to long and irregular work hours.

Eyewatch was rolled out by the NSWPF as the revolutionary new way for police at LAC's to engage with the community of NSW. It is commonly known in the State Plan NSW 2021 as 'Neighbourhood Watch for the 21st Century'. Eyewatch uses the Facebook website as a platform to connect with the community on-line.

NHW Groups can be mobilised through Eyewatch using social networks and afford them the opportunity to participate with their local police in active crime prevention initiatives. Eyewatch presents an opportunity for residents to be aware of incidents that are occurring in their neighbourhood and provide them with the ability to voice their concerns to police, obtain feedback and be part of the solution.

Every LAC in NSW now has their own Facebook page, enabling them to display such things as crime figures, crime prevention techniques, and local community event information. The program is fully supported by the NSWPF and has the backing of the New South Wales Government.

Use of the NSWPF Corporate Brand

It is essential that the NSWPF project a consistent corporate image in all of its dealings with the community. This requires a consistent application of the *Corporate Brand* by all areas of the NSWPF.

The NSWPF name, insignia and chequered band are highly regarded and respected symbols. The police insignia, name 'police', logo or crest and the chequered band and slogan (or branding statement) are collectively referred to as the *Corporate Brand*. Any request to use the *Corporate Brand* external to the NSWPF must be approved by the Director, Public Affairs Branch, NSWPF.

For approval, please send all requests to:

Director

Public Affairs Branch

Sydney Police Centre

Level 5, 151 Goulburn Street

SURRY HILLS NSW 2010

Where approval is given for the use of the *Corporate Brand*, its application on banners, clothing, event signage, websites or promotional items must **also** be approved by Public Affairs Branch. This will require the group organiser to submit draft artwork for approval before the application of the *Corporate Brand* to products. The *Corporate Identity Guidelines* may be provided to suppliers to assist producing and applying the *Corporate Brand*. Further information regarding this, can be obtained from the Corporate Design Team, Public Affairs Branch (ph: 9285-3690).

In accordance with the NSWPF Sponsorship & Endorsement Policy, the *Corporate Brand*:

- must **not** be used to endorse any commercial product or service
- is the official identity of the NSWPF and must **not** be modified in any way.

Any part of the *Corporate Brand* must **not** be used on stationery (including business cards) of any organisations external to the NSWPF, regardless of any commercial arrangements between the parties: this includes Crime Stoppers and PCYC.

The *Corporate Brand* may be used in connection with not for profit community or charity events, police aligned sporting groups and organisations with close ties to NSWPF. The rights to use the *Corporate Brand* will be governed by the terms of a Licence Agreement between the NSWPF and the applicant.

Under Section 203 (8) of the *Police Act, 1990*, the maximum penalty for breach of this section is a fine of 100 penalty units, or six months imprisonment.

Use of the NHW Logo

Prior to using the NHW logo on any material, banners, websites etc, approval to use the NHW logo needs to be obtained from Neighbourhood Watch Victoria Incorporated. Any unauthorised use of the logo may result in breach of copyright. The NHW logo comprises of the logo (four heads) and words (Neighbourhood Watch)

For approval, please send all requests to:

Neighbourhood Watch Victoria Incorporated
State Manager
St Kilda Road Police Station
18th Floor, 412 St Kilda Road
MELBOURNE Vic 3004
Phone: (03) 9865-2968
Email: admin@nhw.com.au

www.nhw.com.au

www.facebook.com/nhw.vic

Example:



Incorporation

NHW Groups are not required to be incorporated in order to operate in their local communities. However, incorporation may be beneficial for larger or more pro-active NHW Groups that would like to be eligible for grants and for fund raising purposes. The Department of Fair Trading is the agency responsible for incorporating associations in NSW and NHW Groups should contact Fair Trading directly to discuss incorporation.

NHW Groups should be encouraged to seek their own legal advice about the advantages and disadvantages of incorporation and their accounting, governance and reporting obligations once they are incorporated.

An incorporated association has its own legal identity separate from its members, providing protection to members in legal transactions.

An incorporated association can:

- Enter into and enforce contracts, including the ability to hold, acquire and deal with property
- Sue or be sued
- Continue regardless of changes to membership.

While there are benefits to be gained from incorporation, there are also obligations. For example, incorporation requires the payment of application fees and requires the association

to maintain proper financial and membership records and registers. Incorporation is not compulsory. NSW Fair Trading's Registry Services regulates incorporated associations registered under the *Associations Incorporation Act 2009* (NSW). For more information, NHW Groups should be referred to:
www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/ftw/Cooperatives_and_associations

Department of Fair Trading
Ph: 13 32 20

Registry Services
Ph: (02) 6333-1400
Free Call: 1800 502 042

Insurance

NSW Police Public Liability and Personal Accident policies provide protection to volunteers whilst working in community safety programs, such as Neighbourhood Watch programs.

To be eligible for cover, volunteers need to be:

- actually involved in the business of the program at the time of the incidents subject of a claim
- that no illegal activity is being engaged in at the time of the incident subject of the claim
- NSW Police Public Liability provides protection for volunteers in Police Safety Programs for legal liability in respect of claims caused by an occurrence, act or omission in connection with the activities involved in the program

Whilst cover is provided in principle, it is stressed that each claim will be treated individually. Depending upon the circumstances, responsibility may or may not be accepted.

Members of the NSWPF who participate in a NHW Group in their official capacity as employees of the NSWPF will be covered by NSWPF's insurance.

Part B: Advice for the Administration of NHW Group's

What is the structure of NHW?

There is no ideal structure for a NHW Group, what works most effectively in a particular community within the broad parameters of the program is quite acceptable. Flexibility is essential.

Some form of management and direction is required, regardless of the size of the NHW area. NHW Groups are routinely managed and operated by a Management Committee. At full strength, these committees may comprise of an Area Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator(s), Zone Coordinator(s), Secretary, Treasurer and Publicity Officer.

Depending upon the local situation, not all of these positions may be required in every NHW Group. Those that have been identified as key positions are the Area Coordinator, Treasurer and Secretary. The remaining positions are optional, depending upon the local situation and requirements. Essentially what is best is what works for a particular community. The key issue is not so much the size of an area or even the number of people participating. Rather, it is the ongoing willingness of the local community to participate in the program in an effective manner.

The general roles and responsibilities of each of the management committee members are listed below as a guide only:

Area Coordinator/Chairperson

- Responsible for the efficient and effective operation of the NHW Area and for chairing Management Committee Meetings
- The principal liaison point between the NHW Area and the LAC

Group Coordinator

- Manages NHW in their respective group

Secretary

- Responsible for preparing and responding to correspondence
- Supply copies of minutes for meetings to interested parties

In the interest of encouraging self-sufficiency, NHW Coordinators should be encouraged to maintain records for their area. In those areas with a Secretary, that person can undertake record keeping.

Treasurer

- Responsible for the maintenance of proper and accurate records of all monies
- Provision of a financial report at each General Committee Meeting and a written report of the Area Coordinator as required.
- Shall ensure that all accounts are in writing and presented to and passed by the Management Committee for payment.
- Deposit all funds with a bank, building society or credit union approved by the Management Committee. Withdrawal of any funds shall be by joint signature of at least two members of the Management Committee
- Ensure that an auditor appointed by the Management Committee carries out an audit of all accounts prior to the annual general meeting

NHW Meetings

Many NHW Groups operate effectively on a casual and informal basis, whilst others prefer to observe stricter protocol. Some meetings are presided over by a Chairperson and all questions and or comments must first pass through the Chairperson, minutes are recorded and business and correspondence is tabled.

Meetings are often an important part of the program and a primary method of engagement and communication in many communities. However, the numbers of meetings held are not a reliable indicator of the success of the program. In many cases, it is the activity that takes place between meetings that is important. Most importantly, meetings should be held to discuss the business of the NHW program and its objectives.

Research has shown that face to face meetings significantly impact the collaborative partnership, build the community's confidence and keeps the community actively engaged in crime prevention and reporting. Meetings that are constructive and consistent are an integral part of building better relationships with the community.

At the request of a NHW Group, the LAC may set up a closed group on Facebook through the Eyewatch program through which, the NHW Group may conduct meetings.

Starting a NHW Group

NHW groups are not governed or operated by NSWPF. They are established and operated by the local community. Below are a number of steps which may be considered by a community group when establishing a NHW group.

Step 1 - Assessing the Need

The process usually begins when a member of the community perceives a need for NHW in their local area. It's important at this stage, to try to ascertain as accurately as possible the likely level of support for the NHW group within the local community. This ground work needs to be conducted by the community member wishing to establish the group.

Notwithstanding a perception by either police or the community that NHW is appropriate; the program will not work without ongoing support. As not all members of the community may be familiar with NHW and its objectives, it's important that the community in the area targeted are supplied with information on the program before their views are canvassed.

For example, this might be done by distributing NHW pamphlets or a simple printed flyer explaining the essentials of the program in the area targeted.

Step 2 – The first meeting

Once it has been determined that there is enough initial interest and support for the NHW group, the next step is to organise a community meeting. Again, this will be organised by the local community member. Essentially, it is about explaining the aims and objectives of NHW, what is expected in the way of community participation and the benefits that will flow to the community from a successful NHW program.

It may be helpful to draw up an agenda before the meeting and circulate it to those attending. The primary reason for this meeting is to help the community decide whether or not NHW should go ahead in the local community. This is fundamental and nothing else should proceed until this is resolved.

If it is apparent that there is sufficient support, the next step is to determine the most appropriate structure for the NHW group and arrange for the election of a management team. This might be carried out at the initial meeting or it might be more appropriate to arrange a second meeting for this purpose. Local conditions and the mood of the audience will largely determine what course of action is taken.

Step 3 – Selection of committee members

People who nominate themselves for positions or are nominated by others need to understand the roles and responsibilities of office holders.

The first position to be filled is that of Area Coordinator. You should call for nominations for this position and ask for a seconder. Anyone nominated should first be asked if they accept the nomination. When all nominations have been received, call for a vote upon each of the nominees in turn (this can be by a show of hands or by ballot). If there are a number of nominees, you may wish to appoint a scrutineer to assist you with the counting.

If no nominations are received for a particular position, do not delay the process and move onto the next position. If there are vacant positions at the conclusion of the election process, the group might suggest that a caretaker for the position be appointed until a further meeting can be arranged.

Step 4 – NHW community members

Membership to the NHW group is at the discretion of the NHW Committee members.

Please note:

- It is important to remember that police have **no voting rights** in the election of office holders
- NSWPF will **not** be conducting criminal history checks of NHW group participants on NHW Committee members. Membership to the NHW Group will be at the discretion of the NHW Committee Members.

Sustaining the NHW Program

The NHW program is dependent upon ongoing community involvement and support. Support and advice will also be provided by NSWPF to sustain the program. This is likely to involve providing support material and providing information on local crime trends for meetings and newsletters.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that those NHW groups that are encouraged to adhere to clear and simple objectives with a minimum of bureaucratic type activity are often the most successful.

It may be helpful to suggest to members that they undertake specific tasks, such as property engraving or marketing the NHW program to neighbours and friends in the intervening time between meetings. Not only is this likely to sustain community interest, it provides a measure for evaluation.

Closing a NHW Group

Given the demographic changes and other issues impacting on communities, it is inevitable that some NHW groups will cease operating. How this will be conducted will be determined by the NHW committee members for that group.

It has been the experience of the NSWPF that NHW groups typically close where the majority of the members (51% or more) vote to wind up the group. Where doubt exists about the intention of the people involved, it should be clarified by affording all members an opportunity to debate the issue and vote on it.

In the event of closure, NHW Committee members should discharge any outstanding expenses and liabilities and vote on the disposition of any remaining funds. Without seeking to prescribe the disposition of the funds, local charities, other NHW Groups or other community safety initiatives may be considered as suitable entities to receive the funds.

Any remaining funds should **not** be:

- Divided up amongst those committee members present, or;
- Paid to NSWPF

Public Comment

Although everyone has the right as a private individual to make public comment and enter into public debate on political and social issues, no member of NHW should make or appear to make statements on behalf of NSWPF.

NHW meetings, initiatives, and success stories can be publicised, and making positive use of local media, can enhance the profile of the program. Community radio stations make a useful local media vehicle through which the police and local NHW groups are able to reach the community. Specialised advice on dealing with the media is available from the Police Media Unit.

NHW and Politics

NHW is not a political organisation. In the interests of maintaining the program's effectiveness, the following advice should be adhered to:

- Discourage the use of NHW to promote political causes
- Guest speakers at NHW meetings should be chosen for their ability to expand upon or explain matters specifically related to the NHW program. They must not use the program as a platform for raising political issues

Sponsorship

Sponsorship can be a useful mechanism for fund raising and sustaining the NHW program. It is appropriate for individual NHW Groups to look for sponsorship for local activities, such as newsletters and membership drives.

It is important that any sponsorship of the NHW Group does not have the potential to cause embarrassment to the NHW program or to NSWPF. All sponsorship activities should be carefully recorded by the NHW Group and treated appropriately in the NHW Group's bank account.

Fund Raising

Advice to NHW Groups should include that fund raising activities need to comply with the law. Particular care should be taken to ensure full accountability and record keeping of all money or goods collected. Any money or goods should only be from reputable persons and businesses.

Consideration should be given as to whether or not the proposed fundraising requires a licence to fundraise, issued under the *Charitable Fundraising Act 1991* (NSW) by the NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing. Section 9 of this Act provides that a person or organisation conducting a fundraising appeal is guilty of an offence unless the person or organisation is the holder of an authority to fundraise issued under the Act, or is authorised to do so by a person or organisation holding such an authority.

Given that the objectives of the NHW program is community based, fundraising by NHW groups fall under the jurisdiction of the Act.

For further information, please contact:

Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing
GPO Box 7060
SYDNEY NSW 2001
info@olgr.nsw.gov.au

ph: (02) 9995-0300

Applying for Grants

NHW Groups may be eligible for grants and should inform themselves as to grants available and eligibility requirements. For example, some grants require grant recipients to have an ABN (NHW Groups requiring an ABN should be directed to www.business.gov.au to register for an ABN). Under no circumstances should NHW Groups use the NSWPF ABN when applying for grants.

Before you begin writing a grant application you need to:

- Be clear about why and for whom you are writing the proposal
- Understand the donor for whom you are preparing it
- Know your group, which means being clear about the group's strengths and weaknesses and being able to present a credible track record in areas such as financial management, project impact and general management ability
- Finally, you need to plan the project, which means understanding the context, setting objectives and designing a process
- Don't start writing a funding proposal before you have done the necessary research, thinking and planning
- If you need assistance with the application for a grant, there are a number of sites on the internet that might be of some assistance

i.e. www.fundingcentre.com.au
www.ourcommunity.com.au
www.civicus.org

All levels of government give out grants, as do many philanthropic foundations and some corporations. The keys to success in getting a grant are subtly different for each type of grant maker. You have to know the difference so you know how to pitch your proposal.

The best way to negotiate the world of grants is to think about your needs before you start thinking about what's available. Hold a brainstorming session and make a list of all of the things your group would like to do, if only it had the money. Make it a living list that's accessible to key people within the NHW Group and can be added to and refined as new needs arise and old ones subside. Use this list to inform your decisions about which grants you want to apply for.

Some grant schemes are applicant-driven. This means various groups submit project proposals, and the grant maker picks the one they like best. Others are project-driven. This means the grant maker has a specific project in mind, and advertises for groups who want to run that project.

In any case, any money you receive from a grant will be earmarked for something specific. Before you accept the money, you must be sure you have the capacity to carry out the terms of the contract. After you have accepted the money, you have to deliver exactly what you said you would.

Often a criterion for receiving grant money is that the group is incorporated. Without incorporation, the group will need to find project sponsor i.e. a group or organisation that is incorporated, such as local council.

If you have any questions about these Guidelines, contact the NSWPF's Crime Prevention Team, Operational Programs (ph) 9768-0722.