

Media Release



For Immediate Broadcast

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH CELEBRATES 30 YEARS AND MAKES WAY FOR NEW SAFETY INITIATIVES

At Neighbourhood Watch NT's recent AGM it was announced that the Safety House Program will close in January 2019 to make way for new safety programs and initiatives that better respond to the safety context of today.

Neighbourhood Watch also celebrated 30 years of helping keep the community safe by recognising the enormous effort of members and volunteers. Six inaugural life memberships were awarded, including to founding member John Lear. New branding was also revealed to members for the first time and attendees were given an insight into current NT crime causality and inaugural life membership awards were presented.

The Safety House program has been operating in the Territory for over 30 years and was formed on the theory that children were at greatest risk when travelling to and from school. In early 2018, an independent review of the Safety House program was commissioned to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in today's society.

The Northern Territory and Western Australia are currently the only states/territories in Australia that still operate a Safety House program.

Neighbourhood Watch NT (NHWNT) President Jenny Malone, who was re-elected, said the Safety House program has been a big part of Territory communities, but the context of safety is continually changing.

"What we found from the review was that children now face a number of other safety risks that were not as big of a concern 30 years ago, or simply were not around," Ms Malone said.

"Not only has the percentage of children making their own way to and from school almost halved since the 1970s, the percentage of children with mobile phones to call in an emergency, has almost doubled in the past 10 years."

Safety remains paramount for NHWNT and the resources dedicated to the Safety House program will be reinvested into identifying newer programs that are more relevant, effective and useful.

"We are going to look into how we can develop new initiatives because we want to do the absolute best we can when delivering on our goal to create safer communities in the Territory."

Guest Speaker Sergeant Andy Bedwell presented an insight into property crime causality. He said while young people were often blamed for crime in the community, youths committed only about 25 per cent of total crime.

“While (official) figures show that youth commit a disproportionate amount of crime for their age, they commit only about 25 per cent of crimes.”

He urged people to keep reporting crimes. “I hear people say ‘No point in ringing the police, nothing happens’. But change will only happen when people stand up.”

Sgt Bedwell added: “The vast majority of crime occurs with unlocked houses and unlocked cars. Don’t make yourself a victim of crime.”

Jenny Malone said that NHWNT will continue to work with Police to help create safer communities and minimise the incidence of preventable crime.

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Media Contact : Hannah Finbow 0458 000 910 nhwnt@nhwnt.org.au