

## **SAFETY HOUSE PROGRAM REVIEW FACT SHEET**

### **Overview**

Neighbourhood Watch NT's Safety House program has operated in the Northern Territory for over 30 years.

In early 2018, Neighbourhood Watch NT commissioned an independent review to evaluate the effectiveness of its Safety House program in today's society.

The Safety House program has been a big part of Territory communities, but the context of safety is continually changing and there were concerns Safety Houses were no longer relevant in today's society.

As a result of the review, which included a thorough risk assessment, the Safety House program in the Northern Territory will close in January 2019.

Safety for children will always remain a priority for Neighbourhood Watch NT, however the time has come to adjust the programs to meet the needs of today and tomorrow.

Neighbourhood Watch NT remains committed to promoting safer communities and will reinvest the resources used for Safety House into new initiatives that further promote safety of school aged children.

### **About Safety House**

The Safety House program is a community-based network of safe places for children in their local area. A Safety House can be a house, shop or a business that provides refuge for children if they are feeling scared, lost, in danger or feeling threatened in the hours before and after school.

The program's aim was to play a preventative role in community safety by providing safer neighbourhoods for children. The Safety House program has 177 registered Safety Houses in the whole of the Northern Territory.

There has been minimal reported usage of Safety Houses in the Territory over the past five years and the Northern Territory and Western Australia are the only states still operating Safety House programs.

## **Findings from the review**

When Safety House launched in the Territory, it was based around the assumption that children were most in danger when walking to and from school.

Since the program's inception, the context around safety has changed considerably and while awareness of personal safety has increased, children now face a number of different safety concerns.

In Australia, the percentage of children walking and riding to and from school has almost halved since 1971, while the percentage of children with mobile phones, which can assist in an emergency, has almost doubled since 2007.

All other states and territories (excluding Western Australia) have replaced their Safety House programs with programs more targeted towards the safety concerns of today.

Newer programs focus on helping children better recognise risks themselves, so they can take actions to minimise the possibility of harm.

Several Territory schools were consulted as part of the review to gather feedback on the effectiveness of Safety House and to understand what programs schools deliver to increase safety as part of the curriculum.

The feedback from schools indicated there are a number of different high-profile safety programs that specifically target wider age ranges and have been effective in engaging all children, such as the Life Education NT program and Daniel Morcombe Foundation.

## **Where to from here?**

The decision to close Safety House has not been an easy one to make. Neighbourhood Watch NT has consulted with Safety House volunteers following the review and is committed to identifying new ways to continue helping create safer communities together.

Neighbourhood Watch NT will continue to partner with Northern Territory Police to improve engagement and safety programs with Territory schools.

Neighbourhood Watch NT values the public as the eyes and the ears of the community. We would like to remind people that if you feel unsafe or observe any suspicious activity please contact 131 444 or call 000 in the case of an emergency.

If you would like to provide feedback on new ways to improve safety of children, you can contact Neighbourhood Watch NT on (08) 8999 0847 or email [nhwnt@nhwnt.org.au](mailto:nhwnt@nhwnt.org.au) .