

# Forward

The Neighbourhood Watch program was initially established in Queensland in 1988.

Neighbourhood Watch areas are established as a community-based crime prevention program organised by members of the community to reduce opportunities for crime within the local area.

The Neighbourhood Watch Charter is designed as a policy document in terms of the day-to-day operation of the program. This document, in conjunction with the Neighbourhood Watch Administrative Procedures which relate to the operations and implementation of the program and its variants, is intended to give guidance to members of the community and the Queensland Police Service regarding the operation of the Neighbourhood Watch program in Queensland.

Through community members working together in small informal groups to improve the safety of their environment for families and residents, and police providing expertise to enable residents to organise themselves to reduce crime in their areas, we can help make the state of Queensland a safer community.

In the Neighbourhood Watch Charter it states that each program area seeks to reduce the number of preventable offences by:

- improving personal safety and household/building security;
- reporting suspicious activity;
- ensuring property is appropriately marked for identification; and
- marketing the program to residents and business people within the area.

The endeavours of all who contribute to running effective Neighbourhood Watch areas are greatly appreciated by the Queensland Police Service.

R ATKINSON  
COMMISSIONER OF POLICE



# Table of Contents

1. Name of the Organisation	4
2. Mission	4
3. Objectives	4
4. Policy	5
5. Active Neighbourhood Watch	6
6. Membership	7
7. Office Bearers - Office Holders	8
8. Committees	9
9. Meetings	10
10. Standard Meeting Procedures	12
11. Removal of Office Bearers - Office Holders	14
12. Finances	15
13. Assets of the Program	16
14. Amendments to the Charter	17
15. Returns and Reports	17
16. Sponsorship	18
17. Insurance	18
18. State Coordination	19
19. Closure of a Program Area	20

## 1. Name of the Organisation

- 1.1 The name of the organisation is **NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH - QUEENSLAND** and will be referred to as 'the program' in this document.
- 1.2 Variants of the program also operate. Examples are Rural Watch, Commercial Watch, Marine Watch, School Watch and Train Watch.
- 1.3 The operation of this charter does not apply to School Watch or Train Watch which are coordinated by Education Queensland and Queensland Rail respectively.

## 2. Mission

- 2.1 The mission of Neighbourhood Watch is to promote safety, security and quality of life for all residents in Queensland.

## 3. Objectives

- 3.1 Members of a Neighbourhood Watch program area seek to reduce the number of preventable offences by:
  - 3.1.1 improving personal safety and household/building security;
  - 3.1.2 reporting suspicious activity within their area;
  - 3.1.3 ensuring their property is appropriately marked for identification; and
  - 3.1.4 marketing the program to residents and business people within the area.

- 3.2 The State Coordinator, Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) program will develop inter-governmental/community partnerships to enhance the mission of the program.

## 4. Policy

- 4.1 The program shall be apolitical, non-sectarian and open to all community members within the program area.
- 4.1.1 Under no circumstances are NHW areas or their meetings to be used as a forum for political endorsement/electioneering or debate. This does not preclude support by elected members of various levels of government through, for example, their attendance at NHW area meetings to advise on or answer questions in relation to the objectives of the NHW in that area, or through the provisions of resources or services that assist in the effective operations of the NHW area.
- 4.1.2 Unlawful discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated in the program.
- 4.1.3 The program has no scope for vigilantism and activities of this nature will not be tolerated. Whilst communities are required to organise themselves in the fight against crime, their primary responsibilities extend to ensuring that they are additional eyes and ears for the police. If members act as vigilantes they may break the law, resulting in action being taken against them.
- 4.2 Regional Assistant Commissioners of Police are responsible for the program in their regions. As such they will, in partnership with the community (*Section 2.3 and 2.4 of the Police Service Administration Act 1990 refers*):

- 4.2.1 determine the priority in which NHW program areas are established in their region, in order to most effectively combat crime;
  - 4.2.2 provide the highest possible standard of police support for NHW areas in their region within the limits of staff and material resources available; and
  - 4.2.3 ensure police and community program office bearers are trained in the operation of program areas.
- 4.3 Should the contents of this charter appear to conflict with the rules of incorporation of a NHW area that is, or is intending to become incorporated, the State Coordinator, NHW should be contacted for advice.

## **5. Active Neighbourhood Watch**

- 5.1 To be deemed an active NHW the area will:
- 5.1.1 conduct a minimum of four general meetings a year (one of which may be the Annual General Meeting (AGM));
  - 5.1.2 produce and distribute a minimum of four local newsletters per year which are distributed to all member households; and
  - 5.1.3 communicate with the State Office NHW, and/or a District Crime Prevention Coordinator (DCPC) at least twice a year.

## 6. Membership

- 6.1 All persons sixteen years of age and over, residing or operating businesses in a NHW area are members of that watch area unless they ask to be excluded from membership of that NHW area.
- 6.2 All persons under sixteen years of age, residing in a NHW area are encouraged to attend general and area NHW meetings, and to support the program objectives. These members may be known as junior members but will not have voting rights.
- 6.3 Junior members may submit matters through a member for consideration by their area committee.
- 6.4 NHW members are not prohibited in any way from participating in other groups, bodies or organisations. Such participation is the decision of the individual concerned and is undertaken on the understanding that the individual is not representing the program unless authorised by the committee to do so.
- 6.5 NHW members, by virtue of their position within the program have no specific obligation to attend or assist any external group, body or organisation.
- 6.6 Where NHW members are appointed by the area committee to attend non-NHW meetings they shall represent the program on matters that only relate to the mission and objectives of the program.
- 6.7 The personal details of an Area Coordinator and other NHW members are to be treated as confidential.

## 7. Office Bearers - Office Holders

### 7.1 Office Bearers

- 7.1.1 Any member of a NHW area is eligible to be an office bearer within a NHW area.
- 7.1.2 All office bearers are to be approved as to their suitability to hold office in a NHW area. A completed 'Volunteer Application Form' must be submitted on application and then every three years to the local officer in charge of police to obtain suitability approval.
- 7.1.3 Should any discrepancy be found by the officer in charge, consultation shall be only with the applicant. Should any discrepancy be found making the applicant unsuitable, the applicant should be requested to withdraw the application.
- 7.1.4 NHW office bearers are those members elected to the area committee at a general meeting. This may include, but not be limited to, the area coordinator, secretary and treasurer or secretary/treasurer and deputies to any of these positions.
- 7.1.5 Each individual NHW area has the right to modify the composition of its area committee to meet special needs (for example, it may be that block coordinators, or some of them, are included in the committee). Additional positions such as newsletter editor may be created as required. Appointments made to such positions are to be ratified at the next general meeting.
- 7.1.6 Any office bearer may hold a maximum of two offices within the NHW area, on a temporary basis only, or as approved by a general meeting of the NHW area.

## 7.2 Office holders

- 7.2.1 Office holders are block or zone coordinators and their deputies, or other persons not elected at the AGM but appointed by the area committee to undertake a role in the NHW area. A completed 'Volunteer Application Form' as per section 7.1.2 to obtain suitability approval is required.

## 8. Committees

- 8.1 The main committee is the area committee which is usually elected at an AGM. An executive committee and sub-committees are generally elected from within the area committee. Only committee members are permitted to vote at these meetings.

### 8.2 Area Committees

- 8.2.1 The area committee is composed of the office bearers of a NHW area as elected at an AGM.
- 8.2.2 The area committee will decide major internal policy issues relevant to their specific NHW area.
- 8.2.3 The area committee will organise area meetings and other events to promote the objectives of the NHW program.
- 8.2.4 Where casual vacancies occur, the area committee may appoint office bearers and/or office holders either as additional or replacement coordinators or office bearers (A completed 'Volunteer Application Form' as per section 7.1.2 to obtain suitability approval is required). Such appointments should be recorded in the minutes for insurance purposes.

8.2.5 The area committee is to ensure that all office bearers and office holders receive training in their roles.

### **8.3 Executive Committee**

8.3.1 An area committee may, if so desired, appoint an executive committee to conduct the routine operation of their area. The members of an executive committee shall be the area coordinator or in the absence of that person, the deputy or assistant area coordinator, and not less than three other officer bearers.

### **8.4 Sub - Committee**

8.4.1 The area committee may set up sub-committees as required in the interest of the area. The area committee reserves the right to review, amend and negate the recommendations of such sub-committees for legal or other reasons.

8.4.2 Area coordinators or their nominated deputies/assistants may be ex-officio members of all such sub-committees.

## **9. Meetings**

### **9.1 General meetings**

9.1.1 General Meetings include the launch meeting, AGM and extraordinary general meetings. All members of a NHW area are entitled to attend and vote at these meetings. Junior members are welcome to attend but have no voting power. A quorum for an AGM will be as determined by the area committee in consultation with the officer in charge of the local police division.

- 9.1.2 **Launch Meeting** - a general meeting in a NHW area with members who have come together to form a new program area. At this meeting the area committee is elected and the NHW Charter adopted. Financial management procedures (as per section 12 of the Charter and the NHW Administrative Procedures) must also be decided.
- 9.1.3 **Annual General Meetings** are open to all members in a NHW area. Each member over the age of 16 years attending the meeting is entitled to a vote. The AGM:
- (a) should take place within three calendar months of the end of the financial year (30 June), and conform to the laws and practice for the holding of meetings (see NHW Meeting Guide); and
  - (b) will re-appoint office bearers where such persons are unopposed and are willing to take office. The meeting will confirm the appointment of all office bearers by vote.
- 9.1.4 **Extraordinary General Meetings** may be called by area coordinators, or at the request of at least five members, provided that at least fourteen days prior notice is given to members and the specific business of the meeting is detailed in the notice.
- 9.2 **Area Committee Meetings** are arranged by the area committee to plan and promote the activities of NHW. Examples of such activities include meetings with a guest speaker, social functions, or a project task. Other interested members of a NHW area are encouraged to attend these activities.

- 9.2.1 An area committee will meet as often as necessary to ensure the efficient operation of the area. Additional information may be exchanged and disseminated as necessary or required.
- 9.2.2 Any office bearer absent from three consecutive area meetings without apology or leave, may forfeit their position at the discretion of the area committee.
- 9.2.3 At least seven days prior notice of any area meeting is required to be given to members of the committee, whether by post, area newsletter, notice in local or other newspapers, or verbally at a meeting. Such notice should where possible be reinforced by more than one method.
- 9.2.4 Non-receipt of, or failure by a member to observe, such notice shall not invalidate a meeting.

9.3 **Sub-Committee Meetings** are meetings of the NHW members (with a minimum of one office bearer) who have been appointed by the area committee to address one or more issues as required in the best interest of the area. Minutes shall be taken at such meetings, with recommendations then referred to the area committee for ratification.

## 10. Standard Meeting Procedures

10.1 Should the following procedures conflict with the model rules of an incorporated NHW area, they should be brought to the notice of the NHW State Coordinator.

## 10.2 Minutes

- 10.2.1 Accurate minutes shall be kept of all meetings and should be available on request to all members and tabled at the AGM.
- 10.2.2 No resolution of a meeting may be rescinded, unless fourteen days notice of intent is given to members, together with the reasons for such action. Approval for such rescission may be by a simple majority of votes at the level at which such resolution was originally decided or at an AGM or extraordinary general meeting.
- 10.2.3 A suggested proforma for minutes is available in the NHW Meeting Guide. This proforma is a guide only and may be adapted for individual area needs.

## 10.3 Voting

- 10.3.1 Every member shall have one vote only.
- 10.3.2 Motions are required to be seconded by a member present before discussion and voting.
- 10.3.3 Voting may be by ballot or by show of hands as determined by the area coordinator (Chair) or as agreed by members at the meeting.
- 10.3.4 Police representatives are not permitted to vote at NHW meetings. However, when attending as an area member they have the same rights as other NHW members.
- 10.3.5 Area coordinators, or their nominated deputy, shall occupy the Chair with the right to a casting vote\*.

10.3.6 A quorum for an area meeting or sub-committee shall be the area coordinator, or a nominated deputy plus one third of office bearers, or in remote areas a number mutually agreed to by the area committee and the officer in charge of the local police division. The quorum of an area committee shall be a simple majority of the membership of that committee.

*\* If the Chair is given a casting vote (which is used only when there is equality of voting for and against a motion), then that vote should be exercised so as to preserve the status quo.*

## 10.4 Elections

10.4.1 Nominations for all positions of office bearer or office holder will be called prior to and at the AGM.

10.4.2 Contested and uncontested positions will be filled by vote, although only contested positions need be by secret ballot. Minutes of the meeting should record the names of any persons elected or appointed to official positions (for insurance purposes).

## 11. Removal of Office Bearers - Office Holders

11.1 Any office bearer or office holder who discredits the program by their actions and/or behaviour may forfeit their position at the discretion of the area committee in consultation with the officer in charge of the local police division.

11.2 Any office bearer or office holder who does not effectively carry out their duties or is considered to be disruptive to the program may be asked to resign or, if necessary, removed from office by the vote of at least three-quarters of the area committee.

- 11.3 Any removal of an office bearer or office holder will be carried out in a discrete manner. Should the office bearer or officer holder wish to dispute the decision of the area committee, the matter may be taken to a general meeting for ratification by a majority vote. Any person so removed from an official position is to be named in the minutes of the appropriate meeting (for insurance purposes).

## 12. Finances

- 12.1 Every NHW area will be self-supporting.
- 12.2 The amount of voluntary donation sought will be decided by the area committee or in such a manner as agreed to at the area launch or AGM. The financial needs of the area will be the overriding consideration when determining a requested voluntary donation. If a member chooses not to make a donation this will not exclude the member from the program.
- 12.3 The area committee will NOT impose levies, but may raise funds for special purposes, subject to approval from the Regional Assistant Commissioner (for non NHW purposes) and/or the Justice Department, where such approvals are required.
- 12.4 All monies collected for projects or agencies not specifically supporting NHW objectives must be clearly shown to be for such purposes only and not for the NHW area.
- 12.5 A bank account must be opened as soon as possible after a NHW area has been launched, and be accessed by a minimum of two signatories (see NHW Cash Management Guidelines).

- 12.6 It is the responsibility of every area committee to ensure that an appropriate book of accounts is maintained. Authority to incur expenditure (and maximum amounts permitted) for both routine area administration and other NHW related purchases, should be clearly documented at the first area committee meeting and thereafter confirmed or amended at an AGM.
- 12.7 An auditor or audit committee\* should be appointed annually at the AGM (if incorporated, the area accounts must be audited in line with the current requirements of incorporated bodies).

*\* An audit committee shall comprise of at least three suitable persons as determined by the area committee (not including the treasurer or their deputy).*

## **13. Assets of the Program**

- 13.1 The assets of a NHW area, whether monies or property, shall not be given or transferred to any member, or other person or group, except with prior area committee approval for the direct and ongoing operation of other NHW areas.
- 13.2 Reimbursement for out of pocket expenses incurred by any member requires prior approval by the area committee.
- 13.3 All moneys obtained through the NHW program should be used for the ongoing improvement, support, promotion or enhancement of NHW areas in line with NHW objectives and policies.

## **14. Amendments to the Charter**

- 14.1 If a NHW area committee believes the Charter is in conflict with the objectives of the program, notification should be given to the officer in charge of the NHW areas police division or district. Such notification should have the support of at least two thirds of the area committee.
- 14.2 The notification should then be forwarded to the Regional Assistant Commissioner for clarification and/or consideration. The notification with any recommendations or amendment (if appropriate) may then be referred to the State Coordinator, NHW for consideration by the state forum and ratification by the Commissioner of Police.

## **15. Returns and Reports**

- 15.1 The following returns and reports will be submitted as indicated:
  - 15.1.1 Annual Report - one copy to the DCPC and one copy to the officer in charge of the local division within one month of the AGM;
  - 15.1.2 Annual Statement of Financial Affairs - to be included with the annual report;
  - 15.1.3 Changes in appointments of office bearers and coordinators - to the DCPC and officer in charge of the local division; and
  - 15.1.4 Area NHW newsletters are published at a frequency determined by the area committee (minimum of four

each year). It is recommended that any newsletter distribution list include:

- the NHW Liaison Officer
- the DCPC
- the State Coordinator NHW (may be sent through the internal police mail system).

## **16. Sponsorship**

16.1 In accordance with existing and future sponsorship contracts, Crime Prevention Unit, Policing Advancement Branch, functioning as the State Program Coordinator, is responsible for the distribution of resources supplied by sponsors. Such distribution shall be in accordance with the objectives of the program and Queensland Police Service ethics. The distribution particulars will be published annually in the state newsletter.

## **17. Insurance**

17.1 Public liability insurance is to be obtained and renewed on an annual basis by the NHW State Coordinator.

17.2 Voluntary workers insurance is available to NHW office bearers and office holders and can be obtained, paid for and renewed on an annual basis by the NHW area committee, at a cost to be advised by the State Coordinator of the program.

- 17.3 Area committees are to ensure adequate insurance cover is provided for the operation of NHW areas and for area meetings and other events. The level of cover may be determined by the extent of the activity and the number of coordinators involved.
- 17.4 As a volunteer community organisation, members and office bearers accept that they are individually responsible for their actions, conduct and statements made in connection with their involvement with NHW.

## **18. State Coordination**

- 18.1 Responsibility for the state coordination of the NHW program is vested in the Officer in Charge of the Crime Prevention Unit, Brisbane.
- 18.2 The state coordination role will include routine servicing of the program, day-to-day administration, forward planning for the provision of stationery, signs and publications, and production of the NHW state newsletter.
- 18.3 Area coordinators are responsible for dealing with local government authorities in matters of a purely local administrative nature only.

## 19. Closure of a Program Area

19.1 If a NHW area ceases to be active, the following action will be taken:

19.1.1 An extraordinary general meeting should be called (by the area coordinator, officer in charge of the local police district or the DCPC) in an attempt to revive the program area. The officer in charge of the division/district must be advised of this meeting;

19.1.2 If an AGM (or extraordinary general meeting) elects to close the NHW area, all moneys and other assets of the NHW area must be donated to another NHW area or a non-profit organisation;

19.1.3 The area coordinator (or deputy) will submit a final report and an audited financial statement to the officer in charge of the relative police division within thirty days of the closure of the area;

19.1.4 In circumstances where an area committee is no longer in operation and cannot fulfil their obligation as required by section 19.1.3, the relevant DCPC shall submit a final report and financial statement if available to the officer in charge within thirty days of the closure of the area;

19.1.5 The officer in charge shall submit a report to the NHW State Office notifying area closures; and

19.1.6 The DCPC for the NHW area will forward a request to the local authority for the removal and return of street signs.

19.2 NHW street signs remain the property of the program.