

## Introduction

Communicating with members of your neighbourhood can be achieved in many different ways. Saying hello to your neighbours and attending your local Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) meeting are just some ways of reinforcing the strength of a community.

While many community members may be unable to attend NHW meetings due to the demands of life, a NHW newsletter is a great way of bridging the communications gap between residents and community issues. A quality newsletter may well bring about a new found interest that could lead to greater input and participation in the program by its residents.

The NHW Charter states that 'To be deemed an active NHW area your area should produce a minimum of four newsletters a year, which are distributed to all member households'.

The aim of this guide is to make newsletter editors aware of the basics involved in the production of NHW newsletters. It is intended to bring about a degree of standardisation of newsletters across the State whilst still allowing local flair and imagination to continue.

What makes a community thrive is the wonderful mix of culture, experience and individuality of all its members. Ideally the end result from your newsletter will be a quality product capable of reaching and educating all members of your NHW community.

## The Basics

A NHW newsletter template is available electronically via the NHW State Office or your local District Crime Prevention Coordinator (DCPC).

Even if you choose not to use the template, it offers a number of compulsory requirements that must be included in your local newsletter. These basics include:

- The NHW banner;
- Your NHW area name, edition and/or date;
- Logos i.e. The 'Working Together' and Sponsor logos;
- Disclaimer \*;
- Contact details of the Newsletter Editor;
- Important Phone Numbers (including the local police station, emergency, fire station etc.).

### \* Disclaimer

*" The information contained herein has been obtained from sources we deem to be reliable, however we cannot guarantee its accuracy and interested persons should rely on their own inquiries. The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Queensland Police Service unless expressly so quoted."*

## Guidelines

As with any publication, it is necessary to have clear guidelines regarding the subject matter of articles published in NHW newsletters.

The basic rule is that NHW newsletters must be apolitical, non-sectarian, not promote racist or vigilante views or be used as a forum for lobby groups or political issues. Remember, if in doubt ask your NHW Liaison Officer or DCPC.

Everyone in the community has different views and opinions, and if your newsletter is perceived to be taking a particular line on one issue over another the very real possibility exists of alienating a significant percentage of your NHW membership - as well as contravening the Commissioner's Charter for NHW.

Noteworthy topics you may consider incorporating in your newsletter include:

- Contact details of the Area Coordinator/Secretary/Block/Zone Coordinators (optional);
- Details of your next local NHW meeting;
- An overview of the last meeting and any important issues raised;
- Details about the NHW program, framework, structure, objectives, policy updates and developments etc.;
- A report from the Area, Zone or Block Coordinators;
- A report from your NHW Liaison Officer;
- A police report/statistics on local crime;
- Information on local community activities and topics;
- Simple maps of area / zones.

- Welcome and farewells to participants;
- General notices - i.e. babies, memorials, animals lost/found etc.;
- Police related programs (e.g. Home Secure/Assist, Neighbourhood Safety Audits);
- Details and numbers for community services;
- Tips, traps and tales; and
- General advertisements from supporters.

**Subject matter that is prohibited includes but is not limited to;**

- Language that is or could be considered offensive;
- Anything considered to be racist, sexist, rude or not legally correct;
- Political comment;
- The promotion or publication of vigilantism;
- False or misleading comments/information;
- Information which would tend to identify victims of crime in any way - i.e. name, address but not limited to these examples;
- Anything which is "potentially" libellous;
- Articles which could be seen to be giving legal advice or an interpretation of the law (except where written by a legally qualified person);
- Comments on matters before the courts (sub judice); and
- Material related to the views of any lobby group.

## Finding Information

The first step in writing a NHW newsletter is to address the needs of your community. One way to discover what residents would like to see in their local NHW newsletter is by asking the community to contribute articles, ideas and information on local events or news. This not only gives the community a voice, but also can be used to address problems and allow for possible solutions to be identified. Not to mention providing the newsletter editor with new ideas!



## Using existing information sources

The newsletter editor's job can be made much easier by accessing already existing information. A wealth of ideas, information and material of interest to readers can be found in publications and organisations such as:

- The NHW state newsletter;
- Magazines and lifestyle books;
- Newspaper articles;
- Newsletters from other NHW areas;
- The community services section of the telephone book; and
- Government bodies and private companies such as the Queensland Police Service, Life Line, the Seniors Enquiry Line and the Office of Fair Trading.

When choosing an article, ensure that it is written by a person with an appropriate level of expertise or knowledge. Care should also be taken to deal only with legitimate organisations when considering publishing articles relating to them.

Finally, make sure that what you are going to print is accurate, up to date and where necessary permission has been given for its use. Refer to the Copyright section for further details.

## Writing an article

When writing an article it is important to ensure that all of the information you use is accurate. This may require some research to confirm the facts.

Make sure that the information is appropriate to the audience, the purpose of the newsletter and that the article is of interest to the aim and objectives of NHW.

When ideas or information are obtained or clarified through verification with another source, that source must also be acknowledged appropriately.

Articles relating to the local NHW area are usually a good place to start. These can range from simple things like the achievements of individual NHW participants, through to articles involving a little more in-depth research such as exploring the positive impact of NHW in the area.

Some hints to consider when writing an article are:

- Localise your news - be relevant;
- Talk sense, by making your text conversational it will flow and appeal to the widest possible readership;
- Avoid jargon, uncommon or difficult words;
- Keep sentences short and succinct;
- Keep your personal opinions to yourself;
- Link your story to events or issues relating to NHW;
- Don't forget the objectives of NHW; and
- Remember, you are an advocate for NHW.

# Copyright

The importance of acknowledging the original authors of articles etc. cannot be over emphasised.

If you use the words of another person that have been published elsewhere without acknowledgement it is most likely that you are in breach of that person's copyright. Legal action can result in cases of breach of copyright.

It is good practice when using any work other than a book, for example a newspaper, magazine or brochure - to contact the author or publisher prior to using excerpts to request use of the article, and to confirm the steps you will need to take to satisfy their rights as copyright holders.

The infringement of copyright can be avoided by following a few simple guidelines. When an article, part of an article, or the ideas developed within the article are used, take note of the following details relating to the original author:

- Authors full name;
- Date of the publication;
- The name of the article;
- Who published the article (newspaper, magazine, book publisher); and
- The place the article was published.

There are a number of ways to correctly reference an article and thereby acknowledge the original author. Outlined below is one example:

"Crime prevention is the anticipation, recognition and appraisal of a crime risk and taking steps to remove or reduce it" (*Crime Prevention Brochure, (1995), "Protecting Your Car Against Theft", Queensland Police Service, Brisbane*).

This informs the reader that the sentence used (in inverted commas) was not the writers own and was taken from the "Protecting Your Car Against Theft" brochure, produced by Crime Prevention, Queensland Police Service, in Brisbane in 1995.

More comprehensive information and other appropriate methods of referencing source material may be obtained from any public library.



## **Budget**

Some cost will be associated with the production of your newsletter. There are however, a number of options available to alleviate the financial pressures of publishing your NHW newsletter. There are many ways to meet publication costs, the following are but a few examples:

- Various fund raising activities (raffles/competitions);
- Donations;
- Small business support (such as photocopying or paper); and
- Advertising.

These activities can also enhance the communication between NHW residents by providing an additional opportunity to meet each other.

### **Obtaining local support**

Inviting local businesses to become supporters is one method of minimising costs. It simply involves approaching local businesses, banks or schools and requesting the use of services, such the use of a photocopier or computer, or material such as paper, in order to produce a newsletter.

Local business support can also assist with fund-raising activities. Businesses may offer to donate a particular item or service, which could then be raffled or used as a prize for a competition. Businesses contributing in this way may be acknowledged as a NHW supporter.

This arrangement can prove to be beneficial for both the NHW - having met a component of their costs - and the business, as they receive publicity in their local area for a minimal outlay.

## Advertising

Advertising of local businesses is an effective way to reduce costs.

Local businesses may be approached directly, or invitations made in your newsletter inviting members of the local community to advertise in the newsletter for a small charge or provision of paper etc. This can be achieved by developing a commercial section for your newsletter. Cost of advertising is to be determined by the area committee.

It is important to remember the aim and objectives of NHW when accepting business support. Your newsletter should be aimed at providing informative and enjoyable reading for your community and not as 'money-making' venture.



## Endorsement

NHW is not permitted to recommend or endorse the products or services of any person or business. Persons or businesses placing advertisements or assisting in the production of the newsletter should be clearly recognised as "supporters" rather than "sponsors".

The term supporters rather than sponsors is used as the corporate sponsors of NHW are accorded that status as a result of a legal agreement with the State of Queensland. The Queensland Police Service is the only body which may grant "sponsorship" of the program.

Local support may be recognised through acknowledgements such as:

*" Our thanks to these advertisers for their contribution to our NHW", or*

*"Our thanks to the supporters for their assistance in producing this NHW newsletter".*

An unacceptable example may be:

*"Please support the businesses who advertise in this newsletter".*

If in doubt about the type of advertising you should accept, seek advice from your NHW Liaison Officer or DCPC.

## Presentation techniques

Image is important! The look and appeal of your newsletter can often influence the readership of your community.

How your newsletter is produced and presented depends on many variables such as the technology available, your budget, the type of information available and the time you can devote to the project.

Don't think that you need access to masses of modern technology to produce a quality item. There are some simple formats that can be utilised which do not require a lot of time or effort to make an impact.

The newsletter template, available from your DCPC provides one example of a basic newsletter layout and contains all compulsory information required.

The layout, gathering together, selecting and choosing of appropriate articles, involves some initial planning. When trying to establish a distinctive look and a 'local identity' for your newsletter consider some of the following factors:

- Size and colour of newsletter. Experiment with different formats such as an A4 size, folded in half, or even in thirds in a brochure format;
- Headlines are incredibly important. Research has shown longer headlines actually gain more readership than short ones, provided they're saying something;
- Introduce different fonts, styles and type sizes (e.g. bold, italics, larger) and make your type size large enough to be reader friendly. This forces the readers eye to move around the page and read the fine print;

- Consider what the eye sees first - most readers will automatically head for pictures and then the accompanying headline;
- Add zest by way of different techniques - photographs, line drawings, cartoons, illustrations (remember to check that you have permission to use them). Non-written information is easy and quick to process;
- Keep paragraphs short; and
- Make sure the page is not too cluttered.

Once all appropriate material has been selected, prepare your layout by simply moving, cutting and pasting the articles on a blank sheet or template until they provide the desired visual impact.

Ensure that all compulsory requirements have been included.

## Tips to encourage readers

There are many ideas that can be utilised to enhance the quality of newsletters. The following examples are designed to merely stimulate your own imagination, increase the popularity of your newsletter and in turn enhance the communication within your NHW area.

- Include question and answer polls - this may help indicate the level of readership and provide you with further topics;
- Run competitions e.g. "Street of the Month" for the tidiest street in your area;
- Include jokes, puzzles, personal stories or poetry;
- Gather feedback from readers and advertisers;
- Outline the successes the program has had in your area;
- Include educational articles e.g. about wildlife in your area;
- Organise displays on issues of interest to NHW members and advertise them in your newsletter;
- Invite guest speakers to your meetings and advertise the event through your newsletter; and
- Encourage younger readers through colouring in competitions etc. and publish their work to draw the attention of their peers.

## Conclusion

There are many techniques that can be used to contribute to the success of a Neighbourhood Watch newsletter. Experiment to find out what your NHW area is interested in and use this knowledge to your advantage.

The advice given in this manual is just that. It is designed to open your mind to some of the options and ideas that can be used to transform a newsletter into a powerful communications tool.