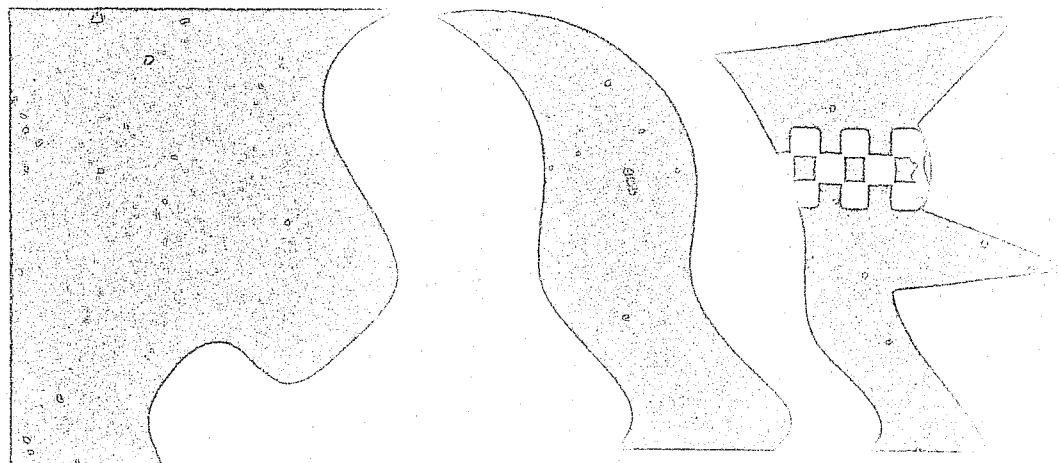


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# neighbourhood watch

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#### Our Cover: COMMUNITY CARING



Neighbourhood  
watch.

The 'Neighbourhood Watch' logo which was  
designed by a community group in Victoria and  
which has been adopted throughout Australia.  
The theme being 'Community Caring' working  
together to prevent crime.

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# community relations

## Neighbourhood Watch in N.S.W. — 1 Year On



Commissioner John Avery, M.A., Dip. Crim.,  
New South Wales

This article was the speech delivered by the Commissioner at the first annual seminar of N.S.W. neighbourhood watch areas, Sydney Opera House, Thursday, 13 March, 1986.

"We were born to unite with our fellow men, and to join in community with the human race." — Cicero.

### Introduction

This is one of the most important moments I have experienced in the 20 months that I have held the office of Commissioner of Police in N.S.W. The progressive achievements of neighbourhood watch is a significant event in the whole range of community, police and government efforts to deal with crime. Its impact has been such that it merited special mention in the speech of the governor at the opening of parliament. The fact that today we have close to 500 civilians and police gathered to assess and review the progress of this program is a significant achievement in itself.

Recently, we passed the 300,000 mark in the total number of homes incorporated within the scheme. This is three times our target for the first 12 months, and is a tribute to the team that has worked so hard from within the Police Department, and an even greater tribute to the people within the community who have responded. Credit must be extended in three areas, to the involved, concerned and responsible community elements — to those local police who have responded so well in their districts and to the organising team in the community relations bureau.

To deal with a major crime-fighting exercise we have established a program with a strong infra-structure: this is no mere public relations exercise. Later I will reinforce our determination as a police force to ensure that the Neighbourhood Watch schemes are continually serviced by police and consequently supported by community and sponsors alike. One glance at the notices of motion we have received shows a genuine and widespread concern that the service provided by police to maintain the program should be both positive and constant. I thank those who highlighted this aspect in their motions.

I would also extend my thanks and congratulations to every citizen who has become involved in the neighbourhood watch scheme. I am gratified by your presence here and ask that when you return to your local areas that you pass on to your neighbours our recognition of their contribution to what is fast becoming established as the leading Neighbourhood Watch program in the world.

It is well worth us pausing for a moment and considering the circumstances that prevailed in recent years, and still exist in some areas today, which have made neighbourhood watch so imperative. This neighbourhood watch scheme is the structured

coordination of the sort of cooperative techniques that have been used by thinking citizens and shrewd police for many years. The fundamental principles of neighbourhood watch date back to the first social groupings of primitive man, people who came together for protection. It has been shown often that without community support even an occupation army has difficulty maintaining order and security. However, under the modern formal program we are now operating, the good ideas and success of the past can be multiplied a hundredfold and extended to all areas of the community. The impelling message of Neighbourhood Watch is to be found in that sadly neglected text book where it is indicated that we are our brothers' keepers.

### Background

In 1974 there were 25,869 housebreaking offences within New South Wales. 2,652 of these were solved, presenting a clear-up rate of approximately 10.25%. In 1985, some eleven years later, the figures for breakings had reached 62,927 homes. 3,428 of those crimes were solved representing a clear-up rate of approximately 5.45% but a loss of approximately \$80 million in property was involved. So in 11 years we have seen the incidence of break and entry more than doubling and the clear-up rate almost halved.

An interesting factor about crime is that almost every crime is witnessed by somebody and that 90% of crime that is cleared up is solved as a result of information supplied by people in the community. It is significant that at this stage in the evolutionary development of criminal investigation only 10% of the clear-up rate of crime can be attributed to physical clues. Therefore information is the life-blood of policing: and such initiatives as neighbourhood watch and crime prevention programmes are viable crime fighting strategies.

A factor heavily related to the increase in crime is the growth of high & medium density urban living areas — such as the city and suburbs of Sydney. In Sydney there are 3.3 million people and inevitably, with such a large population, there is considerable anonymity. If any one of you were to walk from one end of George Street to the other on any given day, the chance of you meeting someone you know would be limited. Sure, you know people in your own street, but in a crowd of strangers there are fewer behavioural inhibitions to

govern our conduct — a chocolate éclair — an unabashed stare — a dart across the street against the lights. There are those without inhibitions — criminals — who use this condition of anonymity as a cloak for their nefarious activities.

It is a worldwide phenomenon that there is considerably more crime in cities than in smaller towns. One of the plus factors of neighbourhood watch is that the coordination role reduces the anonymity level and must therefore have an affect on the crime rate. That is merely one productive aspect.

Drugs too, cause an increase in crime. People become irrational and desperate when addicted to hard drugs and commit many crimes to feed their drug habit.

Students of police administration and history tell us that three of our most useful tools — the telephone, the radio and the motor vehicle — have been somewhat counter-productive by breaking down community-police relationships. In the days before the car and the phone police worked in the community and their contact with people was direct, personal and fairly constant. The radio, the telephone, the car and accelerating demands for police attention have caused police to use operational techniques which have caused a separation from the community. The speeding vehicle, alerted by phone and radio, responding to a call, provides small opportunity for measured interaction with the community.

It is impossible to thoroughly police all of a community today with the foot patrols which provide the best opportunity for personal contact — but we recognise the importance of this and are devoting as much of our resources as possible to foot patrols. It is obvious that police must use every modern aid in their fight against crime; telephones, cars, computers and sophisticated radio and weapons are all essential.

However, the challenge today is to develop a system of policing that can provide the benefits of the community style policing of the past in the changed circumstances of today. Neighbourhood watch is proving an ideal vehicle for the resurgence of community responsibility that we so desperately need.

I have been blunt with you, but despite the scenario I have painted with statistical and operational problems, the N.S.W. Police Force has a reputation for being one of the most operationally competent in the world. The investigative competence of our detectives ranks highly amongst the world's police forces. But we have come to accept that no matter how expert we be, or we might become, no matter how efficient, it is not possible for us to control and prevent crime effectively without the broad support of the community. It is no longer acceptable that police should be simply reactive; that we should gear ourselves up and be ready to respond as soon as we are called.

There is an added dimension to policing in the modern world and it is through programs like Neighbourhood Watch that we are filling that dimension. The police force must apply itself to strategic planning to ensure that we are taking every possible opportunity to prevent crime and that we are using every possible resource to both prevent and clear-up crime. Our greatest available resource for crime prevention are the individual citizens of integrity who make up our communities.

### Community Response

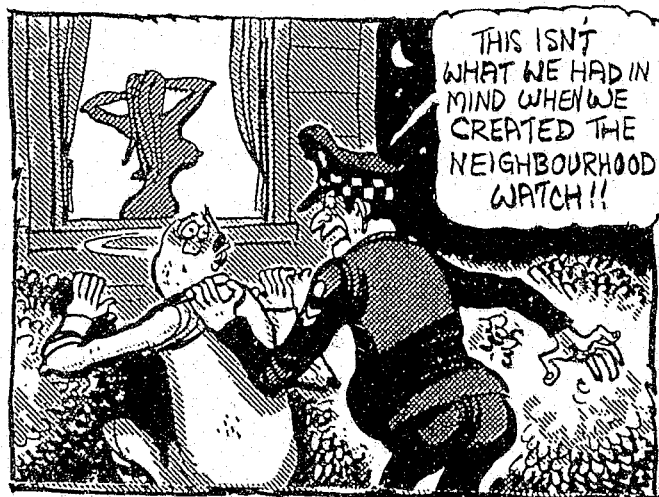
I would like to deal with the community response to this change in approach, before moving onto the response of police. The immediate overwhelming community response to Neighbourhood Watch is very clear evidence that we are beginning to fulfil a community need that has existed for some time.

Community concern about personal safety and the security of homes and property has been at a high level for many years. Police forces have provided insufficient mechanisms for that community concern to be expressed in positive and constructive ways. The community was seldom involved in crime prevention and crime fighting efforts despite the obvious willingness of so many to contribute. Consequently the frustration felt by some individuals in the community has been expressed in terms of criticism, sometimes constructive and sometimes destructive, of the police and the legal system in general. Your presence here makes an emphatic social statement. The social statement is that the decent element of the community must be involved in its own social salvation.

The activities revealed by the statistics have converted a plausible theory into an important reality:

- 380 Neighbourhood Watch areas established in 12 months.
- 304,000 homes incorporated within those areas.
- Public meetings of up to 600 and 700 people commonplace.
- A waiting list that extends to the end of June, despite the fact that we have not yet begun to actively canvass application for new areas.

We are receiving the same community response to other programs, including those with special needs or fears like the young and the elderly. The Safety Houses Program and special projects to provide reassurance and comfort for the aged, valuable attempt at liaison and understanding aboriginals and ethnic groups and their special problems, and communication with the homosexual community have all tapped an instant response. The public response to the new emphasis on



community policing is first class and showing every sign of becoming even stronger.

I would like to re-emphasize that the last thing we want is for people to directly confront criminals. What we ask is that citizens take careful note of any suspicious activity, note relevant details and promptly contact police. It is our job to respond and take the physical and legal action necessary.

### Police Response

It is appropriate therefore that we should now consider the police response.

In considering the police response we must make the point that the introduction of Neighbourhood Watch, along with other community based programs in N.S.W., is a police initiative. It was a move that we considered overdue, and one that we researched and considered carefully, using the experience gained from the mistakes and successes made in similar schemes in many parts of the world.

Our primary foundation has been that any success must be built on willing community co-operation, nurtured and developed through police support. Many police were immediately enthusiastic about the scheme and the obvious public response. Other police were more sceptical and they are progressively being won over.

The benefits to the community of Neighbourhood Watch are obvious — close community ties, a stronger sense of security and confidence in the home and neighbourhood, the knowledge that support and assistance is more readily at hand and, of course, in most cases a drop in house breaking in particular, and crime in general, is evident in Neighbourhood Watch areas.

The benefits to police that flow from this operation include a reduced crime rate — job satisfaction — the warmth that flows from productive human cooperation — a great reduction in the we/they syndrome — the so-called siege mentality which can grip police in vast urban configurations.

Shortly we will be hearing some good news from the sponsors and the minister will, also in respect to this program, have some positive views to put, but let me, firstly, talk about our resources commitment. A quick estimate from internal resources shows that the N.S.W. Police Department has committed in staff, equipment and time more than \$500,000 to Neighbourhood Watch in the first year. This is an obviously conservative figure because the cost of much of the operational contribution to the whole issue is almost incalculable. By the end of 1986 that estimate will be well over \$1 million from internal police department resources alone. Of course, the financial and resource commitment is only the first step, we need much more than that. The moral and philosophical commitment is even more important.

Let us consider some of the areas in which programs like Neighbourhood Watch can be of direct benefit and assistance to police. Let me again emphasize that Neighbourhood Watch can be one of the best tools to

local police to prevent and clear-up crime. The Minister, Mr. Paciullo, and our Executive Chief Superintendent (Crime), Mr. Joe Parrington, will be detailing some of these later. This is obviously the big attraction for police to be involved, but there are others.

The Neighbourhood Watch program and process is one that will assist individual police, through their involvement, to become better all-round police and gain a better awareness of the needs for serving the fears and concerns of people in their police patrol.

Neighbourhood Watch provides a meeting ground for various sections of the community to come together with police in a common cause in a non-crisis situation. All too often the only contact with police is associated with trauma, crime, fearful situations or traffic incidents.

In many areas various ethnic groups have come together under the umbrella of Neighbourhood Watch. We have noted that the scheme has not been as successful as we would like in areas that are dominated by one particular ethnic group. This is despite the fact that we have had pamphlets printed in our seven most common foreign languages. However, this is a fact that we have noted and will be taking further steps to address.

The fact is that more and more police are realising that the future success of policing in this country will depend very much on the success of our community policing programs. The clear corollary is, of course, that the promotional prospects of police will depend to a large extent on a demonstrated capacity to manage community policing efforts in their area in a way that reduces crimes and increases clear-up rates. So there is an element of self interest, as well as community interest, for police. You see, when police seeking promotion to the senior ranks, Superintendent or above, come before the Police Board, of which I am a member along with the Chairman, Sir Maurice Byers, and Sir Gordon Jackson, they are questioned, among other things, on the success of community policing programs in their area. We want to know what their management approach has been to establishing, servicing and maintaining programs like Neighbourhood Watch. These questions are also searchingly put by selection panels examining those who aspire to Inspector's positions.

Our organisation, the N.S.W. Police Service, is quite consciously upgrading its capacities in order that it might increasingly meet the demands on its services and provide appropriate operational support for such programs as Neighbourhood Watch. We are carefully examining the management practices of the organisation, and we have radically changed our promotional processes in a way that creates a fairly intense competitive climate for positions of command. While this may have caused some substantial heartburning within the organisation it is already showing benefits to the community by putting appropriate officers into positions with the result that you will be better served. We are working hard to substantially upgrade our educational programs so that police will be better equipped to understand and adequately interact with and appropriately respond to the community.

**Conclusion**

The fact is that potentially Neighbourhood Watch is a great crime fighting tool. As a police force we are committed to its maintenance and development. By the very nature of events we can expect our difficulties as well as our successes.

Heavy workloads, and periodic unavailability of staff, will at times restrict police attendance at your coordinator's meetings. However, you can expect regular police attendance at your regular meetings. And, if you are unhappy with any aspect of police support, raise your questions immediately with your local liaison officer or district community relations officer. If you feel the problem is serious enough do not hesitate to raise it with your local inspector or District Chief Superintendent.

As Commissioner, I am determined that Neighbourhood Watch will continue to succeed and I have the general support of police, including senior officers, in that determination. This determination is one that is being communicated as forcibly as possible to any police that may have not got the message, those who may take a traditional reactionary view about changed policing techniques.

Let me thank each one of you for your commitment. There *will be* reciprocity for you have my pledge that my best endeavours will be directed to seeing that our organisation also makes an appropriate commitment.

Let us look forward to another successful year during which the honourable citizens and their professional law enforcement associates will continue to be "on the watch".

apj

Continued from page 46

By 1.10 p.m. ambulances and fire brigade units were in attendance, the army bomb squad had been notified, the Gas and Fuel and SEC were notified, after the blast ruptured a gas pipe, and the worst injured were on their way to hospital.

On Friday, as part of Melbourne's central business district remained cordoned off and gloomily empty, a press conference was held at William Street police headquarters by the Chief Commissioner, Mr. Miller, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mr. Mathews, and the Assistant Commissioner (Crime) Mr. Paul Delianis. It was attended by about 50 journalists, photographers and cameramen.

Mr. Delianis said the blast had been caused by about 50 sticks of gelignite placed in the boot of the Commodore and set off by a timing device.

Asked about the effect on police morale, Mr. Miller said: "As far as the police are concerned, I would think that perhaps in a contradictory way, there's nothing which promotes police morale and police response to a greater extent than a tragedy which is imposed upon us. . . We deplore this as an horrendous outrage which has had appalling effects and equally appalling implications. We believe the outrage was discriminate in one sense — the explosives were detonated outside the Russell Street police complex — and yet indiscriminate in that whoever might have happened to be passing or in

the vicinity at that time were equally exposed to the risk.

"I think it's miraculous that there weren't multiple fatalities arising from this outrage. A number of people have been injured, some seriously, some members of the police force and some members of the public. And we regret that. And we also regret that this happened in this community. It's **utterly un-Australian**. There was no forewarning that a bomb might be detonated. Even self-respecting terrorist groups overseas usually provide that concession.

"Police work has its dangers. Some of these are latent, some of them are startlingly apparent, as this bombing indicates. But some of the police who were injured yesterday, some seriously injured, were in situations which would not be regarded as high-risk occupations.

"Unhappily, this is the nature of the police role. It was because of the indiscriminate nature of the outrage that those police happened to become casualties. There was a random factor."

The subject of police powers was raised by a reporter. Asked if police had sufficient powers to investigate the bombing, Mr. Miller replied: "Well, I would hope that if we get a suspect we can dispose of him within six hours. That is, if he'll tell us who he is in the first instance, as we don't have the power to ask him his name and address, nor to fingerprint him, unhappily.

"In terms of telephone intercepts, we have no power whatever. The

state police have no powers whatever or no opportunity to have access to telephone intercepts in the course of such an investigation. And it is this sort of situation which highlights the lack of enabling powers police possess. It's all very well the system paying lip service to police investigations, but we need to resort to the basic avenues and methods of investigation in order to achieve our objective.

"We can only work with the tools which society provides us. And those tools are largely inadequate."

Mr. Mathews said the government considered a \$100,000 reward appropriate "because of the magnitude and the significance of what has occurred."

"These people have not only placed in jeopardy the lives and well-being of a large number of our fellow citizens, and actually inflicted injuries on 22 of them, but they have robbed our community of its peace of mind.

"This is a crime which surpasses all others and the government wants to respond appropriately to it. We want this person, these persons, whichever the case may be, identified and brought to justice. And the more quickly it happens, the better for all of us."

**Good Friday was fine and sunny, and a holiday for many Victorians. But to the men and women of the Victoria Police, it will long be remembered as "The Day After" . . .** apj