NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SA ADVOCACY AND POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT POLICY

Policy title	Neighbourhood Watch SA (NHW) Advocacy and Political Involvement Policy
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Review date	6 October 2028
Review responsibility	NHW SA Manager, Communications and Engagement
Replaces	N/A – (new policy)
PCO reference	2024/3623
Associated General Order	Police Volunteers Conflict of Interest
Enquiries to	NHW SA Unit Telephone 7322 4043
Corporate Policy Sponsor	Officer in Charge, Communication and Engagement Branch
SAPOL employees must comply with Corporate Policy. Refer to General Order, Corporate policy framework.	

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

Neighbourhood Watch SA (NHW) is a community-led crime prevention initiative where volunteers and police work together to support towns and suburbs statewide to become safer and more connected through crime prevention activities and initiatives.

NHW is a South Australia Police (SAPOL) program. NHW volunteers are members of the NHW Volunteers Association of South Australia Inc.

SAPOL and NHW are apolitical. When representing NHW, volunteers must not engage in political advocacy, endorse political candidates or parties, or undertake any activity that creates a perception of political alignment or personal gain. This is to maintain NHW's neutrality, credibility and reputation as a trusted community safety organisation.

NHW volunteers may advocate for evidence-based, apolitical community safety initiatives such as awareness campaigns and partnerships. They must not engage in political, unlawful, confrontational, or reputation-damaging activities. Advocacy must be inclusive, fair, and representative of diverse community voices, avoiding contentious or divisive issues.

Advocating to government and non-government organisations should always be of public benefit, lawful, respectful, transparent and fair. Negotiation with relevant local authorities should only be undertaken to resolve local community safety issues that have been previously tabled, discussed and agreed to at an Area level by the Area Coordinator.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance on acceptable and unacceptable advocacy activities for NHW volunteers including remaining apolitical. It ensures that all advocacy efforts are focused on enhancing community safety while maintaining public trust and integrity. This policy safeguards NHW's reputation, promotes evidence-based solutions, and prevents conflicts of interest or perceptions of bias.

Scope

This policy applies to all NHW volunteers, including NHW Police Volunteers (accredited through the Police Volunteer Program).

2. DEFINITIONS

Apolitical. An unbiased position in relation to political matters. Apathy or antipathy towards all political affiliations. A person or organisation may be described as apolitical if they are uninterested or uninvolved in politics.

District Community Engagement Section (DCES) / Crime Prevention Section (CPS). Local sections in SAPOL that are responsible for community engagement in their District (metropolitan) or Region (regional areas) and, through their community engagement responsibilities, support the NHW program.

Local Volunteer Coordinator (LVC). A SAPOL employee who manages NHW volunteers in their District, Branch, Section or Region including providing ongoing training and managing the administration of volunteers such as volunteer reviews and appropriate volunteer supervision.

Advocating. (Also known as 'campaigning' or 'lobbying'). The practice of undertaking activities that are designed to secure or oppose a change to a law, policy or practice including:

- involvement in the development of public policy
- promotion of, or opposition to, specific laws, policies or decisions of any level of government
- awareness-raising and education
- changing public behaviour and/or mobilising public support.

NHW Area. Throughout this document, use of the term 'NHW Area' refers to either a specific NHW Area or a volunteer or volunteers acting on behalf of a NHW Area.

NHW State Coordinator. A SAPOL employee within the NHW portfolio that is responsible for the day-to-day management of NHW SA.

NHW volunteer. A Police Volunteer who is registered as an official volunteer with NHW and undertakes defined activities of their own free will and without payment including NHW Police Volunteers (accredited through the Police Volunteer Program) who can participate in all NHW activities and NHW Supporters whose only role is to deliver NHW newsletters.

Police Coordinator. A sworn SAPOL employee who is assigned to a NHW Area and acts as the conduit between the NHW Area and SAPOL. The role supports the NHW Area with tasks and attends meetings. Each NHW Area has an assigned Police Coordinator.

Politician. A person who holds, has held, or is seeking to hold elected public office at any level of government, including local, state or federal positions. This also includes individuals formally endorsed as candidates for elected office, and political party officials whose primary role involves political representation, campaigning or influencing government policy.

State Volunteer Coordinator (SVC). A SAPOL employee responsible for the day-to-day management of the Police Volunteer Program.

3. ACCEPTABLE ADVOCACY ACTIVITY

It is acceptable for NHW Police Volunteers to advocate on local community safety and crime prevention issues where there is an evidence-based, validated and apolitical position or solution to support the topic of advocacy. The decision to advocate must be endorsed by the NHW Area's committee and documented in the meeting minutes. Examples of acceptable types of advocacy include:

- engaging with local councils and police on issues such as better lighting or traffic calming measures in high-risk areas
- supporting community safety forums or meetings with local government and law enforcement to discuss concerns and promote ideas and improvements
- promoting public awareness campaigns to educate residents about crime prevention and identifying and reporting suspicious activity
- building partnerships with schools, businesses, and other community organisations to promote community safety
- supporting police to improve perceptions of community safety
- submitting formal feedback or recommendations to local government consultations on safety-related policies or urban planning.

4. UNACCEPTABLE ADVOCACY ACTIVITY

NHW Areas should not promote, be aligned with or be connected with unlawful activities or those that oppose the rule-of-law, the Australian constitutional system or the safety of the public or national security. This may include direct or indirect connection or perception of connection with such activities.

A NHW Area must not advocate for or publicly support:

- contentious, ambiguous or controversial issues that do not reflect the interests of the community
- any action or activity that may damage or otherwise negatively impact the reputation of NHW or SAPOL
- a political candidate, a political view or any position of a political party.

The following advocacy and engagement activities are NOT permitted by NHW Areas:

- Political endorsements, political campaigning and any activity that creates the perception of association with such endorsements or campaigns.
- Accepting donations or sponsorships from political parties or Politicians other than small financial contributions in line with the guiding principles of the House of Assembly Global Allowance (exception is newsletter printing – see further information in Item 7).
- Intimidation and confrontational advocacy intended to influence community decisions.
- Publicising unverified claims, exaggerated statistics, or biased narratives to promote a particular cause.
- Any public position that may marginalise any community groups or individuals or fails to be inclusive, fair or representative of diverse voices.
- Any advocacy or promotion in the name of NHW or using the branding of NHW for personal gain (i.e.: promoting a member's business interests under the guise of community safety).
- Providing any information to the media without compliance with the NHW Media Policy or any other government policy relating to media and social media.

Where doubt exists, seek clarification from the relevant DCES/CPS.

5. NHW ADVOCACY PROCESSES

Where a NHW Area proposes to advocate with or engage with a stakeholder on a local crime prevention issue, authorisation should be sought from the NHW State Coordinator via the relevant DCES/CPS for consideration of:

- the supporting evidence
- scope of the issue
- the nature of the advocacy
- any perceived conflicts of interest associated with the advocacy

6. POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT IN NHW

A Politician at any level of government or a political party member is not precluded from being an NHW volunteer nor are they prohibited from publicly disclosing their involvement as a NHW volunteer.

However, the promoting or opposing of a political party or a candidate for political office is considered to be a 'disqualifying purpose' under section 11 (c) of the *Charities Act 2013 (Cth)*. Such political activity by NHW volunteers when representing NHW could potentially result in NHW being deregistered by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission.

Consequently, Politicians and political party members must not use NHW as a platform:

- to voice, advocate for, lobby for or gain leverage for party political issues
- to enhance their political profile
- for personal gain.

A NHW volunteer who intends to campaign in any political election must:

- keep their political activities separate from NHW
- avoid creating any perception that NHW supports their candidacy.

A NHW volunteer must not express political views or associations when they are:

- representing NHW
- identifying themselves as a NHW volunteer in any manner - this includes, but is not limited to, wearing a NHW lanyard or NHW identification badge.

7. CARETAKER CONVENTIONS

The caretaker period is the designated time immediately before an election when government agencies and associated programs are required to avoid actions that could influence, or be seen to influence, the election outcome. During this time, government continues to operate, but special limitations apply to ensure neutrality and to avoid making decisions that could influence the election or restrict the freedom of a future government.

During the caretaker period, NHW volunteers must ensure that all NHW activities remain strictly apolitical and do not create any perception of political endorsement or influence. While representing NHW, volunteers must not participate in political events, media opportunities, or public engagements that could be interpreted as supporting a political candidate, party or platform.

Invitations to attend NHW events must not be extended to political candidates during the caretaker period unless the event is operationally essential, previously arranged, and unavoidable. In such cases, the candidate must not make statements, distribute materials or use the event for political visibility.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PRINTING SERVICES

Some NHW Areas use the services of local political party members to print their newsletters free of charge. Acknowledgement of this service should not create a perception of support for a specific political candidate. The following wording must be used, with the inclusion of the individual's name and role title, and is not to be altered:

> *"We are grateful to (add name and role title), for providing services in printing this NHW newsletter. Accepting this service does not align NHW with any political party".*

This wording should appear in a small area on the back of the newsletter in eight or nine-point font. It is not permitted to include a photo of the political candidate or to specify the political party they represent.

Any form of advertisement (paid or unpaid) for political candidates or parties is not permitted in NHW newsletters or publications.

9. NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THIS POLICY

Non-compliance with this policy may constitute a breach of the SAPOL Volunteer Conduct Standards and, as per the SAPOL Volunteers Agreement, may result in deregistration from the Police Volunteer Program.

10. REFERENCES

NHW SA Volunteer Media Policy

SAPOL Volunteer User Guide

SAPOL Volunteer Conduct Standards

SAPOL Volunteers Agreement

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission website - Charities, Campaigning and Advocacy - Charities, campaigning and advocacy | ACNC

Guideline of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment – Volunteers

11. FURTHER ENQUIRIES

Neighbourhood Watch SA State Coordinator at
SAPOL.NeighbourhoodWatch@police.sa.gov.au

12. DOCUMENT HISTORY

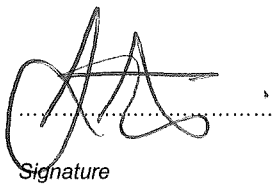
Date	Action (amendment/deletion/new/review/temporary variation)
04/09/2025	New policy

APPROVED BY SAPOL BRANCH MANAGER

Superintendent Lucas Stubing
Officer in Charge
Communication & Engagement Branch

9402/7

Print Full Name *ID Number*



22/9/26

Signature *Date*

APPROVED BY NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC PRESIDENT

PHILIP BRUCE TAVENDER 5001718

Print Full Name *ID Number*

P.B. Tavender

6/10/26

Signature *Date*