



# Neighbourhood Watch

## Let's watch out for each other

Thursday 24 January 2019

### Do Victorians feel unsafe?

#### Greater community connections are the antidote to fears about personal safety

Community organisation Neighbourhood Watch believes that feeling part of a community and feeling connected to neighbours, colleagues and those around us, can play an important role in reducing fears of feeling unsafe.

“We believe that the vast majority of people are good and it is all of our jobs to watch out for each other” said Neighbourhood Watch Victoria CEO Bambi Gordon. “Not just in a traditional residential street, but on public transport, at events, at work, in apartment towers.

“We believe that being connected to your neighbours, feeling part of a community is the antidote to feeling unsafe and anxious.”

Ms Gordon was responding to Productivity Commission released data that indicates that Victorians are more likely than residents of other states and territories (other than Northern Territory) to feel unsafe in a variety of situations.

*The Age* reported today that:

- The number of Victorians who feel unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood is substantially higher than the national average, which sits at 22.8 per cent.
- The 27.9 per cent of Victorians who report feeling unsafe on public transport at night is markedly higher than the national average of 20.6 per cent.
- The percentage of Victorians who feel unsafe if they are home alone is low, 9.4 per cent, but higher than the national average of 5.7 per cent.

Throughout 2017 and 2018 in the build up to the State Election last November, law and order was a major issue for the electorate.

“Though the crime stats are declining in all areas other than domestic violence, it can be difficult to stay calm and feel safe if the media is regularly focused upon the relatively small amount of crime being committed,” Ms Gordon said.

“The front-page headlines are then exaggerated on social media where often times facts are skewed.

“And of course the horrendous – and subsequently high-profile – murders of innocent young women also understandably play into people’s fears.

“If you are on public transport and feel unsafe, reach out to the people around you. Start a conversation. If you need to walk a dark laneway, plan in advance if you can walk with someone, or if there is another way to go.



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“And when it comes to feeling safe at home the easiest thing to do is keep your house locked. Install a sensor light. And know your neighbours.”

Ms Gordon said some members had decided to join Neighbourhood Watch to feel safer after having been a victim of crime themselves.

“Neighbourhood Watch provides them with connections, with a sense of taking back the power over their own environment.”

For those who are fearful of being out at night, Neighbourhood Watch recommends some simple things that can help with the sense of unease and will improve people's safety

- Plan ahead. Decide prior to leaving how you will get there and get back.
- Avoid sitting alone. If you are on public transport and someone is making you feel uncomfortable, move seats and reach out to a stranger. Or sit near the driver during non-busy times.
- If you need urgent assistance on public transport, use the emergency buttons that are located in all trams, train carriages and buses and on train platforms; this alerts staff and emergency services.
- Gain the backup of a customer service person. If you're in a pub or bar, concert or sporting event befriend the nearest staff member so that they'll come to your aid if someone starts hassling you.
- Stay alert. If listening to music through ear phones leave one ear free.
- Learn how use the emergency SOS function on your phone – in case you need to quickly call for help

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