



Safer Communities Australia Inc

Annual General Meeting

24 September 2008

President's Annual Report 2008

I am pleased to present the **2008 Annual Report** of the activities of Safer Communities Australia Inc. At the outset, I thank members of the Board for their support and advice. The structure of the Board with six elected members and six representatives of government agencies and community organisations brings together experience and contacts important to the Association. Rona and John Gebbie from the Whyalla Management Committee have brought a valuable country perspective to our deliberations. Victim Support Service's inclusion in the corporate half of the Board has given us the benefit of net-working and of sensing the outcomes of crime or, in other words, a lack of community safety

I must make special mention of the contribution of **Chief Inspector Bill Prior** who recently changed his position in South Australia Police and will no longer be the SAPOL representative on the Board. Bill Prior has been part of this organisation from the beginning of *Block Parents*, he is a Past President and Life Member of the Safety House Association of South Australia, he has been the constructive SAPOL representative for more than two decades and he has influenced for good the development and operations of this Association. His advice and actions have been positive, reliable and bold. As the original and successful recruiter of *Block Parent* and *Safety House* members, he visited many school parent meetings. He influenced early liaison with interstate kindred community organisations. It was his inspiration which gave Safer Communities Australia its structure. On behalf of the Board and membership and also as a very special personal acknowledgement of his friendship and assistance to me, I thank him and wish him success in his new responsibilities. It is a pleasing post script to this tribute to announce that he will continue to be a community elected representative on the Board.

Sergeant Alan Buckler arranged for secretary Rona Sakko and me to meet **Superintendent Linda Williams**, the newly appointed SAPOL officer in charge of the State Crime Prevention Branch. A continuing strong relationship with SAPOL seems assured.

During the past twelve months, the Board has completed the preparation of policies required by legislation and our operations. Last year, I reported that policies on Privacy, Risk Management, Occupational Health and Safety, and corporate chain membership had been adopted. A policy on **Mandatory Reporting** is now in place and I appreciate the assistance given to secretary Rona Sakko by police officers in the preparation of this sensitive issue.

Safety Assist continues to be our major *raison d'être* and, in each newsletter, we summarise some of the uses of Safety Assist locations. Members displaying our sign and offering assistance are wonderful examples of community social intelligence, the front line of making communities safer. They are people and organisations aware of the responsibilities that community members have for each other. I was disturbed recently when the *Advertiser*, in huge banner front page headlines, announced "Spirit Dies" in reference to residential Safety Assist membership decline and then proceeded to report incorrectly on the development of corporate membership. Our members who have given assistance and the thousands of South Australians who have been assisted know that the spirit of community service is alive, worthy and successful. My letter of reply to the *Advertiser* was not published. At least the article has resulted in enquiries for membership which may not have otherwise occurred.

Substantial progress has been made during the past year in updating and establishing reliable records of street signs which are not only indicators of Safety Assist locations but are also excellent promotional signs.

The *Stay Safe* program continues to strengthen and flourish. The **Children's Safety Celebration** conducted during Children's Week was held at Tyndale Christian School, Salisbury East, and was a warm, friendly and most successful event. Safety Ambassadors convey safety messages to their school communities and will now help schools attain **School Watch Level 1 accreditation**. Plans for the extension of Safety Ambassadors into secondary schools are proceeding with the development of curriculum and work sheets. These are critical stages which must be prepared carefully.

Safety Expos as part of the *Stay Safe* program have been conducted in Adelaide and Whyalla. Presentations and displays have contributed to other community and school events. Prominent Safety Assist displays were part of the SAPOL pavilion at last September's Riverland Field Days.

New brochures on *Business Guidelines* and *Guidelines and Responsibilities for Members* have been produced and additional resources have been acquired. Substantial progress has been made since the last AGM on street signs - time consuming but operationally important and excellent in promoting the service. A main feature in a DVD being produced by the Noarlunga Council to promote child friendly communities is *Safety Assist* and *Safety Ambassadors*. These programs

were also featured in a two page article in KickStart Junior, a Volunteering SA publication aimed at encouraging youth into volunteering.

Our new Patron, **His Excellency Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce AC CSC RANR**, Governor of South Australia, hosted an awards reception at Government House and presented Association and Safety Ambassador awards. A similar function will be held in the near future.

Financial support by the South Australian Government through the Minister for Police and SAPOL has continued, is critical to our existence and is gratefully acknowledged. Negotiations during the past year have resulted in our grant being predictable for the next several years. Through the good offices of our treasurer Rona Sakko, we have benefited from grants and donations from the Tea Tree Gully Council, Community Benefit SA and Bank SA & Staff Charitable Fund. Our participation in the Australian Central Credit Union community lottery raised about \$4,000.

Enormous credit and gratitude for a busy and fruitful year go to our Program Director, Board secretary and treasurer, Rona Sakko. She carries the bulk of the work of the Association to the extent that the Board should consider ways in which the work might be more shared. Rona is creative, attentive to detail and extremely hard working. On behalf of the Board, our members and those who benefit from our programs, I extend unconditional thanks to her.

Safer Communities Australia now having operated for five years, the Board should consider an audit and review of its systems, symbols and operations to ensure that the programs and organisational brand remain effective, relevant and current.

Bryce Saint OAM
President