

prices, which means heavy heroin users need about \$1000 a week to pay for their habits. For men this often means break-ins, credit fraud or car thefts. For women, it often means prostitution. For the dealers it means high profits for a relatively low risk: dealers often insulate themselves from criminal acts thus avoiding charges. Almost inevitably the convicted user refuses to reveal his supplier's identity because he fears the dealer more than the law, and he may need another supply.

On a broader note, statistics do not show the human anguish caused by crime such as that felt by a family in Macgregor on 16 November 1983 when a father murdered his three young sons and then took his own life. Or the sense that some people feel that nothing can be done.

After the bodies were found at Richardson, some neighbours were asked whether they had noticed the family's absence. Their rather anguished reply was that it didn't pay to become involved "because look what could happen".

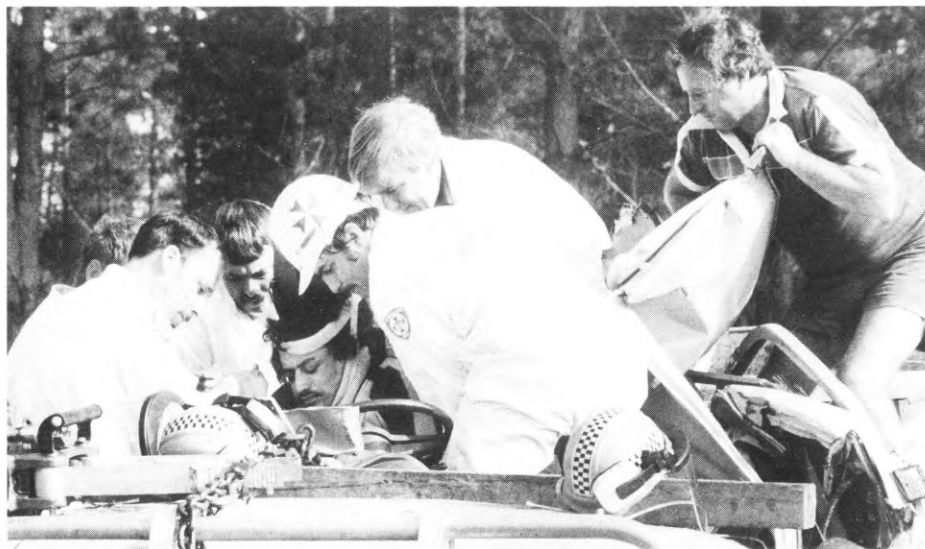
At the time of the Rivett murders, the neighbours had heard some disturbing

noises but did nothing because disturbances there were frequent.

Mr McConaghy said part of the success of Neighbourhood Watch had been that it had helped establish more community relationships, which he hoped would mean that more people were alert to unusual activities about them. Police figures show that in areas where Neighbourhood Watch has been established

for some time, break-ins have fallen by as much as 47 per cent.

With a population of more than 280,000, Canberra has to accept that its crime rate has increased and changed. What the police see and the statistics are showing, is that the sudden jump in serious crime in 1980s is now part of the city's character. ■



Canberra Times

*Rescue Squad members attend a badly injured man at Pierce's Creek on 7 March 1984 after a fallen tree struck the vehicle in which he was sitting.*

# Neighbourhood Watch

**When residents of the Canberra suburb of Kambah rallied to a call to take the first steps in their own community-based crime prevention program, the response was surprising.**

That call, in September 1984, saw the implementation of the ACT's first Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. And in time it became one of the AFP's most successful community policing achievements.

The pilot program in Kambah achieved a recorded 67 per cent decrease in the offence of residential burglary.

In January 1985, three more programs were started in Campbell, O'Connor and a second area in Kambah. The response in these areas was exceptional and more areas were implemented at the rate of six a month.

By April the following year, 49 programs were operating in the ACT, covering 29,216 homes and about 90,000 residents.

The success has been such that by February this year, 132 programs had

been introduced, covering 79,000 homes and 237,600 people — representing more than three-quarters of the population of Canberra.

Extension of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme is planned so that eventually all newer suburbs will be included as they become more settled.

## Target crime

The original Neighbourhood Watch Scheme was first established in America in 1972 by the National Sheriffs Association with financial assistance of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. This created thousands of local residential crime prevention programs in which individual citizens would make their home less inviting targets to crime by forming neighbourhood groups to liaise with law enforcement agencies. Burglary was selected as the target crime, because it accounted for 30 per cent of serious criminal offences committed. It was a major crime that could be prevented to a degree by citizens protecting their prop-

erty and dwellings, and it was a crime in which victims who caught criminals in the act of stealing could be killed or injured.

The scheme was adopted in England and Wales in 1983.

Victoria was the first State in Australia to introduce it in 1983. Organisers there designed the familiar green and white Neighbourhood Watch logo to represent the community and police working together.

Since then, the scheme has been or is being introduced into all States and Territories.

Development of the program in the ACT has been focussed on community caring. This involves minimising the incidence of preventable crime, increasing the reporting of crime and suspicious activity, improving the quality of information given to police, improving the level of household and personal security, and encouraging the community to identify valuable property by engraving easily identified numbers on it. ■