



Personal Profile

KYLEMORE NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH (KNW)

The KNW offers a unique platform for Vollar integration. This is a community policing initiative founded in 1997, aimed at the protection and upliftment of Kylemore. This little town is wrought with socio-economic issues; with a high unemployment rate in winter due to a large proportion of the community's dependence on seasonal labour on the surrounding farms and a lack of industry in the surrounding area. This is exacerbated by the psychological repercussions of the historic *dop* system; a system in which Western Cape farmers supplemented labourer wages with alcohol, tobacco and/or bread. This has led to a drinking culture more susceptible to alcoholism and has resulted in a large portion of the community falling victim to alcohol abuse.

The lack of recreational social infrastructure in this community has led to a profitable niche for shebeens and illegal liquor distributors, which provide a convenient source of entertainment. There has also been a steady increase in the influence of local and external drug dealers, which have taken advantage of the poor socio-economic conditions to sell cheap and highly addictive drugs, as well as recruit local youth as sellers. It is only natural that in this environment the rate and instances of crime have steadily increased, with many occurrences directly related to the abuse of both alcohol and drugs.

Additionally, the closest operational police station at the time of the KNW's inception, was highly understaffed; being incapable of providing emergency response as swiftly as needed, particularly on weekends when occurrences were highest. This naturally caused extreme dissatisfaction with police services not only within Kylemore but the Dwars River Valley community as a whole. The combination of these aforementioned conditions ultimately led to the creation of the KNW by a group of nine established and well-known men from the community.



They stated their primary motivation for beginning this organisation as the creation of a community free of crime and social evils for future generations. Their initial concerns were focused on the problems of unemployed youth and alcohol abuse within the community, which often led to instances of assault and domestic violence. Although the prevalence of drug abuse, predominantly attributed to crystal methamphetamine (*tik*), was not as widespread in the community at the time of creation; members of the KNW were aware of the likelihood of these drugs becoming increasingly available.

The KNW has an established constitution and code of conduct in compliance with provincial and national standards for an organisation of its nature. This means that the structure of the KNW can have no political affiliation and cannot discriminate on the basis of sex, gender, race or sexual orientation. The KNW is also required to act in their capacity and will be liable to their capacity, being accountable to the SAPS (South African Police Service) and subsequently their local CPF (Community Policing Forum).

This mechanism of community policing saw a great deal of initial success, as the KNW was firmly entrenched within the “close-knit” town where everybody seems to know one another. This made it easy for the KNW to effectively report crime and identify perpetrators. Subsequently, crime spread out to the local farms where it was easier to evade identification and capture. Thus these surrounding farms grew to depend on the KNW for daily patrols, in addition to their existing security, providing small amounts of funding and at times equipment like flashlights, radios and in one instance a pick-up truck (*bakkie*).

The organisational structure of the KNW is very conservative in nature, due to the traditional Christian values of the senior male founders. As such, members of the KNW are expected to behave in an upstanding and morally righteous manner, being disallowed from purchasing alcohol illegally and being imbibed publically.



New members undergo a probation period before beginning active participation, due to fears of criminal infiltration into the organisation, particularly of incoming members from the youth. Females are not permitted to patrol actively and serve a more administrative role in communication, due to the dangerous nature of the job and to prevent sexual promiscuity, a testament to the conservative roots of the organisation.

There is also an unspoken hierarchy that exists between the older and younger members of the KNW that mirrors the relationship between the community members of Kylemore. This creates a social paradox in which crime is seen as a problem of the youth and thus, being excluded from processes of safety development, being viewed more as perpetrators than victims. This is most likely an unconscious exclusion and distinction by the older groups, but it has resulted in a frustrated and disinterested youth. As a result, the KNW membership uptake sees dwindling members from the younger generations.

Vollar can be used within this volunteer structure to increase interest and activity in this organisation. The youth may be provided sufficient incentive for participating effectively and altruistically through this infrastructure.