Neighbour Day for community organisations and groups

Neighbour Day is Australia’s annual celebration of community, encouraging people to connect with those who live in their neighbourhood. Whether through a cuppa, a picnic in the park or a message of support, Neighbour Day is the perfect opportunity to say thanks for being a great neighbour and for being there to lend a hand.

Neighbour Day is celebrated on the last Sunday in March every year with the aim of fostering strong personal connections that last the whole year round.

The principal aim of Neighbour Day is to build better relationships with the people who live around us, especially the vulnerable and elderly.

The official Neighbour Day is a tremendous catalyst and reason to connect with your neighbours and a terrific way to raise awareness. That said, it is the other 364 days of the year that we really care about!

Neighbour Day is the culmination of a year-round campaign where we gently encourage people to get to know those who live nearby. We provide ideas, support and resources to help them to do so and to develop meaningful relationships that last.

Neighbour Day brings together like-minded people, resources, and organisations to grow stronger, well-connected communities.

Neighbour Day engagement is growing each year.

Active participation in Neighbour Day 2019 more than doubled from 118,000* (ND2018) to more than 296,000*.

*Conservative estimate. Formula for calculations is available in the Neighbour Day Evaluation Report 2019.

Overview & 2020 Theme

Australia is in the midst of a loneliness crisis, with many in our population experiencing a deficit of social connection.

When we reflect upon loneliness, many of us will think of social and emotional isolation. We may contemplate a lack of important and meaningful relationships, perhaps an absence of companionship and social interaction with others.

In 2020, Neighbour Day is looking to flip the loneliness discussion to get Australians to focus instead on the importance of belonging – to start people thinking about how they can put their energy into creating positive and meaningful social connections with people outside of their normal groups and relationships.

These social connections might be one-off moments or regular and lasting interactions that create one to one relationships or become the starting point for an ongoing group.

In 2020, the theme for Neighbour Day is ‘Social Connection’.

The Pear – Neighbourhood Node
National winner of the 2019 Tell Us Your Story Competition
The Role of Community Organisations and Groups

Community organisations and groups are great supporters of Neighbour Day and essential to the success of the movement. They inform and engage large numbers of community members in neighbourly pursuits, and effectively use the Neighbour Day celebration and association with this national day as another means to help achieve their vision for their community.

Community organisations and groups in every state and territory are utilising Neighbour Day to promote and catalyse social connection in their communities. A growing number weave Neighbour Day promotion and engagement into their calendars in March, drawing people together to celebrate at the events they host in the lead up to, and on the day. For example, Senior’s and Youth weeks, Harmony Day, Earth Hour, and Easter holiday events and other community celebrations.

We hope that the Neighbour Day campaign serves as an additional helpful resource and we welcome your feedback and advice to improve the support and resources we offer.

Very Neighbourly Organisations (VNOs)

The principal aim of Neighbour Day is to build better relationships with the people who live around us, especially the elderly and vulnerable. A Very Neighbourly Organisation (VNO) has a strong values match to the principal aim of Neighbour Day.

Some national community organisations acknowledged by Neighbour Day as Very Neighbourly Organisations (VNO) (as at Sep 2019) are: R U OK?, Reachout.com, Orange Sky Australia, Conservation Volunteers Australia, The Welcome Dinner Project, Garage Sale Trail, Neighbourhood Watch Australasia, NAPCAN, SBS Foundation, Sing Australia, KidsHelpline and YourTown.

Check out the full list for state/territory and local/regional VNOs.

Should your community organisation or group be interested in being recognised as a Very Neighbourly Organisation check out the VNO criteria to find out how.
What we have learned

The benefits of engagement with Neighbour Day have been identified as social participation and connection; building resilience and social capital; improved mental health and wellbeing; supporting vulnerable people; community development and education; celebrating and recognising community; improving community safety; embracing diversity; and utilising the values of Neighbour Day in their communities (Neighbour day 2016 host survey.)

Host survey respondents (2016 -19) find Neighbour Day a useful tool to assist people to connect with their neighbours with consistently more than 90% planning to maintain ongoing contact with their neighbours and people in the community. Ninety percent of people who engaged with the day told us they kept in touch with their neighbours throughout the year.

Whilst most events or actions (2019) were undertaken by private individuals (62%), almost one third of the events of actions where held by organisations, councils and community groups, with almost 40% of all events open to the public.

Evaluation

Relationships Australia as the home of Neighbour Day commissioned two external evaluation research projects for Neighbour Day 2018 and 2019.

Clear themes emerged from the Neighbour Day 2018 survey feedback from event registrants about the benefits of promoting and/or hosting Neighbour Day.

• attending a Neighbour Day event often leads to people joining existing community groups, or organising their own groups and events;
• participating in Neighbour Day creates new relationships, renews past relationships, and deepens existing relationships;
• Neighbour Day helps create ongoing and enduring connections between people and their communities; and
• continued interaction after the event often leads to increased neighbourhood trust, which in turn leads to neighbours experiencing a greater sense of safety in their neighbourhood, and offering support to each other. [Swinburne University of Technology Report]

Initial findings from Neighbour Day 2019 evaluation indicate that after people hosted an event or took some neighbourly action, they experienced an increased sense of identification with their neighbourhood; an increased sense of belonging; and perceived their neighbourhood environment more positively. [ANU Report to be released in October 2019]
Easy Neighbour Day Ideas for community organisations & groups

**Print** Neighbour Day posters and display them in your organisation’s buildings; local libraries; community halls; child and family health, youth and senior citizens centres and other relevant community premises in your local area. Your local council or state MP or territory MLA may be able to help you with printing Neighbour Day promotional resources.

**Talk** about Neighbour Day in your organisation’s publications, e-newsletters, local newspapers and social media. You can also highlight your Neighbour Day activities at community meetings, networks, or groups focused on developing stronger communities and connected neighbourhoods.

**Access** the free Neighbour Day council and community organisations resources and e-kit available for downloading at neighbourday.org.

**Distribute** Neighbour Day promotional flyers, connection cards and/or calling cards to your networks to your community members.

**Support** and encourage your organisation members and the communities you support to host their own Neighbour Day events with ideas, council (or other public land manager) approvals, equipment or other assistance.

**Align** your organisation or group’s existing events with Neighbour Day, including events held before, or on or after the official day!

**Register** your event or action on the Neighbour Day web site at neighbourday.org. Remember ‘Every day is Neighbour Day’, so you may wish to choose to celebrate on other days that best suit your organisation, your community and your neighbours.

**The 2020 free Neighbour Day e-kit for councils and community organisations** is now available for download at neighbourday.org. The updated e-kit includes event ideas, Neighbour Day logo and posters (including a version with space for your logo or local sponsor logos), invitations, Certificate of Recognition template, e-cards, connection and calling cards, promotional flyers to use at community events, stands, or shop counter tops, and Neighbour Day 2020 selfie and event marker signs. Also included are social media drafts, and an easy to use media template.
What does Neighbour Day look like for community organisations?

There were more than 7,000 Neighbour Day events, activities and actions undertaken across Australia to celebrate Neighbour Day 2019. The following list is not exhaustive, however we have cherry-picked a variety of diverse examples of what some community organisations and groups have done in previous years to help catalyse thinking about how you can best utilise Neighbour Day in your activities.

• **ABC’s Television’s ‘Ask the Doctor’** presenter Dr Caroline West joined in with the *Lane Cove Community Chaplaincy* Neighbour Day games and sausage sizzle event in the park (they host games every Sunday of the year!). The Neighbour Day interviews and activities filmed were included in the Season 2 episode about Loneliness that aired mid-2019. Volley ball (not serious!), park chess, face painting, corn throw), and many more games were played by neighbours local to the area.

• **Molonglo Valley Mingle and Charles Weston School** in the ACT worked together to create a cultural cookbook for the residents of Molonglo Valley. They asked residents to submit a recipe from their cultural background to include in this book for launch on Neighbour Day 2019. Their respective Facebook pages covered their Neighbour Day celebrations including a video.

• **Some primary and high schools** celebrate in the weeks before Neighbour Day with a lunchtime special guest talking about the importance of being neighbourly and catalysing neighbourly action during their school holidays. Topics like planned and random [or spontaneous] acts of kindness were included and how kids can work with teachers, parents and carers to connect with neighbours to ensure child safety.

• **Dementia Australia Ambassador and Neighbours actor Takaya Honda** produced a video to promote Neighbour Day and the Dementia Friends program which was posted on social media on Neighbour Day.

• **Neighbourhood Watch ACT** hosted and presented the **2019 ACT Good Neighbour Award** at their Neighbour Day event. The **ACT Police** joined with **Neighbourhood Watch ACT** to produce a Neighbour Day video to launch Neighbour Day in the ACT, that included their Good Neighbour Award.

• **GPs and family clinics** have downloaded and printed the free Neighbour Day posters from the e-Kits and displayed them in their waiting rooms in the month leading up to Neighbour Day.

• **Relationships Australia Canberra and Region** hosted a Neighbour Day stand at the **2019 Canberra Multicultural Festival**. They gave out hundreds of Neighbour Day gift packs that included Neighbour Day branded teabags, ‘Hello’ cards and invitations, and tips to create connections.

• **Junction Australia** included a copy of the Neighbour Day Connection Card in its hardcopy newsletter (a cut out version) encouraging its 2,200 residents to connect with a neighbour.

• **Two new high profile Very Neighbourly Organisations (VNO) VICSES and CFA** collaborated with **Red Cross VIC** to host a Neighbour Day Challenge with their staff, members, volunteers and communities of interest. The campaign was in recognition that Victorians who have strong relationships with their neighbours are more likely to help one another and have better outcomes when faced with emergencies.

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《The community you want starts at your front door! ™》
Because dogs are neighbours too ... The City of Melbourne, Victoria Harbour and Knowledge Markets teamed up to bring locals together for an amazing family day out. The Neighbour Day Docklands Dog Pawty hosted doggie activities, puppy-cinos, stalls and dog behavioural experts. It is a pup-tastic (!) way to meet neighbours and their best friends at the same time.

Houndwave in Adelaide is a fun annual music festival for dogs and those who love them with the aim to encourage everyone to come together and have a great day out. This musical neighbourly event is a collaboration between Adelaide West End Association and Splash Adelaide and scheduled when it best suits their community, sometime around Neighbour Day.

The Oxley Ridge Neighbourhood Watch, QLD celebrated christening a new BBQ next to a playground inviting the community for a sausage sizzle breakfast on the new barbie and a coffee van – and to meet their neighbours. Police Beat officers and Volunteers in Policing (VIP) also attended and showed kids the police cars, and helped them make a cool police badge to take home. Four legged friends were also looked after – dog owners were given a Neighbourhood Watch dog tag which the friendly VIP’s engraved.

The Copacabana Community Association encouraged street parties, car port or verge parties, and challenged kids to get crafty, show off their talents and to set up tables or stalls in their street. Kids sold homemade lemonade, cupcakes, friendship bracelets, paper dream catchers, homemade bookmarks, and painted flowerpots. A great way to get to know their neighbours and also make some pocket money!

The Queensland African Communities Council and Camp Hill Community and Sporting Club invited the public to join them in celebrating Neighbour Day. With some help from the Queensland Government, the Queensland African Communities Council and Camp Hill Community and Sporting Club are co-hosted a festival for their local community. There were food trucks, market stalls, live music, traditional dances, craft activities, jumping castles, face-painting, barefoot bowls and more!

Outdoor movies have proven popular across the country to attract neighbours to get together.

Neighbourhood Watch Victoria promotes Neighbour Day to their communities on their website explaining the benefits of getting to know your neighbours and encouraging participation. Some Neighbourhood Watch groups celebrated Neighbour Day and used it as an opportunity to attract new members.

A growing number of community groups use Neighbour Day to catch up with their neighbours to promote bushfire safety and others promote the event in their Fire Wise Group Communications.

Four nearby regional towns decided to connect in the most central town to celebrate Neighbour Day!

For a number of years, Country Women’s Association members have hosted morning teas to connect with their neighbours.

Neighbourhood Bake-Offs are a favourite with both children and adults.

In Alice Springs a Neighbour Day Community Working group was formed a few years ago with the support of Relationships Australia NT. The group of local champions and community organisations (with Town Council support) have actively promoted Neighbour Day and the importance of being neighbourly in a multitude of ways – speaking at community gatherings, churches, service groups, schools and catalysed more than 25 events. Through a small community grant they purchased and developed seed packets using a young local student’s Neighbour Day drawing (8years old). Local volunteers, with the support of the town Mayor, presented at assemblies at the town’s primary schools (including some prep students). They
shared how (with their family/carer’s support) they could safely connect with their neighbours and the importance of knowing your neighbours. Students were gifted seed packets to take home and to discuss with their family the idea of ‘Growing our Neighbourhood’. The Alice Springs community also hosted the Neighbour Day 2018 national launch and awarded the first Neighbour Day Very Neighbourly Community Award.

- Some Landcare and Bushcare groups and community gardens use Neighbour Day as a reason to get together, get some work done - and also attract new members.
- Sunbury Community Health (a regional primary health care organisation in VIC and Very Neighbourly Organisation) have hosted a Communi-Tea van in the park to help people connect over a cuppa.
- Free morning or afternoon teas are hosted by many community and neighbourhood centres during the week before Neighbour Day, encouraging their neighbours to visit the centre and to get to know each other and their staff.
- The ACT Neighbourly Network members (community and ACT Government departments) actively promote Neighbour Day within the ACT in their spheres of influence and beyond the ACT border. A number of network member organisations also host their own activities.
- Council to Homeless Persons promoted Neighbour Day 2019 on their website to raise awareness for people to connect with all our neighbours - including those without a home.
- The Carlton Residents Association utilised Neighbour Day (two years running) to bring their community together to transform a street into a vibrant and fun zone of community led family friendly all age inclusive activities including a long lunch. The Carlton Community Welcome Lunch for Neighbour Day 2017 had: Play [simple and free]; Learning [reducing energy consumption and reducing and reusing waste]; Food [using the Welcome Dinner Project model]; Art [drawings from ‘My Neighbourhood’ competition]; and Music [local musicians and buskers].
- One group handed out cards with neighbourly messages on them, whilst another set up a local Random Acts of Kindness Facebook page. [Albury/ Wodonga].
- Each year Conservation Volunteers Australia (a Very Neighbourly Organisation) promote conservation projects in March as a great way to support your neighbours and celebrate Neighbour Day with teams of volunteers joining in across Australia.
- ‘Show and tell’, ‘cupcake and clothes swaps’ and ‘book and garden tool swaps or giveaways’ are popular events for community groups
- Katalyst Church cancel services on Neighbour Day Sunday, encouraging their community to connect with their neighbours instead. They also share a swag of ideas and Neighbour Day resources on their website to make getting involved easy. Being a nationally recognised day; they said, “Neighbour Day is an excellent open door to initiate something that may be awkward at other times.”
- One community established a Facebook group named Cowra Community Compliments, on behalf of Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre, to provide locals with the opportunity to spread their happiness and goodwill to the community via genuine, heart-felt compliments to one another in celebration of their accomplishment.
- CoDesign Studio is a social enterprise inspiring people to shape their neighbourhoods and they developed a Neighbour Day postcard activity to produce local neighbourhood cookbooks!
• Libraries ACT promoted neighbourly themed story times and books at all their branches in the month of March 2019 and also hosted a number of events.

• Neighbour Day Sunraysia (2017) joined with Greening Mildura and Mildura Central shopping centre on the Friday before Neighbour Day. They hosted a mock Neighbour Day garden party with a popup front-yard picnic in a garden with the local Bunnings providing chairs, umbrellas and other garden stuff to green up the ‘yard’.

• A group of previously ‘stand-alone’ businesses came together to celebrate Neighbour Day to create a hub, as a practical display of their shared core values.

• One school in the Northern Territory co-ordinated a cricket game on the school grounds for the neighbours that live in the same street as the school.

• One community group organised the Neighbour Day Olympic Games with sack races, egg and spoon, quoits, hula hooping, you name it!

• A shopping centre handed out jam, teas and other goodies for people to share with their neighbours.

• Community organisations across Australia organised Neighbour Day breakfasts in offices and business parks on the Friday before Neighbour Day to engage their local neighbours and get to know each other better.

• You can follow Neighbour Day on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Community organisations can use social media to cross-promote neighbourly events and information. We’d really appreciate you tagging Neighbour Day in your posts!

Why not find out what some councils and shires have done and how you might connect with them?
What people say about the benefits of getting involved ... 

“When I saw this Neighbour Day, I thought, ‘This is a perfect date to swing off and make a date that we can all remember and start making that our dates.’”

“Catching up. Communal well-being is my well-being.”

“It’s an impartial, respected reason for bringing people together. That makes it much easier than any one person trying to have to bring people together on their own.

“Different people have come that may not have been to events before, it’s been nice to keep breaking the ice and particularly with new families in the street which happens a bit.”

“Neighbour Day was a bit of a kick-off point for some more stuff. Not just the physical changes in the park like... the mural, .. there’s also a yarning circle... and was a kick-off point for me to run an event called hobby-exchange.

“The fact that I was isolated. I’ve really got nobody that I know or in my family or anyone, so I was trying to meet neighbours”

“I feel hopeful as a result.”

“For me personally, I feel there great value in engaging not just for me, but for communities to be engaged to be connected, so we can create safer communities, healthier communities. We can address things like loneliness and depression and social isolation through connecting with people who are around us...I think that there is something really important about connecting with those that live around us. And looking out for those that maybe are slipping through the cracks and not connected.”

“Our community is more aware of specially bushfire safety.”

“I guess we have a fairly strong ethic of giving back and that’s important to us. We think that building community ultimately pays dividends. It’s good for everybody’s concerns.”

“Our children got to know each other better as well.”

“For my son (whom has a disability) to be well known in his neighbourhood. This we know will keep him safe.”

“As a President of a community garden, I thought that it was a good way to get more people in the neighbourhood to know about it and to give them the opportunity to turn up, an opportunity to be a part of it.”

“I found neighbours who have lived here for 20+ years did not know each other, and that made me feel good about hosting and connecting those people.”

“It gives people reason to connect with their local community.”

“Highlights the importance of looking out for your neighbour and works to alleviate social isolation.”

“It has the ability to take a local area and build a community.”

“Provides a date and resources to use to promote the community coming together - particularly new residents.”

“A fantastic conversation starter to approach local people you don't know or have lost touch with:"

“Connections are made and friendships grow as a result plus, the young connect with the more elderly and everyone develops a greater sense of community belonging.”

“This is the first time we have hosted a Neighbour Day party and we were overwhelmed by how many people came. This is the beginning of an annual event in our neighbourhood that will strengthen our community to look out for each other and thrive.”

“Our regional suburb has only 2 schools and only 1 IGA shop and many families don’t have transport to get to town. Our public transport isn’t as good as many families tend to feel isolated, but holding events like this help bring people together. Such as many families from overseas with younger children were invited to Playgroup and weren’t aware of the family group at the school and gave them a new opportunity.”

“I really believe it was a momentous turning point in how my community relates to one another and thinks about ownership and neighbourly responsibility.”

“We had a great BBQ in the park and plenty of food and drink. We found there is a common interest in music!”

“Met some new neighbours and some that have been around for a long time that had never met! Have since popped in for a cuppa to follow up on one lady who lives alone and had never previously come to things in the street. Catching up with another lady (who
Finally ... The Neighbour Day website contains resources and guidance to start connecting in your neighbourhood. If you have other good ideas, or would like to feed into our understanding of community connection, please provide us with that feedback, and your story.

It is the stories about real human connection at the local neighbourhood level that inspire all of us to rise above our reserve and knock on the door of the person down the road whose burden may be lightened, or even life transformed by that small kindness.

I had always wanted to have a great connected neighbourhood but didn't really know where to start. Neighbour Day gave me ideas, tools and an excuse to get on with it. Most people say they have been meaning to get to know their neighbours, but many don't get around to it. Neighbour Day gives a time frame and a sense of urgency.”

Getting to know our neighbours, not just immediate ones. Having a great deal of fun. Six families shared the cost of purchasing a log splitter, which is shared among us. The splitter was used for a neighbour in her late 70s to split enough wood for her winter use.’

“We held a working bee followed by afternoon tea. We improved the amenity of the street and had the opportunity to discuss a new bridge design with residents all together. We have had a few deaths in the street, so it was an opportunity for members to talk about this and make sure everyone was OK.”

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Neighbour Day Ambassadors Andrew Heslop, Natalie Ahmat & Costa Georgiadis