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 – however 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 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 Role of Councils & Shires

‘Local government plays a key role in addressing health issues through planning and the design of built environments and public spaces that supports physical activity and community engagement. Councils provide a wide range of services, which contribute to the health and wellbeing of their communities’. (ALGA)

The local partnerships that councils form have real power to affect change in the wellbeing of our community.

Councils and Shires are strong supporters of Neighbour Day and are integral to the success of the movement. They have the capability to inform and engage large numbers of community members in neighbourly pursuits by utilising the Neighbour Day celebration and association with this national day, as an additional mechanism to help achieve their community development goals.

Councils and Shires in every state and territory utilise 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 events they host in the lead up to, and on the day. For example, Senior’s and Youth weeks, Harmony Day, Earth Hour, Easter Holiday events and other community celebrations.

Local Government are at the frontline of community development and wellbeing in Australia and we hope that Neighbour Day serves a helpful resource in your toolkits. We welcome your feedback and advice to improve the support and resources we offer.

Note: We took your feedback a few years ago that Councils and Shires prefer 6 months’ notice to prepare for promotion and/or involvement in Neighbour Day and adjusted our planning and updates of our website, theme and resources accordingly.
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.

Councils acknowledged as Very Neighbourly Organisations (VNO) (as at Sep 2019) on the Neighbour Day website are: City of Albany, WA, Brimbank City Council, VIC, City of Monash, VIC, Shellharbour City Council, NSW, City of Cockburn, WA, Lane Cove Council, NSW, City of South Perth, WA, City of Kwinana, WA, Tweed Shire Council, NSW and City of Subiaco, WA. Should your council/shire be interested in being recognised as a Very Neighbourly Organisation check out the VNO criteria to find out how and to for the full list of current Very Neighbourly Organisations.

Some of our friends are national community organisations acknowledged by Neighbour Day as Very Neighbourly Organisations (as at Sep 2019): 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. There are also state/territory and regional VNOs.

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 Councils

Print Neighbour Day posters and display them in council buildings; libraries; community halls; child and family health, youth and senior citizens centres and other council premises.

Talk about Neighbour Day in council publications, e-newsletters, local newspapers, the Mayor’s column and social media. Highlight Neighbour Day activities at community meetings, networks or groups focused on developing stronger communities and connected neighbourhoods. Perhaps the Mayor could be the local Neighbour Day Ambassador!

Access Neighbour Day council resources and the FREE e-kit at neighbourday.org. Subscribe to the ‘Verandah’ by Neighbour Day’ Enews and share with your community for great neighbourly information and ideas. Distribute Neighbour Day calling cards to all council services and libraries for residents to collect and use.

Support and inspire residents to host their own Neighbour Day events with ideas, council approvals, equipment or other encouragement.

Align existing council events with Neighbour Day, including events that are held before, or on or after the official day!

Register your promotion and/or event(s) on the Neighbour Day web site at neighbourday.org

The free 2020 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 selfie and event marker signs. Also included are social media drafts, and an easy to use media template.
How some councils do Neighbour Day …

This list is not exhaustive, however we hope the following examples (and links) from previous years are helpful. There are many ways both small and big that your council/shire may be able to utilise your association with Neighbour Day to further your community wellbeing and development goals.

• Councils find it easy to promote Neighbour Day on their websites and offer tips for how to get involved. For some examples visit VNO Tweed Shire Council, NSW; City of Clarence, TAS; Moreton Bay Regional Council, QLD; City of Adelaide, SA; Greater Shepparton Council, VIC; Logan City Council, QLD; City of Vincent, WA; City of Port Adelaide Enfield, SA; VNO Lane Cove Council, NSW; Maribyrnong City Council, VIC; VNO City of Albany, WA; City of Goldcoast, QLD; Alice Springs Town Council, NT.

• City of Darwin stepped outside the box and chose four local artists to develop artwork for a temporary public art commission, in celebration of Neighbour Day 2019. Artists were asked to respond to the 2019 Neighbour Day theme: Loneliness – What Neighbours Can Do to Create Connection in their submissions.

• Many Councils take a purely promotional, awareness-raising and capacity building role whilst others host free events. Some both promote and host, depending on their resources and capacity.

• VNO City of Kwinana in WA launched their Neighbour Day Every Day program in 2019 a place based year round program leveraging its relationship with Neighbour Day. Promotion includes a massive electronic billboard on the freeway (below left) and free resources (below right.) Neighbour Day wasn’t always this big for Kwinana. In 2016, they aligned the opening of a new community pavilion with Neighbour Day. They promoted Neighbour Day on their website and social media, and for 2017 invested in lamppost promotional wraps. They then supported associations or community groups with grants (9) of up to $2,000, with smaller incentives (reimbursements of up to $150) for hosts. Now they do Neighbour Day Every Day!

• VNO Brimbank City Council, VIC has offered grants of $250 to residents for a number of years to encourage connection and community participation at a local level with great success. Council previously partnered with Gallery Sunshine Everywhere to engage with children at a preschool, primary school and high school to produce artwork that described their relationship with their neighbourhoods. They also provide some great tips for how to get involved.

• Neighbour Day Ambassador Hugh Mackay was special guest at Moreton Bay Regional Council’s (QLD) Neighbour Day event with more than 200 community members to talk about ‘Why neighbourhoods matter’.

• City of Sydney’s Resilient Sydney encouraged the 39 councils in the program to get involved in Neighbour Day its communications. For example, they posted an article in CityNews to promote Neighbour Day and other services the City provides that builds community.

• Mayors and council staff across the country ‘virtually attend’ the Neighbour Day each year by snapping a pic with the Neighbour Day theme selfie sign or strapline sign – The community you want starts at your front door ™ and spreading the neighbourly messages on social media. Don’t forget to tag Neighbour day!

Greater Shepparton team (L) Alice Springs Mayor and community member (R)
• Logan City Council QLD is a long-time supporter and their #KnowThyNeighbour campaign in 2018 again linked with Neighbour Day. They’ve also shared Neighbour Day ideas on its website #neighboursoflogan and ‘made’ this awesome Neighbour Day house very cleverly using our artwork in 2017 to help promote participation (at beginning of this document).

• VNO Tweed Shire Council, NSW promoted Neighbour Day widely in their LGA, offered incentives to get involved including a prize of a $500 Weber barbeque - AND catalysed 110 registered events! (2018)

• VNO City of Subiaco, WA offered $100 grants, host help packs and cobranded posters invitations, colouring in, and selfie sign.

• Greater Shepparton, VIC promotes Neighbour Day on its website (as do many other councils!) and in 2018 partnered with the YMCA to offer a free BBQ and skate workshops. They’ve also developed a terrific Neighbour Day booklet.

• Georges River Council, NSW partnered with community housing provider SGHC to host a Neighbour Day community BBQ (2018) and also provide resources to support residents to do their own thing.

• Neighbour Day Connection Cards are popular and a growing number of councils printed and distributed these as a simple way to help their residents connect with each other. A co-brandable version is available on request.

• Community information stalls in shopping centres or parks are popular events and councils invite community, health, Fire and Rescue and other support services to talk about what they offer. Neighbour Day resources are utilised to promote the event.

• Many (!) councils host awards, which recognise the value of neighbourly actions. For example Very Neighbourly Organisation Shellharbour City Council, NSW again hosted its Good Neighbour Awards in conjunction with Neighbour Day 2018, and held a ‘draw your neighbour’ competition for kids under 12 years old.

• Manningham City Council provide a Know your Neighbour Pack and have awarded a community grant for their tenant community and neighbours for Neighbour Day 2020 via Haven; Home, Safe.

• 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.

• City of Unley, SA offered an events page (2018) where residents could tag their event online and share what they had planned. In 2017, they provided a Neighbour Day page on their website offering Greeting Cards and an Acts of Kindness list; called for nominations for their Great Neighbour promotion; and invited feedback on what makes a good neighbour in their online forum. They also asked residents to tag their Neighbour Day event on the online council map and hashtag with #unleyneighbourday on social media.

• Councils and Shires use social media to cross-promote neighbourly events and information.
• **Ballarat Council**, VIC Police and local community have supported Neighbour Day for ten years, and [highlighted a local tragedy](#) (two older men died) as a catalyst to get involved and the importance of getting to know and care for your neighbours.

• Banana Shire, QLD in 2017 offered small grants as part of their Community Recovery Support funding to build community capacity and social connectedness. They encouraged applications that supported small or large gatherings, brunch, or BBQ dinners. Residents were encouraged to invite new members of their community.

• **City of Willoughby, NSW** has included Neighbour Day in their [Neighbour to Neighbourly campaign](#). For a number of years they have offered Harris Farm vouchers ($50) to help get the party started; offered a swag of ideas and tips to get involved, event planning checklists; and links to volunteering groups, community gardens and Neighbourhood Watch.

• **Hobsons Bay City Council**, VIC [130 countries of origin; 90 languages; 90 faiths; 1 Hobsons Bay Community!] included Neighbour Day in its celebrations of Cultural Diversity Week (2017). Residents of Altona North were invited to get to know their neighbours whilst enjoying music and food from around the world; with entertainment for the whole family that including face painting, games, a colouring competition with prizes and the book cubby.

• **Fairfield City Council, NSW** organised a free community event (2017), collaborating with Fairfield Local Area Command, NSW Police to host an afternoon event for older residents in the mall.

• **Relationships Australia Tasmania** joined with **City of Hobart** (and others) (2017) to host a Neighbour Day celebration at a local community centre for older people and spread the word about building stronger communities.

• **The City of Charles Sturt in SA** combined World Poetry Day (2017) and Neighbour Day with a poetry competition and event in the mall. We loved this!

Why not find out how some community organisations and groups do Neighbour Day and how your council or shire might connect with and / or support them?
Some examples of collaboration …

Banyule City Council (2018) offered a $500 grant for a range of purposes including entertainment, catering expenses, children’s activities and hire of equipment AND opened up for new applications on 1 December 2018 for Neighbour Day 2019. The council collaborated with Relationships Australia Victoria’s Kew centre (2017) to host a Neighbour Day event: Music and Memories in the Mall, with the focus on reminiscence. Yarra Plenty Library provided activities and resources, including their Hindsight Exhibition that highlighted the changing faces of their senior members. The theme for the exhibition was “What advice would you give to your younger self?” Swinburne University displayed digital storytelling services provided by their Wellbeing Clinic for Older Adults, and Heidelberg Historical Society displayed an interesting range of memorabilia. Music from the 50s was provided by the Blue Ramblers and a fabulous morning tea provided by the Banyule Age-friendly Champions.

The Alice Springs Town Council Mayor Damien Ryan is a local Neighbour Day Ambassador and connected with the Alice Springs Neighbour Day Community Working group and Relationships Australia NT. The group sourced a community grant and the Mayor supported the local initiative to work with the town’s primary schools to ‘Grow Our Neighbourhood’ - calling for volunteers to assist with tailored seed packets, Neighbour Day community plantings, social and mainstream media, and public speaking at school assemblies to discuss how with their family they can safely connect with their neighbours. The Alice Springs Community Neighbour Day group (of which the town council is a member) recently were awarded a Very Neighbourly Community Award where they hosted the national launch of Neighbour Day in Alice Springs.

For the first time in 2018 Very Neighbourly Organisation Lane Cove Council sought nominations for neighbours who deserve recognition for their support in the local community as part of Council’s Neighbour Day celebrations as part of their ‘Love where you live’ campaign. In 2017, the program supported Lane Cove Community Chaplaincy, FoodFaith and Lane Cove Rotary with resources, signage, flyers and some giveaways to help their community Neighbour Day (2017) event. The day included music, dancing, BBQ, damper and pesto making, face painting (by Elsa from Frozen!), nail art, learning to make an eco-bag and some large games. The Mayor and organisers made a few short speeches, and gardening expert Meredith Kirton spoke on worm farming in the new community garden. They organised a loop bus servicing the area from the centre of Lane Cove, due to limited parking.

The ACT Government performs some functions that parallel council activities. The Justice and Community Safety Directorate included Neighbour Day in its Property Crime Prevention Strategy 2016-2020, and partnered with Relationships Australia and Neighbour Day to help them meet Objective 1 - Community and neighbourhood connections are strengthened; Action 1.1 Promote national Neighbour Day. A Neighbour Day working group formed (NGOs, community organisations and ACT Government e.g. Libraries, Police, etc.) in 2017 to leverage individual and collective resources to develop a cohesive approach to increase social connection in the ACT through engagement with Neighbour Day and developed cobranded ACT tailored resources. They launched Neighbour Day in the ACT on 1 March 2018 with special guest speakers the ACT Minister for Community Services, Social Inclusion and Disability, Children and Youth, Rachel Stephen-Smith and the ACT Commissioner for Children and Youth, Jodie Griffiths-Cook AND Constable Kenny Koala. They renamed themselves the ACT Neighbourly Network and more recently 364 Neighbourly Network to reflect their commitment to the other 364 days of the year. They meet year round to collaborate on neighbourly pursuits - including Neighbour Day! ACT Neighbourly Network members include ACT Government, JACS, ACT Police, Crimestoppers, Libraries ACT, Suburban Land Agency, Molonglo Mingle, Charles Weston School, ACT Ombudsmen, Neighbourhood Watch ACT, Neighbourhood Watch ACT – Florey, Communities at Work, Woden Community Services, Northside Community Service, Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council, and Relationships Australia Canberra and Region (RACR).
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 it 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, its 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 it 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 is deaf) next week to teach her how to use Facebook so she can join our street group and stay up to date.

“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.”

“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.’

“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.”

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.

The community you want starts at your front door!™