



Australia's Neighbour Day founder to speak at the UN

The Australian founder of the global Neighbour Day initiative, Andrew Heslop, will travel to the United Nations headquarters in New York during May as keynote speaker at an NGO forum on the protection and care of the elderly.

Heslop, 38, is a four-time Australian of the Year nominee who founded Neighbour Day in Melbourne, Australia in 2003 when an elderly woman was found dead in her home. She had been there for two years, forgotten by neighbours, friends and family until the Victoria Police broke in and discovered her remains. Remarkably all of the utilities (water, electricity, gas and telephone) remained connected despite the accounts not being paid for two years.

In 2006 former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan pledged the UN's support to developing Neighbour Day worldwide. The concept of the day is supported by President Clinton and HRH The Prince of Wales.

Now steps are in place for it to become an official UN Observance Day which could lead to an International Year of Neighbourliness being declared.

Commenting, Mr Heslop said –

“The opportunity to have dialogue with the UN is a welcome step in an initiative designed to develop better relationships with our neighbours and to protect the elderly and vulnerable. Everyone, everywhere is a neighbour and we must do all we can to encourage tolerance, respect and understanding in order to build stronger, healthier and more vibrant communities.

I am honoured the UN has extended this invitation and look forward to my first visit to the United States”.

Neighbour Day is always held on the last Sunday in March every year (Sunday 30th March 2008).

FOR MEDIA INFORMATION ONLY

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