



Media Alert

Australia's founder of Neighbour Day, Andrew Heslop, will be in London on Monday 26th May ahead of European Neighbours Day on Tuesday 27th May 2008.

Prior to travelling to London and Paris Mr Heslop will speak at the United Nations in New York on Thursday 22nd May about the development of Neighbour Day.

The speaking invitation follows a letter to (former) Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2006 seeking the UN's support. While at the UN Mr Heslop will also meet with representatives to discuss the process for Neighbour Day to become an official UN Observance Day, which could eventually lead to an International Year of Neighbourliness being declared by the General Assembly.

In Paris Mr Heslop will meet with the organisers of European Neighbours Day to discuss their invitation of a global partnership and future collaboration.

Heslop, 38, is a four-time Australian of the Year nominee and former National Communications Manager for Australian Red Cross 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 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, with the concept of the day also supported by President Clinton and HRH The Prince of Wales.

For the first time in 2008 Neighbour Day received the personal backing of every Premier, the Chief Minister of the ACT and the Lord Mayors of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide. They were joined by local councils and shires across the country who ran local promotions and events encouraging residents to get together.

Commenting Mr Heslop said –

“Over the past six years Neighbour Day has grown from a simple idea first raised as a Letter to the Editor of The Age in March 2003 to an event now being discussed at the United Nations. To have encouraged Australians everywhere to have better relationships with their neighbours, to look out for the elderly and vulnerable, and to get to know each other no matter where they live or their personal circumstances has been quite remarkable. When I wrote that letter I never once thought Neighbour Day would lead to the United Nations and succeed at this level. It really has been the most amazing journey.”

Neighbour Day is always held on the last Sunday in March every year (Sunday 29th March 2009)

For more information visit www.neighbourday.org

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