



NSW residents urged to check on elderly neighbours

With temperatures in Western Sydney and parts of New South Wales forecast to hit and exceed 40 degrees tomorrow and this weekend residents are being urged to check on their elderly neighbours.

The record heatwave in South Australia and Victoria last week is thought to have claimed the lives of at least 60 elderly people.

"High temperatures are a significant health risk for older and frail people who are simply unable to cope with the heat. The sudden deaths of 60 people last week in SA and Victoria was an absolute tragedy and we need to take precautions today to prevent such deaths occurring again," said Neighbour Day founder Andrew Heslop.

"If there is an older person living next door or across the street from you go and check up on them to make sure they are okay. If you live in the bush go to the next farm.

"Many senior citizens, particularly those who live in public housing, may not have air conditioning or even a fan to use. Those who do may still be reluctant to run them because of the cost.

"But if you have a spare fan or portable air-conditioner at home that isn't being used why not offer it to them?

"Or if your house has air-conditioning, why not invite your elderly neighbours over for a cold drink during the heat of the day? Consider giving them a spare key to your home so they can remain cool while you are at work.

"These are clearly extreme weather conditions and it doesn't take much effort to check up on older residents. It may also help save a life," Andrew said.

Other handy tips for residents with elderly neighbours include –

- Remind them to drink enough fresh water to stay hydrated.
- Drop by in the morning and in the cool of the evening to see how they are.
- Leave your mobile or work phone number so they can contact you in an emergency.
- Alert police and emergency services immediately if elderly residents known to live alone fail to answer the door.

Neighbour Day, Australia's national day to develop better relationships with the people who live around us, 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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Released 05.02.2009