



Outback BBQ puts Australia's Neighbour Day on the map

A group of neighbours in the remote Western Australian city of Kalgoorlie - Australia's largest outback town - will fire-up their barbecues in their front yards this Sunday to celebrate Australia's 7th annual Neighbour Day.

"You'd be hard pressed to find a more Aussie location than Kalgoorlie," said Neighbour Day founder Andrew Heslop, "and there isn't a past time Aussies love more than having their mates over for a barbie and a beer.

"It's just the perfect way to celebrate Neighbour Day this Sunday," he said.

Located at the edge of the Great Victorian Desert, Kalgoorlie lies 600 kilometres by road from Perth on the west coast of Australia and is almost 3500 kilometres from Sydney on the east coast. Approximately 30,000 people call the goldfields town home.

"In just seven years Neighbour Day really has become Australia's annual celebration of community after starting out as an idea in a Letter to the Editor of The Age in 2003," said Andrew.

"It's amazing how quickly and enthusiastically residents in towns and suburbs across Australia have embraced the concept. Whether it's a knock on the door to say g'day or a bbq for all the neighbours it's so easy to get together and involved.

"What is even more exciting is that local government has backed the day by organising major festivals and events to bring entire communities together," said Andrew.

Andrew started Neighbour Day in March 2003 after Victoria Police discovered the body of Mrs Elsie Brown wrapped in a blanket on her sofa. Mrs Brown had died in January 2001 but for two years had been forgotten by neighbours, friends and family until a neighbour realised she had not seen Mrs Brown for a considerable period of time.

Mrs Brown's gas, water, telephone and electricity were still connected despite accounts remaining unpaid for two years.

"The continued success of Neighbour Day is extraordinary when you consider its origins - the sad and lonely death of an elderly woman in her own home," Andrew said.

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"Neighbour Day has gently evolved from a day to check up on elderly or vulnerable neighbours into a celebration for the whole community.

"It has captured the imagination of Australians in a way I never expected or considered simply because everyone is a neighbour, no matter where you live or your personal circumstances.

"When we know our neighbours we feel part of a community, we care about the people in it and the events which impact on it.

"The recent bushfires in Victoria, Cyclone Hamish and the floods in northern NSW and North Queensland were graphic examples of neighbours and whole communities coming together in adversity. They backed each other, despite the danger, to save lives and homes.

"The legacy of Mrs Brown's death is that it really has brought Australians closer together.

"Closer relationships between neighbours right across Australia are certainly worth celebrating and the 7th annual Neighbour Day on Sunday 29th March is the perfect day to do just that," said Andrew.

Among the planned activities around Australia this year are community festivals and events in Melbourne's Docklands; Mackay, Old and Mosman Park, WA; street parties in the Sydney suburbs of Pymble, Turramurra, Canterbury and the Central Coast town of Woy Woy, NSW; the launch of the Neighbourhood Smile Zone promotion in the City of Banyule, Victoria; the search for South Australia's Best Neighbour and a Gold Coast party at Varsity Lakes with magicians, hip-hop, belly dancers and an opera singer.

For more information visit www.neighbourday.org

The 127 suburban titles within the News Community Media group and 60 stations within the ABC Local Radio network are proud National Support Partners of Neighbour Day.

Letter to the Editor - The Age Monday 17th March 2003

<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/03/16/1047749660596.html>

Background information on Kalgoorlie

http://www.rfds.info/Info_for_Docs_KG.htm

<http://www.kalbould.wa.gov.au/>

Local media

Kalgoorlie Miner newspaper <http://kalgoorlie.thewest.com.au/Regionals.aspx?MenuId=237>

ABC Local Radio <http://www.abc.net.au/goldfields/>



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Released 25.03.2009