



Incentives for community engagement needed all year round says Neighbour Day

NSW Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell's decision to provide seed funding to 'reinvigorate' Neighbourhood Watch should be just one element of a wider plan to reconnect communities, says Neighbour Day founder Andrew Heslop.

"Rather than just concentrate on crime there needs to be wider government and corporate funding to develop strategies to engage communities all year round," Andrew said.

"When residents are engaged and active in their streets and suburbs the opportunity for crime is lessened.

"Getting Australians off the sofa and outside has to be the first step. Encouraging neighbours in houses, apartments and on farms to get together is critical," said Andrew.

For the past nine years Neighbour Day has been encouraging Australians to celebrate their communities on the last Sunday in March as the catalyst for year round interaction.

It has worked with residents, councils and shires across the country holding bbqs, street parties, afternoon teas and events in parks and public spaces.

"In 2008 I was invited to speak at the United Nations about the organic growth and development of Neighbour Day which won the Westpac Prize in May this year," said Andrew.

"While Kevin Rudd endorsed the day as Prime Minister, and state leaders, Lord Mayors and community advocates have willingly got behind it, Neighbour Day has been funded entirely from my salary and personal savings since 2003.

"Running a national event as popular and large as Neighbour Day is enormously rewarding but it is done after hours and on weekends, which continues to make the search for external funding difficult.

"Next month a global meeting of national Neighbour Day organisers is being held in Paris and I'm hopeful that Qantas and the Australian Government will help me to attend.

"The stand out success of Neighbour Day is its power to connect Australians on such a basic level, no matter where you live or your personal circumstances. It is a message that has been embraced by Australians since 2003 who firmly believe the community you want starts at your front door," Andrew concluded.

www.neighbourday.org

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