



## Australian representation at global conference in doubt

Australia may not be represented in Paris next week at a global conference of national Neighbour Day organisers from around the world unless a travel provider can be found, after failing to secure airline support to attend the conference.

"It is unfortunate none of the CEOs of the major airlines who service Australia and Europe have been able to help," said Andrew Heslop, the founder of Australia's annual celebration of community, Neighbour Day.

"I certainly appreciate the economic pressure they are under and the reality that there are many very worthy organisations and individuals deserving support. It's simply not possible for them to help in every instance.

"Being invited to represent Australia is a great honour and recognition for the communities and councils all around the country who have willingly celebrated Neighbour Day on the last Sunday in March since 2003.

"Initially I advised the conference organisers I was not able to attend simply because I fund Neighbour Day from my salary and savings, which I have done for nine years, without any external financial support, sponsorship or government grant.

"However they contacted me again late last week insisting I attend, asking me to take whatever steps necessary to be at the meetings on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> October and Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October. I've now done that but have not been successful.

"If a travel provider can be found to cover the cost of economy flights and accommodation in Paris I need to leave Australia by Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> October at the latest.

"After speaking at the United Nations in May 2008 I attended European Neighbours' Day celebrations in Paris, which gave me a great insight into its operations and activities across 30 countries. With the continuing organic growth here attending the conference will help me to scope a sustainable future for Neighbour Day in suburbs and towns across Australia," Andrew said.

Andrew was the inaugural recipient of the Westpac Prize in May 2010 for his development and promotion of Neighbour Day in communities across the country.

- **Travel providers wishing to assist should contact Andrew on 0404 038 106.**

Neighbour Day has five principal aims –

1. Strengthen communities and build better relationships with the people who live around us.
2. Create safer, healthier and more vibrant suburbs and towns.
3. Promote tolerance, respect and understanding.
4. Break down community barriers.
5. Protect the elderly, the vulnerable and the disadvantaged.

### **FOR MEDIA INFORMATION ONLY**

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*Released 01.10.2010*