



Petersham

Media Release.



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Neighbour Day founder wins national award for bringing people together

Local Petersham resident, Andrew Heslop, is the national winner of the 2010 Westpac Prize in the Individuals category. Andrew has won more than \$10,000 worth of prizes for creating 'Neighbour Day', Australia's annual celebration of community, that brings together the people from next door, across the street or the next farm.

An active community member, Andrew beat hundreds of nominees from around the country to take out the prize. Having volunteered with the Australian Red Cross for many years, Andrew made his mark on the local community through his brainchild initiative 'Neighbour Day', which he developed in response to the 2003 news that an elderly woman, Elsie Brown, had been dead at home for two years before being discovered.

"The sad discovery of Mrs Brown's lonely death confronted many Australians – not just the elderly – because she had simply been forgotten by neighbours, friends and family. The subsequent media debate around the country caused many people to ask 'What if that had been me?', so my idea for Neighbour Day was simply to encourage all Australians to have better relationships with their neighbours and to keep an eye on the elderly or vulnerable who live nearby.

"How you participate is entirely up to the imagination of you and your neighbours. It can be a street party, community bbq or just a cup of tea and a slice of cake. I never expected Neighbour Day would be embraced so enthusiastically – the response from communities all around Australia has been phenomenal.

"I'm very proud and honoured to have won the Westpac Prize. This is the first award Neighbour Day has received and it's humbling to be rewarded for something you're passionate about. My plan is to use the cash component of the prize to provide small grants to community organisations and residents groups so they can hold local bbqs or afternoon teas to celebrate Neighbour Day on Sunday 27th March 2011," he concluded.

Events held as part of Neighbour Day include street parties and picnics in public spaces, as well as public housing events.

He awards are supported by Westpac as part of their Social Sector Banking division which specialises in supporting community and not-for-profit organisations.

Westpac's Head of Social Sector Banking, Vanessa Nolan-Woods said Andrew is an extremely deserving recipient. "Andrew is an extraordinary individual who has made an amazing contribution

to Petersham and the broader community. He embodies what the Westpac Prize is all about – he inspires ordinary people to change their lives, and the lives of others.”

“Westpac and Our Community would like to congratulate Andrew for the remarkable and valuable contribution he has made to our local community and also to broader Australia,” she said.

Andrew will be officially announced as the winner of the Individual category at the 2010 Communities in Control Conference, Australia’s largest community conference held in Melbourne on Monday 31 May, where he will talk about the Neighbour Day initiative.

The Westpac Prize is conducted by Our Community and Westpac to recognise individuals, organisations and projects that make a difference and stretch people’s vision of what’s possible in Australian society today. The winner of each category will receive a prize package including \$3,000 cash and selection of Our Community books and newsletters, Communities in Control DVDs and training (valued at more than \$7,000) – plus, for interstate award recipients, accommodation and flights for two people to attend Communities in Control.

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About Westpac and Our Community

As Australia’s first bank, Westpac has been supporting the Australian community for over 192 years. A dedicated Social Sector Banking team was created in April 2009 to provide support to community organisations such as charities, sports clubs, churches and support groups that are a vital part of the local communities in which Westpac operates, and its customers live and work.

Westpac Community Markets partnered with community sector industry body Our Community (www.ourcommunity.com.au) to contribute to and learn more about the requirements and needs of its not-for-profit customers and create solutions and services that would help them to achieve their financial potential.