



Neighbour Day founder announced as NBN Champion



The Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator the Hon. Stephen Conroy, today announced Mr Andrew Heslop, the founder of Australia's Neighbour Day and an Australia Day Ambassador, as a Champion for the National Broadband Network [NBN].

"I am honoured to have been invited to lend my support to the NBN because it will strengthen and connect local communities while delivering vital infrastructure critical to the future economic, social and scientific success of Australia," Mr Heslop said.

"Just like Neighbour Day, the NBN will be accessible to 100% of Australian homes no matter whether you live in the city or the bush, in a house, an apartment or on a farm. Every home in every street, in every suburb and in every town will be equipped to participate in our quickly changing world.

"Communities across Australia will be revolutionised by the capacity of the NBN. Its speed will transform our learning, our discovery, our business transactions and how we connect with family, friends and colleagues on the other side of the country or the globe.

"It will assist farmers to better manage their crops. It will allow children in urban, regional and remote communities to quickly delve into libraries and expand their horizons through the growing knowledge economy. It will allow our scientists to continue to be at the forefront of research, innovation and medical breakthroughs.

"But most of all it will bring fast, reliable and in-demand 21st century technology to all Australians where speed will eclipse distance like never before.

"If Australia is to remain globally competitive, and our children are going to be among the world's brightest and most highly skilled, we have an obligation to provide them with the first-class tools they need to achieve success.

"The NBN will dramatically change lives by connecting communities into a prosperous, skilled and smart future," said Mr Heslop.

Always held on the last Sunday in March every year Neighbour Day was founded in Melbourne in 2003 after the body of an elderly woman was discovered in her home two years after she passed away. Over ten years Neighbour Day has grown organically to become Australia's annual celebration of community.

It 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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ANDREW HESLOP BACKGROUND

Andrew Heslop's commitment to community, and his acknowledgement of its collective ability to create and cause change, is fast gaining him a reputation as a leading commentator both in Australia and internationally.

He is the sole founder of Neighbour Day, Australia's annual celebration of community, which he instigated in 2003. The event is supported by the Australian Government, through the Prime Minister, as well through a wealth of media partnerships which run the length and breadth of the country.

Andrew was a Board Member with the former Victorian Relief Committee and Chaired the annual Winter Blanket Appeal for three years until 2005. Under his leadership the 71st Winter Blanket Appeal in 2005 received a record 10,000 new blankets for distribution to Victoria's homeless and underprivileged.

In May 2008 Andrew spoke at the United Nations in New York about the global development of Neighbour Day which has grown from a simple idea expressed in a Letter to the Editor of The Age to become a national community event. He has also presented a paper to the Gulbenkian Organisation in the UK on the establishment of Neighbour Day as a concept through the UK and Europe.

In 2009, he delivered the keynote address at the launch of the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras to an audience of 70,000 people at Fair Day in Victoria Park.

He was listed by the [sydney]magazine as one of Sydney's TOP 100 Most Influential People in the January 2010 edition and was named an Australia Day Ambassador in 2011. He has also been recognised for his work within community through:

- Delegate to The People's Parliament, Sydney 2011
- Australia Day Ambassador
- The Westpac Prize – winning the individual category in 2010
- Champion for the Australian Government's National Compact
- Selected by Samsung to run with the Olympic Flame through Canberra during the Beijing 2008 Olympic Torch Relay.
- Nominations for Australian of the Year Award 2005-2011
- Nominee for Commonwealth Bank Local Hero Award 2008
- Semi-finalist for 2006 Regional Achievement and Community Awards sponsored by The Weekly Times and Prime Television
- Nominated for a prestigious Melbourne Award within the Individual Contribution to Community category for raising the international profile of Melbourne through the development of Neighbour Day

A portrait of Andrew, by Sydney artist Bruce Remmer, was submitted as an entry in the 2010 Archibald Prize.

CAREER BIOGRAPHY

Professionally Andrew started his career with John Fairfax & Sons at 5DN 972 in Adelaide aged 15 and later gained wider experience at the ABC, B105, QTQ 9, HSV 7 and 3AW.

In Sydney he has represented the Rail Corporation of New South Wales - the NSW Government operator of passenger rail services under the CityRail and CountryLink brands; TransdevTSL - as operator of the Yarra Trams franchise in Melbourne; The University of Melbourne, British Red Cross and Australian Red Cross.

Until September 2008 Andrew was Senior Media Adviser to NSW Deputy Premier John Watkins until Mr Watkins retired from the NSW Parliament.

In London in 1999, Andrew was the Project Manager of the Valentino Autumn Collection Fashion Show for domestic and international aid projects of British Red Cross. Over lunch attended by Valentino, Elle Macpherson, Joan Collins, Sophie Anderton and other celebrity guests around £60,000 (\$AUD150,000) was raised. At 10 Downing Street then Chancellor of the Exchequer, The Hon. Gordon Brown, hosted the launch of the International Fundraising Committee in November.

As the first National Communications Manager for Australian Red Cross Andrew developed and launched the Asia Pacific HIV/AIDS Appeal in 2001 to highlight a massive regional health issue. When planes crashed into the World Trade Centre, The Pentagon and a field in Pittsburgh on 11th September 2001, Andrew became the international public face of Australian Red Cross.