



Neighbour Day founder named NSW Volunteer of the Year

The man who in 2003 responded to the lonely death of an elderly woman by founding Australia's annual celebration of community, Neighbour Day, has been named 2012 NSW Volunteer of the Year.

Andrew Heslop was announced and presented with the prestigious award by the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, the Hon Victor Dominello MP, at a ceremony in Sydney on Wednesday attended by more than 300 volunteers from across NSW.

"In Neighbour Day's 10th year I am honoured and delighted to accept this award, especially on International Volunteer Day," Andrew said.

"I am proud to be the NSW Volunteer of the Year and I dedicate this award to the memory of Mrs Elsie Brown, whose lonely death in 2001 led me to write a Letter to the Editor of The Age in 2003 suggesting the last Sunday in March as the day to check up on our elderly neighbours; and the late Clive Tayler, who along with his partner Joan Nicholas, ably demonstrated to me what it meant to be great neighbours," Andrew said.

The Awards were established by The Centre for Volunteering in 2007 to recognise the efforts of NSW volunteers and promote the importance of volunteering to the community. More than 240 million hours are donated every year by about two million individual volunteers across the state.

Presenting the award Mr Dominello, who is Patron of the Awards, paid tribute to Andrew.

"I am delighted to celebrate the outstanding contribution of volunteers like Andrew Heslop," Mr Dominello said.

"His work and those of many volunteers is helping to revitalise connections between people in their communities."

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.

The free Neighbour Day kit for 2013 - containing invitations, name tags, posters and a 'how to' guide - can now be downloaded from www.neighbourday.org

** Full text of Andrew's acceptance speech may be accessed here <http://on.fb.me/SF0bOr> or here <http://bit.ly/WPEpG9>

** Minister Dominello media release <http://bit.ly/SwYnFZ>

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Released 08.12.2012