



## **Neighbour Day founder calls time on Australia's annual celebration of community**

An Australia-wide search has commenced for a suitable national organisation or group with the capacity and resources to take responsibility for Neighbour Day and guide it into the future.

The annual day – which is held on the final Sunday in March every year – aims to promote social cohesion, build social capital and create stronger communities by encouraging residents of all ages to get to know their neighbours.

Andrew Heslop, the 2012 NSW Volunteer of the Year who started the day in 2003 after the lonely death of an elderly woman was discovered two years after she died in her home, says it's now time to pass the baton on.

What is not widely known is that Andrew has self-funded Neighbour Day in its entirety from his own resources since 2003 after repeatedly being unable to secure any philanthropic, corporate or government funding to support his vision.

"It is with an enormous sense of pride and achievement that I have made the decision to relinquish Neighbour Day after guiding it for more than ten years," Andrew said.

"Giving up something which you have developed, nurtured and protected for such a long period of time is hard – but the reality is much harder.

"Neighbour Day needs financial support that is significantly greater than what I am able to provide. It needs a formal structure and a team of people who can guide it during business hours – not after hours and on weekends as I have needed to do. It needs an office and resources – not just me, my MacBook and my iPhone.

"The simple reality is that Neighbour Day now needs a bigger home, a more secure home, and I am hoping that I can find it one.

"At some point every inventor, every founder, has to recognise when it is time to let go and for me that time is now. I'm just hopeful that I will find the right home for Neighbour Day so that it can continue to make a difference in communities across the country.

"The enthusiasm and willingness which Australians in urban and regional areas have shown for the concept and messages behind this annual celebration of community continues to be extraordinary – and for that I am especially grateful. People of all ages, and from all cultural backgrounds, take part because we have a shared belief that our suburbs and towns are friendlier, safer, more inclusive and sustainable when everyone knows their neighbours," said Andrew.

The idea behind the national day was first proposed in a letter to The Age in March 2003 after Victoria Police found the remains of Mrs Elsie Brown in her Melbourne home – forgotten by her neighbours, friends and family. A coroner later established Mrs Brown's death had occurred two years earlier in January 2001.

What started as an urgent call to check up on elderly, vulnerable or single neighbours living alone has grown to become a national series of street parties, barbecues, open days, festivals, fairs and other formal and informal community activities run by neighbours, resident or tenancy groups and local government.

"I have been extremely fortunate that the organic growth of Neighbour Day has been principally driven by strong and significant editorial coverage all year round in local, state and national media and through generous in-kind support," continued Andrew.

"I am enormously grateful that News Community Media, part of News Corp Australia, has been a National Support Partner in six capital cities and 111 local mastheads since 2009 because of the leadership of executives Bob Osburn and Martin Beesley. Television wunderkind Adam Boland also helped generate early momentum by reaching Sunrise and The Morning Show viewers with the Neighbour Day message.

"As well, the overwhelming generosity of Brian King at Ripefruit in Melbourne has been essential for a continuing online presence.

"Yet without the vision and support of neighbours across the country who took my idea and made it in to a reality by voluntarily organising their own events, Neighbour Day would have been just another suggestion in a newspaper.

"It's been a great experience made possible by every day Australians - to whom I say a heart felt 'thank you'," Andrew said.

Since 2003 Neighbour Day has had 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.

**Expressions of Interest** outlining organisational capacity, a statement of commitment to community values and demonstrated experience and success in the management of national activities and/or events may be sent as follows –

- a. By email to [information@neighbourday.org](mailto:information@neighbourday.org)
- b. By mail to Neighbour Day, Post Office Box 968, Double Bay NSW 1360

### **FOR MEDIA INFORMATION ONLY**

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**NeighbourDay**



**@NeighbourDay**

## Neighbour Day highlights

- 2003**
  - Founded in Melbourne.
  - Letter to the Editor of The Age published Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2003 with first interview to Jon Faine on 774 ABC Melbourne at 8.50am who suggests 'Say G'Day Day' as the name.
  - First Neighbour Day held on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> March.
- 2004**
  - Melbourne designer Dianne Treble creates the distinctive logo with a lower case 'n' to represent a home.
  - Positioning statement 'The community you want starts at your front door™' used for the first time.
- 2005**
  - Ripefruit becomes a National Support Partner.
  - Free downloadable kit with posters, invitations, flyers provided on the website for the first time.
- 2006**
  - UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, former President Bill Clinton and HRH The Prince of Wales endorse the aims and concepts of Neighbour Day.
  - Andrew Heslop a semi-finalist for the Australia Post Events and Tourism Award at the Regional Achievement and Community Awards.
- 2007**
  - The Hon Anthony Byrne MP, Member for Holt, speaks about Neighbour Day in federal parliament.
  - Andrew Heslop nominated for the Commonwealth Bank Local Hero Award.
  - Samsung announces Andrew Heslop as its first torchbearer for 2008 Beijing Olympic Torch Relay in Canberra.
- 2008**
  - Saatchi & Saatchi creates first television commercial pro-bono. It is screened without charge on all free-to-air and pay television networks, and in-flight by Qantas.
  - Every Premier plus Chief Minister of Australian Capital Territory publicly endorses Neighbour Day.
  - Andrew Heslop speaks at the United Nations in New York about his development of Neighbour Day then is a special guest at European Neighbours' Day in Paris.
  - Neighbour Day a finalist at the annual Melbourne Awards in the Individual Contribution to Community category.
  - Andrew Heslop appointed a Champion for the National Compact, the Australian Government's strategy for the Third Sector.
- 2009**
  - The Hon Kevin Rudd MP becomes the first Prime Minister to publicly endorse Neighbour Day.
  - Radio commercials go to air for the first time.
  - News Community Media becomes a National Support Partner.
- 2010**
  - Neighbour Day receives its first award with Andrew Heslop honoured with the Westpac Prize.
  - the(sydney)magazine names Andrew Heslop as one of the city's TOP 100 Most Influential People for his development of Neighbour Day.
  - A week long Neighbour Day storyline is woven in to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary episodes of Neighbours, watched by 120 million daily viewers in 57 countries.
  - Andrew Heslop addresses the Neighbourhood Watch Australasia conference and delivers the keynote address to the Victorian Neighbourhood Watch Conference in Melbourne.
  - Andrew Heslop appointed a Champion for the National Broadband Network.
- 2011**
  - The Hon Julia Gillard MP endorses Neighbour Day as Prime Minister.
  - Traffic Film Production in Brisbane creates the new television commercial 'One Day Next Door Could Be Your Next Best Friend' based upon recent natural disasters. It is voiced by Angela Catterns.
  - Andrew Heslop appointed an Australia Day Ambassador.
  - Andrew Heslop appointed an Outreach Partner in the Office for the Not-for-Profit Sector, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- 2012**
  - Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC CVO, Governor-General, delivers 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary address.
  - The Hon Anthony Byrne MP, Member for Holt, speaks on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Neighbour Day in federal parliament, commending founder Andrew Heslop.
  - NSW Parliament congratulates Andrew Heslop on his development of Neighbour Day over ten years.
  - Andrew Heslop named 2012 NSW Volunteer of the Year for his development of Neighbour Day by the Hon Victor Dominello, Minister for Citizenship and Communities, in Sydney.
- 2013**
  - Prime Minister the Hon Julia Gillard MP recognises the commitment of founder Andrew Heslop in her Neighbour Day statement.
  - The Neighbour Day Garden 'Connections' by Eckersley Garden Architecture wins Gold at the 2013 Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show, as well as the Mark Bence Construction Award.
  - The original MasterChef, Julie Goodwin, provides recipes and support for Neighbour Day 2013.
  - Samantha Chant of Redland Bay, Queensland wins \$5000 to celebrate Neighbour Day thanks to Australian House & Garden magazine and Bauer Media.