

Neighbour Day 2016
Evaluation Report Highlights



**The community you want
starts at your front door™**

#NeighbourDay

Sam Robinson & Paula Mance
Relationships Australia National

Introduction

“We all want to lead a good life, at the heart of a thriving community, among people we trust, and within an environment of mutual respect. Neighbour Day gives us an opportunity to reach out, to connect and to become more engaged with our local community....Neighbours don’t have to be best friends – but the role of neighbour is a distinct and precious one.

Knowing the people around us increases our sense of emotional security and physical safety, and our local neighbourhood networks help to define and sustain us – in both the good times and the more challenging moments of our lives.” **Neighbour Day Ambassador – Hugh Mackay AO**

Neighbour Day is an annual celebration that promotes community connectedness. The principal aim of the campaign is to help people build better relationships with those who live around them—especially the elderly and vulnerable. By bringing together people and organisations, and their resources, the long-term ambition of the Neighbour Day Program is to improve mental and physical wellbeing in communities around the country every day of the year.

Relationships Australia sincerely thanks those who contributed their information, feedback and ideas via the Neighbour Day 2016 post event survey. This data, combined with other information collected helped us plan for Neighbour Day 2017 and beyond.

The Research

We know from a range of studies that social exclusion and loneliness are detrimental to mental and physical health, while social participation is positively associated with the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001; Berry, 2008; Berry & Shipley, 2009; Betts 2011).

Social participation is part of, and a prerequisite for, the development of social capital which is thought to positively affect health through improved health behaviour. Social ties encourage individuals to engage in health promoting behaviours such as physical activity and seeking medical care, or refraining from damaging behaviours such as smoking. Social ties are also thought to buffer the effects of stress, leading to more benign appraisals of stressful situations rather than cascading and harmful negative responses.

The Program

Neighbour Day (the Program) is a grass roots community development program that aims to bring together people and communities on the last Sunday in March every year. Founded by Andrew Heslop in 2003, the Program encourages people to connect with their neighbours and communities with the overall aim of improving individual, family and community wellbeing.

Relationships Australia has operated as the backbone organisation for the Program since 2014. It provides operational and stakeholder support; communication materials and tools; client and stakeholder management systems; funding, governance and leadership; policy and research; and workplace health and safety standards.

The Program relies on three key elements. These are:

1. a stakeholder management framework;
2. tools and materials to support Neighbour Day events; and
3. an online and mainstream communication campaign.

Highlights

- Direct consultation, resources and support were increased in 2016 with the aim of building the capacity of both individuals and organisations to undertake Neighbour Day activities.
- The number of registered events decreased by 18% due to the removal of the requirement to register an event prior to accessing online material. However, there was a significant increase in total visitors to the website (11.8% increase) and the downloading of resources (180 to 420%).
- The most popular events were barbeques; afternoon teas, morning teas, meetings at the park and street parties.
- Local council/shire participation increased from 5% to 17% of all local councils in Australia.
- The highest number of events occurred in Queensland followed by New South Wales, with participation in every state and territory.
- Based on data collected from registered events, downloads and the post event registrant survey, a conservative estimate suggests that 62,800 people attended a Neighbour Day event in 2016. This does not include other neighbourly actions taken on or around the day.

- The number of events increased by an estimated 300% in 2016 compared to 2015 to an estimated 1650 events in 2016.
- There was increased participation from both individuals and organisations (see above); however it is not known whether the contact between neighbours and their communities was sustained over time.
- 93% of post event survey respondents identified Neighbour Day as a useful tool to connect with their neighbours and community.
- The main self-reported benefit of promoting Neighbour Day in the local community or neighbourhood by hosts was social connection and inclusion, including the elderly, multicultural participation and new neighbours.
- More than 80% of post event registrant survey respondents reported that Neighbour Day made it easier for them to connect with their neighbours.
- More than half of post event registrant survey respondents reported using Neighbour Day messages in other related community activities with which they are involved.
- 84% of post event registrant survey respondents indicated that they would promote or host a Neighbour Day event again.
- Research evidence on the relationship between social participation and wellbeing was confirmed by qualitative data collected via the post event registrant survey and an increase (eight additional) in the number of organisations with similar values identifying as Very Neighbourly Organisations (VNOs).
- The majority of VNOs reported a high level of satisfaction with the support of their Neighbour Day promotion and events.
- The overall use of resources and participation in the Program increased in 2016 when compared to 2015, suggesting that user needs were more than adequately met.
- The reach and engagement of the Twitter campaign increased, with tweets, re-tweets (21%), Likes (70%) and user mentions (38%) increasing when compared to 2015.
- More than 4,000 social media posts were associated with the community service announcement video and the endorsement videos were viewed 2,200 times.
- Requests for media interviews doubled when compared to 2015.
- The number of print, radio and online publications increased by 7%, with further media promotion occurring beyond the provided resources.

- There was an increase in approaches from business and community sector organisations to participate.
- Neighbour Day provided opportunities to connect with businesses; with the e-kit 'For the Workplace' downloaded 198 times.
- The Program was successful in attracting a small amount of financial support in 2015 and this sponsorship doubled in 2016.
- In-kind support increased in 2016 and included: council grants for hosts, prizes donated by local businesses, promotional videos and co-branded material, evaluation reports and free entry to local attractions.

Conclusion

Based on the first year of evaluation, Neighbour Day appears to be achieving its short-term outcomes, with some evidence also suggesting there has been progress toward achieving the medium-term outcomes of the Program [see Appendix A]. This information should provide a baseline with which to measure the future success, or otherwise, of the Program in 2017.

Appendix A

#	Short-term outcomes <i>(change in knowledge, skills, awareness and motivation)</i>	Medium-term outcomes <i>(Change in behaviour or practice)</i>	Long-term outcomes <i>(environmental, economic or social changes)</i>
1	Increased knowledge and awareness of Relationships Australia as the home of Neighbour Day	Increased contact between neighbours and community participation	Increased social capital
2	Increased knowledge and awareness of Neighbour Day and its relationships to individual, family and community wellbeing	Increased commitment of the Relationships Australia federation to Neighbour Day	Social inclusion
3	Increased support of Neighbour Day from individuals and organisations	Increased in-kind and financial support from external stakeholders	Improved physical and mental wellbeing
4	Increased media engagement	Increased capacity in hosting events (less input required over time)	Neighbour day campaign is sustainable.
5	Increased confidence in the community in hosting a Neighbour Day event	Strategic relationships developed with relevant organisations as a result of Neighbour Day	
6	Stakeholder needs are understood		
7	Neighbour day is aligned with current and future business		
8	Internal and external champions knowledgeable and supported to facilitate Neighbour Day engagement		