

## Neighbour Day in your workplace



Across the country, Australians are facing unprecedented times. We are in the middle of a worldwide pandemic and the strength we draw from each other, from our relationships and our wider communities, has never been more important. Changing conditions, and new directives from government, have necessitated a shift in the way we interact and are likely to stay with us into the future as we all adjust to a 'new normal'.

Many have made the transition to working from home, making the workplace and daily social connection with colleagues very different and challenging.

## When every day became neighbour day

Neighbour Day is celebrated on the last Sunday in March every year with the aim of fostering strong personal connections that last beyond the day.

Relationships Australia, as the home of Neighbour Day, encourages people across all communities to build and strengthen their social connections. Because every day is neighbour day.

Over the years supporters have told us that they like Neighbour Day (as a recognised national campaign) because it gives them 'permission', or perhaps a legitimate 'excuse', to try something neighbourly without the feeling that they are being intrusive.

When the pandemic hit Australia in early March 2020, the need to support others within our community became even more pressing. People told us that they wanted to do something, to take positive action to support their community, particularly during these uncertain times.

With that in mind, we pivoted and launched our [#CreativeConnections Tips](#) to help support people to stay connected every day.

## Who is a neighbour?

The word 'neighbour' has undergone a revival during last summer's bushfires and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, the term neighbour is well understood as someone who supports others in times of need. Someone who picks up shopping or other essentials for others. Someone who checks in regularly to make sure people are ok. Someone who volunteers to help those who need support. Someone who drops off thoughtful notes. Someone in your street, or the wider community, or your workplace, or online. Maybe in Australia, perhaps overseas.

Neighbours connect and provide support to those living next door and to those further away. We have the capacity to build communities beyond our physical locations. Neighbours can be anyone.

## Loneliness as a deficit of Social Connection



[Relationships Australia's research \(2018\)](#) found that one in ten people are lacking social support or connection, while one in six experience emotional loneliness. Further, just under 1.5 million Australians report they have been lonely for a decade or more. It is a loneliness epidemic. Research tells us that this lack of social connection can have significant impact on an individual's mental and physical health as well as the health and cohesion of the wider community.

The Australian Government's response to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus, while necessary, has led to a deficit of social connection for many Australians.

[Social connection is critical for our health and wellbeing.](#)

Social connection also makes us feel better as it helps prevent loneliness, isolation and depression. Neighbours are important because good relationships with others can transform communities.

The 2020 theme for Neighbour Day focused on Social Connection and that theme holds true for 2021 – where we continue to highlight the need for meaningful connections that happen every day.

## What we learned from Neighbour Day 2020 in the time of COVID-19



Initial findings from [ANU's 2020 Evaluation of Neighbour Day](#) revealed that from early March – April 2020, respondents reported a [decreased sense of mental wellbeing](#); an [increased sense of loneliness](#); and yet an [increased sense of neighbourhood satisfaction](#).

At time-point 2 (April) during lockdown restrictions, respondents reported that [greater neighbourhood identification was associated with better mental wellbeing](#). This occurred in part [due to greater perceived access to neighbours' support and reduced loneliness](#).

Being involved in [multiple social groups was positively associated with mental wellbeing](#). This occurred in part [due to greater perceived access to support from family and friends, and reduced loneliness](#).

We also found that especially during this period of crisis, survey respondents saw the [importance of connecting with neighbours for the benefit of their community, and individual, wellbeing](#).

Respondents described using [a myriad of creative ways to connect](#) through virtual or not-in-person means that complied with official guidance on social gathering restrictions.

Compared to 2019, people reported that getting involved in Neighbour Day 2020 was [less about having fun and meeting new people, and more about reaching out to support neighbours in the pandemic situation as well as perceived benefits for one's own wellbeing](#).

## Connected people connect communities



As the country grapples with extended periods of isolation, physical distancing measures and a re-think of how we operate our day-to-day lives, we want to remind everyone of the importance of social connections and support – every day.

The risk of increased loneliness and social isolation at this time is worrying. While it is vital we adhere to physical distancing rules, we also need to prioritise maintaining healthy social connections and relationships, as these are key to good mental and physical health. With many working from home.

We don't know what changes might occur between now and Neighbour Day 2021. We hope that circumstances in March next year might permit some of the traditional events of

previous Neighbour Day campaigns, however if that is not possible we all need to find other creative ways to stay connected.

Relationships Australia firmly believes in the power of the Australian community to support its most vulnerable, to tackle loneliness, and to work together to ensure healthy and safe relationships throughout the pandemic, and beyond.

Encouraging social connection is the essence of Neighbour Day.

Knowing your neighbours and your broader community has never been more important.

## Neighbour Day 2021 theme

Neighbour Day encourages people across all communities to build and strengthen their social connections. Because every day is neighbour day.

Whilst Neighbour Day is officially celebrated on the last Sunday in March each year, the purpose of the campaign is to raise national awareness of the importance of social connection and neighbourly actions throughout the year. The campaign encourages people to make meaningful connections that last beyond the day itself.

The principal aim of Neighbour Day is to increase positive and sustainable social connections between people and communities throughout Australia. In doing so, Relationships Australia, as the home of Neighbour Day, aims to support healthy relationships and assist in tackling the loneliness epidemic in this nation.

The official theme for Neighbour Day 2021 is **'Every day is neighbour day'** – building on the growing movement of people taking neighbourly actions every day of the year, whether in person or from a distance.

Whether through a cuppa, a picnic in the park, a neighbourly action, or a message of support, Neighbour Day is the perfect opportunity to reach out to neighbours, both near and far.



## What we know

- attending a Neighbour Day event often leads to people joining existing community groups, or organising their own groups and events;
- participating in Neighbour Day creates new relationships, renews past relationships, and deepens existing relationships;
- Neighbour Day helps create ongoing and enduring connections between people and their communities; and
- continued interaction after the event often leads to increased neighbourhood trust which in turn leads to neighbours experiencing a greater sense of safety in their neighbourhood, and offering support to each other.

### [Swinburne University of Technology Report, Neighbour Day 2018](#)

After people hosted an event or took some neighbourly action (2019), they experienced:

- an increased sense of identification with their neighbourhood;
- an increased sense of belonging; and
- perceived their neighbourhood environment more positively.

### [Australian National University Neighbour Day 2019 Evaluation Report](#)

## What did Neighbour Day 2020 look like?

Of those who reported that they did manage to take action for Neighbour Day 2020 of some form, the majority (81.7%) indicated that their reach tended to be on a smaller scale and between 1-20 people. These smaller events are likely due to the COVID-19 physical distancing and lockdown restrictions, resulting in the cancellation or postponement of the majority of planned events (e.g., BBQs and other food sharing activities, street parties).

A small percentage of survey respondents managed to reach a larger number of people by leaving connection cards, care packages or using social media. The community adapted and found creative ways to create connections and stay connected. Some examples below.

[\[Neighbour Day 2020 Evaluation\]](#)

### Virtual

- Called a neighbour
- Posted on social media
- Launch social media group
- Connected through 'group messenger' chats
- Texted the nearby neighbours
- Started a Facebook group and Website
- Virtual morning tea

### Not in person (left something / did a favour)

- Bear Hunt for children
- Boredom/Educational packs
- Buddy program for elderly
- Chalk art on driveway/footpath
- Created an art display at our local sign
- Delivered and received care packages, including cards for kids
- Exchange of unwanted kitchen appliances
- Formed a volunteer group to walk dogs
- Goods exchange
- Held colouring/poetry competition for school children
- Helped an elderly neighbour's yard
- Left "Bags of Hugs," a present, "Appreciation Notes," hand sanitiser, home baked goods, contact details, toilet roll, letters
- Made artwork for neighbouring housing building

### What will 2021 be like?

Right now [10Oct20], popping into a neighbour's place for a cuppa (for many) is no longer easy - and in fact in many cases, not advised, nor even allowed. Catch-ups at local parks, gyms, cafés, restaurants and bars are limited for most, and mask wearing (for very good reasons) and physical distancing is becoming the norm in many states.

We don't know what changes might occur between now and Neighbour Day 2021. We hope that circumstances in March next year might permit some of the traditional events of previous Neighbour Day campaigns, however if that is not possible we all need to find other creative ways to stay connected.

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

## The role of business in the community



### Virtual morning tea

Grab cuppa & telephone or video call to connect.

**#createconnections**  
**#creativeconnections tip**

*Relationships Australia.* The home of Neighbour Day

Business organisations and companies are recognised as important supporters of Neighbour Day. They are in a strong position to promote the Neighbour Day ethos to their staff and customers; where an association with Neighbour Day can be seen to be a practical demonstration of a company's core values.

Some businesses leverage their association with Neighbour Day to play a catalyst role to engage and support their communities of interest. Others take the opportunity to weave Neighbour Day promotion and engagement into their calendars, bringing their people together with business neighbours to celebrate at hosted public events. Most businesses celebrate Neighbour Day in the weeks prior. Staff and customers will likely choose to celebrate closer to the nominated day when they are back in the neighbourhoods they call home.

The Neighbour Day website contains resources and guidance to start connecting with your neighbourhood. If you have other good ideas, or would like to feed into our understanding of community connection, please provide us with that feedback, and your story. It is the stories about real human connection that inspire all of us to rise above our reserve and check in with others [in person, by phone, or online] and whose burden may be lightened, or even life transformed by that small kindness.

## Easy Neighbour Day Ideas for the workplace

**Print** Neighbour Day posters and display them in your buildings, store fronts, and related facilities (e.g. childcare, meal rooms, bathrooms) and wherever else you and your people have a presence. You may wish to take the lead and offer these items to your staff to help them promote Neighbour Day in their respective neighbourhoods.

**Talk** about Neighbour Day in your publications, e-newsletters, and social media. You can also highlight your Neighbour Day activities at relevant meetings, networks or groups where developing stronger communities and connected neighbourhoods reflects your business values.

**Access** the Neighbour Day resources and E-kit which are available at [neighbourday.org](http://neighbourday.org). Resources include posters, e-cards, calling cards, promotional flyers, and Neighbour Day signs for Instagram selfies.

**Distribute** Neighbour Day promotional flyers, calling cards to your people and encourage them to get out there and be neighbourly! [Subscribe to Verandah by Neighbour Day](#) monthly Enews, which you can share with your people and use in your communications.

**Support** and encourage your staff to host their own Neighbour Day events in their neighbourhoods.

**Align** existing business or company events with Neighbour Day, including events that are held before or on (or even after!) the day.

**Register** your event or neighbourly action on the Neighbour Day website at [neighbourday.org](http://neighbourday.org). You are welcome to choose another day during the week that suits you and your business neighbours better. Whichever day you decide to celebrate, remember 'Every day is Neighbour Day'. The E-kit for your workplace is now available for download when you register at [neighbourday.org](http://neighbourday.org). The E-kit includes, Neighbour Day logo and posters, connection and calling cards (for bulk printing, including COVID safe versions), and selfie and event marker signs. Also included, 'How to Social' with email drafts and graphics ready to use.

## Stuck for an idea?

Here are a few ideas to help you get started:

- Organise a **Neighbour Day breakfast** in your business park or shopping precinct in the week before Neighbour Day to connect with local business neighbours. You could include a terrific barista, barby breakfast and tasty treats. If getting together physically is not possible, then video conferencing is always an option.
- If you're in Sydney, why not try a (COVID safe) **volunteer experience** with [Thread Together](#) (a Very Neighbourly Organisation) – and help them at their Fulfilment Centre to support them to deliver new, good quality clothing and shoes to people in our community who are doing it tough.
- **Bring a plate morning tea** for your office to promote your involvement with Neighbour Day, or with nearby business neighbours to share the neighbourly vibe! Or take it online.
- **A Very neighbourly Bake-Off** (Julie Goodwin is one of our Ambassadors!) Everyone could bring something they've baked to share and the tastiest treat could win an award. Share the recipes via Neighbour Day social media.
- There are plenty of **volunteering opportunities** that would sit well with being socially inclusive and connected e.g. homeless shelters, 'soup kitchens', etc. Check first to ensure the volunteering standards are COVID safe.
- **Lunchtime sausage sizzle** – who doesn't like a sausage, a bit of bread and tomato sauce? Low cost, the aroma attracts good interest and gets people talking.
- **Photo booth** – Connected people connect communities. Just about everyone has a smartphone. Print out the 2021 selfie sign, bring in some fun 'dress up box' type items, and perhaps even have a makeshift frame – and you have a fun activity for your people. You can share the neighbourly messages on social and other media.
- **Join in Neighbour Day social media.** Follow Neighbour Day on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Councils, community organisations and businesses can use social media to cross-promote neighbourly events and information.



Neighbour Day Ambassadors Andrew Heslop, Natalie Ahmat & Costa Georgiadis