



9 March 2021

## Neighbour Day – Connected People Connect Communities

Sustainable social connection is a key to ending loneliness and increasing greater wellbeing outcomes across Australia. Today we're celebrating stories of connection from across Australia as the winners of the annual Tell Us Your Story are highlighted.

Relationships Australia as a leading service provider for over 70 years in Australia, is the home of the social engagement campaign, Neighbour Day. Relationships Australia acknowledges the role of all Australians in helping to end loneliness and Neighbour Day aims to facilitate opportunities, and to encourage sustainable connections between individuals and communities.

While traditionally celebrated on the last Sunday in March (this year, Sunday 28 March), the theme for Neighbour Day 2021 is *Every day is neighbour day*, a call to action for all Australians to connect and support each other.

Each year, Neighbour Day celebrates social connection around Australia, including through the annual *Tell Us Your Story* competition, which recognises Australians who build and maintain relationships with family, friends and neighbours – every day.

"All Australians have endured a difficult year, and the winners of this year's Tell Us Your Story competition showcase just some of the ways people adapted and creatively connected. These connections occurred both in real life and online, both within neighbourhoods and wider communities, and are great examples of the Neighbour Day spirit in action", said Nick Tebbey, National Executive Officer, Relationships Australia.

The National winner for 2021 comes from NSW and highlights how a diverse community rode out the COVID-19 pandemic together, at times with good humour. These neighbours made a light-hearted commitment to mow their lawns in dress up clothing on weekends. They found creative ways to connect and stay connected, while physical distancing, and grew closer as a result. Neighbourhood members now feel more confident and comfortable in being able to call on one another when needed.

Across the country, countless more stories have emerged of everyday Australians making a range of efforts to support each other and their communities.

The Tasmanian winner shared a story of finding their neighbour socially isolated in need of urgent medical care, which they personally arranged. This person then became a strong source of support for their neighbour, helping them to connect with their family and friends who lived interstate and could not travel due to the pandemic.

The ACT winner tells a story of a cul-de-sac community coming together over generations, raising their families in each other's homes; and always making newcomers welcome. When the pandemic took hold, one neighbour with experience in crisis management called a meeting to help mobilise the community. Zoom meetings kept them connected over the year and they look forward to resuming their face-to-face neighbourly brunches.

The Victorian winner talks about feeling lonely, isolated and not at all themselves during the pandemic. After finding out another neighbour felt the same, this person took the initiative to invite others to a socially distanced street chat. This small gesture had a huge impact on the individual and collective mental health of their neighbourhood, and was the catalyst for ongoing social connection.



The Western Australian winner started a What's App group during lockdown for their street, where people could communicate and offer help and support where needed. The connection has continued.

The South Australian winner describes moving to Adelaide from overseas, leaving parents, friends, colleagues and career behind. This story highlights the personal importance of connection. The winner talks about having formed gradual, strong, long lasting, trustworthy relationships in their neighbourhood which have become a source of strength and celebration.

The Queensland winner actively participates in, and encourages, a socially connected neighbourhood. The ongoing and sustainable connections that have been formed in this neighbourhood enable all parties to stay connected and rely on one another whenever needed. This story shows how, for this individual and their connections, neighbourhood extends beyond their immediate neighbours and further into the community.

Finally, a special commendation went to another Queensland entry, which highlighted the efforts of an individual who carried out small acts of kindness within their neighbourhood, bringing the community closer in the process.

Each state and territory\* winner has been awarded \$100, with the national winner taking home \$400. (\*There were no entries from the NT in 2021\*)

“Australia is full of amazing stories of connection and kindness, and this year’s winners highlight the many acts Australians are taking to support each other throughout the pandemic, and beyond.

“Neighbour Day 2021 is approaching, and we encourage all Australians to take inspiration from these stories, and to seek opportunities to connect with their neighbours in safe ways, and to support each other”, said Mr Tebbey. The public health advice varies from location to location and we encourage people to ensure they follow the official advice.

Neighbour Day 2021 will also see the celebration of our newest venture: [Communities Connected](#). This initiative aims to shine a light on the many [often smaller] community organisations that connect people and help people stay connected, across Australia, by collecting and sharing stories of connection. There is a major prize for the organisation judged most outstanding, which will be announced on Neighbour Day Sunday 28 March. Anyone interested should visit our website.

For more information on Neighbour Day and how you can get involved, including free easy-to-use resources head to our website [neighbourday.org](http://neighbourday.org). You can also follow our [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts and subscribe to [Verandah by Neighbour Day](#).

“The community you want starts at your front door.”™

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[Relationships Australia](#) is a leading provider of relationship support services for individuals, families and communities. We aim to support all people in Australia to achieve positive and respectful relationships. We are a community-based, not-for-profit Australian organisation with no religious affiliations.