



Communities switch on this Sunday



With no incentive other than a shared belief in safe, resilient and sustainable communities neighbours right across the country will get together this weekend for Australia's annual celebration of community, Neighbour Day.

"It's hard to believe that a letter to The Age in 2003 following the lonely death of an elderly Melbourne woman has been the catalyst for stronger, better connected suburbs and towns," said Neighbour Day founder and Australia Day Ambassador, Andrew Heslop.

"Over the past nine years Neighbour Day has grown organically with Australians in the city and the bush – living in houses, apartments and on farms – organising street parties, barbecues, afternoon teas ... all kinds of activities ... for Neighbour Day.

"They have been joined by councils and other major bodies who put on festivals, open days and other events so local residents can get to know each other and celebrate their communities.

"In doing so they are encouraged by Prime Minister Julia Gillard, as well as other political and community leaders, to appreciate how vital it is to have a connection with the person next door and across the street," Andrew said.

Unlike other awareness days Neighbour Day does not receive any corporate, philanthropic, government or public funding. However significant in-kind support comes directly from the CEO's of major metropolitan and regional media companies.

- In print, News Limited is a National Support Partner through News Community Media and its 105 mastheads across six capital cities that reach six million people [*source: Roy Morgan Single Source Australia: March 2010*].
- The 2011 pro-bono television campaign, which touches on the recent floods, Tropical Cyclone Yasi and bushfires, is now on-air. Voiced by Angela Catterns and written by Steve Minon it was directed and shot by Gwyn Dixon, produced by Sara Taghaode and made possible by Traffic Film Production in Brisbane. It is on all metropolitan and regional commercial networks, all ABC television channels, Foxtel and additionally on Sky News, The Movie Channels Network and The Lifestyle Channel www.neighbourday.org/resources/advertising
- Radio commercials for AM and FM stations are also on-air across the Macquarie, Fairfax, nova, Austereo, ARN, Capital Radio and Southern Cross Media networks www.neighbourday.org/resources/advertising

A free Neighbour Day kit with invitations, name tags and posters can be downloaded at www.neighbourday.org

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"For many Australians the flexibility of Neighbour Day continues to be the key element to its success," added Andrew.

"It is free to participate and wherever you live, whatever your personal circumstances, everyone is a neighbour. You don't have to spend a lot of money to take part and how you celebrate is only limited by the imaginations of you and your neighbours.

"However the critical element is to make that connection with the person next door, across the street or on the next farm. As we have seen just recently, you never know when you might need help from a neighbour," said Andrew.

Always held on the last Sunday in March every year 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.

FOR MEDIA INFORMATION ONLY

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Letters & Opinion

Elsie Brown's lonely death is a wake-up call for us all

The eventual discovery of the remains of 75-year-old Elsie Brown in her Melbourne home last week, almost two years after her death, is an appalling indictment on a supposedly civilised society in one of the world's most affluent countries.

That Elsie Brown's whereabouts had gone without proper investigation by relatives, friends and neighbours — let alone by utilities companies, government agencies or service providers — for so long reflects poorly on our sense of community and concern for others. Yet it is sadly indicative of the isolation many women and men face each day.

With increasing numbers of people of all ages choosing to live alone, for whatever reason, I believe we simply cannot continue to ignore those within our suburbs and towns who are isolated, lonely or at risk — and, as

in this instance, especially senior citizens.

While people disconnect with their family or friends for entirely valid reasons, at an immediate level I'm sure we can all identify someone within our community we know to

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live alone and without regular day-to-day contact.

How often have we watched as new neighbours moved in next door or across the street, yet have not taken the time to say hello? How often have we walked past the residence of an elderly neighbour and looked at the over-

grown garden or piles of junk mail, quietly wondering about their welfare?

So let's do something about it. I propose we designate Sunday March 30 "National Check On Your Neighbour Day". Make the effort to get to know the people next door, in the house behind and across the street. If you live in the country, get in the car and check on your single neighbour on the next farm. Introduce yourself and make sure they're OK — especially if they are elderly. Swap phone numbers, and follow up by dropping by from time to time, and call the police if you're concerned.

Elsie Brown's lonely death was tragic — but let's use it as a wake-up call, and all take greater responsibility for those around us. You never know, it might just save a life.

Andrew Heslop, Albert Park



PRIME MINISTER
CANBERRA

MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER JULIA GILLARD

NEIGHBOUR DAY 2011

Over recent months we have seen the power of ties between neighbours as Australians have united to protect their families, homes and livelihoods from floods, cyclone and bushfires.

Friends, family and strangers alike have worked together to save lives, build levies, evacuate homes and rescue stranded animals. A sense of community has given Australians the strength to push through this difficult time.

Even in today's busy world, neighbourhood ties are important. Forming bonds with our neighbours makes us feel more connected and involved with our community. The response of Australians to recent natural disasters highlights that communities are protected as we care for others and are cared for in return.

Neighbour Day, on 27 March 2011, is a fantastic opportunity to enjoy the company of those around you. Australians live in a diverse and changing country, but every person can enjoy being part of their local community.

I encourage you to have a friendly chat with your neighbours, to attend or organise a barbeque or a party for those on your street. By doing so, you will help ensure that your neighbourhood is a, safer, more inclusive and enjoyable place to live.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Julia Gillard' with a horizontal line underneath.

The Honourable Julia Gillard MP
Prime Minister of Australia