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Letter to the Editor

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Los Angeles, CA 90012

The death of Yvette Vickers is a sad indictment on an increasingly isolated society where elderly and vulnerable people can so easily be forgotten (Mummified body of former Playboy playmate Yvette Vickers found in her Benedict Canyon home, 02.05.2011).

Australia's annual celebration of community, Neighbour Day, was founded in Melbourne in 2003 after an elderly woman died but in similar circumstances was not discovered for two years. Over that period of time Mrs Elsie Brown's neighbours, who knew she was vulnerable and lived alone, simply didn't make the connection that something could be wrong as the mail, newspapers and store catalogues piled up at her front door.

The legacy of Mrs Brown's lonely death is closer relationships between neighbours right across Australia, in the city and in the country, whether people reside in a house, an apartment or on a farm.

Neighbour Day, held on the last Sunday in March, is a national celebration of street parties, barbecues, open days, community fairs and festivals that unite residents where they live.

When I spoke at the United Nations in 2008 about the development of Neighbour Day I lamented that we needed to be reminded to connect with the people next door, across the street or on the next farm.

With increasingly busy lifestyles it appears we need to pay a little bit more attention to our neighbours, no matter where we choose to call home.

Andrew Heslop
Founder & CEO, Neighbour Day
Australia Day Ambassador