



9th July 2011

Letter to the Editor

The discovery of the lonely deaths of two senior Australians at opposite ends of the country in less than a week is evidence there is much more to be done to care for the elderly and vulnerable.

Both deaths occurred in densely populated inner-city areas. In both instances concerns were raised with authorities and an investigation is now underway to determine what went wrong in the Homeswest case.

It should be of concern to us all that someone's relative silently passed away but no one realised. People of all ages disconnect from their families and friends for a variety of reasons yet all have neighbours next door and across the street.

We can keep an eye out for elderly and vulnerable residents who live alone especially those who value their privacy.

Look for tell-tale signs something may be wrong by checking the mail is being cleared from the letterbox, store catalogues are being collected and newspapers are being picked up. Have you noticed the blinds or curtains being closed at night or seen a light on?

Police will always respond to genuine concerns that something may be amiss. No matter where you live caring for the people who live around us helps to ensure our communities are safe, resilient, sustainable and friendly.

What is desperately needed is greater funding of community strengthening organisations by federal and state governments, and the corporate sector, to encourage neighbours in the city and the bush to be better connected.

After personally funding the entire national operations of Neighbour Day for ten years without any government, corporate or public financial support it would make an enormous difference if renowned WA philanthropists and business leaders Mr Kerry Stokes AC, Mrs Gina Rinehart or Mr Andrew Forrest were able to step up to help.

Clearly there is a need.

Andrew Heslop
Founder & CEO, Neighbour Day

Australia Day Ambassador
Champion for the National Broadband Network
Champion for the National Compact