

When good neighbours become good friends

How Neighbour Day is helping combat loneliness in Australia

Remember after-school adventures with friends who lived on your street? How about neighbourhood barbecues on a Sunday afternoon, or stopping in for a cup of tea with an elderly neighbour?

With such neighbourly gestures becoming increasingly rare, Australians are being encouraged to reconnect with those who live nearby as part of Neighbour Day 2019.

Held on March 31, Neighbour Day aims to combat loneliness and social isolation by promoting a return to neighbourly values – whether it's getting together for a barbecue, returning your neighbour's bin on rubbish day, or simply saying hello across the back fence.

"We know that people lead increasingly busy and fragmented lives, and this leaves less time for forming connections with our neighbours," said Relationships Australia National Executive Officer Nick Tebbey.

"Neighbour Day is a reminder of the important role neighbourly relationships have in building safer, more inclusive communities and combatting loneliness.

"Each Neighbour Day we hear inspiring stories of neighbourly gestures and acts. We hear of refugees welcomed into new communities, of people supported by their neighbours when they've fallen on hard times, and of children who owe their lives to the actions of quick-thinking neighbours.

"Neighbour Day serves as a celebration of neighbourly values and encourages all Australians to build better relationships with the people who live around us, especially the vulnerable and elderly."

Latest research paints a confronting picture of the loneliness epidemic in Australia, with one in 10 people lacking social support or connection and one in six are experiencing emotional loneliness. While many people associate loneliness with the elderly, that's not always the case, according to Mr Tebbey.

"Loneliness doesn't discriminate. It affects people of different ages, backgrounds, and even those who are seemingly surrounded by people in their day-to-day lives," he said.

"It's an issue that's of immense social significance and something we're now seeing rise to the attention of politicians, celebrities and thought leaders across the country.

"We know that people with strong social networks are healthier both physically and mentally. Conversely, those who are disconnected from these networks often experience poor physical health, poor socio-economic outcomes, social anxiety, and poor mental health.

"On March 31, we're asking all Australians to reach out to the vulnerable and lonely members of their community to create a connection, even if it's through a small gesture."

For more information on Neighbour Day 2019, or to register a community event visit www.neighbourday.org. To learn more about the day's history and significance check out the [Neighbour Day FAQs](#) and for ways to make every day more like Neighbour Day read the [Neighbour Day 2019 Very Neighbourly Tips](#).

<ENDS>

Relationships Australia provides professional relationship support services throughout Australia. We are a not-for-profit, non-aligned, community-based organisation with partial funding from the Federal, State and Local Governments. Relationships Australia operates Australia-wide.

How to get involved with Neighbour Day 2019

We encourage you to get involved in Neighbour Day on Sunday 31 March 2019 or any day that suits your community.

If you're hosting an event:

[Register](#) to access free material to help you organise a successful Neighbour Day event – including posters, invitations, labels, flyers and helpful tips.

If you're attending an event:

Share your stories and photos with us via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#).

On Social Media:

- Share a message of why you think knowing your neighbours is important.
- Share a message of why you think social connection is important.
- Use the hashtag #NeighbourDay
- Download our [Neighbour Day selfie sign](#) take a photo with it, and share the photo with us on our social media networks.

<ENDS>