

## Parliament House Gets Neighbourly!

The National House of Parliament today hosted the launch of Neighbour Day, Australia's annual celebration of community. The event was attended by the Minister for Social Services, the Honourable Scott Morrison MP, Federal Parliamentarians, family and community support organisations and Relationships Australia staff. Neighbour Day celebrations will be held across the country on Sunday 29 March 2015.

"We're really excited to have launched Neighbour Day in our national House and delighted that so many people could be there to hear about the significant benefits of establishing local connections," Mat Rowell, Chair of the Relationships Australia Board said.

Neighbour Day Ambassadors able to attend the launch included Natalie Ahmat, presenter of National Indigenous Television News; Costa Georgiadis, host of Gardening Australia and Andrew Heslop, Founder of Neighbour Day.

Neighbour Day Ambassadors who sent goodwill messages for the launch included Fred Chaney, the 2014 Senior Australian of the Year; Julie Goodwin, Australian cook and winner of the inaugural season of MasterChef; and Nick Duigan, co-host of Hook, Line and Sinker on the Seven Network and Fox Sports.

"Neighbour Day is our annual reminder of the importance of getting to know your neighbours. Good relationships with neighbours can and does change communities and can make a real difference to people's wellbeing," Mr Rowell said. "Research has shown that people living in well-connected neighbourhoods are better equipped to face and recover from emergencies or natural disasters than residents in other communities.

Now in its twelfth year, this year's Neighbour Day on 29 March is shaping up to be an exciting celebration of community. All over Australia neighbours, local councils, businesses, and community groups are organising barbeques, street parties, morning teas and community gatherings in an effort to get to know the people around them.

Neighbour Day was founded in Melbourne in March 2003 by Andrew Heslop after the remains of an elderly woman, Elsie Brown were found inside her suburban home. Andrew Heslop is a community activist, social commentator and well known Australian. Andrew suggested a 'National Check on Your Neighbour Day' in a Letter to the Editor of The Melbourne Age in 2003.

In January 2014 Andrew handed responsibility for Neighbour Day to Relationships Australia to build and grow.

... / 2

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The five principal aims of Neighbour Day are to:

- Strengthen communities and build better relationships with the people who live around us.
- Create safer, healthier and more vibrant suburbs and towns.
- Promote tolerance, respect and understanding.
- Break down community barriers.
- Protect the elderly, the vulnerable and the disadvantaged.

The Neighbour Day website ([neighbourday.org](http://neighbourday.org)) includes all the information needed to get involved in the Day and to register an event. The *Tell Us Your Story* competition encourages people to submit a 500 word story about a great neighbour or an extraordinary neighbourly act. To enter go to [neighbourday.org](http://neighbourday.org) and be in the running to win cash prizes.

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

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#### **About Relationships Australia**

Relationships Australia is a leading provider of relationship support services for children, adults, families and communities. We are a community-based, not-for-profit Australian organisation with no religious affiliations. Services and programs are provided from more than 110 centres nationally by our 2,000 staff.

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