



Relationships Australia.



neighbour day

Evaluating the impact of Neighbour Day on the community

Final Report

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With special thanks to all Neighbour Day hosts and attendees who supported this research project.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Key findings	4
Evaluation Summary	5
Key recommendations	6
Project background.....	7
Method	7
Purpose	7
Participants.....	7
Table 1: Participant Demographics	8
Table 2: Summary of Neighbour Day events hosted by participants.....	9
Data collection and analysis	9
The lived experience of Neighbour Day.....	10
How do people hear about Neighbour Day?.....	10
Why do people host a Neighbour Day?	10
Why do people attend a Neighbour Day?.....	11
Who hosts Neighbour Day events?	12
Who attends Neighbour Day events?	12
What happens at a Neighbour Day event?	13
Setting the right tone	14
Food	14
Activities.....	14
Challenging weather	15
Council support.....	15
The effect of Neighbour Day have on the community	15
Social cohesion	15
From little things, more things grow.....	16
Perseverance is key.....	17
Qualitative evaluation.....	18
Output effectiveness.....	18
Media	18
Resources to support events	18
Merchandise and competitions	19
Short-term outcomes.....	19
1. Increased knowledge and awareness of Relationships Australia as the home of Neighbour Day	19
2. Increased knowledge and awareness of Neighbour Day	19

3. Increased support of Neighbour Day from individuals and organisations	20
5. Increased confidence in the community in hosting a Neighbour Day event.....	20
Medium-term outcomes.....	20
1. Increased contact between neighbours and community participation	20
4. Increased capacity in hosting events (less input required over time)	20
Long-term outcomes.....	20
1. Increased social capital.....	20
2. Social inclusion.....	21
4. Neighbour day campaign is sustainable.....	22
Recommendations.....	22
Limitations.....	23
Appendix A: Neighbour Day campaign outcomes.....	24
Appendix B: Interview Questions	25

Executive Summary

Neighbour Day is a grass roots community development program that was founded by Andrew Heslop in 2003. The aim of Neighbour Day is to encourage people to connect with their neighbours and communities. Relationships Australia has operated as the backbone organisation for Neighbour Day since 2014.

This research was commissioned by Relationships Australia National to supplement the existing evaluation with a qualitative account of the lived experience of hosting and attending Neighbour Day.

Twenty-two hosts and four attendees of Neighbour Day 2018, from around Australia, completed a short telephone interview with a researcher from Swinburne University of Technology. The researcher then identified common concepts and themes from these transcribed interviews. Due to the low number of Neighbour Day event attendees interviewed, the findings of the project focus primarily on the host experience of Neighbour Day.

Key findings

Neighbour Day events are as diverse as their hosts and attendees. From event advertising approaches, to location, timing and event activities, the key theme that emerged from participants was that the event should be adapted to the local neighbourhood context.

- Neighbour day hosts, attendees and events are as diverse as the general population. What unites them is a shared desire to create, deepen or renew relationships with neighbours.
- Neighbour Day hosts chose Neighbour Day as it provides additional structure, recognition, and legitimacy to their existing neighbourhood events.
- Neighbour Day attendees valued their community as much as hosts, but lacked capacity (due to finances, age, ill health, work or family commitments) to host events or seek new community activities.
- The main challenge for hosts in organising Neighbour Day events was the unpredictability of the March weather.
- The most immediate effects of Neighbour Day reported by participants were creating new relationships, renewing past relationships, and deepening existing relationships. With continued interaction, these relationships often led to increased neighbourhood trust which in turn led to neighbours experiencing a greater sense of safety in their neighbourhood, and offering support to each other.
- Neighbour Day events often led to people joining existing community groups, or organising their own groups and events.
- Ongoing Neighbour Day events developed a sense of community ownership. This reduced the effort required from a host to organise the event, and ensured the sustainability of the event if the original host left the area or stepped down as an organiser.
- The support, or lack of support, from local councils was a key determining factor for hosts when deciding to re-host a Neighbour Day event and whether to expand the event to include a larger area.

Evaluation Summary

Outcome	Level of evidence
Short-term outcomes	
1. Increased knowledge and awareness of Relationships Australia as the home of Neighbour Day	No evidence
2. Increased knowledge and awareness of Neighbour Day and its relationships to individual, family and community wellbeing	Moderate
3. Increased support of Neighbour Day from individuals and organisations	Moderate but highly variable across sites
4. Increased media engagement	Not assessed
5. Increased confidence in the community in hosting a Neighbour Day event	Moderate
6. Stakeholder needs are understood	Not assessed
7. Neighbour day is aligned with current and future business	Not assessed
8. Internal and external champions knowledgeable and supported to facilitate Neighbour Day engagement	Not assessed
Medium-term outcomes	
1. Increased contact between neighbours and community participation	Strong
2. Increased commitment of the Relationships Australia federation to Neighbour Day	Not assessed
3. Increased in-kind and financial support from external stakeholders	Not assessed
4. Increased capacity in hosting events (less input required over time)	Moderate
5. Strategic relationships developed with relevant organisations as a result of Neighbour Day	Not assessed
Long-term outcomes	
1. Increased social capital	Moderate
2. Social inclusion	Limited
3. Improved physical and mental wellbeing	No evidence
4. Neighbour day campaign is sustainable	Limited

Key recommendations

Based on the findings, we recommend the following priorities for Neighbour Day 2019/20.

1. A continued effort to increase media attention for Neighbour Day.

Increased awareness at a national level will decrease the amount of advertising effort required from hosts and will also increase the likelihood of individuals attending their local events. This overall reduction of the host burden will likely contribute to an increase in Neighbour Day events in the short term, and Neighbour Day sustainability in the long term.

2. A focus on developing relationships with local councils throughout Australia.

Councils were identified as one of the major facilitators and barriers when it came to organising Neighbour day events. They also played a key role in the branding, or lack of branding, of Neighbour Day events. Working with local councils also aligns with participant feedback about their desire to tailor Neighbour Day events to their local context. Increasing Neighbour Day awareness and buy-in at a council level can provide a low-cost method (through the use of existing programs and staff) to increase the reach of Neighbour Day and increase the support provided to individual hosts.

3. Learning more about Neighbour Day attendees.

Neighbour Day hosts are already highly involved in their communities, making it difficult to determine what impact the Neighbour Day event has on their lives. It is likely that the greatest effects of Neighbour Day on social capital, social inclusion and wellbeing are to be found in the changes experienced by attendees. Attendee awareness and recognition of Neighbour Day will also be key to creating a coherent national identity for the event.

Project background

Neighbour Day is a grass roots community development program that was founded by Andrew Heslop in 2003. The aim of Neighbour Day is to encourage people to connect with their neighbours and communities. Relationships Australia has operated as the backbone organisation for Neighbour Day since 2014.

As the backbone organisation, Relationships Australia provides operational and stakeholder support; communications materials and tools; client and stakeholder management systems; funding, governance and leadership; policy and research; and workplace health and safety standards. The 2018 Neighbour Day theme was: “It takes a neighbourhood to raise a child”.

This research was commissioned by Relationships Australia National to supplement the existing evaluation with a qualitative account of the lived experience of hosting and attending Neighbour Day.

Method

Purpose

The study had two aims:

1. To explore the lived experience of hosts and attendees of Neighbour Day 2018. Specifically, we wanted to understand:
 - a. The motivation of people to attend or host Neighbour Day events
 - b. Personal experiences of Neighbour Day events
 - c. The personal and community impact of Neighbour Day
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of Neighbour Day 2018 against the Neighbour Day campaign outcomes (see Appendix A).

Participants

Twenty-two hosts and four attendees of Neighbour Day 2018 were recruited for the study. A summary of participant demographics is provided in Table 1. Twenty Neighbour Day events were discussed in the study. A summary of the events is provided in Table 2.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Variable		<i>n</i> (%)	
		Hosts	Attendees
Gender	Female	14 (66.7)	4 (100.0)
	Male	7 (33.3)	-
Age	30-39	1 (25.0)	1 (25.0)
	40-49	7 (33.3)	
	50-59	6 (27.3)	1 (25.0)
	60-69	5 (22.7)	
	70+	2 (9.1)	1 (25.0)
	Missing	1 (0.5)	1 (25.0)
Ethnicity	Caucasian	21 (95.5)	4 (100.0)
	Other	1 (0.5)	
Household type	Living alone	2 (9.1)	
	Couple, no children	9 (40.9)	2 (50.0)
	Couple, with children	11 (50.0)	
	Single, with children		1 (25.0)
	Missing		1 (25.0)
Years living at current address	< 5 years	5 (22.7)	1 (25.0)
	5-9 years	5 (22.7)	1 (25.0)
	10-19 years	7 (33.3)	
	20-29 years	3 (13.6)	
	>30 years	2 (9.1)	2 (50.0)
First year involved with Neighbour Day	2018	10 (45.5)	4 (100.0)
	2017	2 (9.1)	
	2016	2 (9.1)	
	2013/14	3 (13.6)	
	2012	2 (9.1)	
	2011	1 (4.6)	
	Missing	2 (9.1)	

Table 2: Summary of Neighbour Day events hosted by participants

Variable		<i>n</i> (%)
State	ACT	1 (5.0)
	QLD	6 (30.0)
	NSW	2 (10.0)
	NT	1 (5.0)
	SA	3 (15.0)
	Tas	3 (15.0)
	Vic	3 (15.0)
	WA	1 (5.0)
Remoteness (based on ASGS Remoteness Structure)	Major City	12 (60.0)
	Inner Regional	7 (35.0)
	Outer Regional	-
	Remote	1 (5.0)
	Very Remote	-
Socio-Economic status (measured by Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage Quintile)	Most disadvantaged (Q1)	2 (10.0)
	Q2	2 (10.0)
	Q3	3 (15.0)
	Q4	5 (25.0)
	Most advantaged (Q5)	8 (40.0)
Venue	Local park or common area	7 (46.7)
	Own home (inside or outside)	6 (40.0)
	Croquet Club	1 (6.7)
	Local library	1 (6.7)
	Missing	5
Event size	<50	6 (46.2)
	50-100	6 (46.2)
	>100	1 (7.7)
	Missing	7

Data collection and analysis

Participants completed a short 10-25 minute telephone interview with a researcher from Swinburne University of Technology. A copy of interview questions is provided in Appendix B. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The researcher then identified common concepts and themes from the transcribed interviews. Due to the low number of Neighbour Day event attendees interviewed, the findings of the project focus primarily on the host experience of Neighbour Day.

The results are presented in two sections. The first section outlines the lived experience of Neighbour Day 2018 as described by the study participants. The second section then compares this information against the listed intended outputs and outcomes of the Neighbour Day campaign to provide an evaluation of Neighbour Day 2018.

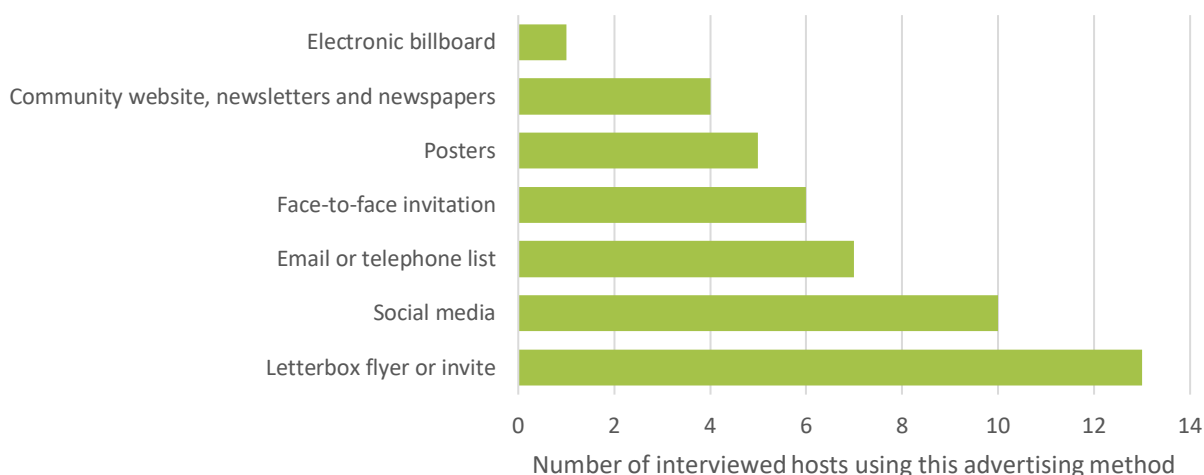
The lived experience of Neighbour Day

How do people hear about Neighbour Day?

The majority of hosts reported hearing about Neighbour Day through word of mouth (7 hosts), local media (6 hosts) or internet posts (4 hosts). Interestingly, none of the hosts reported attending a Neighbour Day event prior to becoming a host.

Host reported using multiple ways to advertise their Neighbour Day event, e.g. *“We advertised it by leaflets and by email and on our Facebook website and by word of mouth.”*

Preferred event advertising methods



Six hosts made use of the advertising materials provided by the Neighbour Day website, however most of these hosts reported altering it to suit their neighbourhood.

“I think I used the little template [the Neighbour Day website] had, used it as a bit of a basic layout. We redid it ourselves on the computer and then just printed off a whole lot of sheets. Then we just stuck magnets on the back, so people can at least stick it on their fridge, try and remember it.”

Why do people host a Neighbour Day?

Participants seemed to choose Neighbour Day, as a specific event, because it **aligned with the aims of their existing activities**, and provided additional structure, recognition, and legitimacy to their existing neighbourhood social events.

“When I saw this Neighbour Day, I thought, ‘This is a perfect date to swing off and make it a date that we can all remember and start making that our date.’”

“It’s an impartial, respected reason for bringing people together. That makes it much easier than any one person trying to have to bring people together for their own... subjective little party.”

Another key reason to host Neighbour Day, reported by 13 hosts, was the **desire to foster neighbourhood support networks** through creating new social connections, or deepening existing ones.

“For me personally I feel there’s great value in engaging not just for me but for communities to be engaged, to be connected, so we can create safer communities, healthier communities. We can address

things like loneliness and depression and social isolation through connecting with people who are around us....I still think that there is something really important about connecting with those that live around us. And looking out for those that maybe are slipping through the cracks and not connected."

"I was very conscious of knowing a few neighbours but most neighbours not having much to do with you, might wave to them as they drove off and say g'day but not a lot deeper. I thought here's an opportunity to engage at a deeper level with our neighbours and do something around Neighbour Day."

Eight hosts also mentioned being motivated by a **sense of social responsibility**, often driven by their childhood experience of community.

"I guess we have a fairly strong ethic of giving back and that's important to us. We think that building community ultimately pays dividends. It's good for everybody's concerns."

"Because it's just the way we've grown up. I suppose I've grown up in country areas so it's a good way of living, looking out for each other and being associated with another small group that you know."

Community group and council hosts also reported being motivated by a **desire to promote community groups and activities**, and to support the Neighbour Day movement more generally.

"As President of the community garden, I thought that it was a good way to get more people in the neighbourhood to know about it and to give them the opportunity to turn up, opportunity to be a part of it".

"I liked the idea of growing the awareness and focus on this. I figured the more support Neighbour Day got, the better."

Why do people attend a Neighbour Day?

Attendees reported being motivated by an **ongoing desire to engage in their local community**. For one attendee, this desire was driven by a current sense of isolation but the other attendees, just like the hosts, seemed to already be engaged in their community.

"The fact that I was isolated. I've really got nobody that I know or in my family or anyone, so I was trying to meet neighbours."

"I try to be a part of the community. I do try and attend these things with my little girl. It's good for her to see and hear, you know, like the indigenous speaker or like hearing about the community orchard."

It seemed that the main difference between attendees and hosts was not a desire for community engagement, but rather their **capacity** to get involved.

"There's nothing out there. The things that are available aren't affordable or they're just not close enough or I can't get to them, keeping in mind I've got three children."

"I said, 'When are we going to have another meeting?' They said, 'Oh we'll have to do another one next year.' I said, 'Wait until then? What a shame.' It's not ever me that arranges it. I just know that somebody is beautiful around the area that will suddenly say, 'When do we get together again?'"

Who hosts Neighbour Day events?

Neighbour Day hosts are diverse. In this study, twelve events were hosted by individuals or groups of neighbours, five events were hosted by community organisations (i.e. Neighbourhood Watch, Lions Club, Community Garden, Friends of the Neighbourhood) and three events were hosted by councils. For ten of the hosts interviewed, 2018 was their first year hosting an event. Other hosts had been involved with Neighbour Day for up to 8 years (average: 3 years).

Individual hosts were mainly:

- White (13 out of 22)
- Female (9 out of 22)
- Living as a couple with children (6 hosts out of 22), or without children (6 hosts out of 22)
- Middle-aged (range 32-68 years, average 52 years)
- Long-term residents of the neighbourhood (range 1-40 years, average 12 years)

Participants who were asked why they thought people with this profile were more likely to host events, attributed it primarily to their increased capacity. That is *“They have the confidence, the time, the maturity, the connections and resources.”* Three participants also commented on the increased social engagement of women.

Who attends Neighbour Day events?

Hosts described a broad range of attendees, of different ages, ethnicities, and from different areas of their suburb. However, children accounted for a significant amount of the attendance at many of the events. This is likely due to the 2018 theme, *“It takes a neighbourhood to raise a child”*.

“We had quite a mix of cultures. We had a number of people from Asian backgrounds, a large number of Aboriginal people.”

“I was pleased that we got the numbers that we did and the stretch of people that we did from the various areas. They weren't all from a particular area in [our suburb], they were from a variety of different streets.”

“There was some people in our street that came and they were in their mid to late eighties. There were few around that vintage and then it sort of dropped down probably to the ones with the younger children. Yes, there was a good range of ages.”

What happens at a Neighbour Day event?

Below we provide a snapshot of some of the diverse ways to celebrate Neighbour Day.

A council event

This is a small community library. The council sent us all posters to put up because they wanted to encourage the community to hold events. I think they have farm vouchers they were giving away too. I did notices on the board, a bit of social media, and using the groups that use the library, so that was a good source of promotion....We had morning tea. I think it was 10-12 on a Saturday. I invited all the other community groups, like there's a Men's Shed and the golf club and the art gallery, the swimming club or whatever. I just sent out messages there, people just came. We had a chat. It wasn't a formal thing, it was come in, have a chat, to meet some people....It's quite a bit of work but it's worthwhile. I thought I'd have it every second year only because then the other years you hold something else so it's more special.

A constantly growing event

Our first Neighbour Day was March 2014. We had a barbecue in our front yard and we had people from 9-10 houses. It was a nice, casual event. People who'd never walked up our end of the street were there. Since then different families have hosted. We've tried afternoon teas, we've had a barbecue and we've settled on morning teas. We have an informal committee that's probably 3-5 families that have been involved over the years. We have someone develop a flyer and we try and cover the houses in our neighbourhood with a letter box drop. It's been nice to keep breaking the ice, particularly with new families in the street. The last couple of years we made an effort of having lots of kids things to do. This year someone came up with the idea of having a swapping and sharing thing, so whether it's books or clothes. Someone took responsibility for arranging that on the day in our park. Something a little bit different.

A new community group event

We arranged to have a croquet day at a croquet club. Free tea and coffee and a little bit of music and free tuition on how to play croquet. We advertised it by leaflets and by email and on our Facebook website and by word of mouth... It was a bit disappointing, really. I thought, "It would be nice to get 80-100 people." I suppose we ended up getting 50-60 all day. We charged \$2 entry and that went to Neighborhood Watch... We asked for contact details, we talked about local issues, development issues, crime issues and road widening issues when and where appropriate. Some people got involved in local politics. We had thought of doing something a little bit more upmarket like finger food or plates of sushi and charging or having a champagne breakfast. Lots of crazy ideas have been thrown up and never come to fruition. But you know we're always thinking. We are definitely planning to have Neighbor Day there again in March next year.

A small neighbourhood gathering

Myself and my wife and this other couple who have a carport organize it. To advertise I send out an email update and for the rest put a note in the letterbox saying it's coming up. I used to get people to R.S.V.P. but I don't bother anymore. We get fairly consistent numbers and it doesn't make any difference. We previously had it in the park which is in the middle of the Place. For the last few years the day that we chose ended up being too hot or too wet so we're having it in somebody's carport. Between the two couples we provide all the tables, chairs, urns, tea and coffee and odd or even-numbered houses bring a plate to share. People just come at a particular time but in reality, people drift in a bit later or leave a bit earlier. We thought about having it more often but I think once a year suits us. It's not a burden and it's just an opportunity to renew acquaintances and make sure we keep in touch.

Despite the diversity, some key commonalities emerged from the interviews.

Setting the right tone

It was important to hosts that the event was adapted to the local community and provided an **inclusive, informal, and friendly environment** for social interactions among neighbours.

“We do letter box drop a fair stretch, we’ve got a discrete neighbourhood, discrete suburbs and we pretty much try and make sure everyone is invited.”

“I just sent out messages there, people just came. We had a chat. It wasn’t a formal thing, it was come in, have a chat, to meet some people.”

“I love them [every Neighbour Day event] all. It’s a funny thing to say but I’m overcome by the fact they’re all so good. They all talk to each other. There’s no dirt, there’s no nastiness. It’s all just everyone helping each other.”

Some hosts reported actively **facilitating social interactions**, but this was generally not necessary.

“There was a few introductions, but as I said there was the sausage sizzle, so by the time people went out and stood in the queue and got their sausage they were mixing together.”

Food

The universal feature of Neighbour Day events was **food**, with hosts mainly organising barbecues, afternoon teas, and morning teas. Two hosts organised smoothie bikes for their events, while one host organised campfire damper-making and another hosted a neighbourhood dinner. Food was generally brought by attendees, funded by the council, donated by a community organisation, or provided by the host.

“I said to everyone, ‘Everyone bring a plate.’ And we ended up with way too much food.”

“[The] Council, they were promoting it again. They said that if people wrote in and spoke about what they were planning to do, they were going to be giving out some barbecue packs. We did that, and we were successful in winning a barbecue pack.”

“We borrowed a smoothie bike from one of the schools. Yes, that was quite nice because we sourced some locally donated fruit and things like that. Fruits from people’s gardens and mint from people’s gardens.”

“I usually do the baking, I have a little piggy bank every now and again that I might put on the table or they’ll just say, ‘Look, here’s some money towards ingredients.’”

Activities

Some hosts, especially community group and council hosts, also organised **Neighbour Day activities**. These included community group stalls and presentations, free henna, music, a book and clothes swap-meet, games for children and adults, croquet, community art projects and a neighbourhood scavenger hunt.

“Four or five different groups turned up. There was a local Bushland group that had a stall and a tent. We had the Lions Club, local councillor, the state MP, we had the federal MP so we had all three levels of politicians. Then there’s actually a musical theatre company who had a rehearsal room in the park. They actually put on a little extract from their forth-coming production, South Pacific.”

“We put together a little scavenger hunt, so the idea was to have families teaming up and going looking around the neighbourhood. There was a bit of a focus on... points of interest like which house has a mosaic dragon on its letterbox and stuff. But also, things like what's the speed limit at this point and how many meters from the playground you have to be before you can smoke.”

Experienced hosts reported **rotating these activities** to maintain engagement with the event and to encourage others to contribute to the event organisation.

“This year someone came up with the idea of having a swapping and sharing thing, so whether it's books or clothes. Someone took responsibility for arranging that on the day in our park. Something a little bit different.”

Challenging weather

One of the key challenges mentioned by participants was the unpredictability of March weather. Some participants reported having to move the location because the unpredictable weather prevented them from hosting the event in an outdoor space.

“On the day we ended up changing a few things because it was meant to rain, and then it wasn't, then it was windy, and it wasn't. We were really unsure of how exactly things would play out because the weather was just being so unpredictable.”

“We usually organize that in our local barbecue area but because the weather was very threatening, one of our neighbours agreed to move it to their house”

Council support

One of the most important themes that emerged from the interview was the effect on hosts and events of the support, or lack of support, from **local councils**.

“I really want to continue but the thing, I just discussed this with the council itself, I had very little funding from them. Even to book or hold an event in a council-owned reserve you have to pay \$150. That's the problem. I've been doing it but I can't continue doing things out of my pocket.”

“[The Council] don't want to know because they can't support it because of all the barriers that they create through their procedures. Then I'll have to have third party insurance. I'll have to have a traffic management plan. Now in Queensland, they're introducing, we have to have water barriers, you know those plastic things that they fill with water, that's about \$500, \$600, just for one event, and it's a lot of paperwork.”

“At first, I was worried that it would grow too much and I would be financially disadvantaged but the money [from the council] just helps you feel like you could invite more than just your closest five neighbours. That's how I think it enabled it to grow so much.”

The effect of Neighbour Day have on the community

Social cohesion

The most immediate effects of Neighbour Day reported by participants were **creating new relationships**, **renewing past relationships**, and **deepening existing relationships**. There was also evidence that these relationships persisted after the event.

“It actually opened up that circle and we've had some people from [the] other street come along to our little morning tea that we put on. I feel like we've met more people. It's nice to feel that you know more people in your immediate area.”

“[At our Neighbour Day] there were two young moms with young-ish kids that haven't met before. One was in the middle of the street, one was up the end. For almost a year [after Neighbour Day], they met up every Sunday and sat in front of their houses and watched the kids play. It was nice seeing that.”

“One of the very nice thing about it is that right now if we go on a walk I always love that we really don't need any more social lives just go around neighbourhoods and sort of chat with the people that we meet, so that's very nice. We also gained a couple of friends which we see more often.”

These strengthening relationships often led to increased **neighbourhood trust** which in turn led to neighbours experiencing a **greater sense of safety** in their neighbourhood, and **offering support** to each other.

“The neighbours leave their kids with us when they just go to the shop instead of telling them to get in the car and come with them and interrupting their play. That only happens because of the trust that's built between the parents. That only happens as a result of these Neighbour Days that we do.”

“It's important because it's a safer area if you know everyone in the area. You can look after anyone's property and children, if you can see an animal that's escaped and know where it belongs. Where I used to live before, our dog escaped and some neighbours had got it and looked after it for me and just things like that. Just helping each other out, just being friendly. It's the only important thing.”

From little things, more things grow

Many of the hosts reported that since hosting a few Neighbour Day events, other **neighbours have started to organise their own community events**, or have offered to help with the existing events.

“It's sort of grown a bit really with birthday parties and poetry gatherings and cycling and singing.”

“Neighbour Day was a bit of a kick-off point for some more stuff. Not just the physical changes in the park like the stuff that we've built in there. It included, besides the mural, there's also a yarnning circle. It also, was a kick-off point for me to run an event called hobby exchange.”

“Well, I suppose I started off organizing them but now, a couple of the people have retired. They've got more time and they actually go on walks together. They're the ones that wanted to start a Christmas party up. So I suppose I gave them a little bit of confidence having done Neighbour Day to start with as well, knowing what it's like.”

This is important for some Neighbour Day hosts as they wanted neighbourhood events to be community-owned rather than associated with a single organiser.

“I'm accepted as being one of the [neighbourhood] organizers and I am very reticent about being kingpin, about being the person who bosses everyone around because that will alienate as many people as it interests.”

Participants also provided examples of how Neighbour Day has led to more people **joining existing community groups**.

"We encouraged a few neighbourhood kids whose parents are saying 'they're 14 and getting up to no good', I say, 'Why don't they come to the surf club? You get first aid training and that sort of thing.' It goes both ways."

"Out of those people who came [to Neighbour Day], they all joined the garden which was great for us. Since then, others from there have joined."

Perseverance is key

Some new hosts reported disappointment at the low turn-out for their first event, especially given the effort they put into the event. However, more experienced hosts reported that over time, their events have increased in attendance and have required less organisation.

"In the beginning I remember the kids saying to me, "Mum, that was a bit awkward." Now, I don't need to do much at all. Everybody knows what we're doing and goes with the flow."

"There's probably only a couple of families currently that are not engaged in anything and some took a few years to warm up to it."

These improvements reported by experienced hosts are likely due to a combination of **increased community ownership of the event** and **hosts learning from previous events**.

"It's got a life of its own. These people enjoy it enough so somebody would take turns doing it, I think."

"We had it in the park which is in the middle of the place... and then we had the carport as a backup... We had it in our house one year and my wife decided that wasn't acceptable because...it was wet and it became a bit muddy from kids running through from inside to outside. We decided that wasn't quite the best way. This other carport has been doing it [since]."

However, experienced hosts still reported needing to **regularly host events** to maintain existing relationships and welcome new residents into the community.

"Different people have come that may not have been to events before, it's been nice to keep breaking the ice and particularly with new families in the street which happens a bit."

"Most people basically don't talk to each other, then don't know each other. Our event started the discussion going. We probably still have a long way. Because basically changing people's behaviour is probably not that easy, but our neighbourhood is getting much more and more together, and we're organizing more and more things."

Qualitative evaluation

Given the cross-sectional nature of the study, and that 50% of interviewed hosts reported 2018 as their first Neighbour Day event, it is difficult to determine many of the Neighbour Day campaign outcomes. However, there is evidence in the qualitative analysis to support some of these outcomes.

Output effectiveness

The main intended outputs of the Relationships Australian Neighbour Day campaign include: social and mainstream media; resources to support events; launches, seminars, presentations; Neighbour Day events; connections with stakeholders; merchandise; competitions; reports, newsletters; research and evaluation.

Media

One of the greatest area mentioned by participants in which they would like more support from Relationship Australia was a continued effort to raise awareness of Neighbour Day through media communications.

“Look, if there's anything Neighbour Day nationally can do to create more awareness and inspire people to get involved.”

The need for further work in this area is suggested by the fact that 50% of the new hosts interviewed reported having learned about Neighbour Day through word of mouth rather than via the media.

Resources to support events

Hosts generally reported satisfaction with the level of **support currently provided by Relationship Australia**.

“I think the resources are great and we use them as we need.”

“I heavily use the information which is posted on Facebook and website, on the day-to-day publishing information. I think that for me it's really good to think of how to keep people informed of benefits of knowing your neighbours. There are a lot of stories which I quite often share or republish.”

However, one host reported difficulty navigating the website to access resources efficiently.

“The Neighbour Day organization had a whole lot of online material that we could use. I found them a little bit hard to access. I could go in and follow the links and you've got all these icons and they're not described very well. You've got to actually click on them and wait for them to open and then decide whether we're going to use... It took me a little while to wade through them and I got distracted and had to go back and then I couldn't find the one I wanted, so I had to click on them again and open it again.”

Another reported a lack of flexibility in the provided resources.

“I didn't use a lot of the stuff on the website. It wasn't quite relevant. It has a theme and the theme's not ours. I think next year the theme's something about loneliness or seniors or something, isn't it? I don't want to focus on that. I think if there'd been something simpler, just simply to say, “It's Neighbours Day” and then there's just space underneath it. It also tended to be too wordy.”

Some of the hosts' suggestions about potential further support from Relationship Australia also suggested a lack of familiarity with some of the resources. Indeed, two hosts reported not having accessed the Neighbour Day website at all.

"I think being able to tap into some expert on different things would be a benefit to the neighbourhood. Something like a theme every year to work with."

"I think, probably, one thing they could maybe do is have a rotation maybe of themes. One year it might be, collection and recycling of tin cans. Just maybe suggest some things that there are trigger points which are useful. It's shopping, gardening, tidying up, taking stuff to the tip."

"I don't know if they can run some sort of thing where people could post a short video, even a one-minute neighbourly message from each event. Have it on a Facebook page or something like that."

None of the hosts, when asked, reported engaging with Neighbour Day on twitter.

Merchandise and competitions

Those participants that were aware of the merchandise and competitions reported overwhelming positive experiences. It seemed that while all hosts were already dedicated to hosting future events, the small prizes provided highly-valued recognition of their efforts.

"We were very lucky because they wanted feedback as to how our Neighbours Day went. I just quickly did a bit of a spiel. Then, we ended up by winning the Victorian Prize for us as a group, which was amazing. Not that we did anything super-duper special, it was just that, I guess, I entered it and they liked it that we've done it to so many people in the slightly wider community, so we won."

"I contacted Neighbour Day and they generously gave us some giveaways and some pens and pencils and some stuff for the kids and some other collateral. All that stuff was provided by Neighbour Day organization, badges and so forth and that was useful."

"In Neighbour Day, council won a small prize of I think \$1,000. We just submitted our paperwork about what we'd done and then they gave us \$1,000. We went on to do another amazing project... That was a lovely follow-on and it meant that we were able to expand on the concept of Neighbour Day. We're now looking at doing some similar projects. That was much appreciated."

Short-term outcomes

1. Increased knowledge and awareness of Relationships Australia as the home of Neighbour Day
Of the hosts interviewed, only 4 (15.4%) mentioned Relationships Australia or were aware of the organisation's link with Neighbour Day. Some hosts reported believing that their council was the group responsible for Neighbour Day. This suggests that more work is required to raise awareness of Relationships Australia as the home of Neighbour Day.

2. Increased knowledge and awareness of Neighbour Day

The increased rates of attendance reported by hosts, and the large number of new hosts included in this study suggest that knowledge and awareness of Neighbour Day is increasing.

3. Increased support of Neighbour Day from individuals and organisations

The large number of new hosts included in this study suggest that individual support for Neighbour Day is increasing. The support reported from community businesses, venues and in particular councils, also suggests increasing support from local organisations, although this was highly variable. Hosts reported [council support](#), in particular, as crucial in the host experience of Neighbour Day.

5. Increased confidence in the community in hosting a Neighbour Day event

All interviewed hosts reported that they planned to host a Neighbour Day event in 2019, suggesting some level of confidence in hosting future events. However, one new host commented on their desire for the same level of event support from Relationship Australia for their next event, suggesting a lack of increasing host confidence and capacity.

“I should think a consistency would be good. It would be handy to have the same level of support that we had in the first year.”

Medium-term outcomes

1. Increased contact between neighbours and community participation

The key themes of [social cohesion](#) and [from little things, more things grow](#) discussed previously support the assertion that Neighbour Day increases contact between neighbours and community participation.

The most immediate effects of Neighbour Day reported by participants were creating new relationships, renewing past relationships, and deepening existing relationships. There was also evidence that these relationships persisted after the event. Participants also provided examples of how Neighbour Day has led to more people joining existing community groups, or neighbours starting to organise their own community events.

4. Increased capacity in hosting events (less input required over time)

Based on the feedback provided by long-term hosts there is significant evidence of increased host capacity over time. This is likely due to a combination of [increased community ownership of the event and hosts learning from previous events](#).

However, two hosts also reported that they had unintentionally become “*the designated neighbourhood lady*”, which meant that other people were unwilling to organise similar social events.

Long-term outcomes

1. Increased social capital

The host interviews provided some evidence of [increasing social capital as a result of Neighbour Day, and other community activities](#). Some further examples include:

“I’ve been meeting someone with their kids at his place, at the pool, going swimming with them. He likes his facilities being used and I like someone else having a pool.”

“I know my next door neighbour. We’ve watched their house for them. Some neighbours up the road had more stones in their garden they didn’t need and they gave them to ones at the other end of the neighbourhood. One man got his bark delivered next to [another] house when it should have been his house. He had to move it all and there was heaps left and that got even to other neighbours. We’ve had a few pavers so we hand them on if they need them.”

The increased social capital has also led to some neighbourhoods collectively lobbying their local governments for new facilities and changes in their area.

“We've both spoken and met with our local government Alderman who is now being voted as the Lord Mayor of Hobart. A barbecue is going to be put in, we've got the doggy poo bags, we've got the bin bags, safety issues were going to be looked at in the area, they're considering looking at maybe the type of trees that have been established because the neighbours aren't really happy with the type of the trees.”

In one instance, a host's attempts to get to know their neighbours even saved his life:

“About five years ago, I had a cardiac arrest just before Christmas and I literally passed out on our back veranda. It was only the fact that my wife was there that saved me but she knew because we knew our neighbours. She knew the lady two doors down was an ICU nurse, gave her a ring and she came running out and took over CPR until the ambulance got here. Those two things; my wife being there at the moment it happened, and then our neighbour being just down the road. We had a phone number to call. It really reiterates how important neighbours are.”

2. Social inclusion

While [inclusivity was a key aim for Neighbour Day hosts](#), this was not always achieved. Key demographics that hosts reported were under-represented at their events included: residents living in rental properties and adult singles and couples without children.

“The only ones who don't come immediately are two rented houses and they don't seem to respond which is fine. I make a point of it on the invitation to say, ‘Whether you are a permanent resident or just renting you're more than welcome’ but I can understand if you just renting you don't have the same interest in getting together with everybody, necessarily.”

“A lot of stuff was aiming towards little children, which in this part of the world, it's actually quite an adult community. [We would like more] things for connecting us as adults rather than relying upon children as the connection.”

However, there was some evidence to suggest that isolated members of the community were being re-engaged in their communities through Neighbour Day.

“The kids could be down playing cricket, and there's a man down the bottom who doesn't have any children, but he'll come out and have a play with them. There's one neighbour that nobody had really seen before, and through different reasons they just, with work and life, they just hadn't really engaged with the other neighbours, been there 15 years, and I've notice they've been out and about a lot more, interacting with the neighbours.”

“This time we knew there was three kids diagonally across from us that would never come out. Their dad brought them out. Then as a result after that, the kids play all the time independently now.”

4. Neighbour day campaign is sustainable

There is some evidence that Neighbour Day is becoming more sustainable. The majority of hosts interviewed ($n=16$) reported requiring no financial or organisational support for their events.

Some hosts also reported encouraging others to host Neighbour Day events, suggesting the start of community ownership of the event.

“I will bet you that the Community Association will now have Neighbour Day. I bet you our new mayor will be supporting it so it's probably grown I think in Hobart. You'll see it grow.”

“I think it's a really good thing to do. I've even spoken to my sister who's just moved. We had a quick trip to Sydney and helped her move suburbs and I've been speaking to her about doing it because now she's in a different area. I don't know if she will, we shall see.”

However, as suggested above, the willingness of existing hosts to promote the event may not currently convert into the creation of new events. In fact one host reported that instead of hosting a new event, residents from a neighbouring area travel to her existing event.

Recommendations

Based on the findings outlined above, we recommend the following priorities for Neighbour Day 2019/20.

1. A continued effort to increase media attention for Neighbour Day.

Increased awareness at a national level will decrease the amount of advertising effort required from hosts and will also increase the likelihood of individuals attending their local events. This overall reduction of the host burden will likely contribute to an increase in Neighbour Day events in the short term, and Neighbour Day sustainability in the long term.

2. A focus on developing relationships with local councils throughout Australia.

Councils were identified as one of the major facilitators and barriers when it came to organising Neighbour day events. They also played a key role in the branding, or lack of branding, of Neighbour Day events. Working with local councils also aligns with participant feedback about their desire to tailor Neighbour Day events to their local context. Increasing Neighbour Day awareness and buy-in at a council level can provide a low-cost method (through the use of existing programs and staff) to increase the reach of Neighbour Day and increase the support provided to individual hosts.

3. Learning more about Neighbour Day attendees.

Neighbour Day hosts are already highly involved in their communities, making it difficult to determine what impact the Neighbour Day event has on their lives. It is likely that the greatest effects of Neighbour Day on social capital, social inclusion and wellbeing are to be found in the changes experienced by attendees. Attendee awareness and recognition of Neighbour Day will also be key to creating a coherent national identity for the event.

Limitations

The key limitation of this study was a lack of attendee participants despite a concerted social media, email and word-of-mouth campaign conducted over some months. Contributing factors to this low recruitment rate include: a significant time-delay between the event (March 2018) and the study commencing (October 2018); the current Neighbour Day registration strategy which collects host, not attendee contact details; and the variable naming of events held on Neighbour Day (i.e. attendees may not have been aware that they attended a “Neighbour Day” event). However, our findings that Neighbour Day hosts are already highly-engaged members of their community suggest that the key benefits of Neighbour Day may be felt more acutely by attendees, especially those who reported a limited capacity to seek out and participate in existing community activities. Hence future research on the lived experience of Neighbour Day attendees is vital to help understand the full impact of Neighbour Day on Australian communities.

A second limitation of the study is the representativeness of the host sample. Despite the concerted effort to recruit geographically, demographically and organisationally diverse participants, there are biases in the sample (see previous [participant demographics](#)). Based on the reported host registrations from the 2018 Neighbour Day Evaluation analysis, council hosts were over-represented in this sample (15% in this sample versus 4.6% of registrations), as were business hosts (0% in this sample versus 5% of registrations). However, the intent of this qualitative study was not to provide generalizable information, but rather to provide rich detail to supplement the existing quantitative evaluation program conducted by Relationships Australia.

Appendix A: Neighbour Day campaign outcomes

#	Short-term outcomes <i>(change in knowledge, skills, awareness and motivation)</i>	Medium-term outcomes <i>(Change in behaviour or practice)</i>	Long-term outcomes <i>(environmental, economic or social changes)</i>
1	Increased knowledge and awareness of Relationships Australia as the home of Neighbour Day	Increased contact between neighbours and community participation	Increased social capital
2	Increased knowledge and awareness of Neighbour Day and its relationships to individual, family and community wellbeing	Increased commitment of the Relationships Australia federation to Neighbour Day	Social inclusion
3	Increased support of Neighbour Day from individuals and organisations	Increased in-kind and financial support from external stakeholders	Improved physical and mental wellbeing
4	Increased media engagement	Increased capacity in hosting events (less input required over time)	Neighbour day campaign is sustainable.
5	Increased confidence in the community in hosting a Neighbour Day event	Strategic relationships developed with relevant organisations as a result of Neighbour Day	
6	Stakeholder needs are understood		
7	Neighbour day is aligned with current and future business		
8	Internal and external champions knowledgeable and supported to facilitate Neighbour Day engagement		

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Theme: Pre Neighbour Day awareness, motivation and expectations

1. How did you find out about Neighbour Day?
2. What motivated you to attend/host a Neighbour Day event?
3. What were your expectations before attending the event?

Theme: Experiences and evaluation of Neighbour Day

4. If a host: Can you tell me a little bit about your experience planning your event?
5. What was your experience of the Neighbour Day event?
6. How well did this meet your expectations? (probe for unexpected experiences)
7. What was your favourite thing about Neighbour Day?
8. What do you think could be improved for next time?

Theme: Neighbour Day impacts

9. What effect has attending this year's Neighbour Day have on your life since? (probe for changing social relationships with neighbours, community groups, household type)
10. What effect do you think Neighbour Day has on your neighbourhood/community? Why/How?

Theme: Research context

11. What role do neighbours/your local community play in your life? Probe for types of engagement/activities, making new friends, types of support offered, facilitators and barriers
12. What other community activities are you involved in? How does Neighbour Day fit in with your other community activities?

Theme: Future of Neighbour Day

13. Have you participated in Neighbour Day events previously?
 - a. If yes: In what capacity? For how many years? Has your experience of Neighbour Day changed over time?
14. Do you intend to participate in Neighbour Day in the future?
15. Do you have anything else you would like to share about Neighbour Day?