



Street by Street

— BRINGING NEIGHBOURS TOGETHER —



PARTICIPANT KIT

Helping people build better connections with neighbours,
so that more of us can feel a sense of community

www.streetbystreet.org.au



A project of the
Centre for Civil Society



An invitation to you.

Dear Neighbour – and for the moment I'm thinking of all of us in Australia as my neighbours,



I was lucky enough to live in a neighbourhood in Mt Nebo, just outside of Brisbane, Queensland, that felt like a community, where we knew each other, helped one another and had friends across the generations. We learned together, planted together, recycled together, had our say on what the community needed, created art, made music and sang together, kept the community hall in community hands, put on festivals and markets and celebrated together regularly. I haven't experienced that anywhere else and it leaves a gap in my life.

Most of us would like a sense of real community in our lives. The Street by Street project exists to help people create this through forming Street by Street Neighbour Groups. With this kit, and other supports, we're making it easy for you to build connections amongst neighbours and explore the many exciting possibilities those connections bring. We hope you will do some amazing things together and reap the benefits of living life surrounded by people you know and like.

This kit tells you about the Street by Street Project and includes examples of what neighbour groups can do. There is nothing new about neighbourhood groups and their ability to make a positive difference in our lives; all we are doing is encouraging this to happen everywhere and making it easier for those willing to convene a group.

This is a project of the Centre for Civil Society, a social policy and social innovation institute, (www.civilsociety.org.au). We wish to thank the many talented and committed people who have contributed to the project – community connectors, the project team and the reference group. We hope you get a lot out of being in your local neighbour group and that you encourage others anywhere in Australia to get in touch and start a neighbour group in their area.

Together, let's create a neighbourhood movement.

Feel free to contact me if you can help promote the project or for further information via irene@streetbystreet.org.au.

Yours in collaboration,

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This kit can be freely shared for community and educational (not for profit) purposes.

Disclaimer: The ideas and suggestions in this kit and on our website are examples only. Individuals are responsible for taking adequate safety precautions, obtaining relevant permissions and observing any relevant laws or regulations related to their activities. The Street by Street Project and the Centre for Civil Society take no responsibility for the activities of neighbour groups.



1. The Street by Street Project – Bringing Neighbours Together

- Turning streets into communities
- Fostering an Australia-wide network of neighbour groups.

The Street by Street Project is here to help people build better connections with neighbours, so that more of us can feel a sense of community. We'd like to see connecting with neighbours become the norm across Australia, and for people to feel happier, safer and more supported as a result.

2. Why do we need the Street by Street Project?

Research has proven that there are life-changing benefits of living in a connected community. Around the world and around Australia there are wonderful examples of communities coming together to create meaningful opportunities for sharing, laughing, learning, supporting and helping one another in their day to day lives. However, despite some outstanding exceptions, many Australians live in neighbourhoods that do not offer vibrant opportunities for neighbours to do things with and for each other, especially in cities.

3. How did it come about?

The Centre for Civil Society, since its establishment in 2007, has brought residents, social innovators, community builders and policy-makers together in several forums to explore how community life in local neighbourhoods can be re-invigorated on a large scale. This produced the Street by Street idea. In 2014 a Project Team and a Reference Group began turning a great idea into neighbour groups on the ground. Please note that Street by Street is not for profit and has no political or religious affiliations.

4. What is the nature of a Street by Street neighbour group?

**Welcoming *Informal *Independentl *Fun*

They are for neighbours that live close to each other, perhaps one long street or a handful of streets, not an entire suburb. Regular social activities are central for a sense of community to develop. All other activities are optional. You can propose ideas to your group.

One or preferably a few people take on the role of Community Connectors, doing some of the organising. Offers of help are generally appreciated. Many hands make light work.





Each local neighbourhood group is independent: it chooses its own activities and mode of operation. All groups, however, should welcome difference and diversity. We're not all the same and, precisely because of that, we can broaden our horizons, learn new things and have more stimulating conversations. Your neighbours may be different from you in age, gender, cultural background, language spoken, religion, political views, ability, sexual orientation, values and interests. We believe this is a plus, provided that we are considerate to others, respect different points of view (providing they are not harmful) and don't push our own views onto others.

We don't aim to get all who live in an area involved, as some people are not interested. We do aim to bring together those neighbours who do want to connect. Participants in a Street by Street Group are not volunteers, they are people in an informal relationship with their neighbours, as neighbours.

5. Why participate in a Street by Street Neighbour Group?

Many things become possible when there are rich connections amongst neighbours. As you get to know your neighbours through regular social gatherings, you discover great people who you never knew were there. Within walking distance, you might find people who share your interests - some may become friends. Kids may find new playmates. You might find people to give you a hand when you need it and people who would like to do things with you to improve your neighbourhood. You are likely to find satisfying ways of contributing to others and gain a sense that you really belong in this place.

The more people get involved, the more it feels like a community and not an area full of strangers. Depending on what your group decides to do together, you might find that you can live a more social, environmentally sustainable, healthier, safer and happier life.

Some people may not have been in the neighbourhood long or may not stay for long. It doesn't matter – we don't know the future but we can make the most of the present.

You may be asked to participate in evaluation studies so that we can discover what difference neighbourhood groups make and to learn from experience.





6. What could our Group do?

The only limit is your imagination:

- social activities so neighbours can get to know one another better: getting together in cafes/restaurants/bars, BBQS, pot luck dinners, street parties, picnics in the park, morning teas in people's homes;
- there are activities one does alone that can be more enjoyable when done with others: walking, jogging, gardening, meals, kids playing, walking dogs;
- sharing and helping become possible: sharing recipes, tools, skills, knowledge; lending a hand to help a neighbour change a light globe, shift furniture, whatever's needed;
- finding ways to improve your neighbourhood or the local environment: living sustainably, creating an attractive place to gather, clean up days, tackling a local issue.

In short, any activity that brings people together, that inspires the art of neighbourliness, can be included.

See the resources and inspiration section of the website www.streetbystreet.org.au for more ideas of what your group could do together. You'll find simple ideas, things that take a bit of organising, ambitious ideas, info on what other community groups are doing, 'How to' guides and links to even more ideas! Have a listen to inspiring community builder Shani Graham, from Western Australia, talk about what can be done in a street and what an amazing difference it can make: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1WSkXWSJac>

7. Communication - What's okay and what's not okay?

We encourage you to share ideas and concerns, local happenings, make requests or offers.

Keep communication respectful, relevant and for community purposes. While neighbours may bring up local issues that concern them, we don't want participants to feel that the group has become an action group, or political, or a means to sell things. Should some members want to take action on a local issue, that's fine, and it also needs to be fine if others don't wish to be involved with that issue. If you're not sure about something you'd like to bring up or share with your neighbours, talk to your Community Connector/s first.





8. What about safety?

While the vast majority of the neighbours you will meet will be great people, there is no guarantee that you will feel comfortable with everyone. So while it's great to extend the invitation to join the Group to everyone, you must make your own decision and take full responsibility for who you decide to trust – who you will allow to enter your home. If your instinct tells you to be wary of someone, be wary of them. Community Connectors and the Street by Street Project take no responsibility for the actions of people in your neighbourhood.

If anyone acts in a disrespectful or dangerous way, the Community Connectors should be told so the implications for the group can be considered. Serious matters should be reported to the authorities.

9. What about privacy?

There is a trade-off between community and privacy. We believe the gains are worth it, but there is the risk of people gossiping about others. Discussing another's situation can be out of interest or concern and can lead to offers of help, or it can be idle gossiping, and can upset the person being talked about. Idle gossiping is breaching a neighbour's privacy.

You can discuss the issue with the group and ask for a group agreement (or ground rule) to not gossip about others. Each person can be responsible for ending a conversation if it is purely gossip, reminding the speaker that the group has agreed not to gossip.

Having the right amount of contact with your neighbours can be challenging, with some loving it when others drop in regularly and others wishing their neighbour wouldn't start a conversation with them every time they went into their garden.

What you can do is:

- discuss this at a meeting and decide how you will handle it
- try to pick up on your neighbour's non-verbal communication about whether they want the contact
- be direct, but polite, when necessary (eg. Sorry, I'm pretty busy with the family so I won't invite you in now, but I'll see you at our gathering next Wednesday).

As with everything, communication is the key.





10. Photos

A picture tells a thousand words. Photos of your group and your activities are great to have – to share with each other and to help us promote the project and idea of neighbours connecting. We do this through our website, facebook, posters and the media. We respect your privacy so if you don't want to be in photos for these purposes please step out when they are taken, or ask the taker to delete a photo they may have just taken with you in it. You can let your Community Connector/s know you don't want photos with you in them used as an additional safeguard.

11. Dealing with problems

Talk to your community connector/s. Look at the resources on the Street by Street website, which include tips for dealing with conflict. If you still have concerns contact us at Street by Street.

12. Share your experiences

Please share (words or pictures) about your neighbour group on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/streetbystreet or email us at irene@streetbystreet.org.au with what it's meant for you to develop a sense of community with your neighbours.

13. Grow the project

Here are three ways you can help expand the Street by Street Project:

- Grow your local neighbour group by inviting neighbours in your area to join in an event.
- Encourage your friends and family anywhere in Australia to start a Street by Street group in their area. Email them some information and suggest they look at our website (www.streetbystreet.org.au) and talk to us for one to one support.
- If you share our passion for building community connections, you could volunteer in our project team to help promote and grow the project.

Find out more at www.streetbystreet.org.au

