

This Neighbour Day let's make sure no senior is forgotten

Curtin University-based Mentally Healthy WA is urging Western Australians to focus especially on the elderly and isolated in the lead-up to Neighbour Day on Sunday 27 March.

Neighbour Day is Relationships Australia's social connection campaign, encouraging Australians to connect with others, and help build stronger communities and address the issue of loneliness.

In 2022 there's a special need for strong and connected local communities in Western Australia – particularly for the sake of our older citizens. While we have all felt the impacts of living under the shadow of the pandemic, no group has been more impacted than the elderly.

Older people are amongst the most likely to experience isolation and loneliness. As Western Australians prepare for more community transmission of Omicron and the relaxation of our state's border restrictions, many seniors are feeling particularly anxious. They are likely to protect themselves by minimising their contact with the outside world and their interaction with other people.

While isolation minimises the chance of coming into contact with the virus it can also increase loneliness and impact a person's mental health and wellbeing. In 2022 there's a real danger that the anxiety and uncertainty experienced by many older people in WA will be exacerbated by increased isolation and a lack of human connection.

As we approach Neighbour Day on Sunday 27 March, Mentally Healthy WA is urging Western Australians to use the day to connect with their older neighbours.

A key element of the Act Belong Commit message is the need to maintain strong connect with others is essential for good mental health and wellbeing. Director of Mentally Healthy WA, Associate Professor Christina Pollard, said it had never been more important to for older people to remain connected to friends, family and their local community.

"Some older people will seek to protect themselves from community transmission of Omicron by socialising less and spending more time in their homes. We should all make sure out of sight does not mean out of mind" Dr Pollard said.

“Understandably older people may be reluctant to meet others face to face, but we must find other ways to connect with them safely, providing the human interaction that is so important.”

“We don’t want to look back in years to come and realise we protected our most vulnerable from a virus but allowed their mental health to deteriorate.”

A toolkit on the Neighbour Day website suggests a host different ways people can reach out and connect with others safely and provides downloadable resources like calling-cards that can be tucked under a door or placed in a letter box.

Mentally Healthy WA is encouraging individuals, community groups, and local governments to use Neighbour Day and the resources provided by Relationships Australia to ensure no senior is forgotten in Western Australia this Neighbour Day.

Visit the [Neighbour Day website](#) and the [Act Belong Commit Neighbour Day](#) toolkit for creative tips and ideas on ways to reach out to your older neighbours.

And go to [Act Belong Commit](#) for more on the things we can do to protect and enhance our mental health and wellbeing

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