

Neighbourhood Connect

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020 - 2022

Endorsed on 19 October 2020



Because life is better when we belong

“The state of the nation starts in your street... Think about the kind of neighbourhood you’d like to live in and then start living as if it’s that kind of neighbourhood. Pretty soon it will be.”

- Hugh Mackay, Australia Reimagined

Who we are

Neighbourhood Connect is a not-for-profit community organisation. We help people turn streets into communities and foster a national network of neighbourhood groups. We help people across Australia feel happier, safer and more supported by creating neighbourhoods where connecting with neighbours in real life is the norm.

Neighbourhood Connect facilitates the formation of neighbourhood groups. The neighbourhood group is the social infrastructure, or vehicle, which builds much needed social capital and social cohesion. Neighbourhood Connect is about creating a movement of connected neighbourhoods – that’s why we invite all sorts of neighbourhood groups that encourage community, sometimes in addition to a focus on sustainability, place-making, safety, gardening, addressing local issues, or something else, to be part of our Network.

We commenced in 2014, under the auspices of the Centre for Civil Society, a social innovation and public policy institute established in 2007 for the empowerment of ordinary people and strengthening of civil society. In 2018 we changed our name from The Street by Street Project to Neighbourhood Connect, incorporated, registered as a national community organisation and were granted charity status (Advancing Health).



Vision

Our vision is an Australia where everyone everywhere feels a sense of belonging, safety and support in their neighbourhood.



Mission

Connecting neighbours to strengthen the social fabric of Australia's neighbourhoods.



Values

Kindness, Inclusiveness, Sharing and Collaboration.



Why Neighbourhood Connect?

Neighbourhoods are the building blocks of society and can be happier, healthier places when people are connected with each other.

Australian communities, like many around the world, are experiencing a loneliness crisis, with many people lacking meaningful relationships or other social connections in their lives. and suffering the impacts on their mental and physical health. The isolation period of Covid-19 has exacerbated this. Social disconnection has other impacts too, like reduced trust and levels of perceived safety in communities.

Statistics are telling:

- 1 in 4 Australians feel lonely ¹ and 1 in 2 Australians report feeling more lonely since COVID-19 ².
- Just 35% of people trust their neighbours ³.
- Residents with larger social networks and higher levels of social cohesion in their neighbourhood are more likely to perceive their neighbourhood as safer compared to their counterparts ⁴.
- Knowing as few as six neighbours reduces feelings of loneliness and is linked to lowering health and financial concerns related to COVID-19 ⁵.

In summary, everyone benefits from community life – people feel happier when they are connected to those who live near them. People naturally help those they know. This can have benefits for the elderly, for people with disabilities and for people who are unwell, and can reduce depression and social isolation. People feel safer when they know their neighbours are looking out for them.

What we do

Promote

Generate awareness and interest. Share stories of connection. Find Connectors to start more neighbour groups.

Run a healthy organisation

Secure resources to grow. Expand projects and partnerships. Value our volunteers. Be accountable and ethical.

Monitor impact

Evaluate to uncover the impacts of neighbour groups. Keep learning and sharing.



Support

Guide and inspire people to initiate a neighbourhood group

Maintain

Maintain neighbour groups by providing inspiration, encouragement and tools

Grow a movement

Increase the network by inviting existing groups to join

¹ Australian Psychological Society – Australian Loneliness Report 2018

² Lim et al (2020) Survey of Health and Wellbeing – Monitoring the Impact of COVID-19 Iverson Health Innovation Research Institute

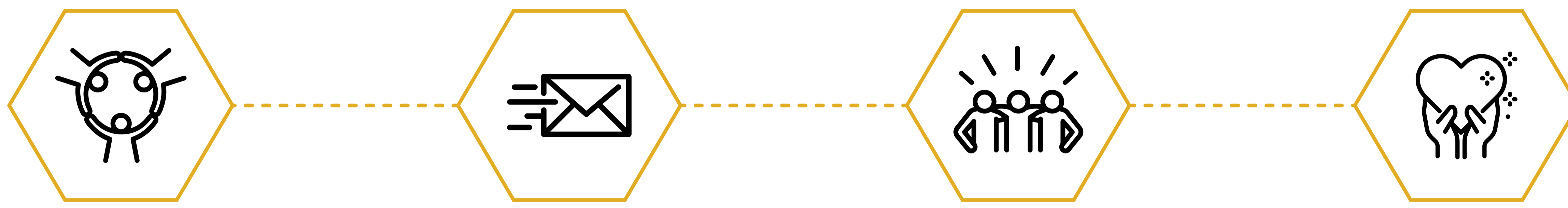
³ Hughes, P (2004) Insecurity in Australia. NCLS Research Occasional Paper 04. Sydney: NCLS Research

⁴ Baum et al. (2009) Do perceived neighbourhood cohesion and safety contribute to neighbourhood differences in health?. Health & Place, 15(4), 925-34

⁵ Swinburne University of Technology (2020) Evaluation of the Nextdoor KIND Challenge

The Neighbourhood Connect process

These are the steps we take people through in starting up a neighbour group.



1. Start

Starts with a person wanting to connect with their neighbours

2. Invite

They give out invitations and invite neighbours to connect

3. Gather

Informal gatherings in person or online communication

4. Connect

Strong relationships formed. People feel happier, safer and more supported

Our impact

The Neighbourhood Connect approach of creating informal ongoing groups of neighbours is highly effective in:



Creating social capital and a sense of community, belonging and trust



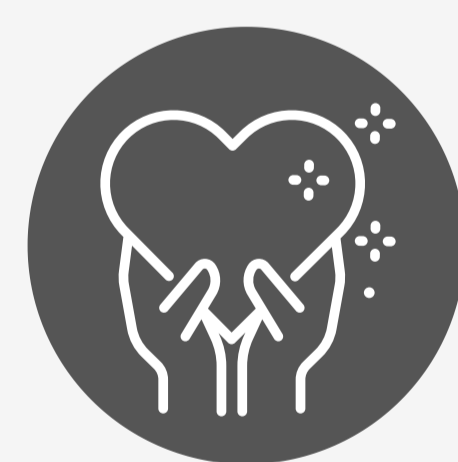
Increasing social support through neighbours helping one another



Improving happiness and wellbeing



Increasing engagement in the local community and in local issues



Decreasing loneliness and social isolation



Increasing use of local businesses

Goals and Strategies

In 2020 to 2022 Neighbourhood Connect aims to implement the following plan:

1. To create a connected neighbourhoods movement across Australia.

- Build the profile of Neighbourhood Connect
- Find potential connectors to start groups
- Support people to start a Neighbour Group
- Evaluate for evidence of our impact and ongoing improvement
- Foster the Neighbourhood Connect network
- Raise awareness of the importance of social connections and social infrastructure and the links to the prevention of social isolation, loneliness and mental health conditions

2. To assist Neighbourhood Connect groups to thrive over the long term.

- Provide support, tools, inspiration and encouragement to Connectors
- Assist Connectors to solve problems that arise in their groups

3. To attract funding and develop partnerships to ensure that the organisation is able to grow and be sustainable into the future.

- Gain funding from local, state and federal governments
- Gain corporate sponsorship
- Gain philanthropic funding through organisations willing to auspice or contract to us
- Seek partnership opportunities
- Establish relationships with like-minded organisations

4. To run an effective organisation that people want to contribute to.

- Create a positive organisational culture which is friendly, collaborative, open to ideas, outcome focussed and informal
- Practice good organisational governance and accountability by the Board
- Manage the volunteer project team so that members can contribute and gain satisfaction from their involvement.
- Ensure that the organisation promotes and implements appropriate Covid safe and other health and safety processes.
- Recruit and support volunteer team members.
- Tap into the expertise and support of an Expert Advisory Panel as appropriate.