



meet your neighbours toolkit

A guide to creating a friendly
and resilient community
in apartment buildings





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Bentleigh Neighbours

- Dora Chan
- Christina Ng
- Ruchika Handa
- Ted Mooney
- Gladys Lee
- Andrew Hecker

Elena Apartment Neighbours

- Harry Winter
- Yoel Hayman
- Julie Winter
- Britney Barber

Metro Towers Neighbours

- Ian Rushton
- Thomas Fung
- Magdalene Fung
- Yangyang Wang
- William Lai

Sevana Apartment Neighbours

- Ted Impey
- Mary Impey
- Natalia Andrienko
- Yuri Andrienko
- Ian Humble
- Leo Gomes

The Landmark Neighbours

- Bill MCGowen
- Jeffrey Li
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Thanks to all residents and neighbours who participated in our events and activities.

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Preface

About the Meet Your Neighbours project

This toolkit has been produced as part of the Meet Your Neighbours project, an innovative pilot program aimed at promoting neighbour connections and building community resilience among apartment residents.

Through engaging events, activities, and workshops, apartment residents have been working with Council staff to connect with their neighbours and address community resilience issues.

The 8-month pilot project involved five apartment sites located in Chatswood CBD, St Leonards and Lane Cove North:

- The Bentleigh, Chatswood (200 residential units)
- Metro Towers, Chatswood (550 residential units)
- Sevana apartments, Lane Cove North (213 residential units)
- Elena apartments, Lane Cove North (101 residential units)
- The Landmark, St Leonards (429 residential units)

Resident volunteers have been working collectively to develop their own ideas for neighbourly initiatives and have generously contributed their time and effort to turn their ideas into action. Through trial and error, they have tested different ideas and approaches to build connection and community among their neighbours. Their experiences, outcomes and learnings have been incorporated into the production of this toolkit.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit includes a range of resources and tips to start growing a sense of community and developing community resilience in your apartment building or complex.

It includes ideas, examples, and downloadable templates that can be used to help you with your own projects, events and initiatives.

Throughout this toolkit document, you will see:



This is not a step-by-step guide, but rather a collection of tools and advice that may be useful in guiding your journey towards a more cohesive and resilient community. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Take from the toolkit what may be useful for you and your unique community.

HAVE YOU
MET
YOUR
NEIGHBOURS
YET?

Why neighbours matter

Creating vertical communities

Apartment buildings are vertical local neighbourhoods where residents live in close proximity, share facilities, and have everyday interactions. These settings offer untapped opportunities to build social connection and community support among neighbours.

While there are many benefits to living in an apartment or unit, evidence suggests that apartment dwellers are not as connected to their local community compared to people living in houses, and are more likely to experience social isolation or loneliness.

Getting to know your neighbours and developing relationships of trust and connection can go a long way to improving the overall wellbeing of the community.

Building community resilience

Neighbour networks and connections are vital to community resilience, which can be harnessed to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters and emergencies.

Read more about what Councils are doing to promote community resilience in the **Lane Cove Climate Resilience Plan** and **Resilient Willoughby Strategy and Action Plan**.

Cohesive connected communities promote wellbeing and support each other better in times of crisis.



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Cultural diversity and inclusion

Apartment buildings are often a vibrant mixture of people of different cultures.

High density communities are therefore more diverse, bringing unique challenges and opportunities in relation to neighbourliness and community connection.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are more likely to live in apartment dwellings compared to the rest of the population.



Photo by Susan Chen

Creating a friendly and resilient community is about connecting with people from different walks of life. When planning your neighbour activities, it's important to consider how to include people such as the elderly, non-English speakers, children and young people, or people with a disability.

Getting the go-ahead (from building and strata management)

A building manager is responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the building and common areas of the property. Building managers are often the first point of contact with owners and tenants regarding property and maintenance issues. Your building manager can help with access and use of common areas for your neighbour activities.

A strata manager (or owners corporation manager) is responsible for administrative and financial management of the strata. This includes conducting strata meetings, enforcing the building's by-laws, and managing the strata budget.

A strata committee represents the building's owners corporation. Members and office-bearers are elected at an Annual General Meeting. The committee meets to oversee the day-to-day function of the strata scheme.

Getting the support from your building manager, strata manager and strata committee can be incredibly valuable as active and supportive partners throughout your neighbour-building journey.

They can help you to:

- get permissions to put up flyers around the building or to do a letterbox drop
- use building common areas for your activities (foyers, gardens, shared facilities)
- get valuable inputs on your projects drawing from their experience.

Your strata might even be able to contribute financially to your project if they recognise its value in improving the building community.

Highlighting the benefits of neighbourliness for strata and building management may help to gain their support. These benefits may include:

- Improved relationships and connections between neighbours, resulting in fewer conflicts and disputes
- A more socially cohesive building community
- Residents become more engaged with, and invested in, their building community, leading to longer term tenancies
- Residents are more resilient and better equipped to handle emergencies.

Find out more about building and strata management.



**HOW CAN
YOU GET
TO KNOW
YOUR
NEIGHBOURS
BETTER?**

Getting started

Not sure where to start?

These steps might help you to get started.

Start talking

Talk to neighbours you already know and start to develop your ideas.

Start connecting

Distributing neighbour cards can be a great way to start connecting with more neighbours. You can also use the neighbour cards to find other residents to who wish to work together on your project.

Do research

Do some research about your building community to help you understand what would benefit your community the most. Find out about who lives in your building and what makes your community unique.

Start planning

Hold a meeting with other interested residents to start planning your project or activity.

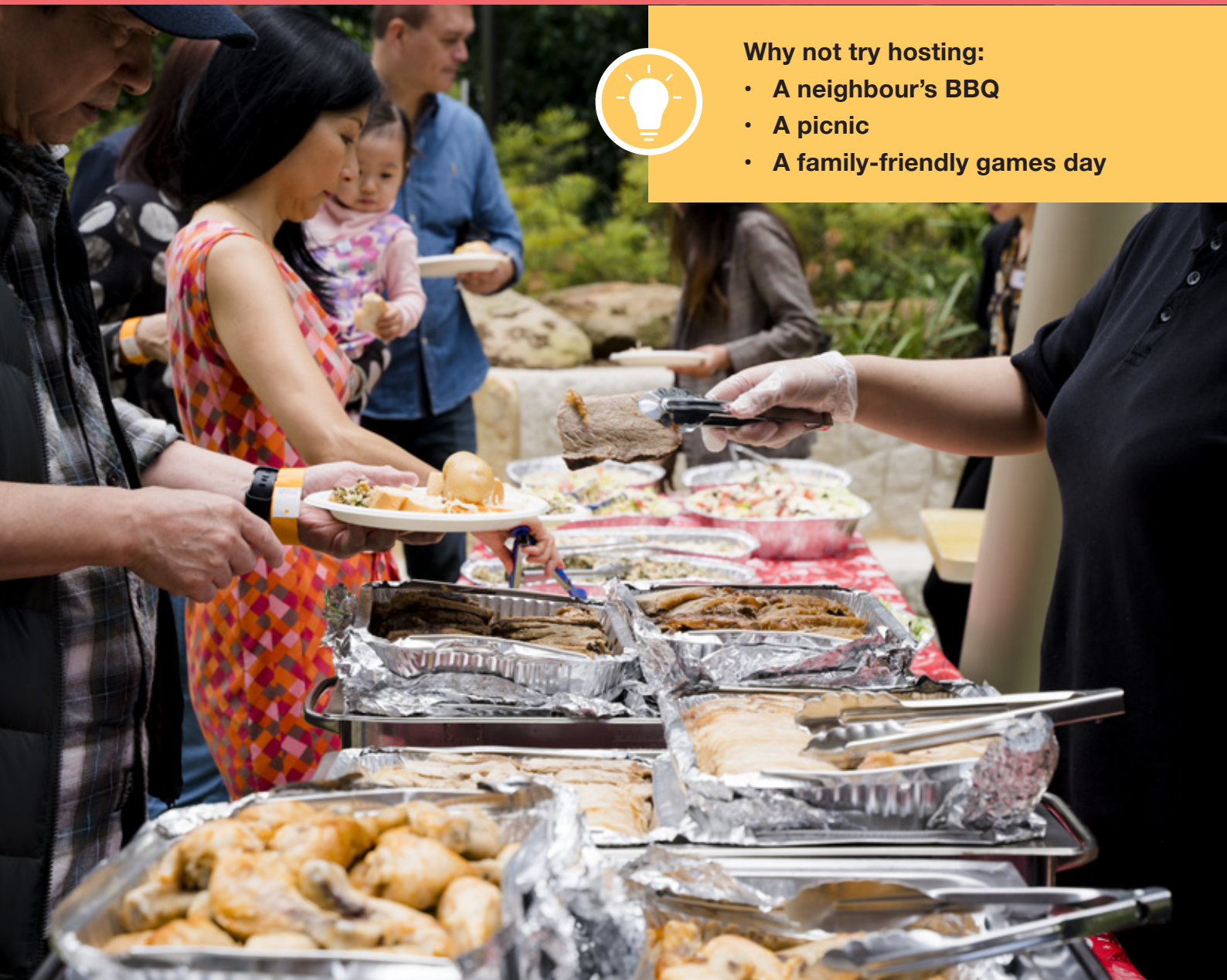


- **Neighbour cards**
- **Vertical community asset mapping tool**

Organising social events

A social event is a great way to meet your neighbours and start building connections among residents.

Food and fun activities are great ways to bring people together.



Why not try hosting:

- A neighbour's BBQ
- A picnic
- A family-friendly games day

©Photo by Maggie Langtry Photography

Make use of building common areas (if available) or adjacent parks and public open space to host your event. Residents will have the event right on their doorstep.



Tip: Cultural celebrations are another great reason to get together with others. You might decide to celebrate Lunar New Year, Diwali, Halloween or Eid with your neighbours! It's a great way to learn about new cultures.



©Photo by Maggie Langtry Photography



Boost your neighbour event with some of these ideas:

- Icebreaker games
- Name tags
- Music or entertainment



- **BBQ Checklist**
- **Meet Your Neighbours Bingo Card**
- **Meet Your Neighbours Directory**
- **Event planning guide**

Setting up hobby groups

Connecting with your neighbours through hobbies and doing something you enjoy are great ways to get to know your neighbours better.



Your neighbours might enjoy getting together for:



- Card and board games nights
- Cooking and baking
- Kids activities
- Pet meet-ups
- Movie nights
- Book club meetings
- Table tennis or tennis
- Walking



WhatsApp or private Facebook groups are useful tools for communication among people within a group.



You can call out for expressions of interest (through a poster, letterbox drop or social media posts) to gauge neighbours' interests and determine the day or time of the week to meet.

Some apartment blocks have common areas such as dining rooms, gyms and pools. You may also find other parks, sports and leisure facilities near your building.

Both Lane Cove and Willoughby have some great public open spaces for residents to enjoy. Visit below websites for information on local recreation facilities.

- **Lane Cove Council parks and recreation website**
- **Willoughby Parks and Recreation**

Activating a common space

Common areas in your apartment such as foyers, lifts or courtyards are shared spaces that can provide residents with opportunities to connect. There are simple things you can do to facilitate connection among neighbours in these spaces.

Decorating or activating an otherwise empty or bland space around your building can encourage residents to engage with the space and with each other.



Some ideas to enliven your building common areas and promote a sense of community:

- **Welcome signage in different languages**
- **Decorations to reflect different holidays and cultural celebrations**
- **A community noticeboard or whiteboard for residents to share messages**
- **Fun activities that bring people together (e.g. table tennis, giant chess or other games)**
- **A community library or book exchange**
- **Furniture to provide space for residents to meet and chat**
- **A community garden**



Liaise with building management to find out what's possible within a certain space.

Photo by Susan Chen

Make sure someone is delegated responsibility for looking after your activity. It may require regular maintenance and supervision to ensure it is being used correctly.

Increasing resilience at your building

Have you thought about how you may be affected or what you need to do in an emergency when you live in the city?

Emergencies can happen anytime, anywhere.

As a resident or strata committee, you may wish to boost your resilience and emergency responsiveness at your building.

A community-led, place-based approach can help you and your team to identify, prioritise and develop solutions to mitigate the resilience issues. These can be discussed over 2-3 social events or meet-ups.



Identifying resilience issues

The best way to understand what resilience and safety issues in and around where you live is for residents to highlight these issues on a plan or map of your building:

- Print a plan/map on your building and common area. You may be able to get this from your building manager, or using google map.
- Residents to write their concerns on the map.

Issues can include:

- Preparing for and responding to emergency situations
- Safety issues on-site and in proximity to your apartment

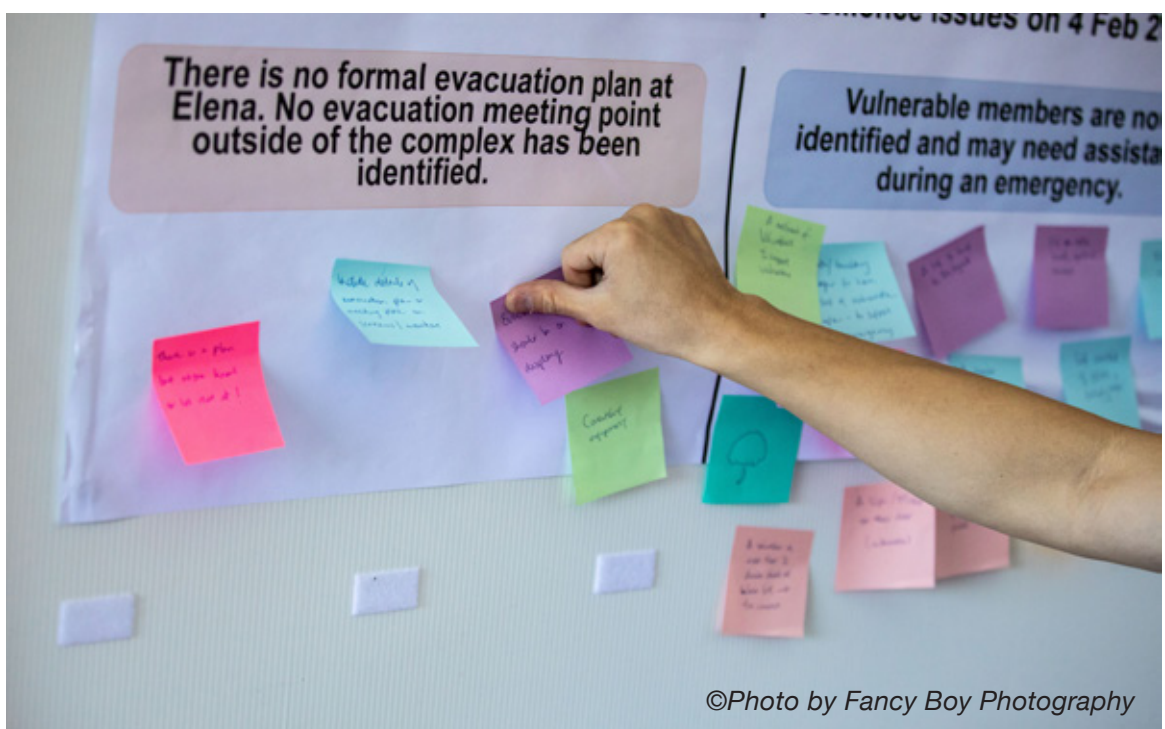


**Resilience
issues
mapping**

Prioritising resilience issues

Once resilience and safety issues have been identified, a survey or a chart can be used for residents to vote on their top issues. A building-wide survey will ensure a broad buy-in.

There are multiple platforms (e.g. Google Forms and Survey Monkey) to start an online survey where you can collate the results easily.





Solutions

The next step will be to brainstorm solutions among your neighbours to resolve the priority resilience issues.

Solutions are also likely to require your strata manager's and committee's approval.

Solutions should be realistic and within the time, skills and financial constraints of your team and strata management.



If you need a particular skill set and resource (for example, graphic design) – don't hesitate to ask for help. You may be surprised on the skills, resources and willingness your neighbours are able to offer.

DO YOU
HAVE A
PROJECT
IN MIND?

Planning a project

Develop a project plan

Taking the time to plan your project or activity with others will help you achieve the outcomes you want.

List tasks and resources

Map out the steps you need to take and the resources you will need to make your goal a reality. A list of necessary resources will help you assess if your goal is feasible, and identify possible roadblocks.

Delegate tasks and responsibilities

Allowing others to contribute to a collective effort will amplify the positive outcomes for your community.

Have a goal or vision

What do you want to achieve and why? Having a clear goal or vision in mind will help you to stay on track throughout your project and prioritise tasks effectively.

One person can't do it alone! Share roles and responsibilities among a team and take advantage of the unique skills and strengths of your neighbours.

Planning tools

Use these tools to help your planning process.



- **Event plan**
- **Project plan**

Get the word out to your neighbours

Once you've established the core details of your project, it's time to spread the word to your neighbours and invite them to get involved!

The best methods of promoting your event or project will depend on your unique building community. Use the method that you think will be most effective in reaching your audience.

Chat to your neighbours about what you are planning and why you think it's important. Your neighbours will be more likely to get involved if they hear from you personally.

Posters or letterboxing

Create a poster to advertise your event or activity. Put up your posters in the common areas of your building where it can be easily noticed, such as foyers, lifts, noticeboards or reception areas.

Alternatively, print flyers to drop into apartment letterboxes.

Word of mouth

Sometimes, the most effective way to share your project or event is to simply talk to your neighbours!





- **Poster template**

Existing communication channels

Your building may have existing methods of communicating with residents, such as a building app, an email list, a newsletter, or an established social media page. Tap into these existing channels and networks to share your neighbour activity. Talk to your building manager about the best way to communicate with residents.

Using digital communication platforms

Social media platforms can be effective tools to share information with your neighbours. Not only can you promote activities and events in the building, having an established channel of communication among your building neighbours can be invaluable for sharing information in an emergency situation.

Digital communication platforms such as social media groups allow neighbours to instantly share knowledge, support and assistance.

There will always be pros, cons and risks when it comes to the use of social media and online communication tools. Select the tool that best suits you and your community.

Many people may not be familiar or comfortable with the use of digital technology. Provide support and clear instructions for people to join your online neighbour group, and make sure you are not relying solely on digital communication methods.



Finding the best platform for you:

Facebook – private Facebook group	Meetup group	WhatsApp group (or other messaging app)	NextDoor group
Post messages and comments	Create and share events	Instant chat function	Post messages and comments
Share images		Limited functionality	Create and share events
Create and share events			
✓ Free	Requires payment for some features	✓ Free	✓ Free
Many people can use their existing Facebook account	Requires sign up and/or app download	Many people already have the app	Requires sign up and/or app download
Strong group moderation features	Can be difficult to verify your neighbour's identity	Requires people to share their mobile phone number	Requires address verification



Establish clear rules and guidelines for how the digital platform should be used.



Use a free online QR Code Generator tool to create a QR code directing people to your digital platform.

Maintaining the momentum

Evaluating your achievements and learning through trial and error

Evaluation and feedback are important to help you assess how your project is going, what is working well, and what can be improved upon. A simple way of monitoring your project is to try to count how many people are participating in your event or activity.

It's okay if your event, project or activity doesn't take off right away, or doesn't turn out quite the way you envisioned it. It can take time for momentum to build among your neighbours, and you'll be learning along the way.

If your activity isn't getting a lot of engagement, you may need to change how you promote your project. Or, it may be that the day and time of your event wasn't suitable.

Through trial and error, you will start to understand what works well and what doesn't.

Getting feedback from your neighbours on your project can be as simple as chatting to them and asking for their thoughts and suggestions.



Some other methods of feedback and evaluation:

- Survey
- Poll
- Suggestion box
- Social media

Making it sustainable

Bear in mind what you and your team are capable of committing to on the project. Some of your team may be keen to help but have limited time due to work or family responsibilities.

It may be better to start small and gradually build up your knowledge and confidence.

Be realistic on how the funding of your events or projects can be sustainable. If you are hosting an event, a potluck party, where everyone contributes, could be a more financially sustainable option. Alternatively, your strata committee may be able to provide the funding you needed.

Living in the city, you may experience neighbours moving in and out of your apartment. It is not unusual to lose some team members throughout your project. You can keep up the momentum by bringing in new recruits.













Each event is an opportunity to recruit for new members. Spreading the word of what you are doing can also interest new faces to join.




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**ARE YOU
READY
TO BUILD
YOUR OWN
VERTICAL
COMMUNITY?**

Full list of downloads

-  Vertical community asset mapping
-  Event planning template
-  Meet Your Neighbours Bingo Card
-  Meet Your Neighbours Directory
-  Neighbour Cards
-  BBQ checklist
-  Poster template
-  Project plan template
-  Resilience planning template
-  Meet Your Neighbours logo

List of related resources:

-  [Emergency Management – Lane Cove Council](#)
-  [Preparing for Emergencies – Willoughby City Council](#)
-  [Strata 101 – City of Sydney](#)





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