



# It Takes a Village: How to host a Meet Your Neighbour Party

Meet Your Neighbour parties are a great way to get to know those living around you and can make the place you live even better. It's a nice feeling to be able to greet a neighbour by name, share the occasional chat or cup of tea, and having someone to call close by in an emergency.

This easy step-by-step guide walks you through how to hold a Meet Your Neighbour Party – whether it's something small like a picnic in a strata block or local park or something big like a street closure for a Halloween trick or treat trail.

**Step 1** - Planning your Meet Your Neighbour Party

**Step 2** - Running the Meet Your Neighbour Party

**Step 3** - After the Meet Your Neighbour Party



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## Step 1

### Planning your Meet Your Neighbour Party

#### Talk to your neighbours

Chat to neighbours you know and knock on doors to meet those you don't! Ask your neighbours if they know friends, family or others in your community who want to be involved in a small community party. Find out if there are any other groups holding community events in your area, and how you can work together or learn from each other.

Some early planning ideas include:

- Have a planning group consisting of a few people to organise the different elements of your party (e.g., invitations and RSVPs, food and refreshments, activity coordinator, clean-up etc)
  - Once you have decided on a type of gathering, location, date and time, get together as a group and start a task list and budget for everything you need.
  - Make a list of all the required equipment. For example: marquees, tables, chairs, BBQ, esky, decorations - make a register so everyone can add what they can contribute
  - Create a small site map with the layout and set up. Make sure there is enough space for social distancing include your areas for food, beverages, seating, activities/entertainment and waste management (bins/recycling)
  - Think about a bathroom policy: "everyone to use their own", this ensures that home security is maintained.
  - Have a wet weather plan
  - Aim to create as little waste as possible – take a look at our Swap this for that party guide and help wipe out single-use plastics on the Northern Beaches.
- Brainstorm how you can get your neighbourhood involved and consider what types of activities you're interested including:
- Hosting a Meet Your Neighbour Party for school holidays/Christmas/Easter/Halloween/ Christmas in July/ Harmony Day or no reason at all
  - Bottle tomatoes or marmalade in summer
  - Gardening day or start your own Bushcare group
  - Games night – get out your favourite board games
  - Host a street clean-up – Clean Up Australia Day is a great opportunity to have a community site when not just your neighbours but locals can get involved
  - Open-Air Cinema or front yard sporting match viewing
  - White night – set up a long table and get everyone to dress in white including white table decorations
  - Talent Show, house concerts, picnic days, street competitions such as a bake off or best high tea, active street games and so much more!

### **Find a location**

Once you have the support for holding a gathering/event you need to select a suitable location and decide if it will be on private or public land.

#### **Private land**

Includes your yard, house, garage, driveway and a shared common area or roof top within a block of units. Private land can be managed as you would any private function, however it will be harder to gain shared responsibility for the event.

#### **Strata complex**

If you live in a unit or apartment, then you should consider all available common areas to host a Meet Your Neighbour Party. This can include grassed areas, extended driveways and other areas that are safe from the road, and an easy place to gather and enjoy time together.

#### **Front garden or front verge**

Many fabulous Meet Your Neighbour parties can occur in simple locations requiring no significant preparation. If you live in an area with wide front verges (the open public space between residential properties and streets), then you can consider setting up a few tables and chairs and enjoying time together in this easy to organise way. This option requires careful consideration for families with younger children and their safety close to the road.

Another excellent consideration is for a host to use their front garden as the space to entertain several neighbours. This option can still be very accessible and open. However, it is also a lot safer for families with younger children. All this requires is the space and the willingness to avail it for the common good!

#### **Public Land**

This includes your neighbourhood park or reserve, verge, street, a cul-de-sac, alley way or parking area. Holding a gathering on public land increases the likelihood of shared responsibility for the event, but the organising process may be more complex depending on the specific location and may have to be booked with Council.

#### **Local Park or Reserve**

Applications are required for Meet Your Neighbour parties in local parks and reserves. This is particularly important to prevent any double bookings. To make a booking, complete the [Bookings Application Form](#) and select 'Council's It takes a Village – Meet Your Neighbour program'. You will then be contacted by a Council staff member to take you through a brief online volunteer induction process. We recommend you submit your application at least one month in advance.

#### **A street requiring a closure**

If you are considering a Meet Your Neighbour party requiring a street closure, you must complete an Application Form and complete a formal process of approvals to go ahead. If approval from Council's Traffic Team is received, you will be invited for an informal briefing at Council. In most instances a Traffic Management Company will be employed to manage the street closure on the day. This can be an excellent option for quiet residential streets that have minimal through traffic and are not on any weekend bus routes.

#### **A cul-de-sac**

For residents who live in a cul-de-sac, you must also complete the Application Form. After this, a Council staff member will contact the applicant to provide a briefing for pick up and drop off of relevant signs and barriers to assist in the self-managed street closure.

### Pick a day and time

Ensure that the date you choose makes it easy for people to attend. For some people, activities on weekends, afternoons and public holidays are more suited. Make sure the activity/gathering you choose is suited for the season and check the weather forecast.

### Safety

Always ensure that you are following the current Public Health advice and consider developing a COVID-19 Safety Plan for your activity. Other risks include trips and falls, electrical cords, manual lifting, food preparation and handling, access to water, access to toilets, accessibility for older people or people with a disability, sunburn, fire, activities near the road, and alcohol consumption.

Ways to reduce risks on site include:

- First Aid kit
- Sunscreen and mosquito repellent
- Practice food safety: proper food handling should always be a priority
- Be aware of noise restrictions (12am–8am Fri, Sat or any day before a public holiday 10pm–8am any other day)
- Stick to your start and finish time
- Have a wet weather plan
- Appoint someone to escort vehicles in or out, if applicable
- Think about child safety, especially around barbecues.

### Get the word out

Invite your neighbours - you can give them a call, paper invitation, email or even better invite them in person. Be inclusive of all people and keep the invitation to residents only. Otherwise, it becomes a public event, and it may get larger than anticipated. Other ideas include:

- Use social media community groups to reach out
- Create a Whats App group
- Put up posters or flyers in prominent locations nearby, like your front fence, local library, or ask you local café or shop if they will put it up their front window
- Ensure you add important details to the invite such as type of gathering, theme, what will happen, date and time, who can attend (pets etc.), what to bring, if you need any help

Encourage people to sign up to your event online or via a WhatsApp group to help you stay in touch with them before and after the event. It's also important to send quick reminders a week before the event and even the day prior for any details or changes that have occurred. There might be a date or time change depending on the weather or other implications.

## Step 2

### Running the Meet Your Neighbour Party

Now that you have made a plan, started a community planning group and invited your neighbours, it's time to hold a great successful event/gathering!

#### Welcome everyone

Welcome everyone when they arrive on the day and give some context for the event.

- A respectful consideration is to open the event with an Acknowledgement of Country, with the following as an example: *I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today and pay respects to Elders past and present and their continuing connection to Country.*
- Introduce yourself, have the option of nametags (it makes it a lot easier to remember names)
- Allow and respect diversity (range of ages and cultures might have different taste in food and music or a different cultural background)
- Purpose of the day, give an overview of the activities that are planned and when things are supposed to happen

#### Collect contact details

Collecting the contact details of your neighbours is an excellent way to keep in touch. It also helps you support one another in times of need, and to make it easier to reach out for a hand on occasion.

#### Have fun!

Now that everyone has arrived and you are all set up, enjoy a great gathering with your local community. Exchange your experiences, enjoy time together, be social, come up with ideas and be kind.

#### Take photos

Have a person responsible to take photos at the event. This will be great to report back to us about the success of your event but also in years to come you as a community group can look back on it and have great memories.

Make sure you check with parents for consent before taking photos of children and respect anyone who does not want their picture taken. Before you start sharing photos on a social media page make sure you make sure it's okay with those in the photo.

Please note that photos that will be provided to Northern Beaches Council are not used for any advertising purposes, they are collected for reference only.

#### Give feedback

The more feedback the better so we encourage you to share this [link](#) to an online survey that will only take less than 5 minutes to complete. This can be done on the day or sent to everyone after the event.

## Step 3

### After the Meet Your Neighbour Party

#### Debrief

After your event, get together with your planning group and discuss your event:

- What went well
- Where can we improve
- What didn't work at all

Fill out the overall post event evaluation form and collect feedback from other community members. This will help make the next Neighbourhood Party an even better experience.

#### Keep in touch and keep it up!

We would love to know how your community is going and how your gathering went! By sharing your community event story, you're able to provide inspiration for others. You can help Council measure the success of these events and help identify where we need to improve our support for community groups and Meet Your Neighbour parties.

Sends us stories, photos and short videos from your event via email to [communitydevelopment@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au](mailto:communitydevelopment@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au).



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