

# Neighbourhood Circles Project

## PART 2

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**“Inclusion is everyone’s responsibility”:**  
Thinking about what it might take.

The first Neighbourhood Mapping document focused on exploring and enhancing our understanding of the different types of neighbourhood circles that exist across the greater Adelaide region, as well as some of their potential barriers to inclusion, accessibility and sustainability. We believe it is important to highlight some of the next steps for neighbourhood circles and initiatives to address some of the potential barriers, which may help us to think about what it might take to support more vulnerable people to be included in the future. While this document does not attempt to provide all the answers to many of the questions that arose throughout the course of this project, it hopes to instil further confidence and inspiration in our neighbourhoods as stronger places of safeguarding and belonging. The strength in our neighbourhoods resides in the stories that they tell. Sharing stories from our neighbourhoods becomes the guiding force behind this document, in which their significance as sources of belonging are addressed.

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# What might it take?

As was highlighted in Part 1 “A space at the heart of our community”, neighbourhood led initiatives demonstrate the important role that neighbours and everyday community members can play to safeguard one another against loneliness and isolation. In enhancing everyday social inclusion and a sense of belonging, much research has shown that “the neighbourhood still matters”<sup>i</sup>. While Part 1 provided a snapshot to the variety of groups that exist across Adelaide, as well as some of the challenges facing their inclusivity, accessibility and sustainability into the future, we would like to continue the conversation to talk about ‘what might it take’ and ‘what’s next’? How can we help lift some of the barriers facing vulnerable people accessing our neighbourhood circles and initiatives into the future? What can we learn from each other about strategies, mindsets and values that support inclusivity? And just what might it take to build stronger, more inclusive and resilient neighbourhoods?

Many of the questions within this document were guided by conversations with a variety of neighbourhood leaders, volunteers, stakeholders, paid and unpaid support staff, community members and people with lived experience. While this document does not attempt to provide all the answers, it aims to explore some previous questions raised in order to help take action to address neighbourhood inclusion and accessibility, as well as provide some further thinking about ‘what it might take’. This document is therefore structured to address the following questions:

- What are the benefits of building inclusive neighbourhoods?
- What might it take to bring more vulnerable people ‘in’?
- How might we address barriers to inclusion?
  - Neighbourhood strategies; and
  - The role of support as ‘bridges’ to social connection
- How might we manage tensions of safety and risk?

When it comes to bringing in some of our communities more vulnerable members, we may face tensions surrounding notions of safety. Mindsets surrounding segregation, safety, liability and risk can endanger many attempts to build inclusive neighbourhoods. Acknowledging people’s vulnerabilities, however, does not mean that we have to sacrifice their ability to live a good life. Rather, by becoming a more active part of one’s neighbourhood people can be kept safer and live richer, more meaningful lives. Neighbourhoods can act as a rich resource for safeguarding, purpose, inclusion and belonging. It is in exploring how we can bridge the barriers to their inclusivity and replication into the future that provides the focus of this document. This report concludes with a case study interview with one particular neighbourhood initiative, a list of helpful links and resources, as well as further explanation as to how this information was collected and collated.



# What are the benefits of building inclusive neighbourhoods?

“There is a greater chance to be protected if we have freely given relationships... friendships strengthen that protection”  
– John Armstrong, Imagine More Conference 2021<sup>ii</sup>

## Relationship safeguarding

It is not hard to recognise the power that natural supports have to help us feel looked out for and safe. Often it is the freely given relationships that surround us where we find the most reliable sources of long-term and sustainable safeguarding. The mother of a man with an intellectual disability once stated that it was the people in his neighbourhood “knowing him” that keeps him safe. The more that people are actively part of their community, the greater their chances of building a larger network of support that can help safeguard them against their existing vulnerabilities. While paid supports can come and go, the relationships that are held through genuine care and love can be relied upon for the long-term. These relationships can become potential advocates or help to walk alongside vulnerable people into the future. However, people cannot build these networks of natural supports without first being a part of their local community. These networks therefore rely on inclusive neighbourhoods in order to give freely given relationships a chance to be formed and grow.

## Valued roles and contribution

While a person’s goals for the future and what they define as a *good time* may no doubt differ from person to person, there are a number of widely held aspects of what makes a *good life* that we all share. For the majority of us a life filled with a sense of purpose, value and contribution is critical to living a good and meaningful life. When we reflect on the roles that define who we are, personally and professionally, we can get a sense of how much of our time is spent in fulfilling those roles and the sense of contribution that we gain as a result. Our neighbourhoods can provide ample opportunities for people to feel a sense of value and contribution through

the variety of roles that they provide. Being in the role of good neighbour can involve the sharing of baked goods, looking after plants when someone is away, or helping with a neighbourhood garden, verge or clean-up. Whatever the role, big or small, everyone has a desire to feel valued, to be given opportunities to contribute and feel a sense of purpose. Our neighbourhoods can provide such opportunities.

## “Being missed when you are not there”: Frequent and regular

Often a sense of belonging comes from the feeling that someone will be missed if they do not show up to a weekly sporting game or regular book club. Members of the Brompton Garden spoke about how much one of their members was missed when struggling through his mental illness because he was no longer the first person present to make the tea and coffee. This person acted as the beacon and signal to prompt others to come to the garden, have a cuppa and connect. They may be the person who turns on the kettle and makes the morning tea or the person whose bright smile and enthusiasm brings a lightness to the group. Whatever role it is they play, it is often their repeated and frequent presence built over time that leads to a sense of recognition, remembrance and ‘missing’. Attending a group activity that is ad hoc or sporadic does not invite the same opportunities for people to build roles, relationships, or a sense of belonging. But by actively including more people in our neighbourhoods, we can provide that extra layer of recognition and safety that comes from noticing when they fail to show up or return to a group that they reliably attended before.

# What might it take to bring more vulnerable people 'in'?

**"We don't have to imagine that our neighbours are going to be our best friends or that we need to be in each other's pockets, but knowing neighbours, being on smiling and, you know, simple conversational terms, with our neighbours, with everyone in the street, depending how long the street is, is very important to our sense of physical safety, and emotional security. And none of that depends on living in a beautiful place. But it does depend on having made those social connections." - Hugh Mackay, 2015<sup>iii</sup>**

When thinking about the role of neighbours to support more vulnerable people to feel a part of their local neighbourhood, it must first start with genuine understanding, tolerance and acceptance for all residents who call that neighbourhood their home. No better example of genuine neighbourliness can be seen than among the residents of Ian Street, in which the level of empathy and understanding demonstrated by champion neighbours Ann and Chris not only works to build trust among the neighbourhood, but also acts as positive role modelling to others on the power of kindness. With their own lived experience as a guiding force, Chris and Ann know that "behind every door on the street there is a different story" and so they operate on a shared ethos that everyone who lives on their street is valued, respected and looked out for. People living with a mental illness or disability are often more financially disadvantaged; they might have experienced disruptions in their work, education and personal lives that can contribute to their disempowerment and negatively affect their self-esteem and sense of value. Many negative roles become assigned to people who might be more vulnerable in the community, in which the valued roles and contributions they provide can become lost. Yet by providing people with a sense of value and purpose in their neighbourhoods we can help them to take control

of how they are labelled by others, and even themselves, and provide opportunities for them to be seen for their skills, gifts and talents. Providing genuine opportunities for people to take roles, big or small, can help encourage people to feel a sense of purpose and contribution, in which a sense of self-confidence and a feeling of genuine belonging can be built. Bringing people along on this journey, however, can require a significant amount of time for mindsets to change and for trust on both sides of the relationship to be built.

For many people who live marginalised and vulnerable lives, paid and unpaid supports often play a critical role in supporting their connection to community. Paid and unpaid natural supports often play the role of social gatekeepers and can act as critical "bridges"<sup>iv</sup> to social connections. However, either through limitations in thinking or through a perceived sense of enhanced risk these important linkers can inadvertently further isolate the vulnerable person from their community. Recognising and thinking about the critical position paid and unpaid supports hold and the role they play as the bridge to social connection is a fundamental step in addressing barriers to inclusion and access. It is in discussing many of these tensions, issues and potential strategies to address them that will help us think about what it might take to bring more vulnerable people within our neighbourhoods 'in'.



# How might we address barriers to inclusion?

**"We cannot create relationships.... but we can build and shape situations in which relationship is more likely to arise" - Janet Klees, 2021<sup>v</sup>**

It is important to first recognise that the solution to inclusion does not take a one size fits all approach. There is no cookie cutter template for bringing people 'in'. Rather the methods taken by a neighbourhood circle or initiative largely require an individualised approach. What a group might do to be more inclusive varies depending on their values, their primary focus or main objective, what and where it happens, and most importantly the 'who' they are trying to include. This also goes for teams of support that surround a person living with a disability, mental illness or other vulnerability. Be they paid support workers, unpaid Circles of Support, human service workers, or other key loved ones, they all play a critical role in supporting the individual they care about or support to connect to their neighbourhood in a meaningful way. The

following section is therefore divided into two parts to help us think about what it might take to address barriers to neighbourhood inclusion.

Part one recognises the important values that underpin strategies to address barriers to inclusion and accessibility by neighbourhood circles and other community initiatives. By including some case study examples this section hopes to support our neighbourhood circles and leaders think about what it might take to bring some of our more vulnerable community members in. Part two then discusses the important role of paid and unpaid supports to be the bridges and linkers to neighbourhood connection. Exploring different ways of working across various paid support teams and Circles of Support for people living with a disability helps to illuminate how supports can inadvertently act as barriers to social connection. By encouraging paid and unpaid supports to think differently about their role we hope to inspire them to think more creatively about how they can act as social bridges to connection. While there is no one set way that we can address all barriers to inclusion, vulnerability or accessibility, there are a few strategies used that can help inspire us to think about how we might address some of the barriers moving forward.

**The Walyu Yarta Community Garden in the southwest parklands is an open garden that is readily accessible to anyone that wishes to pick some herbs or sample some bushtucker 24/7. The gardening group purposely grows vegetables that passersby might appreciate and hold the values of this garden as a collective community meeting space that everyone is welcome to take part in and enjoy.**



Photos of the Walyu Yarta Community Garden

# Neighbourhood approaches to inclusion and belonging

## Inclusion is “everyone’s responsibility”

When it comes to building a sense of inclusion and belonging the phrase “it takes a village” resonates true. The dynamics of a community group play an integral role in not only its inclusivity, but also its sustainability. For a neighbourhood circle to be inclusive all members of the group need to share in the same vision, sense of responsibility and values for inclusivity to ensure that the environment maintained is a positive one. A risk for

many circles’ sustainability and inclusivity is their reliance on one person or leader to sustain the group and take charge of its values, ethos and ways of working. Having a shared vision and strong ethos for inclusivity among all members of a group or community is not only integral to a neighbourhood initiative’s long-term sustainability, but essential to successfully creating genuine spaces of welcome and belonging.

## The Pear-knitting club

Within the Pear Café in Port Adelaide there is an ethos of community ownership that provides it with the foundation that it needs to not only be sustainable, but also a site of shared belonging. The sense of welcome is not centralised to just one person, but is shared among all members and café goers. Manager Annemijn’s recognition of the importance of human connection and helping others to feel valued was an ethos that infected all regular café goers alike. A key example of this is seen in the regular groups that call the Pear their home, including the knitting and crochet group that meet every Wednesday. While reluctant at first due to a lack of confidence in her own skills and in meeting new people, Glender says that the knitting group was made easy by the attitudes, level of care and friendly nature of all the knitting group goers. Members of the group not only knit, crochet or sew for leisure, but they also make things to help others in need, such as projects for women fleeing domestic violence, bush fire recovery, and treasure boxes for newly settled refugees. Seven weeks into the group’s formation, members started to demonstrate care and responsibility for one another and to meet outside of the knitting circle for various social occasions. It’s all members of the Pear community that make the space a positive and welcoming source of social support and friendship.



Glender’s handknitted baby jumpers



Pear staff Tahney and Annemijn



The knitting and crochet club

“Inclusion is everyone’s responsibility” - Annemijn

## Open Garage

When community resident Laura decided to start Open Garage it was through a desire to strengthen the positive relationships between her family and their neighbourhood. While being the main host of the event and the key driver to its success, Laura remarked on the roles taken by regular and frequent members of her community in welcoming and including new people who would drop in. Recognising the appetite for neighbours to get to know each other, Open Garage became what many people in the area felt had been missing in the neighbourhood for many years. As such, the desire to see it succeed and grow inevitably became shared by more people than just Laura and her family. Going to a new group or community event can be daunting for someone new. If Laura was kept busy hosting, other Open Garage “regulars” would take charge in welcoming newcomers and contributing morning tea, jams and produce, and so the Open Garage “bubble” grew. The responsibility for inclusion and welcome therefore became shared and didn’t rely on just one person alone. While Open Garage does face some of

its own challenges in regards to its sustainability, it is maintaining a shared sense of purpose to bring people together that is shared among all those who attend. A circle’s vision for welcome must always be shared - whatever that community “bubble” might be.



A photo of the produce swap table at Open Garage taken by Laura Bakhtiarian

## Charles Sturt “Greenings”

Among members of Rosetta Street Greening there is an ethos that everyone has a role to play, everyone has a skill that they can contribute. Be it Mark’s friendly and welcoming personality, Daniel’s “brute” strength, or Cheryl and Phyllis’s plant knowledge, all members recognise the value that each member brings. This ethos of welcoming and inclusion is also shared within Woodville Greening where Anthony and Kerry see the important role that the garden and its local café play in bringing people in the community together. Angie of Ovingham had lived in the neighbourhood for over 20 years and knew very few neighbours until Barry started the Ovingham Greening group. Through Ovingham Greening Angie has not only built on her social connections and confidence in speaking to neighbours, but also has been inspired to renovate the garden in her own backyard. Brooklyn who is renting a place in nearby Gething Street has a passion for gardening and community. With her own permaculture garden in the backyard, Brooklyn created the Mudge Way project for the benefit of her neighbourhood. All these greening groups take place along reserves, open streets, train lines and stations. While there is always a risk of plants being stolen or damage being done, the inclusivity and openness of these groups mean that all members of the community feel welcome to be a part at any time and take ownership of it together. These passionate gardeners recognise that it is not just the beautification of the area that is valued, but the sense of community and inclusion that it brings. They are places where all members of the neighbourhood are invited and encouraged to belong.



L-R Photos: Bee hotel; Mark walking along Rosetta Street Greening; Garden path at Ovingham Greening; Brooklyn tending to the Mudge Way garden; New verge planting at Woodville Greening

## From little things, big things grow

**“The first thing we have to do is recognise that we are social beings... Having recognised that then we need to engage with that community... But we also need to do it in really, really simple ways. By just acknowledging other people. You pass someone on the footpath, you make eye contact, you smile, you say, “Hello”... that reassures people that they’re being acknowledged, they’re being taken seriously, and that they belong here as much as we do...It makes them feel ‘Oh, someone noticed me.’ ...the first time you smile and say hello to someone in the street, they might ignore you, but the second or third time, they will start to realise that there’s no harm going to come of this”** Hugh Mackay, 2015<sup>vi</sup>



While some neighbourhood circles have evolved or been supported through larger structures, agencies or initiatives, it is often the small stuff that can also have the greatest impact. While seemingly innocuous there is a notable strength in everyday social interactions and what is often referred to as “weak social ties”. Weak ties are defined as “everyday loose contacts” or “nodding relationships” within one’s neighbourhood<sup>vii</sup>. While sometimes minimal in their interactions, having a diversity of nodding relationships between community members can provide new sources of information, facilitate greater access to resources, foster wellbeing and provide “a feeling of home, practical, and social support”<sup>viii</sup>. Community markers that demonstrate a neighbour’s willingness to be seen and become a part of their local community could be as simple as a basket of fresh herbs with a note on their front gate or a sign saying that they are a Buy Nothing Project member. Shared libraries, Grow Free carts, or even a community bench on the front lawn act as conversation starters that open a window to who the person is and what their community values are. Often it’s the “big little roles”<sup>ix</sup> that are built between neighbours that can provide some of the strongest levels of neighbourhood safeguarding. Such little roles help either to break the ice between neighbours or act as a symbol to the kind of community that exists within them. Isolated or vulnerable people can also be encouraged to share lemons at their front gate or bring in the bins for neighbours when away. Thinking about the variety of ways, large and small, that people contribute to their neighbourhoods - regardless of time and resources - is one strong way that strengthening inclusion and access can be addressed.

Top: Photo of a Grow Free cart in the North Eastern Suburbs

Bottom: A photo of the plant share library that is part of the Little Library on Lloyd

## Little Library on Lloyd Street

Inspired by the City of Marion's Community Leadership course, Jody was encouraged to focus on a smaller achievable project within her local neighbourhood that would help to bring people together. In March of 2020 she launched the Little Library on her front lawn and from there her notoriety in the community grew. From quiet readers who silently exchange books to those who regularly leave notes of thanks, rolls of toilet paper, or strike up a conversation, Jody has engaged all manner of neighbours as library patrons. Secondary to the library are community events that Jody organises, such as Valentine’s Day book swaps and Neighbour Day BBQ’s that encourage others to come by and say hello. While the library is seemingly small in its approach, it’s what it demonstrates to other people in the community about the values of neighbourhood that Jody stands for that acts as a beacon and source of inspiration for others to do the same. With the support of neighbours and positive remarks from tradesmen doing work on their street, the library stands as a symbol of good neighbourliness and welcome.

**“The library is an ice breaker and makes people feel braver to say hello...I definitely feel like the library makes our house more approachable but it forces me to be more friendly too. I have anxiety, which means I’m not the person to say hello first very often, but if someone wants to talk books, gardens, bugs, veggies etc., it’s hard to shut me up!”** - Jody

## Ian Street: “A home for you and me”

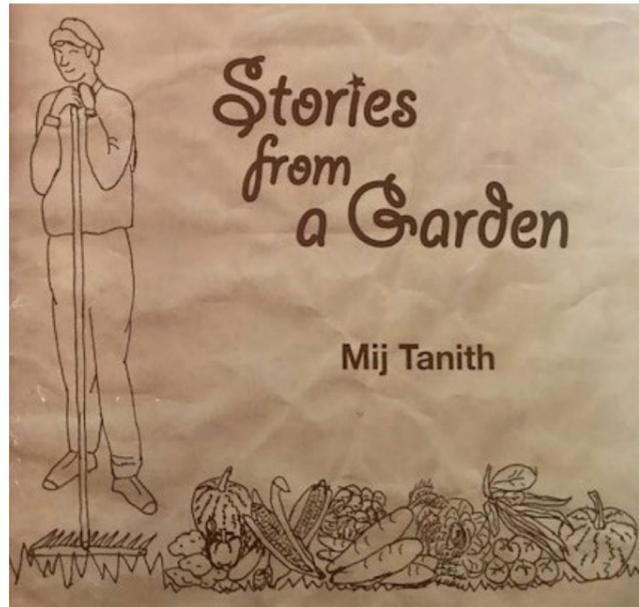


**“You don’t have to physically do anything but have a smile on your face...and that doesn’t cost anything”** - Chris

The champions of Ian Street understand the importance of time and patience when it comes to building a level of trust among a neighbourhood, particularly among some of its more vulnerable neighbours. Many people who are often marginalised or who live with a mental illness can face much judgment and stigma from members of their community. It is through neighbourhood champions Ann and Chris where Ian Street residents find a safe space of comfort and support. Mental Health advocate Ann and former nurse Chris know the value of simple exchanges between neighbours and the importance of giving time for trust to build. An essential requirement to enable trust to build is also to ensure that everyone’s information shared is kept private and confidential. The techniques used by Ann and Chris to build trust with neighbours are simple, but dependent on their repetition and respect. By being known as “the lady who walks”, saying hello, sharing fruit or produce, and hosting neighbourhood socials like their annual Christmas party, the ethos of everyone being a part of the greater community can be built. Often it is the fear that people will be called on all the time, or will have to always be hosts for coffee, that keeps many people from engaging with one another in our local neighbourhood. What Ian Street demonstrates, however, is a street where everyone is looked out for in seemingly everyday ways that doesn’t often take too much time or resources. By genuinely showing a level of trust and kindness, Ian Street becomes a place where “everybody knows your name”.

## “Stories from a Garden”

When a group of neighbours in Adelaide’s City southwest banded together to create a new community garden there were many ideas surrounding its purpose, aims and intended outcomes. What resulted from the creation of the garden, however, demonstrates the importance of shared values, simplicity and genuine social connection. Within her prose poem “Stories from a Garden” Mij reflects on all the personal stories that were inspired from people who attended the garden surrounding a group bonfire one evening. For some participants it was the chance to connect to earth and grow produce from their home country where they migrated from years before, while for others it was the chance to meet new neighbours and build social connections. The main message shared throughout the different stories gives testament to the fact that it is the informal social connections built with people working and sharing together that makes the biggest impact. In the end it doesn’t matter what the size of the garden or project might be, but the values of neighbourhood and community that brings people together. It is this simplicity of connecting to one another - whatever method that may be.



Cover image of “Stories from a Garden” now out of print

## Building resilience and social reconnections:

Many people who live vulnerable or socially isolated lives often risk becoming further isolated through a decrease in their own social resilience and confidence. The more time one spends alone the more overwhelming the idea of having to leave the home, to build new relationships, or stay socially connected becomes. Many vulnerable people also spoke about not going to something new out of fear for their safety - often stating that they would only go if they had someone they trust with them for support. The following initiatives work to help build someone’s social connections and social resilience in the community through positive relationship building. Another key element is in providing sufficient time for people’s social capacities and resilience to build. Relationship building and trust can take months and years, not days or even weeks. The time needed for people to feel a sense of belonging also varies from person to person. Therefore we need to respect the

time it might take to build emotional resilience and social connection, understanding it as a long-term goal rather than an immediate outcome.



A photo of Angie’s backyard garden after becoming inspired by the Ovingham Greening group. Angie has become an active member of the Ovingham street garden since it started, which has helped her own self-confidence to grow.

**“Because I say hello and respond, they learned that they can trust me...it takes time, it takes patience to build up trust” - Ann**

**“I got inspired with the community garden. It has encouraged me a lot and my confidence has grown. I get enjoyment being involved.” - Angie**

## Reconnections by Independent Age

**“With the support from Reconnections, I feel like I’m part of the planet again.”**  
–Reconnections Participant<sup>x</sup>

A program in the UK aims to help vulnerable people to build and develop their social connections and resilience through a volunteer matching program. While volunteers may only spend one hour a day in the person’s home they are matched based on their personalities and know how to slowly help the vulnerable person to feel more confident to step out into opportunities present within their community. Highlighted as one of the most significant barriers for people to step out and into something new, this particular initiative works to help address the safety element that often prevents many vulnerable people from joining or taking part in

community. A common by-product of participating in various communities’ activities often comes through the social connections that are built with those who participate in a group, such as a men’s shed, community garden or walking club<sup>xi</sup>. While Reconnections links a volunteer with a vulnerable person living alone in their home, the primary objective is not for them to kill time with activities, but to help them build enough confidence to step out and take part in existing initiatives within the community. In this instance the volunteer’s job is to act as the social bridge or buffer for the vulnerable person and help them to expand on their social network.

## Online ‘facilitators’: E.g 1000 Hearts

For many people who live with a mental illness or social anxiety putting yourself ‘out there’ can be a daunting prospect. Recognition therefore needs to be given to many online spaces that act in the role of social facilitators. Groups like the Buy Nothing Project, NextDoor and 1000 Hearts exist on various online platforms yet encourage small in-person exchanges that helps to re-build a sense of social connection. 1000 Hearts is a project based around small pocket hearts that are handmade and stitched “with love and good intentions”<sup>xii</sup>. People can create these hearts at home and then offer them to others as a random act of kindness. Originally based out of Tasmania, 1000 Hearts has now grown to include people from all across the world and has supported countless others to get through some hard times. “Heartist” Michelle in Port Lincoln described how making hearts at home helped her build her confidence and need for social connection while facing depression<sup>xiii</sup>. It was the presence of this online community of heartists that helped her to feel a sense of value and purpose through a small, everyday task that

she could do at home. This task inevitably helped to rebuild her social resilience and confidence to step out, give them away as a gesture of kindness and even create her own ‘heart talks’ social group in the Port Lincoln area for other people to come together and connect.



Photo by Nikala Bourke of heartist founder Sarah surrounded by hearts, Facebook

**“Since I started 1000 Hearts, it’s been incredibly powerful to see my small, personal project transform into a global community of people inspired to offer kindness. It gives me faith in humanity and offers hope that, despite all evidence to the contrary, there is more love in the world than we can possibly imagine.” - Sarah De Jonge, 1000 Hearts founder**

## JFA Purple Orange 'Dig In' Project

The trial JFA gardening project aimed to connect people who lived alone in their own homes to gardening. Four members from a local community garden paired up with two people who lived alone, to help them build and create their own gardens in their backyards. While the initiative helped to build the participants' own personal garden, what it helped facilitate beyond the home is what had the most significant impact. The garden members who came to the home over time built relationships with the home-gardeners and maintained these relationships after the program was completed. One particular participant in the project spoke of the confidence and social resilience that she was able to build through the relationships and level of trust formed with the community gardeners. The time and space given to allow their relationship to form gave her the confidence she needed to step out and join the

community garden itself. Getting to know people who were already members of this garden helped her feel that she already had the connections that she needed to step out and try something new.

**"It's just been such a great starting point for the long-term. Beforehand I would be sort of hesitant to join in on things.....I would just shy away from things. But I've learned that I can ask for what I need with things and people actually just like having me there."** - Nicole, Dig in Participant<sup>xiv</sup>

## Removing barriers - structural, governance and resource

A great way that inclusion and accessibility can also be supported is through the removal of administrative barriers that often prevent good things from happening. These barriers include matters of insurance, funding, resources, rules, regulations, as well as time. While governance is typically seen as dull and uninspiring it plays an important role in either enhancing or inhibiting a neighbourhood initiative from getting started. Informal or formal partnerships that provide either insurance coverage, essential funding, administrative support or resources can help to counteract some of these barriers. On a large or small scale, many neighbourhood led

initiatives are supported by other umbrella agencies who take on the bulk of administrative responsibilities that have the potential to hinder a group's ability to do their work on the ground. The City of Charles Sturt Open Space Planner Janet instead talks about "the power of yes", in which findings ways to collaborate, support and empower individuals in the community to take charge of their own initiatives can yield magic results. These are just a few examples of initiatives that act as the governance umbrellas so that neighbours can focus on what they do best - connect.



A photo of a picnic organised by Imagine Uraidla for the community after the bushfires as a way of coming together as a town. The Uraidla concert band played and people brought their own food.



A photo of the Imagine Uraidla stall at the sustainability fair where they ask for feedback from the community.

## Participatory City - Every One Every Day

On a large scale the Every One Every Day project in the UK facilitates more than 250 "hands on" programs that include the sharing of knowledge, spaces and resources, such as joint places for families and neighbours to work, play, cook, grow food and make things together. Developing projects that are thoughtfully designed to assist members of local communities to work together, opportunities are provided for local members to share skills in a socially enjoyable way. The neighbourhood-based programming within this project is designed to remove many of the social, cultural and logistical

barriers that often prevent people from taking part in their neighbourhood and are centered on activities that people in the community have expressed as being important to them. By removing many of the structural barriers, as well as resourcing and time necessary to ensure the initiatives are successful, many neighbourhood-based projects were supported to continue online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Every One Every Day does the bulk of the administrative work - so that the barriers facing community members to contribute and connect with one another are significantly reduced.

**"Every One Every Day is well on its way to showing that a systems-level approach to participation not only helps the residents of Barking and Dagenham plant gardens and build play spaces, but also forges new friendships and fosters trust among neighbours."** Every One Every Day<sup>xv</sup>

## Imagine Uraidla

Across Imagine Uraidla there is an intentionality behind maintaining positive group dynamics and a shared vision. The goals of imagine Uraidla are to "connect, inspire, and empower" members of its community, in which its primary aim is not to tell the community what to do, but to listen and support resident goals to be achieved. Across a community forum in 2019 an open agenda was facilitated that saw Imagine Uraidla ask residents: "what do you want to talk about"? From this forum the community's own desired projects and areas of focus were formed. Moving towards a more distributed model means getting behind members of a community and only

leading things that they want led. As such, Imagine Uraidla moved towards empowering its community through an umbrella structure that sees power for change shift back to community residents. Ownership for areas or circles of importance are facilitated by passionate members of the community, while the back of house governance matters, such as communication, funding, insurance and administration are organised by Imagine Uraidla. Freeing up people's time by "taking on all the boring stuff", the committee operates on an ethos of giving permission and space for the people to come together through a shared sense of contribution and belonging.

**"There is something really empowering about little things and giving people power to change where they live...it's infectious for people as well. More and more people inevitably drive change in their community..."** – Jess, Chair Imagine Uraidla



Imagine Uraidla Inc. is a volunteer run community group focused on connecting (through a monthly newsletter and social media), inspiring (through events and projects), empowering (through our subgroups). They see themselves as enablers for anyone in their district with an idea they want to bring to life

## 5049 Coastal Community Association

The 5049 Coastal Community Association (formerly the Marino Community Association) acts in a similar model to Imagine Uraidla in that its primary responsibility is to act as an umbrella organisation to many smaller sub-groups and support other local projects and initiatives, such as the One Voice Kingston Park, Friends of Pine Gully, and the Seacliff Food Swap. There are also many other facilitated place-making projects that focus on bringing members of the community together, such as the Street Verge Project and the Kind Neighbour Initiative. A large role of the 5049 Coastal Community Association is also in facilitating the sharing of information through their regular newsletter to over 750 local residents, in which they help disseminate important council information, advertise for groups and projects, as well as share stories about other community groups and neighbours. 5049 is largely successful in many areas of its work particularly when focusing on enhancing the level of community involvement and accountability to the area, as well as building the relationship between residents and council. A key focus of 5049 is its Kind Neighbour Initiative that began in March 2020. The Kind Neighbour Initiative was created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on vulnerable

or isolated people living alone in their home. This initiative encourages 'neighbourhood champions' to take the lead in looking out for other potentially vulnerable members of their community, initiate opportunities for social connection, and strengthen a sense of neighbourliness and neighbourhood connectedness.



Neighbours at a Kind Neighbour BBQ hosted by neighbour David

## Building and strengthening neighbourhood ownership and contribution

When it comes to instilling a sense of belonging and desire to be involved, there is a need to inspire others to take ownership of their own community and feel like they are a part of it. One of the great ways that this can be done is through empowering place-based projects or efforts of "place-making"<sup>1 xvi</sup> that help build a sense of ownership and responsibility. Research conducted across more "distressed urban areas" found that "mutual trust generates informal governance as well as the feeling of responsibility. When people identify with a neighbourhood and feel part of it they are more inclined to participate"<sup>xvii</sup>. Building a stronger level of community inclusion often relies on members of the community being empowered to take charge themselves. Much like the sharing of responsibilities for inclusion, the strongest and most sustainable initiatives are the ones that grow from the community up. The level of participation taken from a community can vary from formal - giving residents the power to make direct decisions - to informal, such as organising neighbourhood parties and events<sup>xviii</sup>. Whatever the reason for their implementation it's the sense of shared ownership and responsibility to their neighbourhood that helps to build an ethos of belonging that can grow across its neighbours.



## Living Smart Course

The aim of the Living Smart Course is to enhance the knowledge and know-how of people to live more sustainably<sup>xix</sup>. While the main aim is to help people to improve their quality of life and environmental impact, a natural outcome is encouraging stronger relationships between people in local neighbourhoods, as well as the linking of networks and mentors together. What naturally follows among Living Smart Course participants is a deepened understanding towards the importance of sharing resources and knowledge among members of one's own local neighbourhood as a way to "live smarter" and less wasteful lives. Course participants have not only instigated various projects like building community verges, stobie pole art-work, and community wide clean ups, but also creating a street registry where neighbours sign up to share various resources, such as building/maintenance equipment, produce or even their time to baby-sit or dog-walk. People who have an initial interest or desire to live more sustainably and ethically are given a space to workshop and network with other like-minded individuals and build the roadmap to help make their ideas happen. Communities of individuals are then empowered to take charge of projects in their own neighbourhood and strengthen the ethos of community ownership with the mentoring and support of others who take part in the course together. Through this a collaborative network of ideas, support and encouragement can be formed, in which individuals are empowered to become leaders within their local neighbourhood.

**"Even if you have a project idea, you don't have the motivation to get started... I would not have done something if I didn't have the people together to help and give the roadmap to make it happen"** - Kinda, Living Smart Course participant

<sup>1</sup> "Placemaking is the process of creating quality places where people want to live, work, play, shop, learn, and visit." (Wycoff et al. 2019, p. VI)

## Adelaide LETS (Local Exchange Trading System)

**"These exchange systems are community-focused in order to build community and keep wealth where it is created... Complementary exchange systems foster the real wealth of communities and rebuild a sense of worth and self-esteem among their users"** - LETS website<sup>xx</sup>

Based on a system of trading 'units' the Community Exchange system in Australia - locally known as LETS (Local Exchange Trade System) in Adelaide - follows a principle of reciprocity without the reliance on monetary currency. Members of LETS provide a list of "offers" and "wants", in which there is a broad, community wide system of trading goods and services with other individuals dependent on their needs. If Julie wants her hair cut and has peaches that she can trade, then she can trade those peaches to Tim for units and use those units to have her hair cut by Sandra etc. Members of the LETS group help each other with various physical tasks, such as gardening or house cleaning, in exchange for other goods and services from other members. The system works because it encourages a more natural and organic form of asking that isn't dependent on government, social services or monetary currency. Relationships are often built among the community of people within LETS, in which it helps provide opportunities for people to share ideas and build on a sense of active participation in their broader community. Based on a system of reciprocity that is non-monetary in nature, LETS is not reliant on people to volunteer their time as much as it acknowledges the skills and contributions that can be given to each other in a variety of ways.



A picture of LETS members Amada and Sue trading a woven basket and plant

## Gumeracha Main Street Project

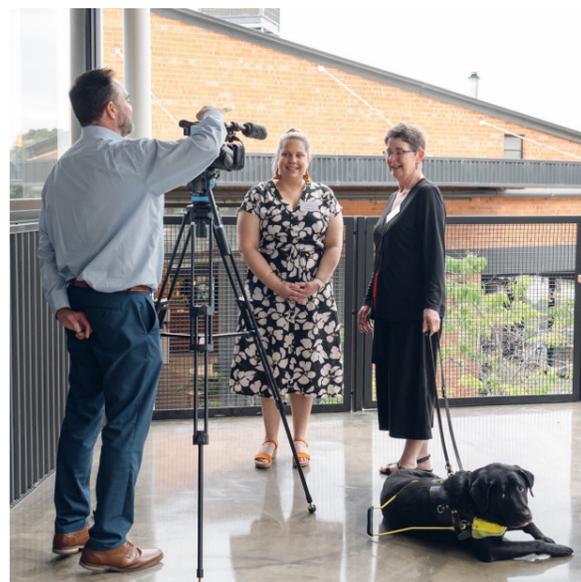


Photo of Gumeracha Main Street Members, Adelaide Hills Newspaper

Within the Adelaide Hills community of Gumeracha a similar story of a community banding together to improve the live-ability, sustainability and vibrancy of its town can be seen in the members of Gumeracha

Main Street. Former journalist and community member Chelsea saw a vision for improving Gumeracha and so called a meeting of the town to identify short, medium and long-term goals that the people wanted to see for their community, particularly in regards to improving its main street. What started with the goal of removing all the above ground power lines from the main street eventually evolved into an association of people who over the years have taken on various initiatives to improve the area and bring people together. From running fundraisers to provide essential insurance to various community groups, winter solstice events, and a Fifth Sunday Market organised by the town's "lead lingerer" Libby that now hosts over 80 market vendors, Gumeracha Main Street has helped to put the town of Gumeracha on the map. What makes this group unique is the creativity of its members to run events, fundraisers and improvements with very little resources and money, but a lot of passion, resilience and determination to take charge of its community and make things better for everyone who lives there.

**Annette Holden is an active disability awareness facilitator and advocate. She is also an active and avid volunteer in her community. Annette with her trusty sidekick RSB guide dog Molly live a life that is rich in contribution and purpose, always giving back and inspiring others to do the same.**



Left: Annette and Molly being interviewed by Volunteering SA/NT about inclusive communities; Middle: Annette taking part in an inclusive cooking class at Sprout with Emilee and her RSB guide dog Molly; Right: A photo of Annette and her RSB guide dog Molly at their official graduation (photo credit to RSB Guide Dogs).

# Supports as the "bridges to belonging"

## Knowing your role

For many paid support workers there is often a narrow perception as to what their role entails that can inadvertently limit people's thinking and ability to see themselves as the bridge to social connection. For the unpaid supports in someone's life, such as a key parent or loved one, a narrow perception towards what is possible can also be limiting and restrictive. Thinking about your role as the "bridge" to belonging<sup>xxi</sup> means considering all the different possibilities and ways that you can support the vulnerable person to connect, build relationships, contribute their skills, gifts and talents, and generally build a life that is filled with meaning and purpose. While you may think that you are only hired to help with cooking, gardening or running errands, your role as a bridge makes it so much more. Can you assist the person share some of what they have cooked with a neighbour or contribute a baked good at the next community garden morning tea? If you are assisting the person to run errands, what perceptions are you giving to others about the person who you are supporting? When doing gardening, in what ways can you support the person to connect with neighbours, gardening groups or others about this shared passion that allows more people to be brought 'in'? While people who are supporting a person to achieve many basic tasks do important work in assisting them to accomplish many day-to-day matters, viewing their role as more than just a task or activity can lead to more impactful and meaningful results for the person's inclusion into their community. Always considering and thinking of your role as the bridge or connector to neighbourhood broadens one's thinking about what is possible and what this support role can truly accomplish.

**"You need to have carved out time to help be the bridge for others to connect to the community"**  
- Janet Klees, 2021<sup>xxii</sup>

## Know the person: What are their skills, gifts and talents?

When thinking about the person you know, support or care for, the important thing to consider is whether or not you are starting with their vulnerability and the challenges they might encounter, or if you are starting with the things about them that draw people in. Often people who are marginalised and live with a disability or other vulnerability become limited by the characteristics of their vulnerability and discouraged from trying new things, or even the same things as their neighbours and peers. What inevitably happens is that people begin to lack many opportunities to explore the world beyond their own home or a segregated program, which limits their ability to explore places with others who might share their same interests and passions. Building neighbourhoods of inclusivity and belonging means taking a one person at a time approach. It means understanding who the person is, what their strengths, interests and passions are so that the right fit can be found. By first deepening one's knowledge about who the person is, the world of opportunities becomes greater and the ability to consider opportunities for valued roles within them can be formed. Does the person have a passion for gardens or gardening? Do they enjoy fine-motor tasks with detail? Thinking about the mainstream, every-day ways that other people in the community would have their passions and interests met is critical in order to move forward to the next step in thinking about roles. First, however, we must really get to know the layers of a person before we explore what may be the right fit.

**Take the time to be alone with the person in quiet communication to get to know them at a deeper level.**

## Think roles, not activities

Often what gets in the way of supporting people to fill valued roles in their community is the attempt to entertain them or fill their time with various activities. While a life that includes fun and at times random activities, such as attending festivals or concerts, going bowling, or visiting the beach brings great enjoyment to our day there is a balance that must be struck between how much time is spent doing them - especially if they encompass all free hours of the day or the hours of one's shift. Going to the movies on the weekend is a great past-time for someone who has had a meaningful week, especially if it is with a friend who they haven't seen in a while. But going to the movies during the day with a support worker begins to lose its gloss if it becomes the highlight of the week and a repeated activity that is used to fill frequent gaps of empty time that comes from not having meaningful work, study, familial obligations,

or other community-based commitments. When we think about what fills our lives with meaning, often it is the various roles that we hold that contribute to making those days meaningful ones. Over the course of our lives we can generally mark how our life has been spent through the various roles that have filled it with purpose. So if someone is passionate about art, what roles can they fulfill that will offer them greater opportunities for meaningful contribution and a chance to meet other people with similar interests? Can this person not only take art-classes at a local art studio, but also join an artist's guild or committee? Are there volunteer or work roles that they can fulfill in the role of artist or protégé? Rather than thinking just about doing a task or activity that kills time, think about ways that their interest or passion, skills, gifts and talents can be harnessed into a meaningful role that will give them a greater sense of purpose and belonging to a group of people or their neighbourhood.

## The valued roles of Brenton, Morphett Vale Football Club member

Brenton is a man who likes routine, but he found himself with some spare time on Tuesday mornings without a usual place to go. Brenton's regular support worker Donald knew about Brenton's interests, his desire to get out and meet people, and his like of places where "you leave your ego at the door". As a member of the Friday morning crew at the Morphett Vale Football Club (MVFC), Donald knew the place to be a welcoming site where men from the area got together, socialised over football, and helped to do some maintenance on the grounds. When Donald

suggested the idea of Brenton becoming a member and taking on some roles and responsibilities, both the club and Brenton jumped at the idea. Since joining the MVFC in January 2021 Brenton plays a valuable role in helping organise the bottles and cans essential to the club's fundraising, painting and building tables, and keeping the garden alive. Volunteering at the club at the same time, same day, every week has solidified Brenton's role and place at the MVFC and the valuable contributions that he can make.

**"Brenton is a well-known and important member of the club...they are very grateful for his help" - Donald**



Photo of Brenton awarded with a swag and commendation for his volunteering



Photos of Brenton painting a table (left) and organising bottles (right) as part of MVFC fundraising



## Rethinking 'busyness'

The concept of busyness sometimes arises for many vulnerable people who might have their week filled with various activities that take them away from their local neighbourhood or mainstream spaces where there could be others who have common interests. While a number of people may be seemingly busy, the nature of how they engage in these activities can actually be quite isolating. How often do they actually spend time doing activities in the home alone or with paid supports? How often are they in places where their opportunities to build freely given relationships are made possible? Is the majority of their time spent doing ad hoc or infrequent activities that vary from week to week? While doing multiple different activities throughout the week and within the home can indeed keep people busy, the lack of routine or purpose within them can limit the opportunities for people to build relationships, meaningful social

connections and a sense of belonging. If joining a club or group may be too big a step, even just moving that activity to a space that is more visible to their neighbours can increase the opportunities for people to be seen and acknowledged by others. This can include doing more gardening projects in the front of the house rather than out the back or having morning tea in the local park or front step rather than the kitchen. A key part of building relationships and becoming known in one's neighbourhood is built through a level of active participation, visibility and consistency. In order for people to be missed when they are not there, we need to first bring them 'there'. In order to be seen in our neighbourhoods we first need to be present in them. We need to rethink busyness, particularly when it comes to helping people live meaningful lives full of contribution. Being present doesn't have to add additional time to our routine, but can just involve shifting our thinking to where, when and how things might happen.

## Think frequent and regular

Relationships can take time to build, in which being in the same place, at the same time, with great regularity can strengthen opportunities for friendships to form. Being in the same place as others who share the same interests or hobbies can also increase the chances of developing positive relationships with people who share a common interest or value. The importance of taking time and having patience to allow a routine to form and trusted relationships to be built has been highlighted previously, however there is a need to re-emphasise the significant role that supports play in ensuring this happens. While the rotation and turnover of support teams can negatively impact a person living with a vulnerability or impairment to maintain a level of continuity in their routine, it doesn't

mean that it cannot happen. The unpaid supports in a person's life can help ensure that the significance of someone attending their regular knitting group or community shed is a shared value and ethos that continues across varying support teams and staff. People who hold a natural support role or freely given relationship can play an even more powerful role through their presence over the long-term. Chances are these people will know the person best and can help advocate for the importance of them living a meaningful life. These people may even take up naturally supportive roles over time, such as helping to give a ride to the various committee meetings or work out together at the local fitness center. Whatever their role might be in supporting the person, remembering the importance of regular and frequent over the long-term is key.

**"If we give people activities then we kill time. But if we give people valued roles then time takes care of itself" - Linda Shevellar, 2012<sup>xxiii</sup>**

## Positive role modelling: “What am I putting into the hearts and minds of others?”<sup>xxiv</sup>

When reflecting on the role of paid and unpaid supports in the life of a vulnerable person, how certain behaviours, attitudes and values are role-modelled to the community is just as important as efforts made to previously connect to opportunities “out there”. The first important aspect in a paid support role is recognising one’s responsibility to be the bridge to the relationship and not the relationship itself. Some well-intentioned support workers view themselves as friends of the person they support and so sometimes actively, or unconsciously, block opportunities for the person to build relationships that are freely given with others. Being paid to spend time with the person can complicate the nature of the relationship and so recognising the distinction here is important. By thinking about the different ways that you can encourage other people to step into the role of friend and take a back-seat when such opportunities arise, you are facilitating a relationship that can be better guaranteed for the long-term. If you have stepped out of a paid role and you find yourself still wanting to be with the person in a freely given capacity once some time has passed, then many of the complications that prevented your friendship before may no longer apply.

*A photo of Adrian with his dogs, Stella, Ted and Boof. Adrian previously operated a micro enterprise “Something for Stella”; making and selling dog biscuits in Mt Gambier.*

Recognising the distinction between paid and freely given support, however, is critical. In your support role your primary aim is to assist people become comfortable on “both sides of the bridge”<sup>xxvi</sup>. As the bridge you play an important role in positive role-modelling for both the person you support and the community that they are engaging with. How you speak to, regard and treat the person you support in public sends a message to others in the community and so ensuring that this message is a positive one is critical. Helping other people in the local area learn more about who the person is by role-modelling positive responses or explanations about any traits that could be perceived as different, odd, or alarming to others is also another way that you can bridge gaps in people’s perceptions and attitudes that can sometimes isolate them to others. Through friendly, positive role modelling, you can strengthen your role as a social bridge and reduce barriers to inclusion.

**“You have a responsibility to be the bridge to the relationship and not the relationship itself.”**

- Janet Klees, 2021 <sup>xxvii</sup>

# How might we manage tensions of safety and risk?

**“They are very vulnerable to being taken advantage of. I need to keep them safe. Some of their neighbours may be dangerous.”**

When speaking with many families, key loved ones, and Circles of Support about what we have learned so far with the Neighbourhood Circles Project, many questions arose surrounding issues of safety and how to support their loved one who may be increasingly vulnerable to meaningfully engage with things happening in their local neighbourhood. Among many paid support teams the tensions surrounding perceptions of risk assessment and risk management can also be quite restricting, particularly if the perceived risk is in someone trying something new or mainstream. Often the misperception that things out ‘in community’ are more dangerous or will not properly address someone’s vulnerability come from a historical basis of assuming that only segregated or ‘special’ spaces, places and services are the best equipped to look out for people and

keep them safe. Among many neighbourhood circles there are many tensions surrounding the positive risk assessment of various neighbourhood gatherings, social events, initiatives and projects that prevent them from getting started in the first place. However, what are the risks of people *not* being part of their local community? Acknowledging the questions, fears and misapprehensions surrounding risk and safety is important to better support networks of supports surrounding a vulnerable person to think differently or perhaps more confidently about how to build neighbourhood connections. It also acts as an important reminder to councils, services or any umbrella groups that may be inadvertently limiting or inhibiting opportunities for social connection based on a perceived analysis of risk.

## Acknowledging risk in our neighbourhoods

A common concern for many key loved ones of a person with increased vulnerabilities relates to their safety. People who live on their own with an intellectual or physical disability, who are elderly or who may suffer from adverse mental health, are often vulnerable to a series of risks as a result of their various impairments or frailties. This could include being taken advantage of or abused financially, physically, sexually or psychologically. In speaking with many key family members and allies, the concerns surrounding their parent, child, sibling or friend is often around the potential risk to abuse that they might face in opening up or becoming known by those who live around them. Neighbourhood circles and initiatives speak about the importance of insurance matters and issues of liability that are often constraining and restrictive. Many vulnerable people are either instructed not to or will not themselves answer the door to strangers for fear that they intend

to do harm. For many key loved ones such fears surrounding safety are often genuine and deserve to be recognised. However, by actively inhibiting or keeping a vulnerable person away from perceived threats in their neighbourhood or preventing neighbours from developing a sense of empowerment in their neighbourhood, a person’s vulnerability can also increase as a result of becoming further isolated from those who live around them and those who can act as important sources of safeguarding. Instead we need to think about our neighbourhoods as potential sources of safety and support; a place filled with those who can help to protect others from experiencing further harm or potential abuse. While deciding to support a vulnerable person to build connections with their broader community may seem risky, there are also risks in that person becoming further isolated if they don’t build those connections. By not being seen or present in their community, people can become inadvertently forgotten in their isolation or develop an over-dependence on paid services and supports. It is weighing up the potential risks of isolation that requires greater recognition.

## Addressing vulnerability through safeguarding

Vulnerability is always a matter of degree, in which some factors can make us more or less vulnerable or change the nature of our vulnerabilities over time<sup>xxviii</sup>. One key way that we can both acknowledge and manage vulnerability, however, is by considering and implementing intentional safeguards. While a person's vulnerabilities cannot be eliminated entirely they can be minimised by consciously creating and designing practices or building networks that can help to anticipate any potential shortcomings or adverse scenarios. As highlighted by disability consultant Dr. Michael Kendrick, being mindful of vulnerability means that we can also be mindful to the kinds of safeguards that are required in order to manage and live with these vulnerabilities<sup>xxix</sup>. Often the best safeguards come through taking preventative rather than corrective measures, in which building a strong informal network around a person is best. While vulnerabilities mean that people are able to be hurt, it doesn't mean that they can't live good lives. By addressing these vulnerabilities through intentional safeguarding, we can help to support people to better adapt, live and manage these vulnerabilities in a way that helps them to still be active members of their own neighbourhoods. A strategy sometimes relied upon to support vulnerable people live meaningful lives is through the building of an intentional network of people that can help to look out for that person into the future, such as a Circle of Support<sup>xxx</sup>. The greater the number of natural supports that surround a person, the greater the level of safeguarding and support that can exist to mitigate or manage many potential risks. If someone is inviting neighbours over to a neighbourhood BBQ then perhaps they can also invite their network of support to be there to help monitor the situation and the people who attend? Considering safeguards means considering and potentially counteracting one's vulnerability as a barrier to belonging.



A photo of Adam and his Circle of Support

## Being a neighbour

When we reflect on the statement, "it's people knowing him that keeps him safe", we are reminded of the importance of being seen in one's neighbourhood. Often it is by being present and part of one's community when vulnerable people are then able to build stronger systems of support that can inevitably help keep them safe rather than become the cause of further harm. This is not to say that a vulnerable person should build a relationship with every neighbour on their street or member of their community, but rather by helping to think about strategies and safeguards we can better support them to build the right relationships with the right neighbours on their street. Providing opportunities for conversations to open up between neighbours doesn't have to be a risky thing if the manner in which it is done is thoughtful, considered and intentional. Not everyone will be in the right place or mindset to invite a group of strangers and neighbours into their backyard for a BBQ, but could this happen in the front yard where it is more visible or in a public park close by? Can the person also invite other friends, family and trusted allies to the BBQ to help them build the right relationships with the people that come? If a BBQ is too great a social occasion, then can you help to put Christmas cards or a small gift in your neighbours' mailboxes over the holidays to help break the ice and see who responds in kind? Again this isn't to assume that all neighbours will be our friends or will be there to turn to in a time of crisis, but by even acknowledging one's neighbour someone can be made safer rather than less-safe from their isolation. Kindness is also not something that relies on us having genuine feelings or emotions for the person we are kind to. We don't have to love or be friends with our neighbours to be kind to them. But by saying hello or undertaking small gestures of kindness, you are letting neighbours know that you are someone they can turn to in a time of need. Being a neighbour can just start by getting to know your other neighbours' names and then let the conversation take you from there.

**"We don't have to be best friends with our neighbours, but we have to be neighbours."**  
-Hugh Mackay, 2021<sup>xxxi</sup>



## Moving forward

Within these two documents we aimed to provide a snapshot to the breadth of different neighbourhood led initiatives that exist across the greater Adelaide region. We also aimed to highlight some of the great work being done by a variety of bright sparks, linkers, and champions within our neighbourhoods to bring people together and build a sense of belonging. Despite the many great things that are happening within our neighbourhoods, however, many of our more vulnerable members are still inadvertently or unconsciously excluded from being a part of them. There is still much that can be done to strengthen the inclusivity and accessibility of all our neighbourhood circles and help to bring more people 'in' into the future. While these two documents focused mainly on neighbourhoods within the greater Adelaide region, there are many lessons learned that can be readily applied to other neighbourhoods across South Australia and beyond. Much of what brings people together or keeps them apart is the result of many universal or structural factors. So while these documents remained focused in Adelaide, we hope they might also help to inspire and support other groups from beyond our city limits to think more about their own efforts to encourage greater neighbourhood inclusion and belonging.

These two documents exist as just one outcome from the *Neighbourhood Circles Project*, which aims to explore, amplify, replicate and sustain the inclusivity of neighbourhood led initiatives. Both documents aim to provide some findings around what we have found across Adelaide's neighbourhoods and partially amplify what is currently being done to address barriers to inclusion and access. However, more still needs to be done in order to appropriately strengthen existing neighbourhood groups' inclusivity and accessibility, as well as replicate and sustain their presence into the future. While there is no one size fits all approach to inclusion, it first begins by acknowledging that every individual has a role that they can play in the life of someone who might be more vulnerable. It can be as simple as finally knocking on your neighbour's door to introduce yourself or helping to share a ride to the local community garden. It is first in acknowledging and recognising the importance of inclusion for all people within our neighbourhoods that can help us to become more intentional and mindful in our approach. While we don't know what the future holds for this project, we are eager to continue to engage with neighbourhood champions, leaders and all people living within our neighbourhoods to explore what it might take to support greater neighbourhood inclusion and belonging into the future.

# An interview with the Friends of Pine Gully group

With Kinda Tabbaa-Snyder; Friends of Pine Gully

**How did the Friends of Pine Gully (FoPG) start? What prompted you to give it a go? How long has this been going for?**

Pine Gully is a reserved park extended between Kingston Crescent and Seacliff Life Saving Club. Until 2017 little attention was given to this gully despite it being a home for 12 rare plant species. Before the 1960s it was burnt regularly in an attempt to get rid of snakes and it was used as a building material dumpster when Brighton Road was constructed. A group of Girl Scouts in 1960 campaigned against the regular burning because the sides of the Gully were collapsing dangerously underneath the houses because of the lack of vegetation coverage. Unfortunately, the type of vegetation planted (Aleppo Pine) made the gully a fire hazard spot in the neighbourhood and smothered any chance for native species to survive. For all these reasons it was important for me to have a solution for these challenges, but I did not know where to start. In 2017 I did the Smart Living Course with Emma Sandry. This course focused on environmental education and on encouraging locals to start their own initiatives. Encouraged by the Smart Living group, the support of the new landscape Board (previously NRM), and Holdfast Bay Council, the "Friends of Pine Gully group" was established. During 2006-2017 two neighbours started working on part of Pine Gully land along Kingston Crescent. They recorded their observation and experience during these years and become the guides for the rest of the community in bush care processes. FoPG then become a valuable aid to assist the Seacliff Community in the challenging task of managing the Pine Gully Reserve and restoring its native vegetation by controlling weeds and replanting appropriate species.

**What role does this play in your neighbourhood? How has it changed the relationship between neighbours in your neighbourhood, if at all? How has it changed the relationship you have with your neighbours, if at all?**

FoPG become the local pride of the neighbourhood and a regular gathering for neighbours to get together socially. It created sense of solidarity and gave courage for more initiatives to flourish from the members of the group who were hindered by the lack of the knowledge on how to start. The change in the mentality of the people can best be reflected by sharing this story: We had a grumpy elder neighbour who used to fight with all the surrounding neighbours. As a new neighbour, I did not know about it and I invited him to our working bees and BBQ regularly. In one of the BBQs, he came and hugged me and said this is the first time he felt home in this neighbourhood. I think his grumpiness was his way to call for attention. He is now one of the regular members and best contributor. As for me, I felt for the first time for 5 years in Australia (2012-2017) that I belong to a place. I felt home because I felt I have value for the people around me and my efforts are appreciated and supported. I have been given lots of love and local recognition that gave me a sense of pride and dignity.

**Have you faced any challenges with the Pine Gully group?: Any 'tricky neighbours', acts of vandalism, council issues etc.?**

We had lots of internal politics that are common for community group. They are manageable and even make the dynamic of the place more interesting. However, we had an incident when we had only enough funds to resurface one of the two paths in the gully and the group organised a public consultation to choose which path should be left open. The result of

closing one of the paths reflected badly on the FoPG because 6 families thought that the group had no right to define which path should be closed. A couple of passersby harassed our volunteers and started to attack them verbally. We also had some plants uprooted. In this incident we asked for council support to do an extended public consultation. The results showed the importance of Pine Gully for the wider community. Four of the contesting families did not live in the area, but they wanted the gully to be the way it was when they were kids, while 2 elderly couples had used the closed path for 30 years and they did not want to use the other path. The council resolved the matter by re-opening the second path and paying to resurface it.

**Do you have any stories about the Pine Gully group and its role in your neighbourhood that you would like to share? Any 'good news' stories or positive experiences that came as a result? Fondest memories about what the group has brought to your life?**

Since the beginning, FoPG group become involved in local issues, such as campaigning against closing the Pine Avenue railway crossing. We won a \$740 grant from DPTI to reopen the crossing. However, because they refused to install a crossing without the loud noise, the group supported Minister David Spiers in his efforts to redistribute the money for local projects in the area, such as the water catchment in Pine Gully and building a social gathering square near the Seacliff Surf Life Saving Club, among others. Members of the group started butterfly native gardens on the verges of a local kindy, planting on the corner of Kauri Parade and Wheatland Street and planting a patch near the Pine Gully crossing. One of the members passed away few months ago because of cancer. She was loved dearly by everyone and she kept me persistent and accountable. One of the group members suggested to leave one flower bouquet and fresh produce on her door when she had refused to meet anyone and decided to be a recluse. After she passed, a group member suggested naming the patch in front of her house that she was dedicated to take care of with her name. Another member who was a talented woodworker created the sign and carved her name on it and hung it on her fence.

**For those that may want to build their own Friends of Pine Gully group in their neighbourhoods, do you have any advice for them?**

You need to have at least 3 people to start a committee with different skills: preferably social and management skills. It is good to start from a supporting point like Smart Living where their members attended the first few working bees before I got the courage to start door knocking and mail dropping in the community. It also helps when the community see that there is something fun and meaningful for them to join. I noticed that 80% of the members are happy to come at regular times, do a task or two, have fun and go back home. It becomes complicated when you ask people to help you with tasks that need council support or more accountability to the group. This is why it is important to have 2 or 3 committed people to start. It might take years before you find more motivated people to take over the managing roles. It was not expensive at all as we only had a Facebook page and we had a great support from the council when we needed plants or training. It would become expensive if you become an incorporated association; this is why I suggest you do not do this until your community is established for a few years. Instead search for an umbrella organisation, such as Trees for Life, the council or landscape board to operate under their management and be covered by their insurance. Later if you become membership-based organisation you start thinking of a website and incorporating.

**Have any other initiatives or groups been created as a result of the Friends of Pine Gully?**

A member of FoPG started smaller greening projects other neglected patches in the neighbourhood, such as the butterfly corner of Kauri Parade and Wheatland Street and on the verge of the local Kindy. There is another member who started a project with the Kindy to draw butterflies and hang them on the railway fence. Another FoPG member started a walking group, besides the Lyn Patch project.

# Addressing barriers to inclusion and belonging

## Some helpful resources

### A few good reads:

**The Art of Belonging** by Hugh Mackay - The role of neighbourhoods and strong communities to develop our moral sense and build our emotional security.

**The Kindness Revolution** by Hugh Mackay - The importance of neighbours and how crises and catastrophes often turn out to be the making of us.

**For the Love of Community** by Becky Hirst - Insights from a personal expedition to inspire better public participation.

**Say Hello** by Carly Findlay - A memoir with thoughts and observations on ableism, media representation and beauty privilege.

**The Shouted Goodbye** by Jeremy Ward - A family's journey through activism, advocacy and community connection to build a meaningful life for their child.

**Part of Who I am** by Alicia Hopper - A parkrun blog post about the role of parkrun, exercise and social connection to support living with a mental illness.

### Articles and handbooks:

**The Human Search for Belonging** by Lynda Shevellar, Jane Sherwin & Neil Barringham - The importance of belonging and inclusion as a human need.

**The purpose of life is a life with purpose: creating meaningful futures through valued roles** by Jane Sherwin and Meg Sweeney.

**Valued roles for All: The Keys to A Good life** by the Better Practice Project - A handbook on valued roles for people receiving community support.

### Websites and resources about inclusion:

**Imagine More** - A NFP that focuses on capacity building and information sharing for people living with a disability, their families and supporters.

**Belonging Matters Inc** - A NFP capacity enhancing service that provides education, resources, mentoring and advice about social inclusion and belonging.

**Community Resource Unit (CRU)** - A NFP organisation that aims to inspire positive change in human service delivery for people living with a disability.

**Resourcing Inclusive Communities (RIC)** - An initiative of Family Advocacy that provides resources to assist people with disability to live meaningful lives.

### Helpful watches and listens:

**Talks That Matter (TTM)** - Stories about people with a disability living lives filled with community, contribution and belonging.

**A Place of Welcome and Belonging** - A story by Inclusive Neighbourhoods about Terry and his role at the Rosefield Community Shed.

**I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much** - TEDX talk with Stella Young surrounding perceptions of disability and the impacts of 'inspiration porn'.

**Rosetta Street Greening** - The story of a local West Croydon community in SA coming together through a desire to improve their local area.

**Abundant Community Edmonton** - A story of the city of Edmonton's neighbouring framework and the importance of neighbourhood connections.

**Sustainability Street** - The story of Tim and Shani who started a social movement in their street's 'growing community'.

**Cafe's Creating Connection** - The story of the Pear Neighbourhood Node for Neighbour Day 2020.

**No Bias: A Story of Belonging** - The story of Michael, a valued member of his local lawn bowls club.

**NOW we're talking: The importance of belonging** - A podcast interview with Project Lead Sarah Faulkner on neighbourhood belonging.

## How was this information collected?

The research process for **Part 2** follows from that applied in **Part 1**: "A space at the heart of our community". This document did not undertake a strict methodological approach but remained exploratory and action based in nature. An active participatory role was taken across a variety of projects and groups over the span of 12 months, in which conversations with a diversity of leaders and participants was made possible<sup>2</sup>. This mapping document expands on the research conducted in **Part 1** by also including outcomes from a variety of "Conversations About...." sessions facilitated with over 25 neighbourhood leaders and community stakeholders across three geographic council areas. These sessions focused on sharing key learnings and responses to findings included in **Part 1**. Facilitated conversations were also conducted with three different Circles of Support for people living with a disability who helped to inform responses to the key findings and strategies moving forward. Time spent across a period of three months was also used to work with an individualised support team for a man living with a disability in the southern suburbs in order to both inform the challenges and barriers facing people's inclusion into the community, as well as strategies to address them. Further consultations and engagement with individual community members, groups and initiatives across 12 months played an important role to help inform the findings of this document. Engagement was also had with a variety of consumer and advocacy-based organisations, conferences and existing data on inclusion and belonging. This document is by no means an exhaustive reflection of the different groups and initiatives that exist across Adelaide, nor the different strategies to inclusion that exist. Similar to **Part 1**, this document hopes to provide a snapshot to what it might take to build inclusion and belonging across Adelaide's neighbourhoods into the future. By providing a glimpse into the importance of belonging and inclusion in our neighbourhoods and some strategies to address the barriers highlighted from **Part 1**, we hope that we may better support the accessibility and inclusivity of our neighbourhoods for all people who may be more vulnerable living in them into the future.

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## Authors note

Similarly within **Part 1** the positionality and experiences of the researcher must be held into account when reviewing this document. For many years I worked as a Circles of Support Facilitator, in which a focus on the important role of freely-given relationships in the lives of people living with a disability became conscious and intentional. The various roles I have held within Amnesty International Australia and a variety of community-based organisations must also be acknowledged as influential to the values and ethos that will no doubt influence the shaping of this document. A critical influence throughout this document was also Social Role Valorisation theory (SRV) developed by Wolf Wolfensberger<sup>xxxii</sup> that is widely applied and considered by a variety of human services and advocacy organisations globally. SRV is a high-order principle framework that seeks to address devaluation and help those who are typically marginalised to achieve the good things in life. Much of what is inspired within this document pulls from theories of SRV, as well as from a variety of like-minded people and agencies who apply its principles for inclusion in their day-to-day work.

<sup>2</sup> See page 33 in Part 1: "A space at the heart of our community" for a more comprehensive breakdown of the research methods applied.

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# Inclusion starts with me.

While there is no 'one size fits all' approach to inclusion there are some things we can think about to help make our neighbourhoods stronger sources of welcome and belonging.

## Say hello

Behind every door there is a story. While we don't have to be friends with our neighbours to be neighbourly, saying hello, acknowledging people, and just knowing their name can go a long way to encouraging them to feel a sense of safety, welcome, and belonging. Research has shown this to be true!

**Tip: So what are you waiting for? Say hello.**

## Find the common value

People who live with a disability, mental illness, or other enhanced vulnerability sometimes miss out on being seen for their gifts, talents, interests, and individual identity. Take the time to learn more about the person. You may find that you have a lot in common and will greatly enjoy the chance to bond over a shared interest in a meaningful way.

**Tip: Ask about a person's interests and passions.**

## 'Think' access

Can people get into your space? Is the information you share in plain English? Beyond removing any physical barriers think about how you might be able to make small accommodations to help more people to be involved. By encouraging a diversity of ways that people can contribute you are providing more opportunities for a diversity of skills, perspectives, and individuals to be included.

**Tip: Ask what might be making access difficult for some people and how you might address them.**

This is an invitation for you to think about what opportunities for inclusion might exist in your own neighbourhood and how you can encourage others to feel a sense of belonging in them.

## The art of asking

Don't wait for people to come along. It can take a lot of courage to step out and try something new, and sometimes we need to have the support of a trusted friend, neighbour or family member to actively encourage or invite us along.

**Tip: Could you invite someone, connect them to someone else, accompany them, or give them a lift?**

## Think roles, not activities

If you want to encourage people to feel a deeper sense of belonging, think about a role - big or small - that they can fill that will contribute to them being missed when not there. Think about the roles you hold in your family and community, and how important they are to your sense of value and purpose.

**Tip: Get to know the person and find a role that could be a good fit for them.**

## Social connections

Human beings have a fundamental need to connect. Community groups are often formed with a goal or activity in mind, but it's the social connections that keep people coming back again and again. Whatever the aim of your group, don't lose sight of the important role it plays in creating social connections - the building blocks to belonging.

**Tip: Think about how you can support people to build and maintain important social connections.**



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