

Neighbourhoods Connected

A guide to street and
neighbourhood gatherings



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, work and play.

We pay our respects to Darkinjung country, and Elders past and present.

We recognise the continued connection to these lands and waterways and extend this acknowledgement to the homelands and stories of those who also call this place home.

We recognise our future leaders and the shared responsibility to care for and protect our place and people.



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Welcome

Central Coast Council is pleased to present this Neighbourhoods Connected guide to help you plan neighbourhood gatherings and community activities.

Neighbourhood gatherings are an opportunity to get to know the people around you and to build inclusive and welcoming neighbourhoods. Getting to know your neighbours is a great way of increasing the sense of belonging in your street and community.

However you chose to come together, this guide is designed to assist you in making your experience as enjoyable, safe and successful as possible.

Using this guide

This guide can be used to start planning a neighbourhood street gathering and learn ways to connect and build resilience in your street.

Throughout this guide you will find:



Tips



Ideas



Downloads

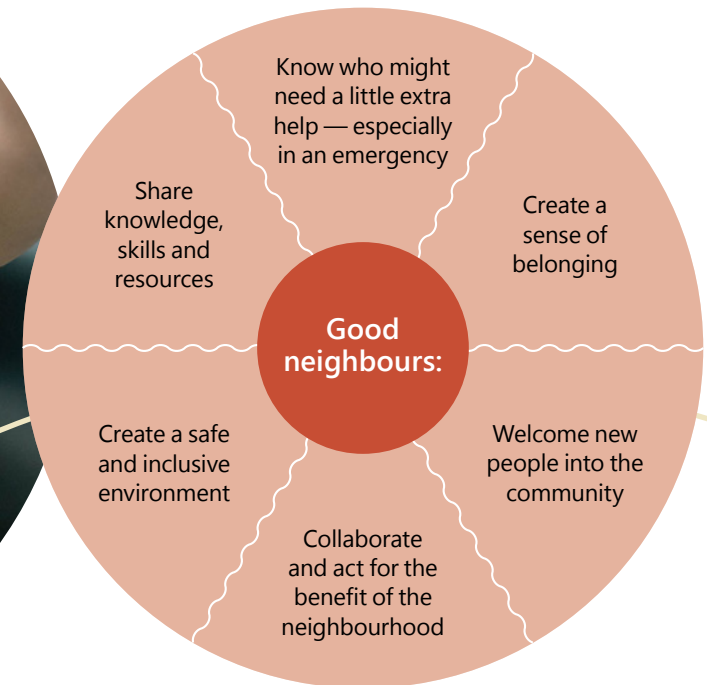
Use whatever is relevant for your unique event and community.





Why good neighbours matter

Having good neighbours and a strong community can be more important than you realise.



If you're more engaged with your neighbours, your street can be a better place to live in, your community can thrive and together we can face collective challenges and help to improve loneliness.

Why is building connections with my neighbours important?

While we often rely on our neighbours to help us remember which bin we are supposed to take out this week, our neighbours can be a strong support system that play a vital role in building relationships, resilience, disaster preparedness and recovery and shared connection.

Connected neighbourhoods lead to positive individual and family well-being with potential outcomes including:

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

- Increased quality of life and a feeling of healthier and happier neighbourhoods.
- A feeling of being safe, engaged and having an overall sense of belonging.
- A reduction in loneliness felt across all ages.
- Improved resilience and localised assistance during a weather event or natural disaster.



Tips to welcome a new neighbour

Many new residents want to meet their neighbours and also introduce themselves.

Put together a cheat sheet for the neighbourhood. Write down all the important stuff that a new neighbour wouldn't immediately know about, like what day the household rubbish is picked up, special events in the neighbourhood and other information specific to the neighbourhood.

A day or two after your new neighbours have moved in, go over with your family

or team up with your neighbours to create a welcome basket (including the cheat sheet) and bring it over together.

A welcome basket could include:

- Fresh flowers
- A handwritten welcome note
- Menus to your favourite coffee shop and takeout places
- An IOU with an offer to help if they ever need anything

If you are a bit uncomfortable introducing yourself to new people but still wish to let your new neighbour know that they're welcome, you could always leave a welcome basket at their front door, or use a 'hello neighbour' card at the back of this resource to introduce yourself that way.



Neighbourhood gatherings

A connected community is a resilient community, and getting to know your neighbours is the first step to building resilience.

While emergencies and disasters like floods, bush fires, storms and power outages are difficult to predict or control, research has shown that communities that are connected and help each other prepare and respond in an emergency, recover quicker and are more resilient.

One great way to get to know your neighbours and build a sense of community is through neighbourhood gatherings.

Whether you live in a house, an apartment building, a flat, or something else entirely you can be part of organising a neighbourhood gathering.

Getting started

It's often a good idea to start small and find one or two neighbours to help you organise your gathering. If this is the first gathering in your neighbourhood, you may need to explain what it is and share some of the benefits.

The idea of a neighbourhood gathering is to bring people together, so talk to your neighbours to find out if they would like to be involved and discuss potential dates and types of activities.

To get your neighbours involved in the planning you may choose to create an organising group. You may also want to include the neighbourhood kids to drop off the invitations in mailboxes. Jobs for teenagers could include the physical games or the music on the day of the neighbourhood gathering.

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



Neighbourhood gathering ideas

There are many types of gatherings your street could start planning. Think about what can work for your type of neighbourhood, be creative and have fun. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Barbecues**
Everyone brings their own food and cook on communal BBQ
- **Picnics**
Decorate your garden and invite everyone to bring a picnic and rug
- **Front yard movie night**
Throw out some rugs and bring out the popcorn.
- **Pet parade**
Meet your neighbourhood pets, dress them up and enjoy the shenanigans!
- **Footpath chalk**
Create a rainbow of colour that connects from one house to the next
- **Game night**
Let the competition begin!
- **Book club**
Meet at a different neighbour's house each month
- **Get moving ... together**
Start an exercise walking group
- **Long Lunch**
Everyone brings a dish to share.

Whatever you choose, planning together is all part of the fun and another way to get to know each other.

Neighbourhood gatherings: People and places

The Central Coast community is growing increasingly diverse, which is of benefit to everyone. Providing opportunities to learn about other people is important and our neighbourhoods will flourish when they are welcoming and inclusive for all people, from different age groups, cultures, backgrounds and ways of life.

Who to invite?

Most neighbourhood gatherings are invitation to residents only, generally restricted to the natural neighbourhood boundaries. If planning a block, street or cul-de-sac gathering it's important to invite everyone from that area.

Even though the gathering will be right outside your neighbours' door, they still have the choice to participate and should feel comfortable whether they attend or not.

Getting the word out

It's important to keep all your neighbours informed of neighbourhood gatherings through both written and verbal communication. However, there should be NO outside publicity, including promoting it publicly on social media (that space makes it a public event).

Inviting people face to face is the ideal way to get people involved. The best way to do this is distribute paper invitations, either by knocking on doors or handing out as you see neighbours out walking the dog or gardening.

Broadening a gathering to the general public means you may require an approval by council.

Ensure you outline any specific details guests should know about attending the gathering. For example:

- What type of gathering it will be, does it have a theme, what will happen?
- Date and time (be specific about start and finish times)
- Who can attend (including pets)
- What to bring
- Do you need help?

Where to hold the gathering

You will need to consider if your gathering is to take place on private or public land.

Private land: This includes your front 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.

Public land: This includes your street, neighbourhood park or reserve, 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 location.

For public spaces, like a park or reserve, you are not required to apply or book if you are holding a small private gathering. As well as neighbourhood gatherings, these include birthday parties, picnics and get-togethers for residents and community groups.



How to keep your public gathering booking-free

A formal booking is not required to be made if your public gathering meets all the below criteria:

- Small group of family/friends
- Maximum of 3 hour duration
- Structure allowance of up to 12 chairs, 1 table, and 2 small shade gazebos weighted by sandbags (pegs are not permitted)
- There is no commercial activity.

Note: If your public gathering falls outside this criteria, you may require approval from Council (see the 'larger gatherings' section of this guide for more information on the permit process).

Neighbourhood gatherings: Things to do at your gathering



Neighbourhood street play promotes fun and community bonding.



Scan the code to download this free resource from Play Australia and Neighbours Every Day

Now that you have a date and location for your gathering and you've invited your neighbours, it's time to think about what will happen at the event.

Games and activities

Think about the age groups attending your gathering and try to cater for them all. Some activity ideas for the kids:

- Talent show
- Face painting or magician
- Bike decorating with a parade
- Scavenger treasure hunt with clues
- Water games like water balloons or sprinklers to run through

For teens and adults:

- Lawn games like croquet or bocce
- 3-on-3 basketball or touch football tournament
- Card games or charades

Music

Will you have music at your gathering? Use a small battery-operated music player to avoid loud amplification and additional cables.

Be courteous — loud music can be disruptive to others. Noise restrictions for amplified music also occur between 10:00pm to 8:00am Monday to Friday, and 12.00am to 8.00am on Saturday, Sunday, or public holidays.

If playing music at other times, you need to ensure the noise level is no more than 5 decibels above the ambient background noise level. All noise generated throughout the event must comply with Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) regulations.

Pets

Firstly, decide whether you want to include pets in your gathering. Anyone who brings a pet to a neighbourhood gathering must keep the animal on a leash at all times and remember to clean up after their pet. After your first street gathering, neighbours could consider starting a dog walking group.

Neighbourhood street play

Your street gathering doesn't even need to be an event!

If you have children in your household, they could do a letter box drop inviting the other kids in the street to play games in a front yard or draw on the footpath with chalk. If there is not enough space in your street, you could arrange to meet at a park.

The aim is for families and children in the neighbourhood to get to know each other and develop social skills.

Neighbourhood gatherings: Other considerations

Ways to reduce risk

Risks could include trips and falls, electrical cords, manual lifting, food preparation and handling, access to water, access to toilets, and accessibility for older people or people with a disability, sunburn, dog bites, fire, activities near the road, and excessive alcohol consumption. Ways to reduce risk include:

- Have a first aid kit that you can access
- Keep it alcohol-free
- Have sunscreen and mosquito repellent on hand
- Practice food safety — better still, have neighbours bring their own food
- Keep noise to a reasonable level
- Hold the gathering during daylight hours
- Stick to the start and finish time of the street gathering
- Have a wet weather contingency plan
- Think about child safety, especially around BBQs

- Make it clear that families are responsible for their own children
- Use your own toilets
- Appoint someone to escort any vehicles that need to get in or out, if applicable.

Environmental sustainability

We all have a vested interest in environmental sustainability.

Consider generating less waste by asking your neighbours to bring their own reusable cutlery, plates, and mugs.

Ensure garbage, recycling, and compost bins are placed out before the gathering starts, and that you have a plan to manage the waste at the end of the event.

Details of waste and garbage disposal systems can be obtained from Council's Waste Services. If additional bins at the site are required, this must be arranged directly with Council's Waste Management Officer who can be contacted on 02 4306 7900 or email waste.management@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au (fees may apply).



Hints and tips for success

- **Name tags!** They may seem geeky, but it's a lot easier than trying to remember everyone's names or doing self-introductions.
- **Allow for diversity.** Your gathering may need to cater for a range of ages and cultures, and different tastes in food, dance and music.
- **Respect differences.** Talk to all residents early to prevent any formal 'objections' — especially if you are having a road closure.
- **Numbers.** It's best to have at least four households participating.
- **Meet and greet.** Someone should be responsible for meeting and greeting people as they arrive and to introducing them to others. People can take turns doing meet and greet at the gathering.
- **Share resources.** Borrow, share or make as much as you can — it shouldn't be an expensive exercise!



For more information, scan the code to visit the Neighbourhoods Connected webpage



Planning checklist

Use this handy cheat sheet when planning your next neighbourhood gathering.



Three months (90 days) before

Form your idea

- Agree with neighbours on a theme and date (plus alternate raincheck)
- Create a simple budget if needed (mandatory if closing a road and/or you need public liability insurance)
- Take your proposal to the neighbourhood to gain consensus

Plan your gathering

- Form a planning group, with one member designated as the main contact
- Decide what the food should be eg shared, BYOE (this is usually best)
- List the equipment will you need (eg marquee, rugs, tables, eskys, BBQ) and who can contribute
- Create a basic map with areas for parking, BBQs, food, waste disposal, seating, games/activities and entertainment

- Decide if pets are allowed
- Decide on a bathroom policy (eg everyone uses their own)
- Make sure the proposed area is safe for all (eg pets, children, older people)
- Designate someone to be in charge of the clean-up!

If using public land or organising a road closure

- Have a street meeting to ensure the neighbourhood is happy to proceed with a road closure if necessary
- Identify additional needs (eg marquees, power and lighting)
- Assign one person to handle road closure permits, traffic management plans and public liability insurance (allow plenty of time in advance to apply)



One month (30 days) before

- Ensure temporary road closure permit has been approved and a suitably qualified person with approved accreditation or company is arranged to implement the traffic management plan

- Send out invitations (mailbox and in-person are best)
- Finalise equipment list, site map and set up requirements
- Encourage neighbours to share their talents (eg musicians)



One week (7 days) before

- Confirm who will be helping you out on the day and what jobs everyone will do

- Send out an event reminder, including reminding people about moving cars if you are closing your street (see the 'larger gatherings' section for information on road closures)



On the day

- Allocate a 'meeter and greeter' to welcome and introduce people
- Copy and print out a stack of 'hello neighbour' cards (available at the back of this guide) and provide a few pens so neighbours can swap contact details
- Make sure there is no rubbish left — get people to take their own rubbish home with them

- Take lots of pictures or videos to share with neighbours!

If using public land or organising a road closure

- You may wish to post signs the day before the event to remind everyone to remove cars for the street closure
- After the gathering, remove any event signage that has been set up. Take down tables, chairs and marquees and ensure they are returned and responsibly dispose of any rubbish.

Larger gatherings

So, you've tried out the front yard or park gathering, and now your neighbourhood would like to plan a bigger neighbourhood street celebration. Where do you start?

This section is to guide you when planning a larger neighbourhood event on public land or if you wish to close your street to host a neighbourhood gathering.



Larger gatherings: Permits

Temporary event permit

If you wish to hold a larger gathering in a public space or you're inviting the general public, you may require a permit from Council.

Council regulates temporary events to ensure community safety, balance temporary events with community use and maintain relevant infrastructure.

A permit also ensures you can secure the location you want for the day and time of your event — however, it does not guarantee exclusive use of an area or its facilities. The permit holder is required to work in with other groups and the public using the area on the day.

Event organisers are encouraged to contact Central Coast Council Customer Service Centre on (02) 4306 7900 if their event does not meet the above criteria.

Central Coast Council will be able to determine if the event space is appropriate, available and if a booking is required.

There are administrative fees for applications for small events (check council's bookings website for current fees and charges).

Things to consider when planning your event on public land:

- Central Coast Council open space areas are for general community use and cannot be retained exclusively.

Scan the code to view and book a council-owned facility



- Provided facilities such as barbecues are to be available for all visitors to the location.
- Existing structures provided at the location such as weather sheds, tables and chairs are available on a first-come-first-served basis.
- All Central Coast Council open space areas are alcohol free zones.
- Structures such as jumping castles or inflatables etc. are not permitted on Central Coast Council land.

How to apply for a small event permit

If you are hosting on public land, you will need to complete and lodge a Temporary Event Application Form at least six weeks prior to the event. Following this, your application could take up to one month to assess if all the relevant information has been provided.

Your application will also need to include the following:

- A simple site plan of the event
- Certificate of currency for public liability insurance, if required.

You can find the application form and information on Council's website.

Larger gatherings: Insurance and road closures

Public liability

The organiser should ensure sufficient public liability insurance is in place to protect against potential claims.

If hosting a small private gathering, at a local park for example, you will not require public liability insurance. However, if hosting a small temporary event on public land that involves a public invitation or having commercial businesses serving food or drinks at the event, you will need to provide a Certificate of Currency for Public Liability Insurance with a cover for \$20 million noting Central Coast Council as an interested party.

If you are hosting a gathering in your home or yard you should have public liability insurance to protect yourself against any personal injury or property damage claims. Speak to your home and contents insurer to ensure your household cover is adequate.



Scan the code for more information on Public Liability Insurance

Temporary road closure

There are times when you may wish to close the street to vehicles to safely host a neighbourhood gathering. This is called a temporary road closure.

Some roads cannot be closed for a neighbourhood gathering. Particularly roads that:

- Carry significant traffic volumes
- Have bus services operating
- Are required for emergency vehicle access (eg a street with a fire station)
- Are within 60m of traffic lights
- Result in restricted access to a railway station, car park or local businesses.

If you have a small, low traffic street or cul-de-sac that doesn't impact the above, then you may consider a temporary road closure application for street gatherings to be held on a local Council Road.

If you are thinking of applying for a temporary road closure, allow a minimum 3 months before your planned event (fees apply—see Council's website for current fees and charges).

You may also need to supply Public Liability Insurance, Site plans and Traffic Control Plan, Risk assessment and written agreements.

If you require more assistance or information prior to submitting your application, please contact Council's Traffic Team on 02 4306 7900 or trafficcontrol@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au

Barricades

Additional barricades and signs to implement the approved road closure can be hired from equipment hire companies.

Let police know about your event

To ensure a quick response from emergency services if needed, applicants must notify the local police station of the intended street party by completing a Party Registration Form online at police.nsw.gov.au/online_services/party_safety/party_registration at least 72 hours prior to the gathering being held.



Scan the code to access the Temporary Road Closure application form (fees apply)



Need more help?

Community Development workers are available to offer advice when neighbourhoods are planning street gatherings.

You can call Central Coast Council Community Development Officers on (02) 43067900 or email communitydevelopment@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au



Risk assessment template

Use this template to note any potential risks associated with your neighbourhood gathering

Risk description What kind of risk is it?	Cause What factors pose the risk?	Consequence Low/Med/High/Extreme	Risk rating Low/Med/High/Extreme	Action/Mitigation How will we reduce/remove risk?	Responsibility Name/Organisation	Done Yes/No
<i>Example: Trips and falls</i>	<i>Clutter in street</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Area to be maintained in clean and tidy condition</i>	<i>John Smith</i>	<i>Y</i>
<i>Example: Traffic entering road closure</i>	<i>Traffic Control plan not implemented</i>	<i>Extreme</i>	<i>Extreme</i>	<i>Use Traffic Control plan, conduct regular site audit</i>	<i>Jane Jones, Michael Brown</i>	<i>N</i>

Resources

Copy and cut out the 'Hello neighbour' cards opposite to give out at your next neighbourhood gathering, or just hand them out to your neighbours in person.

You can also download event planning resources and templates at centralcoast.nsw.gov.au

Hello neighbour!

Did you know? People who know their neighbours are more likely to cope better in emergencies. So give this card to a neighbour and help build a stronger community for all.

My name is/our names are _____

I live

- Next door at no. _____
- Over the road at no. _____
- Up the street at no. _____

You can contact me/us at

Phone 1 _____

Phone 2 _____

Email _____

I am happy to help with

- Putting out the bins
- Collecting mail
- Watering the garden
- Feeding a pet
- A friendly chat
- Something else _____

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- Something else _____

Cohesive connected
communities promote wellbeing
and support each other better
in times of crisis. So go on ...
connect your community today!

