HAVE WE HUNG UP THE PHONE ON CONVERSATION?
~ Four out of five Aussies say we’re losing the art of conversation as text and social media take over ~

1 September 2014: In today’s society, who isn’t guilty of sending a text rather than picking up the phone to call a friend? New research from Virgin Mobile Australia reveals that almost three in five Aussies (57%) are calling their family and friends less frequently since the rise of social media.

According to the survey of more than 1,000 Australians, nearly four out of five (79%) believe social media and technology are causing us to lose the art of conversation, with 63% saying it’s easier to text a friend or a loved one instead of calling for a chat. Perhaps surprisingly, given these insights, three out of five Aussies (60%) wish they received more phone calls from their nearest and dearest. In fact, a whopping four out of five Aussie social media users (82%) admit that speaking on the phone actually makes them feel more connected to people than social media interaction.

As part of its ongoing commitment to making mobile better, Virgin Mobile has joined forces with R U OK? to encourage Aussies to have more conversations that count, signing on as the not-for-profit’s official ‘conversation partner’. R U OK? aims to prevent suicide by encouraging people to have regular, meaningful conversations throughout the year to help anyone who might be struggling with life.

R U OK? views conversation as a way to make a positive change in people’s lives, and Virgin Mobile wants to facilitate this by using the mobile phone as a force for good. The telco will therefore be supporting the cause by giving its customers free calls to their friends and family within Oz on 11 September (R U OK? Day), encouraging people to pick up the phone and ask someone if they’re ‘ok’.

Commenting on the partnership, David Scribner, Head of Virgin Mobile Australia, says, “We’re dedicated to continuing to make mobile better and are proud to be partnering with R U OK? to champion the power and importance of conversation – not just on R U OK? Day, but every day.”

“Nine out of ten Aussies surveyed said they feel genuinely cared about when they get a phone call from a loved one. We have all been guilty of sending a quick text or Facebook message instead of picking up the phone so it’s a timely reminder that a call could really make a difference to that person’s day.”

Sir Richard Branson, Founder, Virgin Group, has also backed the campaign and recorded a video message for all Australians about the importance of conversation, encouraging them to reach out to loved ones this R U OK? Day.

Further to this, Branson shares his own most memorable conversation: “I was fortunate enough to meet the late, great Nelson Mandela, who told me that in Africa many disputes were taken to the elders of the tribe. Peter Gabriel and I asked Madiba to lead a global version of this, an independent group of leaders who work together for peace and human rights. Out of these conversations, The Elders was born and the rest is history.”

Brendan Maher, General Manager, R U OK? says, “The Virgin Mobile partnership will help us inspire more Aussies to have regular, meaningful conversations with family and friends. Life’s busy but we can all take the time to call the people we care about and talk about the stuff that really matters.”

Over the years, the telco has made some remarkable conversations possible and allowed people to share news, such as the birth of a child, hearing a loved one has been given the all-clear on a health issue and receiving the news of a new job. Examples like these portray the power and importance of conversation and underline why Virgin Mobile has partnered with R U OK? and is providing their customers with free calls to mates within Oz on R U OK? Day.

Commenting on her most memorable conversation, R U OK? Ambassador, Allison Langdon says “A few weeks ago my little sister called me with news her multi-organ transplant had come through and she was on her way to the hospital. I was on the other side of the world – feeling helpless. Just getting to tell her that I loved her as she was being wheeled into surgery was one of the most emotional moments of my life. I was a million miles away but I felt like I was right there with her.”

Other interesting findings from the research include:
- Three quarters (75%) of Australian social media users believe the majority of their friends online still don’t truly know what’s happening in their lives;
- Women are more likely than men to agree that texting someone is easier than calling them (68% v 58%);
- Two out of five (45%) Aussies say they don’t call their friends and family as often because they feel like they already know what they are up to through social media;
• Two out of five Aussies (43%) prefer emailing, texting and using social media to communicate than speaking on the phone;
• More than a quarter (28%) of Aussies feel the only free time they have to chat with friends during the week is on the daily commute;
• The average Aussie received only four phone calls on their last birthday, in comparison to 11 social media messages.

To find out more on how Virgin Mobile will be helping inspire people to start a conversation, visit: makingmobilebetter.com.au.

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Notes to editors:
The Virgin Mobile Research Study:
• Was conducted by Lonergan Research among 1,030 Australians aged 18 or older;
• The study was conducted online amongst members of a permission-based panel;
• Fieldwork commenced on Friday August 15, 2014 and was completed on Monday August 18, 2014;
• After interviewing, data was weighted to the latest population estimates sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Virgin Mobile Australia: Making Mobile Better
Virgin Mobile launched in Australia 14 years ago, based on Richard Branson’s belief that we could do mobile better. Better for our customers, and better for our planet. We’ve been rocking the boat ever since, and we’re not stopping now, because it’s just how we work. Innovative products and a commitment to great value for money are in our DNA.

For years we’ve believed our customers should have unlimited calls or texts to their friends and family on our network within Oz, and on our Postpaid plans, they can. We also roll over unused calls and text: our customers have paid for it, so we figure they deserve a second shot at using it.

Backing all this is the power of the Optus 3G/4G network (thanks guys!) which just keeps getting stronger, and allows us to focus on what’s most important – our customers.

We’re committed to making the mobile industry better by keeping pressure on the big guys and making mobile better for customers through innovative products, great service and a commitment to great value for money – it’s a fairer and better way to do business.

As part of this new campaign, we’ll also focus on those outside our customer base and make the world a better place through mobile. Over the coming year, we are going to be launching a number of new initiatives that have nothing to do with new plans or products, but everything to do with people and the planet (although the plans and products will be happening too!)

We’re going to be looking at some of the most silly mobile phone behaviours we’re all guilty of and find ways to turn them into good and show the true potential of the mobile phone while we’re at it. To learn more about how Virgin Mobile is making mobile better, and its #mealforameal initiative, visit: www.makingmobilebetter.com.au.

R U OK?
R U OK? is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to inspire Australians to have regular, meaningful conversations throughout the year to help anyone who might be struggling with life. For tips on how to report sensitively and accurately on suicide, please visit: http://www.mindframe-media.info/for-media