

Media Release

15 Dec 2017



SYDNEY'S BIGGEST CHRISTMAS LUNCH FOR THE HOMELESS

On Christmas Day, Wayside Chapel will once again host their annual Christmas Lunch and street party, providing a family, food and festivities for all. Hughes Street in Potts Point will be shut off to make way for the 10.30am Christmas service and choir on the street, and by lunch-time **over 1000 meals with all the trimmings** will be served to the homeless and local community. Live entertainment, jumping castle, kid's activities, a visit from Santa, and dancing on the street will continue until 2pm.

From the joy on people's faces, it will be difficult to tell apart the people living on the street from those who are housed, nor the people who are lost and lonely from those who make up the dedicated volunteer and staff team. Indeed, the community event, now in its 14th year, is the Wayside Chapel's largest public event, demonstrating its mission of creating community of no "us and them".

For **28,191 homeless people in NSW**, Christmas time is a lonely and difficult time of year. Last December, more than 3,000 homeless men, women and children walked through our doors at Wayside Chapel, Kings Cross, in desperate need of food. Wayside Chapel is one of the only organisations offering support every day and night over the Christmas period.

Christmas Day is traditionally a time for celebration, but for many in the community who are isolated, on the streets or just struggling to put food on the table, it is a time when life's problems are magnified. It is estimated that **3.6 million people Australians experience food insecurity** at some time during the year, 27% of which are children*. Added to this, 8.4 million Australians believe Christmas is a 'financial nightmare', with **nearly half a million children likely to receive no presents****. (*Food bank hunger report 2017, ** Salvation Army 2016 Roy Morgan Research)

Reverend Graham Long AM, CEO and Pastor of the Wayside Chapel says, "The spirit of Christmas is about giving and enjoying a sense of community. No one should be alone or go hungry. We understand it can be a tough time for some, so we open our doors to provide as much love and support to people as possible. In fact, we are open 365 days a year and aim to provide 6000 meals to our visitors over the entire holiday period. Giving to our 'donate a plate' campaign will help put food on the table at our Christmas Day lunch, plus fund our kitchens to provide low cost, high quality home-cooked meals throughout the entire Christmas holiday period".

To help us provide food for someone less fortunate over the Christmas period, you can 'donate a plate' at waysidechapel.org.au/donateplate

Christmas Day celebrations start at 10.30am with a church service on the street led by Rev Graham Long followed by a visit from Santa at 11.50am and a free community lunch with all the trimmings is served at midday by 100 volunteers. Festivities including live entertainment, jumping castle, kid's activities will continue until 2pm. Everyone is welcome.

Wayside Chapel is located at 29 Hughes Street, Potts Point and has recently extended its hours, open daily from 9am (10am Sundays) to 11pm throughout the Christmas period. Wayside is open 365 days of the year.

For further media information, contact Janine Huan, Wayside's Marketing and Communications Manager on (02) 9581 9106 / 0409 887 797 or via email: janine.huan@thewaysidechapel.com

About Wayside Chapel

Wayside Chapel has provided unconditional love, care and support for people on and around the streets of Sydney since 1964. Today, under the banner of 'Love over Hate', Wayside runs two community services centres, youth space and outreach service, mental health program, two community cafés, and Aboriginal Program. All programs are designed to ensure that the most marginalised members of our community have access to essential health, welfare, social and recreational services, as well as a judgment-free place where people are welcome just to 'be'.