



**Wayside Chapel says women will need help this winter more urgently than ever before**

At Wayside Chapel, one in four people seeking support for the first time during night-time hours are women, and this need will only become more urgent as a harsh, cold winter descends on the streets of Sydney. Many of these women will be seeking refuge, services and necessities such as food, blankets, hot showers, emergency clothing and accommodation assistance – as they have nowhere else to go.

**Wayside Chapel is calling for the public to help by donating to its Winter Appeal to raise the \$1.2 million needed to continue to provide vital services and support for the homeless - including women.**

A recent survey was conducted of people seeking support between 5pm and 10.30pm at Wayside Chapel Kings Cross. The survey revealed that the proportion of females that were first-time visitors to Wayside Chapel was 24%, with 47% of female visitors first experiencing homelessness between the ages of 31 and 65 years of age. This trend is further supported by 2016 Australian Census figures indicating that women now make up 40% of the homeless population, an increase of almost 10% since 2011.

Many of these women are homeless due to domestic violence and family breakdown, which is now the number one reason for homelessness in Australia, with 55% of female clients of homeless services citing this reason (Homelessness NSW).

Jiya, a previous visitor of Wayside Chapel, was just one of the many women in this situation.

At 28 years old Jiya first sought support at Wayside Chapel in 2013 after suffering a lifetime of abuse from her husband and family. When Jiya first walked through the doors of Wayside, she was overwhelmed with shame and guilt and covered with burns after an attempt to end her own life.

“I had no family, no friends, nobody at all. I didn’t even have a pair of shoes when I walked through the doors of Wayside.” she says.

Over time Jiya slowly opened up and started making connections with others. At Wayside she found a judgement-free community that she now considers her family. She received specialist support services to find a pathway to employment, and began to regain her confidence and hope to transform her life.

Jon Owen, CEO of Wayside Chapel agrees that the face of homelessness is changing “It’s no longer the white, middle-aged man who is typical homeless person. For a woman escaping domestic violence, they may not have worked in a while, or may be facing mental health challenges due to trauma. Women usually earn less in wages, especially if they have been looking after kids for years, and have less superannuation to fall back on. Add to this a lack of affordable rentals, and all of a sudden for the first time a woman can easily find herself homeless. Women in this situation are incredibly vulnerable.”

“Wayside Chapel provides much more than the immediate essentials like emergency meals and clothing that give people comfort and dignity through the winter months. We help people like Jiya to find housing, employment and counselling services that set them on the path towards healing. Most of all we provide a welcoming community. We are calling on the generosity of the public to help us continue to provide unconditional love and support to the most vulnerable people by donating to our Winter Appeal.”

Today Jiya is the epitome of positivity and hope. She lives in a private rental, has recently completed a Graduate Diploma in Counselling, is working full-time as a counsellor and is pursuing further studies in Criminology. She credits Wayside for helping her regain direction, “Behind every human being is an amazing family; because you need that support; Wayside has become my family. Without Wayside supporters my life wouldn’t have changed”.

**You can donate to the Wayside Chapel Winter Appeal at <https://waysidechapel.org.au/winter>**

**For further media information, or interviews with CEO/ Pastor, Jon Owen, previous Wayside visitor Jiya, or Wayside Ambassadors contact Janine Huan, Wayside's Marketing and Communications Manager, on 0409887797 or email [janine.huan@thewaysidechapel.com](mailto: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, Wingspan Project, 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'.