

Media Release
For immediate release



OAM to celebrate 32 years of volunteering at The Wayside Chapel

Longtime volunteer of The Wayside Chapel, Chantal Denis, has been announced as a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the 2016 Australia Day honours list released today.

Ms Denis was appointed an OAM for serving a remarkable 32 years as a volunteer for The Wayside Chapel in Kings Cross, and for her tireless contributions to her local community.

A volunteer at Wayside since 1983, Ms Denis is The Wayside Chapel's longest-standing volunteer and is nothing short of a Wayside icon. She has volunteered at innumerable café shifts, worked her fingers to the bone in the Wayside kitchen, and been the driving force behind countless Christmas Day street parties. Her vibrant personality, quick wit and trademark colourful outfits are a much-loved fixture of The Wayside Chapel.

Ms Denis was honoured and humbled to be appointed an OAM, an achievement she holds dear not for herself, but for what it means for everyone at Wayside.

"I feel I owe this honour to Wayside, it is an honour for our whole community. I do what I do because I love what I do. All I hope is that seeing this will give more people purpose and incentive to volunteer. I myself am so grateful to have found The Wayside Chapel, my personal life has been difficult and coming to Wayside has allowed me to keep going on, to keep moving forward. It has been a blessing." *Chantal Denis*

The Wayside Chapel's CEO and Pastor, Reverend Graham Long, says he is thrilled that Chantal has been honoured with an OAM for sticking with Wayside through thick and thin.

"A healthy family, a healthy team and a healthy country recognise and celebrate the achievements of some – not to exclude some but to inspire all. Some are honoured for brilliance in innovation, some are honoured for leadership or courage, and some are honoured for sheer tenacity. Our Chantal Dennis has been awarded an OAM this Australia Day for her sheer tenacity of volunteer service over 32 years. It's an achievement that all at Wayside celebrate. There have been torrid times and countless occasions when quitting seemed like the best option but there are few people in the world with the tenacity of Chantal. Well done Chantal, the country honours you and we honour you. Thanks for being who you are and for the blood, sweat and tears that you've given in the service of thousands who will never know what your service cost." *Graham Long*

Wayside Ambassador Claudia Karvan was instrumental in Chantal's OAM application, submitting beautiful words describing her passion for creating community in Kings Cross.

"Chantal goes above and beyond every day at Wayside. From her themed outfits at Christmas time to her sparkling personality, she always has a kind word to say and makes visitors and volunteers feel so welcome. Chantal exemplifies a deep love for her community, she is always looking for ways to improve the Wayside café and collects donations and goods in her spare time. Even more importantly, she always has a twinkle in her eye and a welcoming smile that embodies the sense of family created at Wayside." *Claudia Karvan*

Ms Denis will be accepting her Medal of the Order of Australia as part of the 2016 Australia Day celebrations.

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For further media information, contact Eimear Elkington on 0497 841 716 or email eimear.elkington@thewaysidechapel.com

About The Wayside Chapel

The Wayside Chapel has provided unconditional love, care and support for people on and around the streets of Kings Cross since 1964. Today, under the banner of 'Love over Hate', Wayside runs a community services centre, youth space and outreach service, mental health program, community café, and Aboriginal project. 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'.