

Media Release  
30 March 2020



## Wayside Chapel takes a 'life over death' stance on COVID-19

Wayside Chapel is calling all Australians to stand behind them as they **implement their new emergency relief response to keep people alive** during the COVID-19 crisis.

As more services shut down around them, Wayside Chapel which is deemed an essential frontline service, will remain open expanding its care beyond its building and onto the streets to ensure support is provided to those who are most marginalised, isolated and at risk, especially those dealing with homelessness.

All non-essential services have been stripped back to focus all resources on emergency care. With robust precautions in place to protect the health of the community, and responding to the influx of people needing help, the charity is now providing takeaway meals, emergency clothing, water, blankets, showers and medical care. Urgent referrals into emergency accommodation, medical care and Centrelink, will happen from their Kings Cross and Bondi community service centres, as well as by phone for people in self-isolation.

New street outreach teams have been mobilised to deliver food and care packs to people on the streets who are homeless, as well as to front doors of people who are house-bound, but still in need of care and connection. The Wayside Chapel cafes have closed, but will continue to provide takeaway meals from outside its premises, as people are encouraged to physically distance and remain safe. Their Op Shops will close to the public, and morph into emergency clothing sorting and packing hubs for care packs, ready for distribution.

While the entire community is facing unprecedented challenges during the coronavirus pandemic, Wayside Chapel reminds us that it could have potentially fatal impacts on people who are already struggling with life. Many visitors to Wayside have pre-existing health conditions and do not have a home or shelter to self-isolate to, or support networks to fall back on.

However it is not just people without a home who will be seeking their help.

Pastor & CEO, Jon Owen says *"Many Australians are already in vulnerable situations. Domestic violence is increasing. People are losing their jobs, with no savings to fall back on. People will face mortgage stress. More people will become homeless. We are already seeing new people who would never have dreamed of being that desperate. And without our help, people will die. We will do everything we can to stop that."*

*"For some, social connections are essential for survival and Wayside is the only support they can turn to."*

*"Wayside Chapel can't close. We can't isolate. We must help others survive."*

*"We ask that the community stand with us by choosing 'love over fear' and 'life over death' so that we can continue to provide love and support to people in our community who face homelessness."*

People can donate to Wayside Chapel Emergency Appeal to help people in crisis at [waysidechapel.org.au/emergency](https://waysidechapel.org.au/emergency)

- END -

For interview requests for Pastor / CEO Jon Owen, or Wayside Chapel Ambassadors Claudia Karvan or Christian Wilkins contact Janine Huan, Wayside's Marketing and Communications Manager on 0409 887 797 or via email: [janine.huan@thewaysidechapel.com](mailto:janine.huan@thewaysidechapel.com)

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **About Wayside Chapel**

Wayside Chapel has provided unconditional love, care and support for people on and around the streets of Sydney since 1964. Each year, thousands of people visit Wayside's two centres in Kings Cross and Bondi for assistance in gaining equitable access to essential health, welfare, social and recreational services. Wayside Chapel is well known for its Community Services Centres, dedicated Aboriginal Space and Wellness Programs. It has a Wingspan Project which returns hope to the lives of disadvantaged young people by supporting them into paid hospitality traineeships in its social enterprise café, Heart Cafe.

For further information on Wayside Chapel:

<https://www.waysidechapel.org.au>

For more details on Wayside Chapel's Coronavirus response:

<https://www.waysidechapel.org.au/covid19/>