



## **New focus areas for Wayside Chapel to help the vulnerable this winter**

Wayside Chapel is asking for support from the public to help people in crisis this winter so the most vulnerable people in the community can continue to receive the connection, practical help, care and love, they deserve.

In 2020 Wayside Chapel, which was deemed an essential frontline service, remained open during the COVID-19 lockdown expanding its care beyond its building onto the streets and to people's homes to deliver over 17,200 instances of care in just three months.

Since restrictions have eased Wayside Chapel has seen an average of 158 people per day accessing support, with many new emerging needs being thrown into focus. Wayside has commenced implementation of a Visitors Services Plan with a revised suite of programs, including a recently relaunched program to support the needs of people facing homelessness late into the evening.

Other focus areas include preventing rough sleeping and transitioning people into long-term housing with wrap-around care; providing a safe space for Aboriginal visitors to move from a state of trauma to connect with their cultural strengths; the provision of primary health care onsite for people struggling to access medical assistance, and women's wellbeing and domestic violence support to ensure that women don't become homeless.

As JobKeeper has finished and current JobSeeker benefits (formerly known as Newstart) mean that, many young people are living substantially below the poverty line. Wayside also provides paid on-the-job training at its social enterprise op shops and Heart Cafe for young people through its Wingspan Project.

The iconic charity, most well-known for providing support to people experiencing homelessness often sees people seeking help on the worst day of their lives. Beyond the practical assistance like low cost meals, emergency clothing, water, blankets, showers and medical care and referrals into emergency accommodation, and legal help, Wayside Chapel provides a safe haven where anyone can feel welcome, and more importantly listened to.

Pastor and CEO, Jon Owen says "During the pandemic the biggest impact was on people who are already struggling with life, including those with mental illness, pre-existing health issues, addictions and homelessness. In 2021 we now have the opportunity to revise and focus on the things that will continue to drive our mission of creating community with no "us and them".

"The common thread at the heart of all of these issues is a feeling of disconnection and loneliness. Wayside Chapel is the constant when everything else is in flux, and is a safe place where people can connect with others and feel at home."

"Being connected to your community and having a home isn't just about having a roof over your head and getting your basic needs met." says Pastor Jon Owen, "It's about having somewhere you are loved, somewhere you can feel safe, somewhere you belong, but also somewhere you can find meaning and purpose. Many visitors say that Wayside is like family. Together, with people's support, we will be there for everyone who needs us this winter."

**People can donate to Wayside Chapel's Winter Appeal at [waysidechapel.org.au/winter](https://waysidechapel.org.au/winter)**

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**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).**

**There will also be limited opportunities to interview Allan, a Wayside visitor upon request.**

### **ALLAN'S STORY**

Allan was 10 years old when he became a carer to his mother who was living with a terminal diagnosis. Over the years she was sick, Allan stayed up all night making her hot drinks, cooking meals and carrying her from her wheelchair to the bed. Sadly, when Allan's mum passed away, Allan was left homeless. Because home wasn't safe anymore.

Allan first came to Wayside Chapel at 14 years old.

Through the most difficult times in his life, Allan always found comfort and refuge at Wayside Chapel – a safe haven he'd never known. It was a space for him to not only eat a meal, but for him to build the confidence to connect with other people and start piecing his life back together. It also allowed him to focus on his love of music and take his first steps toward healing. With Wayside's help Allan secured housing, and remains a regular visitor today. Allan says "I could never have done it alone. I love Wayside. To me, it's like home".

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

#### **About Wayside Chapel**

Wayside Chapel has been providing 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 Beach to access essential health, welfare, social and recreational services. Wayside Chapel is well known for its Community Service Centres, dedicated Aboriginal Cultural Centre, and The Wingspan Project – a youth employment pathway. Wayside's social enterprises include the op shops, and the Heart Cafe in Bondi Beach. More recently, Wayside has expanded its care beyond its buildings with new outreach teams delivering support to people on the streets, as well as to people who are house-bound, but still in need of connection.

For further information on Wayside Chapel visit [waysidechapel.org.au](http://waysidechapel.org.au)

#### **Wayside Chapel Statistics**

- During the three months of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown (April and June 2020), Wayside Chapel delivered over 17,200 instances of support to people seeking help.
- Last financial year (2019-2020) Wayside Chapel provided:
  - 13,967 hot showers and toiletries
  - 2429 instances of care coordination including housing, Centrelink, primary health care and legal issues
  - 54,369 hot meals
  - 16,734 items of clothing
- From Jan 2021 – March 2021 Wayside Chapel provided:
  - On an average day 158 people accessed support from Wayside services
  - 8,997 low cost meals served
  - 4,283 clothes, underwear and blankets
  - 1,525 instances of support delivered by van and foot
  - 1,368 warm showers
  - 2,894 instances of care coordination
- 25% of visitors to Wayside Chapel are Aboriginal
- A third of visitors in care-coordination at Wayside Chapel are women