



Wayside Chapel Brings a ‘Week of Christmas Spirit’ to the Homeless

Wayside Chapel’s Christmas will look a bit different this year. The iconic homeless charity will not host its regular Christmas Day Street party in Kings Cross due to COVID-19 limitations. But it still plans to bring on the Christmas cheer so no-one is left behind.

Over the seven days leading up to Christmas, Wayside will host free daily ‘Spirit of Christmas’ community lunches from Friday, 18 December – Thursday, 24 December, 12.30 - 2pm at Wayside Chapel Kings Cross. Nutritious, freshly cooked meals with all the trimmings will be served to people experiencing isolation and homelessness. Seats will be strictly limited for people in need to ensure they meet COVID-Safe limitations.

Wayside will also provide free takeaway meals on Christmas Day, with very limited seating provided at their Kings Cross premises, so that the city’s most vulnerable are not forgotten. A festive spirit will also be added for the people on the streets that Wayside’s van and foot outreach teams meet. These are just some of the many ways that the iconic Sydney charity has had to ‘pivot’ its operations this year due to the pandemic.

Jon Owen, Pastor and CEO of Wayside Chapel says “Earlier this year during the pandemic Wayside moved quickly to ensure that the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness and isolation were still able to access care. Our centres remained open and our outreach teams delivered food and care packs to people on the streets, as well as to people’s homes who were in need of vital essentials and connection. From April to July alone we provided over 17,000 instances of support, as we saw an influx of people in need. This holiday season we are expecting another type of Christmas rush as more people seek our help as they struggle with loneliness and putting food on the table.”

No one should go hungry in Australia, but the **2020 Foodbank Hunger Report** says that since COVID-19 three in ten Australians are now experiencing food insecurity that had not gone hungry before. And those seeking food relief from charities at least once a week in NSW and ACT has doubled in the last year to 38%.

Wayside Chapel is one of only a handful of organisations that will continue to offer support for those experiencing homelessness and social isolation over the Christmas and New Year period. Many turn to Wayside Chapel over this period because their doors remain open at time when people need it the most. They will also continue to provide nutritious low cost meals from their cafes, which have only just re-opened after many months, ensuring that patrons are given a sense of dignity through choice.

Jon Owen, Pastor and CEO of Wayside Chapel says “Many people have nowhere to go on Christmas Day, are hungry, have no support networks or are simply not welcome anywhere else. It’s a time when people remember what they have lost and feel acutely lonely. Our ‘Spirit of Christmas’ community lunches in the seven days before Christmas may not have the fanfare of our usual street party, but we will still provide the gift of conversation, a seat at the table, and a nutritious Christmas meal to show people that they are loved and not forgotten.”

Wayside Chapel needs your support to help provide freshly-cooked meals and support over the Christmas and holiday season. ‘Donate a Plate’ to help feed a person experiencing homelessness at waysidechapel.org.au/donateplate

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For interview requests for Pastor / CEO Jon Owen, or possible interviews with Wayside Chapel Ambassadors / VIPs attending our ‘Week of Christmas Spirit’ lunches, contact Janine Huan, Wayside’s Marketing and Communications Manager on 0409 887 797 or via email: janine.huan@thewaysidechapel.com

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 Space, Wellness Program 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 building with new outreach teams delivering support to people on the streets, as well as to people who are house-bound, but still in of need of connection.

For further information on Wayside Chapel:

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

In the 2019/2020 financial year Wayside Chapel provided the following items to vulnerable people in our community:-

- 734 items of clothing
- 13,967 hot showers & toiletries
- 2,429 instances of care coordination
- 54,369 meals

[Click here](#) to view Wayside Chapel's 2019/2020 Annual Report.