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# Media Release

18 November 2014

## Help give hope where it's needed most this Christmas The Salvation Army launches 2014 Christmas Appeal

The Salvation Army will help over 300,000 Australians in need this Christmas. Figures from a recent Salvation Army survey\* show 55% of disadvantaged people are not able to give gifts to family and friends at least once a year.

**Major Bruce Harmer is encouraging Australians to help give hope where it's needed most by donating to this year's Salvation Army Christmas Appeal.**

The Salvation Army's Major Bruce Harmer has revealed that, incredibly, The Salvation Army expects to help more than 300,000 Australians in need this Christmas – helping them with the basics such as food, bills and accommodation.

The Salvation Army is asking people in the local community to help in any way they can. To donate to The Salvation Army Christmas Appeal, please call **13 SALVOS** (13 72 58) or visit [salvos.org.au/Christmas](http://salvos.org.au/Christmas). Funds are badly needed to help people in crisis.

As the Salvos launch their 2014 Christmas Appeal, they highlight that the festive season can, in fact, be a difficult time for people who are alone, facing hard times or struggling financially.

The Salvation Army is urging everyone in the local area to specifically look out for others in their community and to try to help people who may be lonely or struggling at this time. They say the key is to share some hope and joy.

Major Harmer says, "Poverty and financial hardship can be extremely isolating experiences. This can hit home even more during the Christmas and New Year period. Whilst people are gathering to enjoy time with family and friends for the celebrations, some are not even able to give a gift, get together with friends or go on any kind of holiday."

"What we know is that the **Salvo Care Line** gets more calls in the period during and after Christmas than at any other time of year. Last year in January, there was an 18 percent increase in calls to Salvo Care Line. A lot of people feel the pain and pressure of loneliness, stress, financial difficulty, relationship breakdown or family conflict during this period than at any other time of the year. Sometimes it's the expectations on themselves, other family members and friends and the idea of having 'a perfect time' that can cause issues."

The Salvation Army highlights that a major survey\* carried out in 2014 of 2,485 disadvantaged people helped by The Salvation Army, points out the scale of what is happening in the Australian community. Of the 2,485 respondents, 1,236 had children.

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- 55% of people said they didn't have a lot of friends and 43% said they felt lonely.
- 55% said they were not able to give presents to family or friends at least once a year.
- 88% said they couldn't afford at least a week's holiday away from home each year.
- 38% said they didn't have regular social contact with other people.
- 26% said they didn't have a good meal at least once a day.

Major Harmer said "The Salvation Army will serve around 10,000 meals in the lead up to Christmas and on the day itself. It is estimated over half a million toys and gifts will be distributed to people in need - through the generosity of the Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal. At least 100,000 food vouchers and hampers will be given to people in need."

Major Bruce Harmer from the Salvos also offered some tips on how to spread goodwill, saying "compliment other people and tell them why you value them - never underestimate the power of words. Find elderly people who live locally and do something practical to help them. Identify two or three people that you know are having a tough time and try and work out something practical you could do to help them. Volunteer time to the Salvos or another cause, to help make lives better. Give to help someone less fortunate than you. Call someone who you know needs to hear your voice."

The Salvos also highlight that anyone needing support or assistance can call their free 24/7 counselling service - **Salvo Care Line** - on 1300 36 36 22.

Major Harmer highlighted that they have a network of local churches around the nation with many offering a range of activities leading up to Christmas including carol singing and Christmas Day church services. Some also offer community Christmas lunches. Details will be listed on [salvos.org.au/Christmas](http://salvos.org.au/Christmas).

**ENDS**

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\*The Salvation Army Economic and Social Impact Survey 2014