



Media Release
16 November 2011

Natural disasters and rising expenses mean Aussies will do it tough this Christmas as Wishing Tree Appeal launches

- *Over 2.2 million people estimated as living in poverty in Australia*
- *12 per cent of Australian kids live in poverty*
- *28 per cent of those in need worse off compared with 2010: Salvos*

Today marks the launch of the 24th Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal which, with the support of The Salvation Army, aims to bring some Christmas cheer to those who need it most.

It has already been an incredibly tough year for many Australians with the combination of natural disasters, the rising cost of rent, electricity and food prices forcing many Australian families into hardship.

The Salvation Army help over one million Australians each year including more than 300,000 just at Christmas. Challenges brought about by events like the Queensland and Victorian floods and the West Australian bush fires earlier this year could mean that even more people will require assistance from The Salvos this Christmas.

In fact, The Salvation Army reports that more than one in four (28 per cent) who sought support from the charity last year, say they are worse off this year compared with 2010.

The national target for this year's Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal is 470,000 gifts, building on last year's record tally of 464,000.

Major Jeff Winterburn from The Salvation Army is calling on all Australians to once again open up their hearts to the Appeal and support those in need.

"This year has been extraordinarily tough for many Aussies but it has also reminded us how generous Australians are when a crisis hits. We're anticipating that more Australians will be in need this Christmas and we hope that the generosity towards the Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal continues so that we can assist these people.

"Statistics from ACOSS reveal that over 2.2 million people are now estimated as living in poverty in Australia. Alarming, 12 per cent of Australian kids now live in poverty, which is deeply concerning. We hope Australians realise that behind every 'statistic' is a very real story and we can sometimes forget that people in crisis could literally be living a few doors away," said Major Winterburn.

Kmart Managing Director, Guy Russo, praised everyone's support of the Appeal.

"Our Kmart team is honoured to be able to provide stores where Australians can give to those who are doing it tough at Christmas, and we're thankful for the public's ongoing generosity towards our very much loved Wishing Tree Appeal.

"Year after year we see Australians digging deep to help out, and we know this Christmas will be the same. I am always astounded at how supportive our communities are. Giving people some hope at this time of year is the greatest gift we can give.

"I know the lead up to Christmas is a busy time for most people including myself and my family. Yet helping someone in need through the Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal is quick and easy. Simply leave a gift under the Wishing Tree at any Kmart store or make a cash contribution at any store register or online," Mr Russo said.

"The Salvos will then spread your Christmas cheer to those who really need it."

Major Winterburn reminded Australians to think of people of all ages when donating a gift.

"It's important to remember that Mums, Dads, Grandmothers and Grandfathers will need gifts at Christmas as well, but in particular it is the teenage boys and girls who often go without at Christmas. Simple ideas for this group include sporting equipment such as soccer or rugby balls, books and clothing," Major Winterburn said.

ENDS

Photos from today's launch event are available

For further information, media interviews or photos, please contact:

Rod Jago & Eva Yao

Sefiani Communications

Tel: (02) 8920 0700

Email: rjago@sefiani.com.au / eyao@sefiani.com.au

Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal Information

The Appeal collects gifts on behalf of The Salvation Army who distributes them to children and families that would otherwise go without on Christmas morning.

Gifts can be donated at any Kmart store right up until Christmas Eve.

To donate a gift, simply take a gift tag off a Wishing Tree located in any Kmart store (www.kmart.com.au/stores), identify the appropriate gender and age of a suitable recipient, put it with your gift and place it under the tree.

Alternatively, donors can make a cash contribution at any Kmart store register or visit www.kmart.com.au/wishingtree to contribute online. Cash contributions will be converted by Kmart into Kmart gift cards, allowing Appeal recipients to choose their own Christmas gift.

People of all ages rely on the support of The Salvation Army at Christmas. When making a contribution please consider that it is the elderly, teenagers and boys and girls aged 10 to 12 who are often overlooked.

Kmart and The Salvation Army are aiming to raise a record 470,000 gifts this year.

The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army, affectionately known as the Salvos, currently operates over 600 social welfare programs in Australia, focused areas of greatest stress such as families facing crisis, homelessness and unemployment.

The Salvos help more than one million Australians who are marginalised by these issues each year – that's one person every 30 seconds!