



Leading Sydney charity sees 80% reduction in pro bono food stock supplies as weekly meals demand surges by 50%

Homelessness Week – 5 to 11 August

Giving Day – 6 August

Sydney 1 August: One of Sydney’s iconic charities, Wayside Chapel identifies food insecurity as the number one impact on its visitors as the cost-of-living crunch continues to hit Sydney’s most vulnerable and stretches the resources of the much-needed service.

Wayside has seen a reduction in 80% of its food stock provided pro bono from one of its main suppliers while just this year, Wayside has already served 19,248 meals through its community cafe, with approximately 6,416 individual visits. These numbers underscore the ongoing struggles many face in securing basic necessities.

“We can no longer continue to rely on pro bono providers of food. To meet current demand. Wayside now needs to purchase additional food supplies at a value of \$60,000 per annum,” says Wayside’s Pastor and CEO Jon Owen.

The current cost of living crisis is exacerbating this issue, affecting demographics traditionally viewed as financially stable, including employed people and even mid-to high-income earners.

“The stark reality we’re seeing at Wayside is that a job is no longer a defense or a shield against food insecurity,” adds Rev Jon.

Food demand surges as resources are squeezed

Wayside’s food output has surged by 50%, from 1000 to 1500 meals weekly, stressing its resources. In the last year alone, Wayside Chapel provided 80,000 low-cost meals and 30,000 cups of tea or coffee to people experiencing hardship in our community.

To ensure those most vulnerable can still access an affordable meal the community cafe recently limited the number of meals available for purchase per visitor. However, even with these fiscal measures the café is still often running out of nutritious meals by early in the day.

Next week is Homelessness Week in Australia and the theme is “Homelessness Action Now,” and Wayside’s Giving Day is next Tuesday (6 August).

Latest homelessness statistics (ABS)

- 122,494 people were estimated to be experiencing homelessness on last Census night.
- Males made up 55.9% of people experiencing homelessness; females made up 44.1%.
- 23.% of all people experiencing homelessness were aged from 12 to 24 years.

Rohan’s Story



Rohan works at Wayside Chapel as a mental health support worker, but was once fighting drug and alcohol addiction - his is not the usual story, his father worked at the ABC, he was a former events technical director at Sydney Convention Centre, but excessive exposure to drugs and alcohol in his younger years led him down a dark path for many years, couch surfing and eventually to the loss of his wife and child.

"I progressed to amphetamines, cocaine, a bit of heroin. I would take anything, anything that was on offer. But drinking was the big one that was always available.

"By 20 I was in deep trouble. I had a major car accident while I was out of it, which should have killed me, it didn't. And any normal person would say, 'I won't do that again'. But that didn't stop me. The addiction was alive and well in me. And I drank and drugged for another 13 years after that major car accident. And it didn't get any better. It just got worse."

But Rohan has managed to turn his life around; he has resumed contact with his son and ex-wife and retrained in mental health and addiction and dedicates his life to supporting others in his role at Wayside.

"It's taken a while, but it's a pretty amazing life. It's the most amazing job I've ever had and working with the community that we work with is just extraordinary."

Rohan's story highlights the crucial importance of Wayside's services, now more than ever, for Sydney's most vulnerable, as cost of living, an unusually cold winter and the general economic climate puts the squeeze on the much loved charity, which just celebrated its 60th anniversary.

Wayside's life-changing programs

Wayside Chapel caters to those on the margins and has developed specific services that help meet the culturally specific needs of its visitors including immigrants, women, LGBTI+ and Indigenous visitors.

Wayside's Pathways Program matches people who are ready to move into work or training with organisations that want to make a difference in the community.

Wayside's dedicated Aboriginal Cultural Centre is designed to support Aboriginal visitors moving from a state of trauma to reconnecting with their cultural strengths. Guided by the Aboriginal Healing Framework, which utilises a holistic, culturally safe approach it offers counselling, advocacy, referrals and more.

Please donate to the 'Warm a Heart' campaign this year to help keep these programs going:
<https://donate.waysidechapel.org.au/event/warm-a-heart/home>

If you would like to find out more about volunteering visit:
<https://www.waysidechapel.org.au/volunteering/>

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