



Media release

15 November, 2010

Operation Santa targets care this Christmas

Recent heightened living costs and interest rate rises are placing more financial and emotional stress on those who suffer particularly hard at Christmas.

Target and UnitingCare are asking the community to join forces for *Operation Santa*, the annual Christmas appeal which helps vulnerable individuals and families in our community.

Through *Operation Santa*, people can spread Christmas joy from today until Thursday, 23 December by generously donating gifts at Target and Target Country stores across Australia.

An estimated two million Australians, including more than one in 10 children, still live in poverty. Thousands of people request support services each day from UnitingCare agencies and this demand always spikes around Christmas. Recent interest rate rises and the increasing cost of food, fuel and housing is placing more pressure on those who have previously not needed support.

“There are many people in our community who struggle through the festive season, for reasons including financial difficulties, mental illness, homelessness, family turmoil and an absence of loved ones,” said Rev John Dunn, Chairperson of the UnitingCare WA forum.

“Each time there is additional economic pressure, it draws in new groups of people who suffer that need support from our agencies. This Christmas will be notably harder for more people - and they need our help.”

“We’re asking the public to use their Christmas spirit by giving an extra present to bring love, joy and hope to those in our community who are less fortunate,” Rev Dunn said.

How can people help? Spot the large red *Operation Santa* tree at any Target or Target Country store, take a gift tag from beside the tree and buy a gift for someone in need. Alternatively, gift cards can be purchased from Target checkouts.

UnitingCare representatives will collect the gifts and ensure they are distributed to those in need in time for Christmas morning. All gifts go to people in the local community where they are donated.

Thanks to the generosity of the community, UnitingCare and Target have collected and distributed more than 1.7 million gifts in the past 18 years, with over 65,000 donated last year. Help us collect 100,000 gifts this Christmas for those in need.

Operation Santa runs from Monday 15 November to Thursday 23 December 2010.

For more information or to arrange an interview with Rev John Dunn, Chairperson of the UnitingCare WA Forum please contact Naomi Wright 9355 9027 or naomi.wright@unitingcarewest.org.au