

MEDIA RELEASE

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Is Western Australia losing its Christmas spirit?

"The Western Australian Council of Social Service is concerned that Christmas giving in Perth is increasingly becoming a thing of the past," said Irina Cattalini, CEO of WACOSS today.

A number of the Council's members have identified that Christmas of 2013 may be bleak for many in WA, with charities reporting much lower than normal levels of support so far this year for their traditional Christmas financial appeals.

This poorer showing to date may be part of an ongoing trend, with a number of charities reporting reduced levels of giving in recent years, with appeals like 'Operation Santa' (a partnership between Uniting Care and Target) down 38% last Christmas – despite the Western Australian economy remaining strong.

"Western Australia has seen increases in housing and utility costs which affect us all – however these pressures are most sharply felt by those on low and fixed incomes. At this time of year, while we share precious time with our families at Christmas, many in our community have little to celebrate and will be going without," said Ms Cattalini.

"Being only one week out from Christmas now, I urge everyone to spare a thought for those less fortunate and make a donation, no matter how small, to any of our charities to bring some joy to those who are really doing it tough."

"Having the ability to independently choose how to spend money has a big impact on the self-esteem of someone struggling. Whether it's some new clothes for the kids, help with bills or putting food on the table during the festive season, the ability to decide their own priorities makes a huge difference for vulnerable people to have some normality at this time of year."

"Charitable services are being stretched further than ever, as they struggle with an increase in the demand from a growing population, coupled with rising financial pressures on low income households," she concluded.

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Organisations holding an appeal include:

Anglicare WA www.anglicare.wa.org.au

Salvation Army www.salvos.org.au/donate

Uniting Care West www.unitingcarewest.org.au/donate/operation-santa/

Vinnies <https://www.vinnies.org.au/donate>