

# Media Release



December 20, 2017

For immediate release

## SAMARITANS SETS THE TABLE FOR LUNCH

1000 plates of food. A truck full of presents. 250 volunteers. Not your average Christmas Day lunch! However this is the reality for Newcastle-based charity Samaritans, who will host Christmas Day lunch for locals doing it tough.

In its 16<sup>th</sup> year, the Lunch ensures that people in the community who may feel isolated or are experiencing difficulty, can enjoy Christmas Day with lunch, entertainment, a visit from Santa with gifts and good company.

The Christmas Lunch in the Park will be held at Newcastle Foreshore Railway Sheds from 11am on Christmas Day with support from major sponsors, Port Waratah Coal Services, Port of Newcastle, Woolworths Mayfield and Event Cinemas.

“This event is all about inclusion, bringing people together and sharing the community and festive spirit. No one should be alone or unable to celebrate on Christmas Day and this year we are preparing for bigger numbers as the event continues to grow,” Event Coordinator, Dana Pichaloff, said.

“Samaritans provides a number of services to thousands of people in need at Christmas. From our Christmas Assistance Centre, Emergency Relief services, our refuges and our Christmas Lunches in Newcastle and Wyong. There are a lot of people who need our help and we can only deliver this with the support of the community,” she said.

The Lunch is made possible through the generosity of sponsors and donors to the Samaritans Christmas Appeal which focuses on raising awareness of the vulnerable people in our community who may not otherwise be able to celebrate the festive season.

The Appeal aims to raise much needed funds to support and bring hope to families living in the shadow of disadvantage, and also to those who are without friends and family at Christmas time.

“Christmas time can bring additional hardships for families in crisis and it is children who often struggle the most. Each Christmas, demand for Samaritans services and support increases fourfold, with people in the community realising the difficulties and pressures of additional Christmas expenses,” Ms Pichaloff said.

Samaritans encourages people to give generously this Christmas to support those less fortunate. The Samaritans Christmas Appeal will run until December 31 and aims to raise \$120,000 to bring hope to families living in the shadow of disadvantage.

“Samaritans is grateful for the generosity of all of our Christmas sponsors for Christmas Lunch in the Park, the event would not be possible without the support of the community. I’d encourage all who are able to give generously this Christmas to support those less fortunate,” Mrs Pichaloff said.

Donations can also be made directly to Samaritans for the Christmas Appeal on 1300 656 336 or [www.samaritans.org.au/donate](http://www.samaritans.org.au/donate)

**-ENDS-**

**Media Opportunity:** Media are invited to attend event set up to promote the event for people in need from 10am on Christmas Eve, and from 10:30am on Christmas Day to see the event in action!

**Contact:** Samaritans Communication Coordinator, Laura Dawson on 4960 7157 or 0438 475 772 for more information.