

# Media Release

10 November 2022

## Can you help brighten the lives of vulnerable people this Christmas?

Christmas is the season of giving, but unfortunately, not everyone will receive a gift this festive season.

For the past eight years, for-purpose Catholic organisation VMCH has tried to ensure those they support who may be socially isolated or financially disadvantaged do not feel alone at Christmas, through its hamper drive.

VMCH CEO Sonya Smart says while the organisation is grateful for regular donors, supporters and volunteers who make the hamper drive possible each year, extra help from the public is needed in 2022.

“What started out with 30 hampers in 2015 has grown year upon year, as the true need for these hampers has emerged,” Sonya says.

“This year, off the back of COVID and with a sharp rise in the cost of living, demand has skyrocketed, with 750 hampers needed for older residents living in our affordable homes, children, adults and families from our disability services, and clients who receive care at home across Victoria.”

Affordable homes resident Marjorie, aged 85, says she still remembers receiving her first Christmas hamper more than six years ago.

“I was like a kid at Christmas,” she recalls. “I was just not expecting it and I was so impressed with the items inside.”

Marjorie (pictured) says the arrival of hampers is eagerly anticipated by her neighbours, many of whom live alone.

**“For some people, I know it’s the only present they receive at Christmas. To me, it’s not even about the gifts, but the gift itself that someone is thinking of you.”**

Other recipients say receiving items such as food, decorations, toiletries and toys makes them feel less alone.

“One of my clients who received a Christmas hamper last year rang to say how grateful she is to VMCH for thinking of her,” a VMCH staff member recalls. “She is caring for her Mum and is quite socially isolated.”

Donations for the hampers won’t only benefit recipients, but people VMCH supports too, through the creation of craft items.

VMCH aged care resident Rosemary says making decorations to include in the Christmas hampers each year makes her feel like she’s giving back.

“It’s rewarding and I’m happy to know that I have done something good for those who need it.”

Sonya says the hamper drive is a “real community effort”, with retirement living residents and local school students also pitching in to create items.

“Unfortunately, businesses who’ve donated in previous years have also been hit hard by the pandemic, and our supplies for donations are running low. We’d be grateful if people would consider donating to our 2022 Christmas Appeal and have a hand in brightening someone’s Christmas who really needs it.”

**To donate, please call 1300 698 624 or visit [www.vmch.com.au/christmashampers](http://www.vmch.com.au/christmashampers)**

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## About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic, for-purpose organisation, compassion, respect and inclusion aren't just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we've been around for over a century, we're always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.

