

### Charities struggle in Christmas lead-up

Charities are experiencing a significant increase in demand for help by families doing it tough in the lead-up to Christmas.

The Salvation Army is expecting to help more than 350,000 disadvantaged Australians this Christmas, delivering over \$10 million worth of gifts and food.

Salvos spokesman Major Peter Sutcliffe says the demand for gifts, food and services, is up "significantly" on last year's levels.

"And that's not surprising considering we saw 80,000 new people seek assistance in over the past year who have never sought any before," he told AAP.

The group is experiencing an increase in demand from regional areas hit by recent floods.

And is expecting to distribute half a million toys, a majority of which were donated through its annual K-Mart gift drive.

The Salvation Army says its Wishing Tree Appeal is up 7.5 per cent on the same time last year, with several days to go.

But it's not the same story for UnitingCare's gift appeal, run through retailer Target.

UnitingCare spokesman Reverend Harry Herbert says donations are down a third this year, which means 20,000 children could go without gifts this Christmas.

"We are not getting the gifts we expected or need," Rev Herbert told AAP.

"It could be a less generous spirit in the community, or maybe people are strapped for cash this Christmas."

UnitingCare's appeal closes on Thursday night, but donations can be made through both the organisations shopfronts after this time.



### NSW makes the most festive requests

NSW has the most Christmas cheer out of all the states according to information from a directory assistance service.

Sensis have released data from their 1234 directory assistance which shows exactly how many requests have been put in for numerous things, including Christmas trees and decorations services.

The data shows that these requests in NSW are up 38 per cent while Queensland and Victorian searches across the same categories were down by 47 and 31 per cent respectively.

The festive state was also the only one to see a year on year growth in liquor related requests - up four per cent.

But with taxi cab requests up 57 per cent, drink driving over the festive period will hopefully decrease.

While NSW apparently loves Christmas, Victoria is very well groomed with hairdressing requests up 19 per cent since 2008.

However, it looks like they're not going far with their perfectly coiffed hair as take-away requests have increased by 19 per cent.

In Queensland people are keen to make the most of their money with requests for the lo-

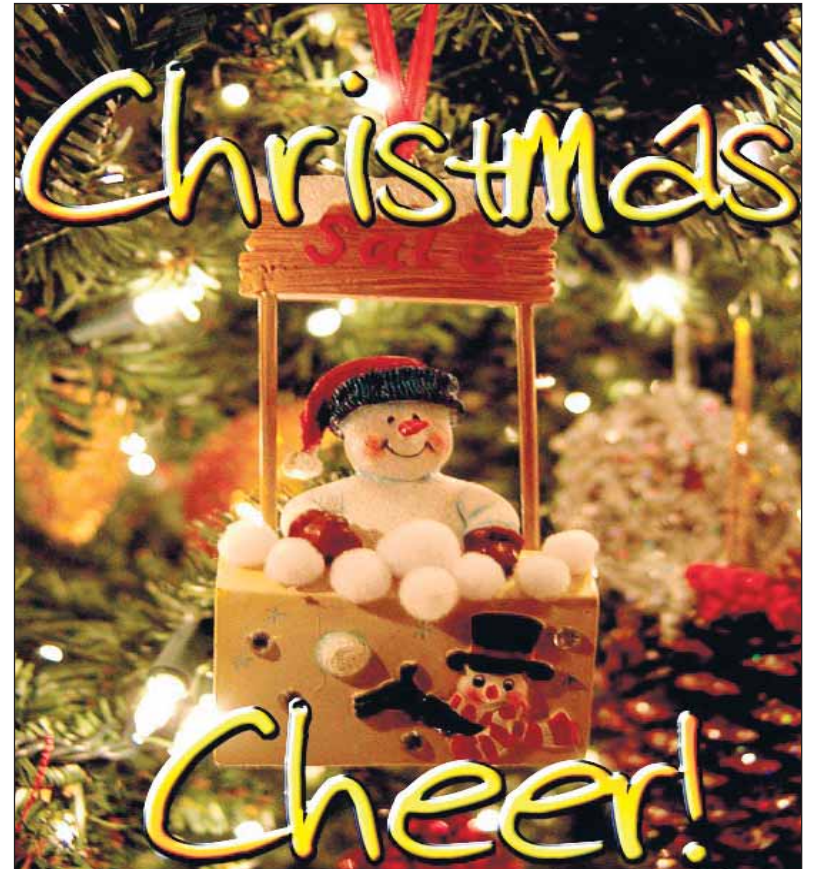
cation of discount stores up 12 per cent.

The sunshine state might just be going to discount stores so they can save up for an Apple iPhone. Queries for Apple stores are up 110 per cent which is more than any other state.

Overseas travel remains high on the priorities list for Queens-

landers with airline searches up 15 per cent since 2008.

The data was collected from 14 million calls averaged across the Sensis voice call centres nationwide from October-December to show the year-on-year comparison of searches across a variety of categories from 2008 until 2010.



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