

MEDIA RELEASE

23 November

Aid Agency Hits Back at Christmas Waste

Today, the international aid agency Act for Peace launched its annual appeal, the Christmas Bowl, encouraging Australians to share their Christmas with war-torn communities. The appeal is set to hit back at the billions of dollars spent each December on Christmas gifts that prove to be unwanted.

Act for Peace's Executive Director, Alistair Gee said, "We're injecting some meaning back into Christmas. It's not all about socks, scented candles and neck ties. With the help of Australians, we're aiming to raise over \$2.7 million to support war-torn and refugee communities around the world. What do we have to lose? Well, apart from a few socks and foot spas."

To coincide with the launch of the appeal, the aid agency has released a [video campaign](#) parodying the plethora of Christmas gifts that flood eBay and landfill sites immediately after Christmas.

Mr Gee said, "Australians spent over \$1 billion on unwanted Christmas gifts last year. Donating just some of this money to the Christmas Bowl can provide life-saving medicine for children in Gaza, a house for a refugee family in Burma or train communities in Sudan to overcome conflict."

"The video aims to promote alternative gift giving at a time when people in Sudan and Burma are in their hour of need. By sharing some of our Christmas cheer we can help secure the well-being of people who face persecution and uncertainty this Christmas," said Mr Gee.

Ethnic groups in Burma are grappling with this uncertainty and violence daily. Tens of thousands of Burmese people need protection and refugee camps are under immense strain.

A former leader of a camp supported by the Christmas Bowl on the Thai-Burma border and now resettled in Sydney, Daniel Zu said, "Everything that happens in Burma has an effect on the border camps. The Burmese government forces are preparing for a major military offensive. Sources confirm that troop re-enforcements are occurring. There will be a humanitarian crisis on the border soon.

"The Australian public can help support the vital work which the Christmas Bowl is helping to achieve on the fragile border", said Mr Zu.

Mr Gee said, "Without further assistance, we will not be able to provide adequate shelter for the Burmese refugees in camps for the year ahead or assist the newly arriving refugees."

"This Christmas, we are challenging Australians with a simple human message. Don't waste Christmas. Share it," said Mr Gee.

The Christmas Bowl is the annual program of Act for Peace, the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

-Ends-

For interviews with Mr Alistair Gee, Executive Director of Act for Peace and Representatives from the Burmese Community in Sydney: Edwyn Shiell 0458 303 515

Further Information:

- To watch the Christmas Bowl launch video on You Tube, please go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-39Ao8piP28>
- To make a tax deductible gift or to order the Christmas Bowl Resources, please free call 1800 025 101 or visit: www.actforpeace.org.au

The Christmas Bowl is a program of Act for Peace, the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia. We empower war-torn communities to reduce poverty, protect refugees, and prevent further conflict. Our project partners are currently assisting more than one million people in the world's worst conflict areas, including Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Burma and Sri Lanka. www.actforpeace.org.au

- To download the image that aligns with this media release, please go to www.actforpeace.org.au/christmasbowlmedia
- To embed the video on a website please use the code below:

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