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Rethinking Christmas Giving: How Australians are turning to philanthropy over presents

As the festive season approaches, more Australians are seeking meaningful, lasting ways to celebrate, shifting away from the commercial rush and instead embracing the spirit of giving back. A survey by the Australian Red Cross showed that **75%** of Australians choose to give back during the last holiday season.¹

The rise of authentic giving

There is a growing resistance to the commercialisation of Christmas, with many Australians becoming more conscious of the waste, excess and environmental footprint of traditional gift-giving. A study by The Australia Institute found that an estimated \$1 billion worth of unwanted gifts were received last year, many of which ultimately ended up in landfill.²

This cultural shift is driving a renewed focus on purposeful generosity, the idea that giving can enrich both the giver and the community.

Recent research commissioned by Equity Trustees reflects this spirit of generosity. Findings included:

- **96%** of Australians donated money to charity in the past year.
- The **average annual donation** for ad hoc givers was **\$580 per taxpayer**.
- Higher-income earners gave an average of **\$850**, while those with religious affiliations averaged **\$720**.
- Despite cost-of-living pressures, **3 in 20** Australians plan to donate **\$1,000 or more** in the next 12 months, and **1 in 20** expect to give more than **\$5,000**.

Philanthropy as a modern Christmas tradition

For many Australians, making giving a tradition - whether individually, as a family or as part of a corporate initiative - is becoming a meaningful way to celebrate Christmas. Increasingly, people are choosing to donate to charity in place of physical gifts or establishing charitable funds that can give back to the community for generations.

Amanda Sartor, National Manager, Active Philanthropy at Equity Trustees, says this shift reflects a deeper desire for impact; "Many Australians are seeking to make their Christmas spending more meaningful. Instead of another Kris Kringle gift, imagine putting that \$50 towards a fund that will grow and give back to the community year after year. It's a simple act that can create a lasting legacy."

"At this time of year, we see clients reflect on the true spirit of giving, using philanthropy to make a tangible difference. It's a wonderful reminder that generosity doesn't just belong under the tree."

For some, contributing to a charitable fund is also a poignant way to honour loved ones who are no longer with them at Christmas, transforming remembrance into a positive and enduring contribution.

¹ [Aussies give the gift of connection and compassion this festive season | Australian Red Cross](#)

² [Never used, never worn: the billion-dollar Christmas waste - The Australia Institute](#)



How to make a difference this Christmas

Sartor added, “Many Australians choose to top up their charitable funds at the end of the year, with December consistently one of the peak months for giving.” Equity Trustees supports donors at every stage of their philanthropic journey, from establishing a charitable fund to managing grants and connecting them with causes that align with their values.

This Christmas, Equity Trustees encourages Australians to consider:

- **Topping up existing charitable funds** instead of purchasing physical gifts.
- **Setting up a new charitable fund** before Christmas to create a new family tradition of giving that lasts for generations.
- **Exploring easy ways to give with purpose** through the Equity Trustees Giving Portal.

“Redirecting even a small portion of Christmas spending can create meaningful, long-term impact,” Ms Sartor said. “It’s a wonderful way to celebrate the season while helping create lasting positive change.”

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