

## Media release

14 December 2010

# Australians planning to waste hundreds of millions this Christmas

Last year six million, or one in three, Australians received one or more Christmas presents that they never used or later gave away, a new survey by The Australia Institute reveals.

Asked about their Christmas gift habits, more than one in four respondents also expect that some of the presents they give this Christmas will go unused or be regifted.

The Australia Institute's Executive Director Dr Richard Denniss said that unwanted Christmas presents represent a staggering \$798 million worth of wasted money, wasted time and wasted resources.

"Giving thoughtful presents can be a real source of joy to those we love at Christmas time, but the growing culture of obligatory giving only brings joy to the big retailers and the big banks whose credit cards are largely funding the annual splurge," said Dr Denniss.

The survey also found that around one quarter of Australians expect to give presents to people that they would prefer not to. Alarming, around one quarter of these reluctant givers are unable to pay off their credit card in full each month.

"This research shows that around one million Australians are spending money they don't have to buy presents they'd rather not give," said Dr Denniss.

"While Australians are paying increased attention to saving electricity and avoiding food waste these figures suggest that there is enormous room for improvement in the gift giving stakes. Millions of unused foot spas require enormous amounts of resources to manufacture and transport.

"On a more positive note, nearly four in five respondents said they wouldn't mind a donation being made to a charity on their behalf instead of a normal present.

"The vast majority of people say they would be happy to see money spent on generous donations rather than wasted on ill-conceived gifts," concluded Dr Denniss.

### Notes for editors

- The Australia Institute conducted a survey of 1,294 adult Australians in October 2010. Survey respondents were sourced through a reputable independent online pan provider. To ensure a representative sample of the broader Australian population, interlocking quotas were applied by gender, age and state/territory.
- A conservative estimate is that on average the recipients of gifts value them at 10 per cent less than their cost (see <http://www.economist.com/node/885748>). Westpac

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data (see <http://www.westpac.com.au/docs/pdf/aw/economics-research/er20101112BullConsumerXmasSpending1.pdf> ) shows people are planning to spend \$438 on average. Hence the value of unwanted presents is \$43.8 per giver, and assuming the figure applies to all people 15 and above, then the total value of unwanted gifts is \$798 million.