Bikes bring Christmas blessings

By Rebecca DiGirolamo

Ten thousand motorcycle riders are expected to deliver thousands of toys to the St Vincent De Paul Society Inc SA later this month so that disadvantaged children and youth will have gifts to unwrap on Christmas morning.

This year’s Toy Run on December 14 will mark the 23rd anniversary of the Motorcycle Riders Association of South Australia’s (MRASA) donation of toys to St Vincent de Paul Society (SVDP).

Vinnies’ volunteers will have just 12 days to sort, label, pack and distribute more than $200,000 worth of donated new toys to parents across the State struggling to make ends meet this Christmas.

“It’s very real,” says motorbike enthusiast Cathy Lux of the widening gap between rich and poor in South Australia.

“There are many people out there who won’t be able to afford gifts for their children this Christmas,” she said.

Mrs Lux has been involved with the MRASA for the past two decades and was the northern regional president for SVDP for more than four years. This will be her 23rd Toy Run.

“I know from experience that it can be tough out there for families at this time of the year and being able to help children enjoy Christmas is what Christmas is really all about.”

The Society’s State president Brian Spencer said the Toy Run was a wonderful experience for the children receiving, and giving, presents.

“Thousands of children have a brighter Christmas thanks to the generosity of the motorbike riders and the public,” he said.

“We should not forget, however, that this event also provides parents with the dignity of knowing that they can provide a gift for their children during this special time of year. As a parent I can’t imagine a more devasting feeling than knowing you are not able to provide your child with a gift at Christmas.”

Parishes, schools and church groups across the Adelaide Archdiocese also donate Christmas toys to Vinnies.

“Christmas is all about giving to others in need,” said Stephen Geaves, education coordinator for St Ignatius’ College.

Mr Geaves said the College’s junior school annually supplied about 300 toys and a trailer load of non-perishable goods to St Vincent de Paul for Christmas.

Toy Run coordinator Harald Lindemann said the Toy Run, now in its 36th year, was the longest and largest of its kind in Australia. He said last year’s run attracted up to 10,000 riders, some from as far afield as New South Wales.

The motorcyclists leave Victoria Park at 11am. They travel via Hutt St, Glen Osmond Road and the South Eastern Freeway to arrive at 11.45am at Callington Oval where festivities will continue with music, food, drink, children’s activities, motorcycle trade displays and stalls. St Vincent de Paul Society will be at Victoria Park before 11am and at Callington Oval to receive new toy and money donations. For more information visit www.mrasa.sa.au.