

Media Release

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RED LETTER DAY FOR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY CANCER

Coles donates nearly 2000 gift cards as research reveals a quarter can't afford basics like food

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Coles will spread Christmas cheer this week by delivering gift cards to nearly 2000 families affected by childhood cancer as new research shows nearly a quarter of families fear they cannot afford basics like food¹.

The research findings released today by national children's cancer charity Redkite highlights the impact of COVID-19 on families who have a child diagnosed with cancer, with nearly a third of respondents also saying they didn't think they could continue to provide for their families.

Coles' gift card donations come as Redkite encourages shoppers to support families in need by purchasing a \$2 donation card at a Coles supermarket checkout between now and Christmas Eve. All proceeds from the national Christmas appeal at Coles, which launched on 25 November, will be evenly distributed between Redkite and national food relief charity SecondBite.

Redkite ambassador Antonia Kidman said every little bit helps for families affected by cancer, particularly during a pandemic.



"COVID-19 has been particularly hard and stressful for families who have children with cancer. Even though restrictions have eased across Australia, the threat of catching COVID-19 is always very real for families who have an immunocompromised child," she said.

"Redkite works on the front line of childhood cancer support, helping with life's basics and making sure families can stay fed and manage the double stress of COVID and childhood cancer. We're extremely grateful to have a partner like Coles on board again this Christmas to raise awareness and funds. Whether it's \$100 or \$2, every donation will help make life easier for a family whose child has been diagnosed with cancer."

Among the recipients of Coles' Redkite Christmas gift cards is the Kidd family from Sydney. Belinda and Craig's four-year-old son Harrison was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia in 2018. His treatment was going according to plan until his cancer returned in early September.

"He was just months away from finishing treatment. No-one expected it, not even his oncology team," Belinda said.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced Belinda and Craig onto reduced wages and after their third son was born in July, they both had to give up work to look after baby Clarke, Harrison and their 16-year-old son, Jayden.

¹ Redkite COVID-19 Social Impact Assessment Survey was conducted between May and August 2020 involving 369 Redkite families. The findings released today specifically relate to responses from 83 Redkite families in August.

"Since Harrison's treatment began again, we haven't been at home much. When we are home, we're just exhausted and we're also wondering: 'When are we going back to hospital? We have to keep an eye on his temperature.' Jayden's definitely felt our absence. His schoolwork has suffered, and he and Harrison miss each other terribly," Belinda said.

Belinda said the Coles gift cards were a saving grace and helped her get Harrison through 'steroid week', a week-long steroid treatment regime that made him ravenous.

"Whenever we knew steroid week was coming up, and we had quite a few early on during his treatment, we'd ask for a gift card to buy all the Sakata biscuits, cabanossi, and olives he could eat. He was always hungry on steroids.

"Salty foods were the only foods he could taste whilst he was going through treatment. Because of the chemo, his mouth tasted so bad, and all those salty foods really were the only things he could taste," she said.

Coles CEO Steven Cain said Coles was pleased to help Redkite through the donation of gift cards to families affected by cancer as well as national fundraising at more than 800 Coles supermarkets this Christmas.

"In addition to our national fundraising campaign, Coles is pleased to donate a \$100 Coles gift card to nearly 2000 Redkite families to spend however they want – be it pantry staples or treats for the Christmas table. It's just one way we're helping families to have a healthier, happier Christmas," he said.

"We hope our customers can help spread some Christmas cheer too by buying a \$2 donation card at a Coles checkout. Our Christmas appeal this year will be shared equally between Redkite and national food relief charity SecondBite, with both organisations helping people across Australia who are facing hard times."

Coles' partnership with Redkite has spanned eight years, with nearly \$40 million raised to provide essential support to children and young people with cancer. Funds raised this Christmas will help families pay for rising household bills, medical and travel expenses.

From 25 November to 24 December, shoppers can purchase a \$2 donation card or donate an amount of their choice at any Coles supermarket across Australia to support Redkite and SecondBite. All proceeds will be evenly distributed between the two national organisations.

About Redkite and Coles:

Coles partnered with Redkite in 2013 to help individuals and families who face financial, emotional and education pressures following a cancer diagnosis. Since then, Coles has raised nearly \$40 million for Redkite through a range of activities including fundraising at Coles supermarkets and Coles Express and by donating five cents from the sale of every loaf of specially-marked Coles Brand bread.

For further information, please contact Coles Media Line (03) 9829 5250 or media.relations@coles.com.au