Xmas revisited

A look at Christmas past in Wagga

at the archives
Wayne Doubleday

When you think of Christmas of the past, what do you think of? Do you think of hot days spent with your family, decorating trees, wrapping and unwrapping presents, and singing Christmas carols?

Perhaps you become a little nostalgic when you reflect on the good old days when the Christmas season was a time concerned only with celebration and spreading cheer and goodwill.

You might feel a certain regret because Christmas has just become another opportunity for retailers to make more money.

If you take a look at the Wagga Wagga Advertiser in December 1968 – 100 years ago – Wagga was very much aware of the commercial advantages to the Christmas season.

The classifieds are full of advertisements, such as:


“Have you got your Christmas Poultry? If not, take a drive to C. Ansell’s; he can supply you.”

“Order your suit early for Christmas, and save disappointment. Large Stock just arrived. H. Oats, Tailor, Gurwood Street.”

Some of the larger stores such as David Jones and Hunters’ on the Hill bought immense spaces on the pages to wish their patrons a Merry Christmas and to encourage them to visit.

Fifty years on, Christmas 1968, the holiday season was in full swing.

The newspapers are full of businesses vying for the public’s attention and Declaring the attractiveness of their wares as Christmas presents.

David Jones “the store of the Christmas spirit”, had glamorous shear nylons, special Hollandia denim slippers, fine grass linen handkerchiefs and limpt free tea towels “in many gay designs for Christmas giving” for her.

For him, they had:

“Phoeba lace, handmade in Italy, in many really handsome designs.”

“St. James stretch nylon socks, rib knit in the patterns men like.”

“My Fair Lady 127 Coronet Record, The Original Broadway Cast, this is something any man would like.”

“50 Cmaven A cigarettes, Christmas pack, sure to be welcomed.”

M Raya and Co., the electrical appliance specialist, advertised their Kelvinator fridges, their Pope washers “in glorious pasted colours” and the “Sunbeam automatic toaster – toast without waiting” as “gifts that last”.

The front page of The Daily Advertiser on December 23, 1968, announced there were only two shopping days until Christmas. The headline extolled, “Tempo of Christmas Shopping Quickens as C” Day Draws Near.”

“The Christmas shopping spree in Wagga reached its highest peak to date on Saturday when hundreds of people crowded city stores in the biggest Christmas rush for many years.”

One of the front page articles of the Christmas Eve edition declared, “Church Leaders Urge that Purpose of Christmas be Realized.”

The article stated: “Wagga church leaders yesterday appealed to the public through their Christmas messages to put realization back into Christmas, and to investigate and appreciate fully the title of the festive period.”

How much has Christmas really changed over the last 100 years?

References:

Wagga Wagga Advertiser
22/12/1968, 23/12/1968, 24/12/1968; photos from Tom Lennan collection (RW1574). Compiled by Jillian Kohlhagen