Social Justice
STOCKTAKE

Taking stock of our communities

THE SALVATION ARMY

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Acknowledgement of Country

The Salvation Army Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet and work and pay our respect to Elders past, present and future.

We value and include people of all cultures, languages, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and intersex status. We are committed to providing programs that are fully inclusive. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of people of all ages, particularly children.

Traditional Owners

Arrernte • Alawa • Alyawarre • Amurdak • Anindilyakwa • Anmatyerre • Awarai • Bilinarra • Binbinga • Bininj • Burarra • Dhay'yi • Djerimanga • Djowei • Emmiyangal • Gaagudju • Gajirrawoong • Gambalang • Garrwa • Gudanji • Gunwinggu • Gurindji • Jamindjung • Jawoyn • Kaytetye • Luritja • Kunapa • Kungarakany • Gunavidji • Kwarandji • Larrakia • Marranunggu • Marra • Marrithiyal • Mati Ke • Matuntara • Maung • Methne • Mudburra • Mulluk-Mulluk • Murrinh-Patha • Nagara • Ngan'gimerri • Ngaanyatjarra • Ngalakgan • Ngalia • Ngaliwurru • Ngarinman • Ngarka • Ngardi • Nungali • Nunggubuyu • Pintupi • Pitjantjatjara • Rembarrnga • Tiwi • Waayni • Wadjiginy • Wagiman • Wakaya • Wambaya • Wardaman • Warlpiri • Warumungu • Wanggamala • Wurango • Yan-nhanu • Yanyuwa • Yolgnu

A practical approach to social justice

The Salvation Army is committed to seeking reconciliation, unity and equity throughout Australia. We value all people – regardless of age, culture, capacity, language spoken, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression.

We aim to provide safe, welcoming and fully inclusive programs to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. Our Salvation Army mission worldwide, is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name with love and without discrimination.

We recognise and are sensitive to the needs of people who often find it difficult to access and use services in times of crisis. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people who identify as LGBTIQA+, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people with disabilities.

The Salvation Army believes all people deserve compassion, dignity, hope and respect. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of people of all ages, particularly children.

Contents

*The hand–heart–shield motif speaks of the need to **raise our hands and be counted**, and that we need to do so with **love and hope**.*

The Social Justice Stocktake

Working for justice is at the heart of what The Salvation Army does in Australia. It is integral to our ethos, our mission and our vision.

The experience of the pandemic has given us all greater insight into just how deeply social injustice is embedded in Australia. In this Stocktake, The Salvation Army wanted to get to the heart of what people were seeing in their local communities, and from there build a map of social justice priorities across Australia. We checked in with over fifteen thousand Australians across every State and Territory and in every electorate.

We found that Australians care deeply about social injustice — but don't always know what to do about it.

We heard that many people feel overwhelmed, even hopeless, when asked how Australia can address the issues they see in their local communities. Some felt they needed government to act before they could do anything individually. Some despaired that governments (of any level and any political persuasion) don't seem to care enough about the issues and injustices going on around them every day.

So instead of just providing our findings, we've tried to help alleviate that sense of hopelessness by also outlining practical solutions. We firmly believe that every social justice issue can be addressed.

Every person can make a difference.

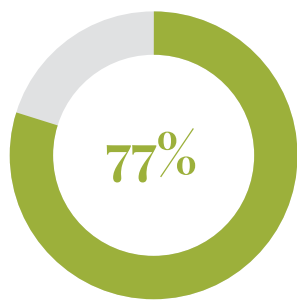*Together, we can make an even greater difference.*

Our hope is that the following report will show how.

The Salvation Army Australia is a Christian movement dedicated to sharing the love of Jesus. **We do this by:**

- *Caring for people • Creating faith pathways*
- *Building healthy communities • Working for justice*
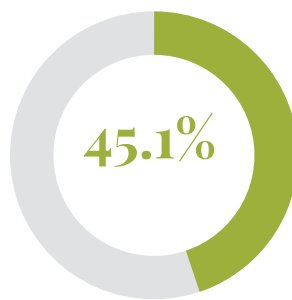
Social Justice in Northern Territory
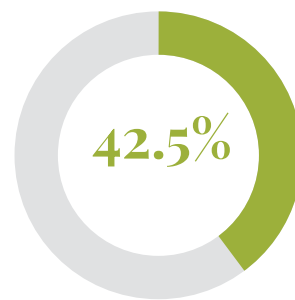
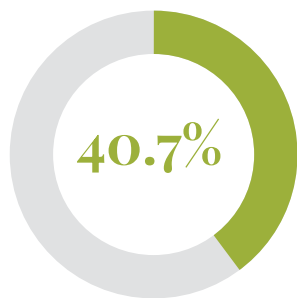**Breakdown of responses**

77% — Alcohol and drug misuse

56.6% — Family violence

45.1% — Homelessness

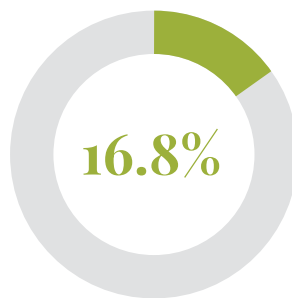**42.5%** — Housing affordability

40.7% — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage

30.1% — Mental health

16.8% — Racism and discrimination
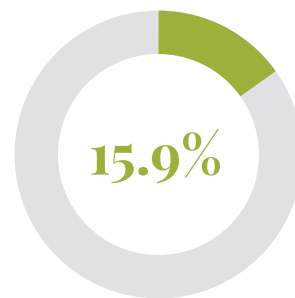
15.9% — Unemployment and under employment
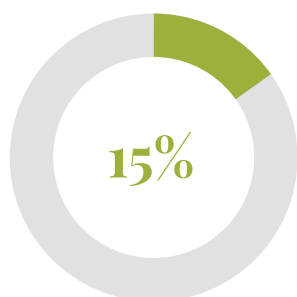
15% — Poverty and financial hardship
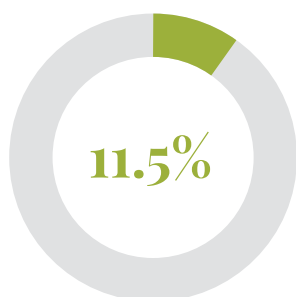
11.5% — Gambling harm

Compared to Australia

The responses from respondents in the Northern Territory varied considerably from what were strikingly consistent results across other states and territories.

The people of the Northern Territory were most concerned about alcohol and drug misuse **(77.0%)**, which is **23.7 percentage** points higher than was reported by any other state (**53.3%** of survey respondents from Western Australia reported this as their second highest concern after mental health) and **34.4 percentage** points above Australia overall **(42.6%)**.

Another major difference in the results was that the Northern Territory identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander disadvantage as the fifth priority social policy issue (with **40.7%** of Northern Territory responses). This is significantly higher than the rest of Australia where it was identified by only **7.3%** of respondents. The jurisdiction with the next highest result was the Australian Capital Territory **(11.7%).**

The prevalence of both family violence **(56.6%)** and homelessness **(45.1%)** were significantly higher than the national result (**35.4%** and **35.1%** respectively).

There are several geographic and demographic attributes of the Northern Territory that set it apart from most of Australia.

Apart from its physical size, remoteness and climate, the Northern Territory's low total population comprises **25.5%** people of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds (compared to the national average of **2.8%**).[1]

Between 2014 and 2016, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged birth to four were more than twice as likely to die than non-Indigenous children. In the Northern Territory, infant mortality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was four times higher than the national rate.[2]

In September 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represented **27%** of the total full-time adult prisoner population, while accounting for approximately **2%** of the total Australian population aged **18 years and over.** The

adult imprisonment rate increased **77%** between 2000 and 2015.[3]

There are **61** domestic and family violence incidents on average on a typical day and four domestic and family violence related homicides per **100,000 people** per year.[4]

There were four homicides relating to domestic and family violence per **100,000 people** in the Northern Territory in 2015, which was the highest of any jurisdiction.[5]

The detention rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged **10-17 years** was **26 times** the rate for non-Indigenous youth in 2016.[6]

In 2015, the suicide rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was double that of the general population.[7]

Mental health was also identified as major social justice issue in the Northern Territory. While respondents in the Northern Territory were not in lockdown for the period this survey was conducted, what is striking about the appearance of mental health is how consistently it was ranked highly across the country – irrespective of lockdowns, geography, or other forms of disadvantage.

In the Northern Territory, there is massive social housing shortfall of **13,000 homes,** and an estimated **7700 people** who are experiencing homelessness. These results dwarf the very serious housing and homeless situations of all other states and territories.[8]

In 2019, people in the Northern Territory were about three times as likely to be a victim of an alcohol-related incident (including verbal abuse, physical abuse or being put in fear) as an illicit drug-related incident (**34%** compared with **11.1%**).[9]

In the Northern Territory in 2019, among people **aged 14 and over:**

- One in seven smoked tobacco daily.
- One in three consumed five or more drinks in one sitting (at least monthly).
- One in five used an illicit drug in the **past 12 months.**
- More than half supported testing of drugs/pills at designated sites.[10]

One of the themes that came through the comments from respondents in the Northern Territory and across Australia was a sense of disempowerment. There was a strong sense that these issues need to be addressed, but a certain hopelessness about how that could happen. In the following pages, we have prepared some further information about the issues identified by the people of the Northern Territory and some concrete actions we can take together to make a difference.

"More availability and access to mental health practitioners, and more widely accepted understanding of diet and lifestyle impacts on mental health"

"Improve access to affordable housing, increase social supports around disadvantage, and trauma, increase supports for DFV families including the perpetrator, increase security and engagement of disadvantaged youth by offering live in rehab/development programs, listen to the people that are experiencing disadvantage, review mandatory reporting laws to support families rather than punish families for being disadvantaged."

"Katherine desperately needs more housing, and for that housing to be more affordable."

"Run community based mental health awareness programmes."

"Easier access to services and increased eligibility. Decrease in rental prices. Increased opportunities for employment."

"Focus on alcohol and drug rehabilitation and removing children from abuse and neglect situations."

"I think DV [domestic violence] has a lot to do with these problems, it's all a cycle. There are limited homeless shelters and programs to get people on their feet, no youth homeless shelter or support (and well-known problems with territory families and foster careers), and limited women's shelters for families trying to leave DV. Let alone hospital care or treatments for mental health. It's all very intertwined."
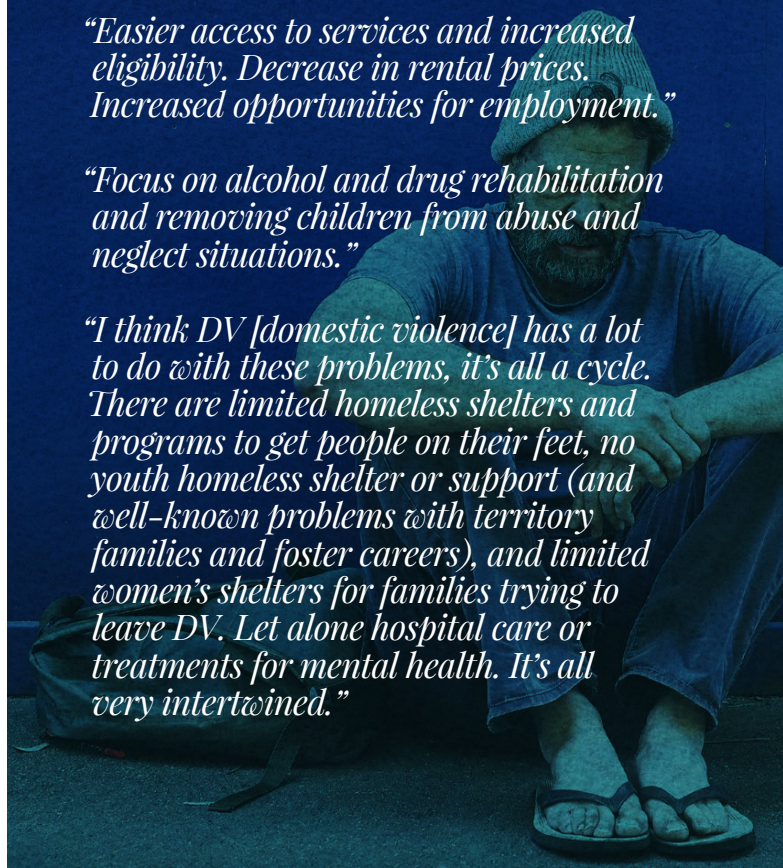
Addressing
Social Injustice

Alcohol & drug misuse

The consumption of alcohol and illicit drugs can place a heavy burden on individuals, families and society. For individuals, it can affect health, relationships, jobs and education. For the community, the cost to the community from alcohol-related harm is estimated to exceed $14 billion annually. For illegal drugs it exceeds $8.2 billion.[1]

Alcohol and other drug related harm is both a driver for and result of other forms of disadvantage. Often a person experiencing alcohol or other drug harm is also experiencing multiple disadvantages at once. Alcohol and drug misuse itself can change an individual's brain, making it harder for them to change behaviour – even when they want to.[2]

Alcohol and drug misuse is widespread in Australia. Around 43 per cent of Australians aged 14 and over had illicitly used a drug at some point in their life (including pharmaceuticals used for non-medical purposes) and 16.4 per cent had used one in the last 12 months.

There is a lot we can do to address the harm that comes from alcohol and drug misuse.

It's estimated that every year in Australia:[3]
- **4,816 people die** from alcohol-related injuries, illness and accidents
- **75,772 people are hospitalised** due to alcohol consumption
- **2,070 people die** from drug-related deaths
- **More people die** from drug overdoses than die on the roads

More than one in five Australians (21 per cent) aged 14 and over have been **verbally or physically abused** or put in fear by another person who was under the influence of alcohol.[4]

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Australia who consume alcohol at levels that exceed lifetime risk guidelines was **18.4 per cent in 2018–19**. Over the same period, **23 per cent** of Indigenous Australians had **used an illicit drug** in the last 12 months.[5]

What we can do?

AS A NATION

» **We can invest in harm reduction.** This means that we focus on solutions to mitigate the problems that come with misuse. In doing this, we need to acknowledge that alcohol and drug misuse often occur alongside other forms of disadvantage, so we need to ensure that policy responses are tailored and culturally appropriate.

AS A STATE OR TERRITORY

» **We can take a local approach that protects vulnerable people and communities.** We need to understand local populations to provide accessible and effective alcohol and other drug treatment systems. Such systems need to be situated within the wider welfare support response to create pathways and services that better engage, maintain and successfully exit people from treatment.

AS A COMMUNITY

» **We can provide social connection that is not reliant on alcohol or drug use.** Community groups can ensure their events and activities are supportive and accepting as a way to create pathways for people to build hopeful, purposeful and meaningful lives.

AS INDIVIDUALS

» **We can recognise that alcohol and drug misuse are health issues that take great effort and courage to seek help with.** We can listen carefully and connect with people experiencing alcohol and drug misuse, and reduce the stigma associated with alcohol and other drug misuse.

Family & domestic violence

Family and domestic violence is a major health and welfare issue in Australia that can have lifelong impacts for both victim-survivors and perpetrators. It affects all people of all ages and from all backgrounds, but mainly women and children.

Family violence is not always physical. Financial abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse or coercive control can be less obvious but just as harmful as physical violence. All these forms of abuse cause immediate and lasting harm to victim-survivors as well as others, especially children, who witness it.

In the last year family and domestic violence has been labelled as the 'shadow pandemic'[1]

Gender inequality and inequity in Australia provide the underlying conditions for violence against women. Many of the drivers of family violence are 'societal' and how we, as a community and as individuals, respond to gender inequity and gender stereotypes can be a powerful force for change.

Almost a quarter of Australian women have **experienced violence** from a current or former partner.

On average in Australia, **one woman every week is murdered** by her current or former partner.[2]

One in three women with disability experienced **emotional abuse** from a partner.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are **35 times more** likely to experience **family violence** than non-Indigenous women and **32 times more** likely to be **hospitalised** because of injuries caused by violence.

What we can do?

AS A NATION

» **We can ensure that when a victim-survivor seeks help, they receive it.** This means that there is sufficient funding for supports and also that supports allow victim-survivors to be physically safe while continuing to be employed, pursue education and be connected. When someone leaves a violent situation, they need somewhere to go.

AS A STATE OR TERRITORY

» **We can make sure that first responders receive the training and support they need to identify family violence and provide appropriate support.** Sometimes family violence is difficult to identify. Sometimes victim-survivors are even misidentified as the perpetrators of violence. First responders have a difficult task, and they need sufficient support.

AS A COMMUNITY

» **We can have safe but challenging conversations about family violence.** Having these conversations can equip us with the tools and resources to understand the nature of family and domestic violence as a pattern of behaviours over time. They can also demonstrate to victim-survivors that they are not alone, and they are not to blame.

AS INDIVIDUALS

» **We can challenge our own ideas and language around family violence and question when others use language that minimises or excuses violence within the family or home.** Everyone can call out negative behaviour. It's important to do so in a manner that doesn't shame the victim, but you can always say 'that's not ok'.

Homelessless & housing affordability

Homelessness is a widespread and serious issue in Australia – well over 100,000 people are homeless in Australia.[1] The risk of homelessness is highest for those who have experienced family and domestic violence, young people, children on care and protection orders, Indigenous Australians, people leaving health or social care arrangements and Australians aged 55 or older – particularly women.[2]

People experiencing homelessness are amongst the most socially and economically disadvantaged in our society. Homelessness leads to increased impact and complexity of existing trauma, substance use and mental ill health.[3] The cost of homelessness to individuals, our community and economy is enormous and increases the longer the individual remains homeless. Homelessness is a result of systemic and structural issues, such as poverty, low income and a lack of safe, affordable housing.

Housing affordability relates to how much money a person has to spend on housing (mortgage payments or rent) relative to their household income.[4] Any type of housing (including rental/home ownership, permanent/temporary, for-profit/non-profit) is considered affordable if it costs less than 30 per cent of household income. [5]

Access to appropriate, affordable and secure housing is the foundation of any family or individual's engagement in work, education and social relations. It's also the single most critical exit point from homelessness services. The lack of affordable housing is one of the main factors for increasing homelessness across the nation.

Housing prices in Australia have been steadily increasing since the mid-1980s, while wages and support payments have not increased at nearly the same rate.[6] This is a significant factor driving the crisis of housing affordability.

The superficial solution to addressing homelessness and housing affordability is to just build more houses (or appropriate accommodation of any kind). Of course, it's a bit more complicated than that, but addressing housing supply, especially ensuring there are enough suitable accommodation options available, is a solid start.

Eradicating homelessness and addressing housing affordability issues are possible in Australia, but it is going to take concerted efforts.

One in 200 people are homeless on any given night.

One third of people experiencing **homeless in Australia** are **under 18 years of age**.

Social housing, as a proportion of housing, has **dropped from 4.6 per cent to 4.2 per cent** between 2014 and 2020.

Rents have increased nationally by **8.2 per cent over the 12 months** ending August 2021, the largest rise in rents since 2008.

In 2020, approximately one in three **women and children escaping family violence** seeking homelessness services were **turned away** due to a lack of accommodation.

A survey considering **74,266 rental listings** showed that:
- **zero per cent of rentals** were affordable for a single person on either JobSeeker or Youth Allowance anywhere in the country
- only **two per cent of rentals** were affordable for a couple living on the age pension (the most generous of government payments)

What we can do?

AS A NATION

» **We can make a commitment to eradicate homelessness.** Making the end of homelessness a key measure of the success of governments will drive action to address the structural causes of homelessness – poverty, low income and the lack of social and affordable housing. Accountability will also encourage governments at all levels to work together.

AS A STATE OR TERRITORY

» **We can focus on transparent population health and infrastructure planning.** One of the barriers to effective action is that there hasn't been enough focus on building evidence around the housing needs of Australians. There is more than enough evidence to get started on increasing social and affordable housing right now, but we also need to be looking at how to ensure that accommodation options meet the needs of the people who will actually live in them.

AS A COMMUNITY

» **We can give people who are experiencing (or have experienced) homelessness a voice.** Being homeless causes such extraordinary personal stress and disengagement that survival is the individual focus, rather than advocacy for structural reform. As a community we can support groups that assist people experiencing homelessness – we can fundraise, volunteer and advocate.

AS INDIVIDUALS

» **We can treat people experiencing homelessness or housing stress with dignity and respect.** If we see someone in the street. experiencing homelessness, we can smile and say hello. If we are in the position of owning an investment property, we can be ethical landlords.

Housing prices in Australia have been steadily increasing since the mid-1980s, while wages and support payments have not increased at nearly the same rate. This is a significant factor driving the crisis of housing affordability.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are part of the oldest living culture in the world, but they are also amongst the most disadvantaged Australians. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities experience lower life expectancy and poorer health outcomes, while encountering higher rates of infant and maternal mortality, family and domestic violence, suicide and incarceration.

There are both historical and current contributors to this disadvantage and the experience of colonialism and suppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures has an ongoing negative effect on people from these cultures. Many of the drivers of disadvantage are systemic and structural. This means that as well as addressing disadvantage as it's experienced, we also need to address the underlying structures that lead to discrimination and hardship.

In Australia, successive governments have committed to 'closing the gap' between outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and those enjoyed by non-Indigenous Australians. The most recent report from the Government showed that much more work is needed in order to meet the target of closing the gap by 2030.

Indigenous people have shared a pathway with us to address this social justice issue – now we need to walk along it.

Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults make up around two per cent of the national population, they constitute **27 per cent** of the **national prison population**.

Indigenous youth are **22 times more** like to be in juvenile detention than non-Indigenous youth.

Rates of out-of-home care for Indigenous children have almost **tripled in the past 15 years**.[2]

What we can do?

AS A NATION

» **We can implement the recommendations of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.**[1] This involves creating a constitutionally enshrined Indigenous Voice to the Parliament and Makarrata Commission. On a very practical level, we can also increase cooperation and cross-sectoral funding for the full implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

AS A STATE OR TERRITORY

» **We can address laws, policies and systems that perpetuate disadvantage.** This is most urgently needed in the criminal justice system (such as raising the age of criminal responsibility), but we can also ensure that services, such as health and educational resources, are culturally appropriate, accessible and fit for purpose for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

AS A COMMUNITY

» **We can be respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and wisdom.** We can include Welcome to Country/Acknowledgement of Country in our gatherings and ensure that our events and activities are actively welcoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and delivered in a culturally safe way.

AS INDIVIDUALS

» **We can commit to learning more about the shared history of this land – even when that history is challenging or painful.** We can then use that knowledge to show support and respect, such as using Indigenous place names or supporting Indigenous organisations, businesses and events.

Mental health

A person's mental health is a central component of wellbeing. Mental ill-health, whether a condition is considered severe or not, undermines the quality of life of millions of Australians. There are many factors that can cause a person to experience mental ill-health. Some of the societal contributors include economic stresses, such as unemployment and homelessness, and social factors including family and domestic violence, substance use disorders and loneliness and social isolation.

Once a person is experiencing mental ill-health, it's easy for minor conditions and setbacks to snowball, and for this to have monumentally negative impaacts upon every part of a person's life.

Mental illness does not discriminate. It's important that anyone experiencing mental ill-health can access timely, non-judgmental and effective support so everyone can achieve and maintain mental health and wellbeing.

We probably can't eradicate all underlying causes of mental ill-health, but we certainly can address much of the hardship that comes with it.

Every year, **3.2 million Australians (13.1 per cent)** experience an anxiety-related condition and **2.4 million (10 per cent)** experience depression or feelings of depression. These numbers are growing.[1]

Nearly half of Australians (46 per cent) experience a mental disorder throughout their lifetime.

One in seven (13.9 per cent) of children between 4 and 17 experience mental ill-health in any given year and more than three quarters of mental health problems occur before the age of 25.[2]

What we can do?

AS A NATION

» **We can design our support systems to recognise the societal, as well as medical contributors to mental ill-health.** This means our national approach to mental health needs to acknowledge systemic issues such as poverty, housing insecurity and family and domestic violence. One 'big thing' the Australian Government can do is reform our social security system, so there is adequate income support for people who become unemployed due to mental illness.

AS A STATE OR TERRITORY

» **We can focus on early intervention – providing support before a person finds themselves in crisis.** This will require a change in how services are delivered and will need diverse, ambitious, evidence-based trial programs based on the lived experience of people experiencing mental ill-health, as well as experts.

AS A COMMUNITY

» **We can break down the stigma around mental ill-health and asking for help.** If we treat mental illness in the same way we treat physical illness – recognising that the person with the condition is not to blame and needs appropriate support – we can change the conversation and provide an avenue for people to reach out for support.

AS INDIVIDUALS

» **We can educate ourselves about mental illness and also about how to support someone experiencing mental ill-health.** There are many resources online, as well as specific courses (such as mental health first aid) that can help us on this journey.

Racism & discrimination

Racism can take many forms and includes "prejudice, discrimination or hatred directed at someone because of their colour, ethnicity or national origin".[1] Racism can be overt (where disadvantage against a particular group is openly enacted or spoken about), covert (where it is subtle such as a 'joke' or seemingly universal rules only actually affect one group) or structural (where processes or systems either purposely or inadvertently disadvantage a particular group).

Unfortunately, racism is a common occurrence in Australia. While legislation protects against discrimination based on race, many people experience racism daily. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, migrants and refugees often experience racism at a higher rate than the general population. Racist attitudes and behaviours often become more pronounced, and less veiled, according to topical and current affairs in Australian society. This can sometimes lead to an increase in racial discrimination against specific groups in society at a given time. Sadly, we have seen examples of this during the Covid-19 pandemic.

At the heart of racism is the failure to recognise that we are all inherently equal and valuable, so that is where we need to start in addressing racism.

A recent study by the Australian Human Rights Commission identified that **20 per cent** of Australians have **experienced racism** in the form of race **hate talk** and about **5 per cent** have been **attacked** because of their race.[2]

7 in 10 students report having **experienced racism** during their childhood.[3]

In Australia, the **Racial Discrimination Act 1975** exists to bring equality between all people regardless of their race, colour, descent or place of origin.[4] It's against the law to discriminate on the basis of "age, disability, race, sex, intersex status, gender identity or sexual orientation in certain areas of public life".[5]

What we can do?

AS A NATION

» **We can ensure that the voice of culturally diverse peoples is not only heard, but valued, in policy formation.** This might provide opportunities that focus on all-of-society cohesion, as well as ways to strengthen protections against racial discrimination.

AS A STATE OR TERRITORY

» **We can address laws and policies that allow structural racism to remain.** States and territories can undertake law reform where laws are implemented in a way that leads to racist outcomes (such as raising the age of criminal responsibility) and operational decisions that lead to disadvantage due to cultural background (such as the provision of enhanced medical facilities so Aboriginal women can give birth on Country were safe to do so). Valuing culturally diverse voices in the policy process would help determine where priority action needs to be taken.

AS A COMMUNITY

» **We can examine whether our own structures lead to racial disadvantage.** Some of the organisations we are involved with may have developed their rules and policies a long time ago and it may be that they need a refresh. Involving people from diverse backgrounds in this reconsideration is a great way to avoid inadvertently perpetuating racism.

AS INDIVIDUALS

» **We can challenge our own ideas and language around other cultures.** We can also question when others use language that minimises or discriminates against another person.

Unemployment & underemployment

Employment underpins the economic output of a nation and enables people to support themselves, their families and their communities. In September 2021, Australia's unemployment stood at 4.5 per cent,[1] however this figure doesn't tell the whole story. People who are underemployed but work 'one hour of paid work per week' aren't counted as unemployed. People who are not employed but have given up actively looking for work also don't count in this figure.

Unemployment, underemployment and casualised employment can be a major source of stress that has the potential to compromise the health and wellbeing of individuals. The current JobSeeker payment is set at an unsustainably low level and forces many people to forego necessities or enter into debt.

Currently in Australia about 750,000 people are 'long-term unemployed', meaning they have been on unemployment payments of 12 months or longer. The longer a person is unemployed, the more their employment prospects diminish,[2] and the more likely they are to experience heightened levels of anxiety, depression and hopelessness.

Underemployment and long-term unemployment are the biggest challenges Australia faces in building an inclusive COVID-19 recovery in which no one is left behind, yet the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have not fallen with equal severity on all shoulders.[3] Low paid workers, many of whom are women, have been exposed to the full health and employment effects of the crisis, resulting in lower workforce participation rates than men and the additional stresses of at home child-care and schooling.[4]

The two main unemployment benefits: **JobSeeker Payment** ($391pw including Rent Assistance for a single adult) and **Youth Allowance, unemployed** ($331pw) are the lowest in the OECD for individuals who have recently become unemployed.[5]

Only **48 per cent** of people with disability are employed, compared to **79 per cent** without disability.[6]

Recent research reveals there are **27 jobseekers** competing for each entry-level job.[7]

In March 2021, an estimated **376,287 people** receiving JobSeeker Payment were defined as having partial capacity to work. **Over 60 per cent** of these people were **aged over 45 years**. Most were on JobSeeker Payment long term.

What we can do?

AS A NATION

» **We can action the commitment to full employment as an urgent policy priority.** This would mean that those who are available, able and actively seeking work can obtain it, including addressing structural and systemic barriers that prevent people from participating fully in the workforce, including gender pay gap and the casualisation of the workforce.

AS A STATE OR TERRITORY

» **We can implement state-based programs and engage with local expertise to find pathways for people who are unemployed or underemployed into new employment opportunities.** Working alongside the Australian government, state and territory governments can promote features of innovative funding and grant arrangements, such as 'social procurement' options.

AS A COMMUNITY

» **We can encourage and facilitate opportunities for people who are unemployed to learn new skills.** Community-based organisations can seek out and welcome unemployed and underemployed people into their activities as volunteers, as well as provide work-related skills, experience and mentoring.

AS INDIVIDUALS

» **We can listen to people's experiences of unemployment and underemployment.** We can make sure we aren't judging people for being unemployed

Poverty & financial hardship

Australia is a wealthy country, but there are still millions of Australians who experience financial hardship and poverty. For a person in poverty, every decision is filtered through the lens of survival. Some of the choices can be as extreme as choosing between affording rent and paying electricity bills or choosing between medications and having food for dinner that night. In this context, it is extremely difficult to prioritise social connection – even though we know that social connection is critical for wellbeing.

Some Australians are in what we call 'intergenerational poverty' – they're in financial hardship because their parents were in financial hardship and, without intervention, it's highly likely their children will have the same experience.

Even short-term, circumstantial poverty can become a trap. Financial stress can draw people into unsustainable debt, it can impact on a person's ability to gain or maintain employment and it can make it significantly harder to escape harmful situations such as domestic or family violence.

There are many contributors to poverty in Australia, including insecure and casualised work, housing stress and rising costs of living. Probably the biggest contributor though is the fact that welfare payments in Australia are set well below any recognised poverty line. The level of income support is so low that a person who is reliant on it doesn't have scope to meet both basic needs and plan for the future. A person dependent on welfare risks long-term unemployment, social isolation, entrenched poverty and intergenerational disadvantage simply because the rate of JobSeeker and Youth Allowance is too low.

The upside of that is there are concrete actions we can take to eradicate poverty in Australia.

In Australia, more than **3.24 million people** or **13.6 per cent** of the population live below the poverty line.[1] Of this, **774,000 children**, or **one in six children**, are in poverty.[2]

The poverty rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is **31 per cent,** while poverty is twice as high in very remote communities **(54 per cent)** as in major cities **(24 per cent).**

Estimates suggest that between **22 per cent to 32 per cent** of the Indigenous population are food insecure.[3]

In 2019, nearly one in five households **(19.5 per cent)** were unable to raise **$2,000** within a week for something important. There were also more households in 2019 that experienced a cash flow problem in the previous 12 months compared to 2014 **(21.8 per cent compared to 19.3 per cent).**[4]

968,000 people or 38 per cent of the 2.6 million people living in poverty (excluding self-employed people) came from households where wages were the main source of income. This is an increase from the **32 per cent** of people in poverty in the 2013–14 statistics.[5]

What we can do?

AS A NATION

» **We can increase social security payments to allow people reliant on them to live with dignity.** More generally we can make eradicating poverty a stated goal and critical success measure for governments in Australia.

AS A STATE OR TERRITORY

» **We can focus on expanding the supply of social, community and affordable housing.** Secure housing is the foundation for other supports to help people out of poverty.

AS A COMMUNITY

» **We can be sensitive to the prevalence and stress of financial hardship for the people around us.** With over 3.2 million Australians living in poverty, it's highly likely that members of our community groups are experiencing financial stress. Ensuring that our social activities are financially accessible (such as by offering free tickets, bursaries or non-financial options for contributing) could be the difference between someone in financial stress being able to participate or not.

AS INDIVIDUALS

» **we can give to or volunteer for groups that are working to support people in poverty.** This is such a big problem that it can feel overwhelming but, there is already so much great work being done that we can get involved with. There are local and national groups working in this space who would welcome any support we can give.

Gambling harm

Gambling harm is any adverse consequence related to gambling activity that affects the health or wellbeing of an individual, family unit, community or population.[1]

Gambling, like any other addiction, is a chronic disease, not a personal weakness or a moral failing. Gambling harm is not limited only to those who gamble at risky levels or compulsively. It's also experienced by the family and friends of those who gamble (even if not compulsively) and the wider community. [2] Gambling harm might include relationship difficulties, health problems, emotional or psychological distress, financial problems, issues with work or study, cultural problems and criminal activity. [3] Australians spend more per person on gambling than any other country in the world (almost double that of New Zealand). [4] More money is spent on gambling than on other activities that can be addictive and dangerous including alcohol, tobacco and all illegal drugs.[5]

For every person who gambles in a harmful way in our country, another seven are directly impacted, including family and friends, causing a multiplying impact of 'affected others' within communities. [6]

Australians **lost $25 billion** on gambling in 2018–19. This means that **$1,277 was lost** on gambling per person in that year.[7]

Approximately **9.9 million** Australians gamble regularly:[8]
- **42.6 per cent** play the lottery or scratchies (losing $2.5 billion annually)
- **11.9 per cent** play poker machines (losing $8.7 billion annually)
- **10.4 per cent** participate in betting (losing $4.2 billion annually)
- **55.2 per cent** who participate in betting do so online

The COVID-19 pandemic increased online gambling activity in Australia: [9]
- Approximately **1 in 3 people** signed up for a new online betting account during 2020 lockdowns
- People who gambled **4 or more** times per week rose from **3 per cent to 32 per cent** between June and July 2020
- Men aged 18–34 **lost $1,075 per month**, up from $687 over the same period

What we can do?

AS A NATION

» **We can take a public health and holistic approach to gambling harm.** This would involve ensuring that gambling harm minimisation, prevention and consumer protections are at the centre of any gambling-related legislation and policy across the country. It would also involve regulation to reduce the proliferation of gambling advertising and gambling products.

AS A STATE OR TERRITORY

» **We can focus efforts on consumer protections.** This might involve reducing availability of poker machines in the most stressed communities, identifying gambling behaviour that could lead to harm and providing proactive interventions, including better training for staff at gambling venues. For some states and territories, it may involve reducing the government's own reliance on gambling revenue.

AS A COMMUNITY

» **We can be aware, and raise awareness, of the considerable harm that comes from gambling.** Being sensitive to the possibility that members might be experiencing gambling harm might lead a community group to avoid gaming venues for social events or forego 'office sweeps' on sporting matches.

AS INDIVIDUALS

» **We can support people experiencing gambling harm and suffering the stigma attached to it.** We can recognise that a person exhibiting concerning addictive behaviour around gambling is dealing with a health issue and not a personal weakness.

About the Social Justice Stocktake

The Salvation Army believes that the social justice issues we face in Australia can be addressed. The best way to do that is to examine and act on social justice within our own communities.

In 2021, The Salvation Army set out to find what social injustices people see in their own communities in Australia, and then explore how these prevalent issues could be addressed. We partnered with PureProfile to collect 15,514 responses – securing 100 or more responses in almost every federal electorate. We asked people to identify the five social justice issues they were seeing in their local community and invited them to tell us what could be done about them.

We used the results from the survey to focus our analysis of a range of relevant data and then produced 157 reports – one for Australia, one for each state and territory and then one for each federal electorate (with the exception of Lingiari (NT) and Solomon (NT) which due to sampling difficulties were treated as one electorate, and the newly created electorate of Hawke (VIC), where no data was available).

Our hope in producing and distributing these reports is that we can help equip and empower people to talk about social justice. The results of this survey confirmed what we already suspected - Australians want to address social injustice – but also reinforced how hard it is to know what to do to make a change.

Every Australian can make a difference – by taking direct action, supporting those on the front line of addressing disadvantage and by making it clear to governments that social justice matters to the people they represent.

More information about the Stocktake, including access to all 157 reports and references, can be found at **www.salvationarmy.org.au/socialjusticestocktake** or by e-mailing **policy.advocacy@salvationarmy.org.au**

About The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is an international Christian movement with a presence in over 130 countries. Operating in Australia since 1880, The Salvation Army is one of the largest providers of social services and programs for people experiencing hardship, injustice and social exclusion.

As part of fulfilling our vision and mission, The Salvation Army in Australia has a small Policy and Advocacy team who work alongside our services, corps (churches) and the community to identify social justice issues, explore social policy solutions and advocate for change.

*Wherever there is hardship or injustice Salvos will **live, love and fight,** alongside others, to **transform Australia** one life at a time, **with** the love of Jesus.*