



# Statements for the Federal Election 2013





## Opening Message – Call to All Parties

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The Salvation Army is one of the largest national providers of welfare services and, having operated in Australia for over 130 years, has an extensive history of working with the most marginalised and disadvantaged people in our communities.

With an annual operating budget of approximately \$600 million, The Salvation Army Australia provides over 1,000 social programs and activities through a network of social support services, community centres and churches across the country.

Through this work, The Salvation Army sees the human face of poverty and disadvantage on a daily basis. Increasingly, that face is represented by children, young families, single parents, marginalised older people, asylum seekers and refugees and those struggling with addictions and poor mental health.

The Salvation Army sees the 2013 Federal Election as an opportunity to renew our efforts and commitment to helping those at greatest risk of poverty and disadvantage, homelessness, unemployment and disengagement. This can be achieved through strengthening the social safety net, creating new pathways out of disadvantage and providing greater opportunities for low income households to meet their social, economic and spiritual potential. The Salvation Army's greatest areas of concern in this election are:

1. Poverty reduction
2. Drug and alcohol services
3. Housing and homelessness
4. Family violence
5. Asylum seekers and refugees
6. Aged care
7. Employment opportunities
8. Gambling issues
9. Human trafficking and slavery

We ask all political parties to consider the following statements and the plight of the disadvantaged as history may well judge our country according to its treatment of the poorest and most vulnerable.



**Commissioner Floyd Tidd**  
Territorial Commander

**Australia Southern Territory**



**Commissioner James Condon**  
Territorial Commander

**Australia Eastern Territory**

## 1. Poverty reduction

### Emergency relief, financial counselling and Newstart benefits

The Salvation Army has a long history of working with people experiencing poverty and hardship in Australia, through the provision of a range of supports and services. The Salvation Army is committed to ensuring that the rights and inherent dignity of all people are upheld at all levels of society.

Poverty has two elements:

- The lack of access to a fair, sustainable, minimum standard of living specific to the need for adequate income, employment, health care, food, housing and education; and
- The lack of opportunity to participate fully in society, including social and spiritual expression.

The Salvation Army's experience with disadvantaged Australians demonstrates that without these basic necessities being met, people survive but do not flourish as full participating members of society.

In the past 12 months, The Salvation Army provided over one million occasions of service to people in need. This included providing more than 230,000 people with emergency relief through 237 sites nationally, and over 100,000 meals. The Salvation Army emergency relief services are based on an understanding that there are often much more complex issues and social disadvantage underpinning these requests for assistance. The Salvation Army's approach is known as 'Doorways', and recognises that every request for assistance provides an opportunity for an individual or family to be empowered, connected and holistically supported. This framework is closely aligned to current broader policy objectives that promote integrated service delivery, individual capacity building and a 'Hand up, not a hand out!' The Doorways philosophy seeks to address the underlying factors leading to poverty, both for people experiencing long-term and entrenched deprivation and disengagement, and the growing number of people experiencing situational poverty.

In 2012-13, The Salvation Army contributed approximately \$18 million of its own funds to providing emergency relief and community support services across Australia.

The Salvation Army is committed to ongoing research and the development of our information-gathering systems in an effort to provide the services which are most needed by the vulnerable in society. This is gathered through a number of sources, including our pilot of the Crisis Referral Information System, an online community support services directory; our national Service and Mission Information System (SAMIS) which collects significant details and data regarding our clients from funded and non-funded programs, allowing us to identify emerging trends and issues; and our annual National Economic and Social Impact Survey which has been undertaken since 2011 and gives a unique insight into the experiences of Australians who are doing it tough. As one of the nation's largest providers of emergency relief and other social support programs in Australia and as an organisation which is committed to ongoing research and service provision review, The Salvation Army is uniquely placed to work together with Government to identify emerging trends and current issues facing our most marginalised citizens.

#### Issues for consideration

A significant proportion of people accessing The Salvation Army's emergency relief and support services are struggling to meet everyday expenses and financial commitments. Most of our clients are reliant upon income support payments, with 90% of respondents to The Salvation Army's 2013 National Economic and Social Impact Survey indicating that they were receiving such payments. The constant struggle to maintain an 'adequate' standard of living requires juggling expenses (such as bills, rent, and food) within an extremely tight budget and without access to emergency funds. A very high 92% of respondents reported not having access to up to \$500 if they experienced an emergency. Restricted economic circumstances



impacts social connections, health and wellbeing, with 36% of respondents reporting no regular social contact with other people, 60% delaying dental treatment, 35% being unable to afford prescriptions, and 23% delaying medical treatment. 35% of respondents said they often feel 'very lonely'.

Two thirds of respondents (66%) reported cutting down on basic necessities and over half of respondents (51%) had gone without meals due to financial hardship. Over half (58%) reported having to delay payment of utility bills and 30% reported delaying rent or mortgage payments<sup>1</sup>.

The Salvation Army is a large provider of financial counselling in Australia. A research project conducted by Swinburne University of Technology for The Salvation Army in 2012 – 'I Wish I'd Known Sooner: The Impact of Financial Counselling on Debt Resolution and Personal Wellbeing' - found that financial counselling is effective and provides measurable, positive outcomes on a range of measures and that seeking financial counselling sooner increases the chances that financial difficulties can be resolved<sup>2</sup>.

The Salvation Army has also found that many people in financial hardship have accessed fringe and predatory lenders in a desperate effort to meet their needs, which has resulted in further hardship. The Salvation Army provides the No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) - an alternative, affordable loans program under the accreditation of Good Shepherd Microfinance.

The Salvation Army supports the ACOSS Campaign<sup>3</sup> to raise the level of Newstart income support, as we have seen that the current Newstart rate is insufficient to make ends meet. Thus, some of our clients are living below the poverty line.

Recent national innovations (such as the Home Energy Saver Scheme which helps and educates low income families with strategies to address high energy usage and bills) have been welcomed by many of our clients and programs. In addition, The Salvation Army has found great benefit in funded programs targeted at vulnerable families and those at risk of homelessness, and welcomes increased access to financial counselling support for people experiencing gambling related issues.

### Call for Action

The Salvation Army calls on all political parties to commit to the following:

- An increase of the Newstart Allowance by \$50 per week to address the manifest inadequacy of this payment;
- Continuation and expansion of funding for emergency relief with an emphasis on provision of funds for case management staffing;
- Continuation and expansion of funding for financial counselling services across Australia;
- Continuation and expansion of funding for the No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS);
- Work with organisations, like The Salvation Army, to identify emerging trends and issues from unique data collections reflecting the experiences of clients seeking assistance from funded and non-funded programs; and
- National expansion of the Crisis Referral Information System.

1 The Salvation Army Australia, It's Not Asking Too Much: National Economic and Social Impact Survey (2013), [http://salvos.org.au/about-us/media-centre/documents/2013\\_05\\_22-MRNationalEconomicandSocialImpactSurvey2013.pdf](http://salvos.org.au/about-us/media-centre/documents/2013_05_22-MRNationalEconomicandSocialImpactSurvey2013.pdf)

2 Dr Nicola Brackertz, I Wish I'd Known Sooner: The Impact of Financial Counselling on Debt Resolution and Personal Wellbeing (2012), The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory, <http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/Global/News%20and%20Media/Reports/2012/00099-I-wish-I-had-known-sooner-Oct-2012.pdf>

3 Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), '\$35 a day is not enough!', [http://www.acoss.org.au/take\\_action/allowances\\_statement\\_2012-02/](http://www.acoss.org.au/take_action/allowances_statement_2012-02/)

## 2. Drug and alcohol services

The Salvation Army is deeply concerned by the numerous tragedies of death and disease caused by the abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in the Australian community. As a frontline service provider, The Salvation Army witnesses and responds to the devastating impact of this issue on individuals and families on a daily basis. The social and economic costs to wider society are also extremely high. In 2004-05, the impact of alcohol in Australia was estimated to be \$15.3 billion, with the majority of the cost being associated with tangible costs, such as productivity loss, road accidents and crime<sup>4</sup>. Excessive and long-term alcohol consumption is also linked to other significant social issues such as family violence, crime and social dysfunction, and has been shown as a major risk factor for a variety of health problems, such as stroke, heart disease, cancers and high blood pressure<sup>5</sup>. There is also evidence that the diagnosis or treatment of mental illness was much more common in those who had used illicit drugs<sup>6</sup>. Most alarmingly, young Australians are starting to drink at an earlier age, and many drink in a way that puts their health and others at risk<sup>7</sup>. Of particular concerns are the impacts to the unborn baby of the use of drugs and alcohol during pregnancy and the impact of excessive and prolonged use of these substances to the brain development of teenagers<sup>8</sup>.

The Salvation Army provides more than 100 services nationally which respond to those with drug and alcohol addictions, including detox and residential rehabilitation programs, counselling and outreach programs. Each year, The Salvation Army provides more than 25,000 episodes of care to clients through our treatment programs, with many thousands more supported through other Salvation Army services.

The Salvation Army in Australia is committed to education and awareness as a vital strategy to prevent and minimise the harm of alcohol and drug abuse. Each year, Alcohol Awareness Week<sup>9</sup> facilitated by The Salvation Army, is highlighted by the release of our Community-Based Research. In 2012, this survey (undertaken by Roy Morgan Research) revealed the significant impact of drug and alcohol use on young children in families. Based on the survey, there are an estimated 2.9 million Australians aged 14 years and above who say they know families where they think that children may be unsafe because of someone's alcohol abuse<sup>10</sup>.

### Issues for consideration

Every day, The Salvation Army witnesses the significant damage to individuals, families and wider communities of the misuse and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. We are particularly concerned with the misuse of these substances in indigenous communities and in disadvantaged and vulnerable populations. Additionally, indigenous Australians were more likely to drink alcohol at risky levels<sup>11</sup> and to use cannabis<sup>12</sup> than non-indigenous Australians. Drug-related problems have also historically played a significant role in increasing health and life expectancy disparities between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

The Salvation Army remains concerned about the extent of advertising and promotion of alcohol use through the media and at a range of major public events. The Salvation Army supports strategies and policies which result in restrictions on advertising to reduce the glamourisation and marketing exposure of alcohol to children and teenagers. We believe that this could potentially increase the age at which Australians are having their first drink, which would be of great benefit to society as a whole.

4 AIHW, Education: Alcohol Consumption (extracted from Australia's health 2010 p. 55-59), <http://www.aihw.gov.au/education-resources/>

5 Ibid.

6 AIHW, Education: Drugs & young people (extracted from 2010 National Drug Household Survey report (July 2011)), <http://www.aihw.gov.au/education-resources/>

7 AMA, Alcohol Use and Harms in Australia (2009), <https://ama.com.au/alcohol-use-and-harms-australia-2009-information-paper>

8 Ibid; AIHW, Education: Drugs & young people (extracted from 2010 National Drug Household Survey report (July 2011)), <http://www.aihw.gov.au/education-resources/>

9 The Salvation Army, Alcohol Awareness Week, <http://salvos.org.au/need-help/drugs-and-alcohol/alcohol-awareness-week.php>

10 The Salvation Army, Roy Morgan Research: Alcohol Awareness Week (2012), <http://salvos.org.au/need-help/drugs-and-alcohol/alcohol-awareness-week.php#aawk2011>

11 AIHW, Education: Alcohol Consumption (extracted from Australia's health 2010 p. 55-59), <http://www.aihw.gov.au/education-resources/>

12 AIHW, Education: Drugs & young people (extracted from 2010 National Drug Household Survey report (July 2011)), <http://www.aihw.gov.au/education-resources/>



Locational disadvantage is also a documented and significant problem. While drug and alcohol abuse is present in all communities and socio-economic groups, there are areas in Australia where it is particularly prevalent. For example, while overall rates of smoking have decreased in recent years, people living in areas of most disadvantage are more than twice as likely to smoke (23.0%) than those living in areas of least disadvantage (9.9%)<sup>13</sup>.

Difficulties in accessing services and delays in receiving support are experienced across all services in the drug and alcohol sector, and this situation is often exacerbated for vulnerable populations. The governmental shift towards funding non-residential services within the drug and alcohol sector has the potential to have a significant impact on people who are homeless and those who are socially disadvantaged. These individuals and families are unlikely to have the support of extended families and are often marginalised from the community, making it difficult for them to access or utilise services requiring appointments and high levels of motivation. It is essential that, alongside the welcome growth in the range of drug and alcohol interventions available, there is an ongoing commitment to the funding and retention of accessible, effective residential treatment services.

In addition, specialist programs for women with accompanying children are limited. The Salvation Army remains committed to providing specific programs to this group of people.

The Salvation Army welcomes the Federal Government's commitment in recent years to building the sector's capacity to respond to the needs of individuals with co-existing drug and alcohol and mental health issues, and calls on further support for treatment and support for this highly vulnerable group.

### Call for Action

The Salvation Army calls on all political parties to commit to the following:

- An expansion of the existing network of community-based drug and alcohol services to allow increased access and more timely responses to those needing to access treatment services;
- Increased funding for programs addressing co-morbidity issues of mental health and substance abuse;
- The development and implementation of strategies which aim to reduce barriers and increase access to drug and alcohol programs for vulnerable populations, including indigenous people, those experiencing homelessness and those with child-caring responsibilities;
- An increased commitment to evidence-based strategies that provide education and awareness of the damage and impact of the harmful use of drugs and alcohol; and
- Implementation of policies and strategies which aim to reduce the levels of advertising, the use of alcohol in the media and at major public events.



### 3. Housing and homelessness

The Salvation Army is one of the largest providers of homeless services in Australia. In the past 12 months, The Salvation Army provided over 1,000 crisis and 6,000 non-crisis accommodation beds to Australians every night of the year. Through these services, nearly 15,000 individuals received more than 200,000 episodes of support. For many, homelessness is a recurring problem and not one which is resolved quickly or easily. Of the \$55 million spent on homelessness and housing support services nationally, The Salvation Army contributed around 35% (or just under \$20 million) to this area of work.

The Salvation Army welcomed the White Paper on Homelessness, 'The Road Home', in 2008, which has shaped state and federal government responses to homelessness over the last five years<sup>14</sup>. The Salvation Army has been strongly supportive of the inclusion of targets as part of this White Paper, believing that these targets have helped to focus the energy and effort of governments and the sector appropriately. In particular, the investment in rough sleeper initiatives appears to have been effective, with the last census and capital city 'street counts' reporting a fall in this type of homelessness.

In addition, The Salvation Army strongly supports the emphasis on early intervention and a prevention of homelessness response. Of particular concern is the impact of homelessness on young people who have so far 'missed out' on many of the provisions made to develop affordable housing.

The issues of housing affordability and access remain some of the most serious problems for many clients approaching The Salvation Army for assistance. In our aforementioned National Economic and Social Impact Survey, housing affordability was raised as a significant issue by many of our clients, particularly for single parents on Newstart Allowance.

The Salvation Army highly applauds the government for its investment in social housing as part of the Economic Stimulus Package. This package has provided up to 20,000 people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness with the opportunity to secure affordable accommodation. In addition, the development of the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) has had a positive impact on the increased availability of affordable housing stock. However, despite these steps forward, demand and need for affordable housing continues to grow. In The Salvation Army's experience, those who are chronically homeless face significant barriers and require even further support to access social housing.

#### Issues for consideration

Results from the 2011 Census identified that the number of people experiencing homelessness had risen from 89,728 in 2006 to 105,237 in 2011<sup>15</sup>. This was due mainly to more people living in severely overcrowded accommodation. Almost 75% of the increase in homelessness was amongst people who were born overseas, and the rate of homelessness amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders remained much higher than that of the general population (300 per 10,000 compared to 49 per 10,000)<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness (2008), Canberra, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05\\_2012/the\\_road\\_home.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/the_road_home.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of population and Housing: Estimating homelessness (2011), <http://abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/2049.0Main%20Features22011> Released 12/11/2012

<sup>16</sup> Ibid





Despite significant investment since 2008 in homelessness programs and new affordable housing initiatives, the National Housing Supply Council estimates that in 2011 there was a shortage of 539,000 properties that were affordable and available to lower income renters in Australia<sup>17</sup>. It is believed that this shortfall has grown since 2011.

Additionally, The Salvation Army's effort in developing social housing has been impeded by the requirements of some jurisdictions which have precluded involvement from large organisations with significant assets. The prescribed corporate structures and 'winding up provisions' have resulted in some organisations choosing not to access government funds or to provide land or assets zmine whether further development of affordable and supported housing, particularly for people who are chronically homeless, is possible.

The agreement between Commonwealth and State Governments outlining funding mechanisms between the jurisdictions - The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) - has expired and a transitional arrangement has been put in place until June 2014. As a national organisation, The Salvation Army has witnessed the benefits of a national agreement in gaining commitment and collaboration to address the issues of homelessness across the country. We urge the formation of a further national agreement to ensure continued energy and commitment towards agreed strategies and outcomes, and to continue the momentum towards reductions in the overall levels of homelessness across Australia.

### Call for Action

The Salvation Army calls on all political parties to commit to the following:

- Increased investment in Affordable Housing through the National Affordable Housing Agreement, to meet the existing shortfall of properties for those on low incomes;
- Ensuring that a new National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness is signed with all States and Territories, with specific targets for the continued reduction of rough sleeping and the overall reduction of other forms of homelessness;
- The development of a specific National Indigenous Homelessness Strategy to address the over-representation of indigenous people amongst the homeless population and create culturally-responsive solutions; and
- The active exploration and enactment of mechanisms which enable not-for-profit organisations with land assets to provide much-needed social housing in partnership with government.

<sup>17</sup> National Housing Supply Council, Housing Supply and Affordability – Key Indicators (2012), Canberra, <http://nhsc.org.au/publications/2012-housing-supply-affordability/executive-summary/>





## 4. Family violence

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The Salvation Army is one of the largest providers of family violence services in Australia. Nationally, The Salvation Army has, in the last 12 months, supported approximately 6,000 clients through our numerous family violence and accommodation services. We provide secure accommodation for women and women with children in a number of confidential locations, including emergency and medium-term accommodation. Independent living services are also provided, where women are encouraged to take control of their lives and are empowered to break the cycle of abuse through a range of workshops and living skills programs.

While The Salvation Army's clients represent only a fraction of those experiencing family violence across the community, the women and children with whom we come into contact through these services represent the hidden face of family violence which is now acknowledged as a serious national issue requiring greater prominence in public policy and community responses.

### Issues for consideration

Family violence continues to present as a major national social problem and experience shows us that women escaping family violence represent the majority of those seeking assistance from homelessness services. The massive personal and social costs attributed to family violence are also accompanied by significant economic costs, some of which have been acknowledged by the recent move by government and some large corporations to provide paid leave for those experiencing violence. The National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children has projected that, without appropriate action, three quarters of a million Australian women will experience and report violence in the period of 2021-22, costing the Australian economy \$15.6 billion<sup>18</sup>.

Importantly, there has been increasing numbers of women presenting at our family violence services who have arrived in Australia on spousal visas and, following subsequent violence and family breakdown, have no ability to earn an independent income. This situation has created a major obstacle for these women to escape a violent domestic situation and also places services under additional financial pressure because of their inability to collect any accommodation fees.

### Call for Action

The Salvation Army calls on all political parties to commit to the following:

- The setting of national targets for the prevention and reduction of violence against women, through the development and implementation of a national strategy involving all States and Territories;
- Increased funding for homelessness services assisting women and children who are escaping family violence, including capital funds for the provision of more emergency accommodation and housing to meet demand;
- The provision of additional and specific funding to services which provide assistance to women escaping family violence without working visas; and
- The allocation of additional funding to support violence prevention and behaviour change programs for men responsible for family violence.

18 National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, Economic cost of violence against women and their children (2009), [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05\\_2012/vawc\\_economic\\_report.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/vawc_economic_report.pdf)

## 5. Asylum seekers and refugees

The debate about asylum seekers, and specifically those arriving by boat, is having a polarising impact on the Australian community. The Salvation Army is involved in working with asylum seekers and refugees from different backgrounds and methods of arrival in a range of settings.

The Salvation Army advocates for the development of proactive, compassionate and appropriate human rights focused policies in relation to all asylum seekers. It is imperative that domestic legislation upholds and promotes those human rights and ensures minimum standards of treatment and conditions for detainees in line with relevant international conventions. Currently, we are concerned that such standards are not always being met and this places Australia's international reputation at risk, as well as putting at risk the health and wellbeing of those adults and children seeking asylum. The Salvation Army believes that Australia should not only meet its international requirements, but should go above and beyond those minimum standards set to ensure that those who seek asylum in Australia are met with compassion and given a high level of human security.

The Salvation Army has clearly stated its position that a country with the wealth and resources of Australia should be able to process, in a timely period, and then settle asylum seekers who are granted refugee status.

The current practice of detaining asylum seekers who arrive by boat in Off-shore Processing Centres severely restricts their access to basic rights and services including legal representation, education, translators and advocacy and health services. This approach impacts on the mental, physical and emotional health of asylum seekers and lacks compassion and dignity.

Off-Shore Processing shifts this responsibility on to other countries that do not have infrastructure or adequate resources to undertake this processing and settlement.

While we recognise the importance of deterring asylum seekers making hazardous sea journeys with people smugglers, The Salvation Army believes that more humane and compassionate policies can be put in place to achieve this objective.

For these reasons, The Salvation Army does not, in any way, support off-shore processing.

Our guiding principles compel our organisation to provide assistance and holistic support to vulnerable people in all circumstances. This has influenced The Salvation Army's decision to work with the Australian Government to provide welfare support to asylum seekers in all situations, be it in off-shore settings, in refugee camps, in community detention, or as part of the community.

The Salvation Army also operates Migrant and Refugee Assistance Programs in each state. These programs offer a range of support mechanisms, including material aid, personal support and access to mainstream community networks. Each year, thousands of asylum seekers and refugees who have been released into the community, often with no work rights and very limited income, seek assistance from our emergency relief and homelessness services. In 2012 more than 2,000 asylum seekers were assisted by The Salvation Army with over 5,000 episodes of care, and the frequency of this occurring has been increasing significantly and steadily in 2013. This is in response to the desperate need of many individuals and families who have been released into the community from on-shore detention centres, but denied work rights severely restricting any ability to support themselves financially. In some cases, once processing is complete and a negative assessment has been made, asylum seekers waiting for a judicial review of their case are denied any form of government assistance. The Salvation Army finds this fact unacceptable.

It should also be noted that men and women awaiting refugee status determination are presenting regularly for accommodation in our homeless refugees and shelters.



### Issues for consideration

The Salvation Army is anticipating increasing demand being placed on welfare agencies to provide basic subsistence needs and housing services, given the growing number of asylum seekers being released from detention, increasing refugee arrivals over recent years and greater restrictions placed on asylum seekers' ability to be financially independent.

Without adequate levels of income, asylum seekers and refugees are forced to rely on Emergency Relief services for their day-to-day needs. This has the added impact of reducing the already strained emergency relief resources available to the broader Australian population. This impact is already evident within our centres.

The Salvation Army is concerned about the impact on asylum seekers' mental health of being denied the right to work. The Salvation Army believes that this policy, when combined with a lack of government financial assistance, has the strong potential to cause long-term damage to people who have no opportunity (often for many years) to participate in the positive community engagement which participation in the workforce creates. We believe it is imperative that some positive opportunities to participate in the workforce or in the broader community are made available to asylum seekers to provide a strong foundation on which to base their future settlement and integration.

### Call for Action

The Salvation Army calls on all political parties to commit to the following:

- The development of alternatives to the off-shore processing and detention of asylum seekers. To reiterate, while we recognise the importance of deterring asylum seekers making hazardous sea journeys with people smugglers, The Salvation Army believes that more humane and compassionate policies can be put in place to achieve this objective. To this end, discussion about the development of a better communication and prevention model engaging Australia's regional partners must be undertaken, and such a discussion would be strongly supported by The Salvation Army.
- Reversal of the decision to excise the Australian mainland and islands for the purpose of the Migration Act;
- The processing of all claims being commenced promptly on arrival and completed within the shortest possible timeframe, taking into account the need for health, character and security checks;
- The urgent review of the decision to deny asylum seekers on bridging visas work rights while they are waiting processing. At the very least, a program to provide community work opportunities and other options to participate in the community should be made available;
- The provision of additional emergency relief funding to approved agencies, in targeted locations, in recognition of the growing burden on their resources caused by increased demand from asylum seekers and refugees;
- Revisit the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers (The Houston Report), particularly focusing on reviewing our humanitarian intake and the strong recommendations to build the capacity of countries in this region to develop effective, humane responses to the challenges posed by asylum seekers; and
- Ensuring that asylum seekers and refugees have access to support services for those whose lives have been affected by trauma and/or torture.

## 6. Aged Care

The Salvation Army provides extensive support and assistance to older people across Australia through many of our programs including emergency relief, housing and homelessness, and specific aged care services. Nationally, we run 22 aged care facilities, including eight retirement villages and more than 400 Home Care packages. One of our aged care facilities specifically provides for homeless people and several of our residential homes have a strong emphasis on accommodating and supporting people who are homeless or socially disadvantaged. In New South Wales, Queensland and the ACT, our aged care services are provided under the banner of Aged Care Plus ([www.agedcareplus.salvos.org.au](http://www.agedcareplus.salvos.org.au)).

The recent Aged Care legislation, 'Living Longer, Living Better', introduces major reforms to the aged care sector. The Salvation Army has focused its attention on reforms that will impact on our ability to provide optimum resident care, including homeless and socially disadvantaged individuals, and has welcomed the introduction of a new homelessness supplement as part of the new aged care guidelines.

### General Issues for Consideration

It is crucial that the Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI) indexation keeps pace with the increasing cost to deliver care.

We welcome the positive elements of the reform package including:

- Dementia and severe behaviours supplement
- Veterans' supplement
- Homelessness supplement

We are supportive of stimulating the labour market within aged care and incentives to grow the workforce by attracting high quality people into the sector.

We recognise a person's right to individual choice to retain independence and a quality of life within their home environment and are therefore supportive of increased Home Care packages.

We support the changes to remove the distinction between high and low care for the purpose of attracting bonds and the requisite investment required to provide high quality care for an ageing population.

We seek to preserve and appreciate the significant role that the not-for-profit approved providers have (making up 60% of the aged care sector) in providing high quality, compassionate care to older Australians.

### Homelessness Issues for consideration

Of the 105,237 people who were homeless on Census Night in August 2011, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) estimates that almost 15,000 people were aged 55 or over, amounting to 14 % of the total homeless population<sup>19</sup>.

19 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of population and Housing: Estimating homelessness (2011), <http://abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/2049.0Main%20Features22011>



There appears to be a growing trend in the increase in numbers of single elderly women who are homeless. These women have often experienced relationship breakdowns and have an interrupted work history with little superannuation. They are seriously impacted by the lack of affordable rental accommodation available to them.

There are only 16 facilities across Australia for elderly homeless people requiring residential care, which are recognised by government as specialist homeless aged care providers. These are services where more than 50% of residents are homeless and such services are entitled to claim additional supplements to enable the additional costs of caring for homeless elderly people. These homeless facilities are predominantly in Melbourne (10), with other facilities based in Sydney (3), Perth (2) and South Australia (1) and provide a little over 700 beds in total. Whilst these existing beds have been a welcome addition to aged care facilities in Australia, there are clearly insufficient places for the numbers of elderly people who are homeless, and in some States and Territories there are no facilities at all.

There are also a number of issues relating to the provision of Home Care to elderly people who are homeless. The Salvation Army has repeatedly witnessed the transformation that can occur for an elderly homeless person who is provided with affordable accommodation and support. Positive efforts should continue to be made through the new guidelines for Home Care to ensure that the needs of this group of people are met.

### Call for Action

The Salvation Army calls on all political parties to commit to the following:

- The continued preservation and appreciation of the significant role that not-for-profit approved providers have in providing high quality, compassionate care to older Australians;
- Ensuring that the ACFI indexation keeps pace with the increasing cost to deliver care;
- The continuation of the provision of an annual capital grant for the construction of specialist Aged Care Facilities;
- The examination and implementation of mechanisms which work to encourage Aged Care facilities across the country, and particularly in regional areas, to welcome homeless residents and clients into their programs and facilities;
- Ensuring that the access point to the Aged Care System is accessible to homeless people and those who are socially disadvantaged;
- The examination of and action on Home Care Provisions and their potential impact on people who are homeless; and
- The establishment of a mechanism which ensures that marginalised and homeless people are supported to make choices as a result of the Consumer Directed Care funding provisions under the 'Living Longer, Living Better' legislation.







## 7. Employment opportunities

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The Salvation Army is very aware of the social and financial consequences of long-term and intergenerational unemployment. These include ongoing poverty, a negative impact on health and mental health and a failure to participate as either individuals or families in the community.

The Salvation Army's Employment Plus program (TSAEP) continues to provide vital support and assistance to jobseekers, with services in 118 locations around the country filling more than 30,000 job vacancies each year and assisting more than 160,000 candidates with job readiness skills and other supports. In addition, The Salvation Army has extensive experience in running specialist youth programs to help early school leavers or those at risk of leaving school early, vocational training and access to job seeking facilities, specialist assistance for Aboriginal jobseekers and on-the-job training programs such as furniture factories and cafes.

'Connections Plus' is another specialist program which provides a wide range of support to job seekers who require more than just employment support, linking them to services such as counselling, financial support services, local medical practitioners and Legal Aid. Following a successful trial in Marrickville, NSW, this service is now available in Whyalla and Port Augusta, South Australia, to eligible indigenous jobseekers who are seeking a more specialist one-on-one service.

### Issues for consideration

While the national economy is struggling with the downturn in the mining boom, it is more important than ever to focus on job creation and skills training for those who are either unemployed or underemployed.

The Salvation Army has increasingly found that jobseekers from disadvantaged backgrounds or who are coping with multiple issues such as homelessness, family violence, mental health or family breakdown face even greater difficulties in accessing mainstream employment assistance programs such as Jobs Australia. There is a demonstrated and identified need for specialist employment agencies to help these jobseekers negotiate the employment market and become truly job-ready.

The Salvation Army is very concerned about the rate of youth unemployment, particularly those who have experienced homelessness or who are from disadvantaged backgrounds. The rate of youth unemployment (15 – 19 year olds) was estimated to be 25.1%<sup>20</sup>. The Salvation Army believes that the development of specialist models to assist young people who are homeless in their search for sustainable employment is vital, and strongly supports the Foyer Model that is being implemented in some metropolitan and regional areas.

### Call for Action

The Salvation Army calls on all political parties to commit to the following:

- The provision of additional specialist employment services in all States and Territories to assist the socially disadvantaged and people experiencing homelessness or housing instability to enter and remain attached to the job market;
- The provision of funding to expand the Connections Plus program to targeted indigenous communities nationally, and additional funding to expand the Disability Employment Services program for individuals with a disability to enter the paid workforce;
- The development of a new labour market engagement strategy focused at reducing youth unemployment rates on a regional and national basis, to prevent long-term and inter-generational unemployment; and
- The development of specialist strategies which aim to respond to youth unemployment and in particular, to expand the development of 'Foyers' to both metropolitan and regional areas.

20 Parliament of Australia, Monthly Statistical Bulletin: 1.5. Youth Unemployment (November 2012), Canberra, [http://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/MSB/15](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/MSB/15)



## 8. Gambling issues

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The Salvation Army acknowledges that gambling is entrenched within Australian society. Problem gambling is now commonly regarded as an addiction not unlike other addictions such as alcoholism and drug addiction.

Problem gambling occurs when a person is dominated by a persistent strong urge to gamble. This is often coupled with a belief that continued gambling will solve their financial problems. Gambling excessively causes havoc to a person's life socially, economically and financially and often leads to the loss of relationships, home, health and career. It may cause depression and stress in a person's life and inevitably has a flow-on effect to family and friends around them. In some cases, it can even lead to suicide.

It is now estimated that there are around 500,000 people at risk of becoming, or who are already, problem gamblers in Australia. It is also recognised that for every one problem gambler, many others are affected, creating a flow-on impact affecting up to five million people in total<sup>21</sup>.

Assistance for problem gamblers is provided through a number of Salvation Army services, and in addition to these services, those affected can access 24 hour assistance through the Salvo Care Line on 1300 36 36 22 to talk or seek referral advice. Residential treatment programs are offered through The Salvation Army Bridge Program in NSW, ACT and Qld.

The Salvation Army also works with problem gamblers through its financial counselling services and sees the need for complementary services, like financial counselling and legal services, to support the rehabilitation of problem gamblers.

### Issues for consideration

Gambling can include playing poker machines, online games or cards, playing in casinos, betting on sports events or on games of skills, and buying lottery tickets. Around 40% of Australians gamble regularly and 2.1% of the adult population is estimated to have a significant gambling problem<sup>22</sup>. The Federal Government itself recognises that the social cost to the community of problem gambling is at least \$4.7 billion a year and that only around 15

21 Problem Gambling, The Facts, accessed in 9th August 2013, <http://www.problemgambling.gov.au/facts/>

22 The Salvation Army, The Facts: Dealing with Problem Gambling (2007), <http://salvos.org.au/need-help/the-facts/documents/Problem-gambling-final.pdf>



per cent of problem gamblers seek help<sup>23</sup>. It is also acknowledged that poker machines are one of the greatest sources of problem gambling behaviours, with 9 out of 10 female problem gamblers citing poker machines as the cause of their addictions<sup>24</sup>.

The Salvation Army is very concerned about the rise of online gambling and sports betting and believes that it is essential for restrictions to be implemented to prevent constant exposure of young and vulnerable people to these open and less controlled gambling mechanisms.

### Call for Action

The Salvation Army calls on all political parties to commit to the following:

- Increased funding to programs for problem gamblers so that greater reach of those at risk can be achieved;
- Increased funding to complementary programs that support and rehabilitate problem gamblers such as financial counselling and legal services;
- Recognition of the value of intensive residential rehabilitation programs, such as The Salvation Army's Bridge program, for some problem gamblers;
- Implementation of the National Gambling Reform initiatives introduced to Parliament in 2012, aimed specifically at enabling players to place 'pre commitment' limits on poker machines prior to playing, in acknowledgement of the serious and widespread harm caused by this form of gambling;
- The development of a comprehensive national strategy to reduce State and Territory dependency on gaming revenues;
- Increased funding for research to provide evidence-based strategies for implementation that will reduce the harm caused by gambling and will assist problem gamblers; and
- The development and implementation of restrictions to online gambling and sports betting mechanisms.

<sup>23</sup> Problem Gambling, The Facts, accessed in 9th August 2013, <http://www.problemgambling.gov.au/facts/>

<sup>24</sup> Responsible Gambling Advocacy Centre, Women and Gambling: Issues of difference (November 2011), Melbourne





## 9. Human Trafficking and Slavery

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The Salvation Army has an international mandate to work on behalf of trafficked and enslaved persons as part of its mission for social justice. The Salvation Army works in 130 countries across the globe and our representations in many of these countries include programs which respond to people trafficking and slavery.

In Australia, The Salvation Army has established and operates the country's only Safe House for people who have experienced human trafficking, slavery or slavery-like conditions. Residential support is provided to young women, women and women with children. Non-residential support is provided to men, women, young people and families. Prevention case-management is provided to people at risk as well support for family members in home countries.

The Salvation Army is engaged in policy advocacy at the highest levels of government to ensure a human rights response to trafficking and slavery. The Salvation Army also conducts extensive community awareness raising and training, and empowers people who have personally experienced trafficking and slavery to become advocates themselves.

### Issues for Consideration

Human trafficking is a transnational crime and a gross violation of human rights. Australia has taken significant steps to meet its obligations as a party to the United Nations *Protocol to Prevent Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons* and other relevant anti-slavery instruments. Australia as a nation has the opportunity to lead the world in anti-trafficking and anti-slavery efforts.

Australia has a robust and comprehensive response to human trafficking and slavery that balances the needs of victims with a criminal justice response. Yet, awareness amongst frontline personnel and in the broader community remains very low resulting in many victims 'falling through the cracks'. New criminal offences legislation passed in March of this year now offers victims a better chance at getting justice if they can be appropriately identified and supported.

Slavery and human trafficking occur on a continuum of exploitation of people's rights as workers. If worker protections in Australia are weakened it creates an environment where exploitation can flourish. All workers, especially migrants, then become vulnerable to abuse.

### Call for Action

The Salvation Army calls on all political parties to commit to the following:

- The adoption of a regional and national human rights approach to slavery-proofing Australia and supporting people who have experienced slavery-like practices;
- Continuing to resource independent, unbiased research into human trafficking and slavery to ensure an evidence-based policy response;
- Educating businesses on ways to take reasonable steps to ensure that goods imported into Australia are free of slavery, forced labour and human trafficking in their production;
- Continuing to convene, actively engage and adequately resource the Australian Government's *National Roundtable on People Trafficking*;
- Increasing resources by 50% towards awareness-raising on a national and regional scale to prevent trafficking and slavery, decreasing the vulnerability of migrants and investigate and prosecuting violations; and
- Ensuring that civil society engagement with policy-makers in the region is continued and encouraged through the Bali Process, United Nations and other regional instruments. This can be done by facilitating and resourcing the participation of such groups.



The Salvation Army is a worldwide Christian movement. In Australia we are known as one of this nation's largest welfare providers. We are dedicated to helping Australians in crisis. Raised up by God, our mission is to:

- Transform Lives
- Care for People
- Make Disciples
- Reform Society

Our vision is that we're a growing, loving community of people dynamically living God's mission in a broken world.

This requires us to be people who are wholly devoted to God, obediently responsive to the Holy Spirit, powerfully committed to each other, compassionately engaged with people in need, totally dedicated to reaching other people with the good news of Jesus Christ and leading them to faith.

Our Values

- Human Dignity
- Justice
- Hope
- Compassion
- Community

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