



# Media Release

24 September 2014

## Response to Guardian Australia Report on Gay Asylum Seekers

In relation to the Guardian Australia report titled '*Gay asylum seekers on Manus Island write of fear of persecution in PNG*', published on 24 September 2014, The Salvation Army issues the following response.

The Salvation Army was contracted to provide humanitarian services to asylum seekers on Manus Island and Nauru, services which ceased on 21 February 2014.

As part of our humanitarian services, our responsibilities included the provision of educational programs to asylum seekers. The Salvation Army was requested by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) to prepare educational modules relating to life in Papua New Guinea (PNG). The slide in question, which was part of a broader education program about life in PNG, does make mention of homosexuality and homosexual activities, which are illegal in PNG.

The Salvation Army developed these modules in consultation with PNG immigration officials, as well as officials from the DIBP both in Australia and in Manus Island.

Salvation Army officers and staff treat every person who comes into our care with non-judgmental respect and acceptance, and have no desire or interest in trying to alter their sexual orientation.

### **So that there is no misunderstanding:**

- Salvation Army's social services operate without discrimination and a multitude of services are provided to people every day without concern or reference to a person's sexuality;
- No person is excluded from worship, fellowship or service in The Salvation Army on the basis of sexuality;
- No person is excluded from employment by The Salvation Army on the basis of sexuality; and
- No person is excluded from volunteering with The Salvation Army on the basis of sexuality.

The Salvation Army has always and continues to provide services to all people who are in need regardless of race, gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation, without discrimination, in accordance with its strong principles of social justice and in line with its international mission statement.

**ENDS**