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Media Release

24 November 2014

**“Alarming increase in amphetamine use across recovery centres,”
reveal Salvos.**

Salvos reach 50 Year milestone of Bridge Program for recovery

The Salvation Army says an increased number of people coming to them with problems with the highly dangerous drug *ice* (and other amphetamine type substances) has resulted in increased unpredictable and challenging behaviour.

As their highly successful Bridge Program reaches its 50 Year Anniversary, The Salvation Army's Gerard Byrne says they are seeing more mental health problems and mood swings than ever, increasing from 33% of people presenting to the Program with mental health issues 30 years ago to 71% today.

The Salvation Army says it is clear the average age of drug, alcohol and gambling users is changing and getting younger all the time.

In Sydney since 2010, there has been a 122% increase of amphetamine users who seek help from The Salvation Army's Recovery Services. In Canberra, the percentage of amphetamine users who seek help from The Salvation Army has almost tripled since 2010, from 11% of clients to 28% of clients in November 2014.

The Salvation Army has added that recent research (by the Australian Institute Health and Welfare) shows the number of amphetamine users in the community who are using the much more potent form of ice has doubled since 2010. Ice is a drug that has been linked to an increase in violent behaviour. They say there has been a clear increase in people coming to them using amphetamine-based drugs.

Acting Deputy Commissioner for the New South Wales Police Force Jeffrey Loy will be part of The Salvation Army's media conference (Monday, 24 November 2014) to talk about concerns over ice and amphetamine based drugs. The media event is at 56-60 Albion Street, Surry Hills (Sydney). A range of people who have had issues with ice or amphetamine type substances and have been helped by The Salvation Army will be present to talk to media along with key Salvation Army personnel including Gerard Byrne – who works extensively with the Salvos in this field.

The Salvation Army's highly successful Bridge Program has reached a major milestone – 50 years of helping people with drug, alcohol and gambling issues.

As it does so, The Salvation Army's Recovery Services say they are now dealing with more challenging behaviour because of issues caused by the highly dangerous drug ice and other *amphetamine type substances* (ATS).

The Salvation Army's own data (2004 to 2013) shows cases of amphetamine type substance usage are now higher than the overall usage of cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine and gambling dependence combined.

The Salvation Army says it is clear the average age of drug, alcohol and gambling users is changing and getting younger all the time.

Current Salvation Army data (as of November 2014) shows an alarming increase of clients coming to The Salvation Army with amphetamine addictions.

In Sydney, there has been a 122% increase since 2010 in amphetamine users who seek help from The Salvation Army's Recovery Services. In Canberra, the percentage of amphetamine users who seek help from The Salvation Army has almost tripled since 2010; from 11% of clients to 28% of clients in November 2014 (The percentage in Canberra has jumped by 28% this year alone, from 22% to 28%). In Brisbane, the percentage of amphetamine users coming to us has increased by 80% since 2010, from 14% of clients to 24% in November 2014 (In the past year alone, the percentage of amphetamine users in Brisbane has increased by 40%).

Across Salvation Army Recovery Services in NSW, there has been an average of 48% increase in amphetamine users presenting in the past year.

Clinical Director of The Salvation Army's Recovery Services, Gerard Byrne, says the changing patterns in issues they are facing have unquestionably created much more unpredictable behaviour. He says they are seeing more and more people facing mood swings and mental health problems. The Salvation Army's own internal research shows there has been a dramatic increase – over time – in people presenting to the Bridge program with mental health issues. Thirty years ago, the rate sat at around 33%. It has now more than doubled to around 71%.

The Salvation Army has added that recent research shows the number users in the community who are using *ice* (the much more potent form of amphetamine) has doubled since 2010. Ice is a drug that has been linked to an increase in violent behaviour. They say there has been a clear increase in people coming to them using amphetamine based drugs.

Gerard Byrne says most of the people who now need help no longer just have issues with alcohol. They are (in general) "polydrug users", using numerous drugs simultaneously. Gambling is frequently involved as well. He says The Salvation Army never judge and are always there to support.

The Salvation Army's Gerard Byrne says there is a worrying trend towards the use of what is sometimes termed 'hard drugs'.

The Salvation Army is the largest provider of residential recovery services in NSW and Queensland. The Bridge Program focuses on reducing drug, alcohol and gambling use and criminal behaviour.

The Bridge Program is a unique recovery program helping people to battle many different types of addiction including addictions to alcohol, other drugs and gambling.

In recent years, a number of The Salvation Army's major centres have seen a marked shift whereby the number of people indicating alcohol as a problem has decreased. The number of people using amphetamine type substances (including ice) has clearly increased.

The Salvation Army echo NSW Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione's recent warnings that children as young as six clearly do need to be educated about the dangers of drugs like ice.

Gerard Byrne said, "We've done such a good job educating people about alcohol. That is great. However, there is this clear shift towards very dangerous drugs that are highly addictive. In the case of amphetamine type substances, this can be a major harm to the community as it is associated with violent behavior and mental health problems."

Major David Pullen, head of Salvation Army Recovery Services for NSW / QLD and the ACT, reminded the community that help is available and The Salvation Army's recovery programs have been shown in research to be highly effective. He said: "People have literally moved from desperation to restoration. We have seen many graduates of our programs employed in very high levels in society and making significant positive contributions in the community. We've seen a lot of great things happen."

Major David Pullen said, "One of our key messages is this simple. There is always hope. Treatment works. If you need help, call the Salvo Care Line - available 24/7 - on 1300 36 36 22 or go to salvos.org.au/recovery. We are deeply proud of the Bridge Program because it has helped so many people put their lives back together. It would be wrong to ever believe people cannot change their circumstances. We have seen many people, who felt their lives were all but destroyed, turn everything around and make a fresh start. It is extremely inspirational."

"People often forget addiction can impact on anyone from any walk of life. You are never alone. Our dedicated staff run highly effective programs with proven outcomes that include significantly reduced criminal behaviour."

Major David Pullen said, "Alcohol is still a big issue. It is disturbing what is happening to some Australian families. We need to continue a huge push on education because drugs and alcohol can cause such massive damage – which then impacts on families, friends, children, work colleagues and employers. Too many people are self-medicating and it is obviously dangerous. There is still way too much advertising and linking of both alcohol and drugs to the idea that they are in some way glamorous."

David Pullen says the ultimate success of this unique program is not always measured in numbers but rather seeing lives changed for the better. He added, "There is such a massive need out there. The Bridge Program is continuing to expand to meet this need. We will soon be opening a special women's wing in Brisbane Recovery Services."

He points out a special residential facility aimed at reaching out to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with addiction issues has recently been launched in Normanton in the lower Gulf region of Queensland.

The Bridge Program operates in numerous locations across NSW, ACT and QLD along with a number of similar church based programs.

The Salvation Army's Bridge Program had its origins in a rehabilitation farm set up at Collaroy back in the 1900s. The current Bridge Program dates back to the opening of a clinic in Nithsdale Street in Sydney in 1964. Commissioner Bramwell Cook – a pioneer in his day with a major interest in helping people with alcohol issues - helped established the clinic.

The program has won numerous awards over the years. The latest was recognition at the National Drug & Alcohol Awards in 2013. It won *Excellence in Treatment & Support* category.

Key statistics at a glance:

Across Salvation Army Recovery Services in NSW, there has been an average of 48% increase in amphetamine users presenting in the past year.

- Across Salvation Army Recovery Services in Qld, there has been an average of 42% increase in amphetamine users presenting to us in the past year.
- Across Salvation Army Recovery Services in NSW, ACT and Qld, there has been an average of 44% increase in amphetamine users presenting to us in the past year.

Key Facts for Sydney, NSW

- The Salvation Army has assisted a total of 3400 clients at its Sydney Recovery Services (including detox) since 2008.
- In Sydney, the percentage of amphetamine (including ice) users coming to The Salvation Army Recovery Services has more than doubled since 2010 (increasing by 122%), from 9.1% of clients to 20% in 2014 (as at November).
- At the same time, there has been a decrease of 23% in the number of clients presenting with alcohol as a problem, from 61% in 2010 to 47% in 2014 (as at 17 November).
- Nevertheless, alcohol remained the highest across the various types of substances in every year since 2010.

Some statistics about the work of The Salvation Army's Bridge Program

Statistically, the following results compare clients' substance use patterns when they arrived at the Bridge Program and 3 months after they had left:

- 100% of people using methadone reduced their level of usage.
- 100% of people using sedatives reduced their level of usage.
- 100% of people using cocaine reduced their level of usage.
- 88% of people using amphetamines reduced their level of usage.
- 87% of people said they feel that they are less bothered by substance related problems after treatment.
- 83% of people with heroin dependence reduced their level of heroin use.
- 81% of people using cannabis reduced their level of usage.
- 80% of people abusing alcohol reduced their rate of abuse.
- 62% of people feel that their mental health symptoms are less problematic after treatment.
- 86% of people felt they had something to contribute to society after treatment.
- 70% of people had less family problems after treatment.
- 46% of people were incarcerated prior to entry versus 4% incarcerated after treatment.