



Media Release

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The Salvation Army Welcomes ALP Stance on Drug Testing

The Salvation Army strongly disagrees with mandatory drug testing of welfare recipients and welcomes the ALP stance opposing a drug testing trial. As one of Australia's largest faith based providers of social welfare services, The Salvation Army joins other service providers and subject matter experts in urging the government to heed the evidence against measures which demean, stigmatise and further marginalise people who are already struggling.

In a submission to government, The Salvation Army has declared its opposition to the proposed trial that would involve 5,000 new applicants for Centrelink benefits being drug tested after having been selected through the use of waste water analysis and at this point a vaguely explained profiling tool. The Salvos are urging government to redirect its efforts into improving availability and access into the voluntary drug treatment system as well as focusing on the implementation of the newly released National Drug Strategy 2017-2026.

"We are concerned that far from eliciting a change in drug consumption patterns, the proposed measures will further entrench people in poverty and compound their already complex life issues, making healthy and productive living much more difficult to achieve" said Salvation Army Alcohol and Other Drugs Team Director Kathryn Wright.

Salvo Operations Manager for Recovery Services Gerard Byrne added, "We know that pushing people further into financial hardship and poverty does not help them recover from problematic drug use. Ready access to the right treatment at the right time needs to be the priority."

Lieut-Colonel Laurie Robertson Salvation Army National Secretary for Government Relations stated; "The good news is that in terms of curtailing drug related harm, we know what works effectively for both the individual and the wider community. We are urging government to get behind evidence based approaches rather than imposing undignified and ineffective strategies on people who have the potential to thrive – given the right support."

The Salvation Army's perspective comes out of a wealth of practical experience throughout many decades in both addiction treatment and services aimed at alleviating poverty.

ENDS

For more information or media comment please contact:

The Salvation Army Media Department: (02) 9466 3143