

# On the Scene

SUMMER 2008 NEWS AND STORIES FROM THE SALVATION ARMY AUSTRALIA EASTERN TERRITORY

## Salvos' Christmas gift to remote Australians

"If you are too fearful to reach out for help, then it doesn't matter if you're in a city or the country. You've got to get over that and say 'I need to do something about this. I don't want to spend the rest of my life hurting myself and those around me'." CATHERINE DRIVER

This Christmas, **The Salvation Army** will freely distribute to more than one million rural Australians a new DVD designed especially to help people in rural communities recognise and deal with depression.

Produced by The Salvation Army, *Braver, Stronger, Wiser* aims both to celebrate the life and resilience of rural Australia, and to help counter disturbing suicide statistics coming out of many farming communities.

The DVD will be mailed to 130,000 of Australia's most remote households\* who have access to few or no medical or counselling services. It will also be distributed through rural GP networks, Salvation Army corps (churches) and rural chaplains, and by beyondblue, the national depression initiative.

*Braver, Stronger, Wiser* shares the stories of four people living in rural and remote Australia who have struggled with – and sought help to manage – various forms of depression.

It features a range of resources including emergency contact numbers, a link to The Salvation Army's Hope for Life online suicide prevention training program, and much more.



ABOVE: CATHERINE SHARES HER STORY IN BRAVER, STRONGER, WISER.

Anna Rudd, manager of The Salvation Army's Dream Films and producer of the DVD, says: "The whole purpose of the DVD really is to save lives, and to get across the message that there is hope, and there is help available."

\*According to Australian Bureau of Statistics

### Message of hope

Catherine Driver, a single mother who owns and runs a remote 70,000 acre property 130km from Charleville in Queensland, is one of the four rural Australians who share their stories in *Braver, Stronger, Wiser*.

Catherine's journey with depression began when she was pregnant with her third child and was living on a remote property in western Queensland.

She says: "I was healthy, I was strong ... I don't know what happened, but that's

when I started to feel like I couldn't cope. I can remember when I was pregnant with Michael, standing at the back door [looking out] ... and I can remember thinking I just wanted to end it ..."

Catherine's marriage eventually crumbled, and in 1999 she and her children moved, and she began to attend university. Catherine was eventually diagnosed with bipolar disorder. She went on to graduate as dux of her course and then purchased her cattle breeding property 'Yarrangully'.

Just days before filming began on the DVD, Catherine lost her home in a fire. Incredibly, she wanted to go ahead with filming. Anna Rudd says: "Catherine was passionate about getting the message out to others that there is indeed hope, even when life seems darkest."

To obtain your free copy of *Braver, Stronger, Wiser*, call **(02) 9266 9690**.

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## Christmas online

Visit The Salvation Army Christmas website – [salvos.org.au/christmas](http://salvos.org.au/christmas) – for information about Salvation Army community Christmas lunches, carol singing events, Christmas church times, ways to support The Salvation Army at Christmas, and other helpful tips.

Thoughts and reflections about the meaning of Christmas are also available on the website.

To give to The Salvation Army Christmas Appeal call **13 SALVOS (13 72 58)** or visit [salvos.org.au](http://salvos.org.au)



## New alcohol research

The Salvation Army recently commissioned Roy Morgan Research to look at the issues of advertising and the impact of alcohol. Released as part of The Salvation Army's 2008 Alcohol Awareness campaign, the findings revealed 8.4 million people in Australia want alcohol advertising reduced, 3.6 million people want alcohol advertising banned altogether and more than 4.3 million people say alcohol has had a negative impact on them or their family. More information at [salvos.org.au](http://salvos.org.au)

## Listening ear – 25 years

The Salvation Army's 24-hour telephone counselling service, Salvo Care Line, has celebrated 25 years since commencing in 1983.

If you need to talk, call Salvo Care Line on **1300 36 36 22**.

**Clarification regarding On the Scene Spring 2008, page four article** Food items in Salvation Army food markets are kindly supplied to us by Foodbank and it is not the policy of The Salvation Army to sell the food in our food markets. Welfare clients are assessed on an individual needs basis and are then issued with a voucher which is redeemed for a certain amount of food products, making the whole process a cashless transaction.

# Supporting Schoolies



ABOVE: SALVATION ARMY CHURCH MEMBER ALISHA BLACKMAN (PICTURED, RIGHT) IS A KEEN RED FROGS CREW VOLUNTEER EACH YEAR. & INSET, TOP: PAUL MERGARD OF THE SALVATION ARMY.

It began as just another night during 'Schoolies Week' celebrations on the Gold Coast, as members of the 600-strong 'Red Frog Crew' moved between entertainment venues, manned their 24-hour help hotline, walked young people home in the dark, and often just mingled to provide a positive presence to the partying youngsters.

Hours later though, two Red Frog chaplains passed a scene of horror as a young lady, whose drink had been spiked, collapsed. As her friends screamed and cried, the chaplains called in an ambulance, and paramedics then worked frantically to revive her. The young woman – who died twice by the side of her hotel pool that night – survived.

In November 2008, a contingent of around 50 Salvation Army volunteers again joined the Red Frog Crew (so named because of the Allen's red frog lollies they hand out) to offer support and a safety net to more than 30,000 young school leavers as they congregated on Queensland's Gold Coast.

Every year during Schoolies Week, the Red Frog Crew (coordinated by interdenominational volunteer group Hotel Chaplaincy) works to provide a positive presence among the young people in 18 locations around Australia. All volunteers agree to fund their own stay and undergo strict safety checks before being accepted to the team.

The chaplaincy also provides a pre-Schoolies education program to around 120 schools each year, as well as a range of alcohol and drug-free entertainment

at Red Frog venues during the celebrations.

Working in conjunction with the Queensland police and ambulance services, local government, event promoters and hoteliers, the team members make themselves visible and available on the ground in any way needed.

Operations manager of the Red Frog Crew for the Gold Coast Schoolies week one, and National Hotel Chaplaincy board member, Salvation Army Mission Team leader Paul Mergard believes that ninety-five per cent of the Schoolies are there to have a good time, and are really well behaved.

"We have seen an enormous and increasing improvement in behaviour every year since we started the in-school education seminars," says Paul.

However, because many have never had a holiday away from their families before, and because of the combination of thousands of young people, drugs and alcohol, there are some very real dangers.

Paul says the presence of the team has saved many young lives: "We had a case last year when one of our chaplains was able to stop someone from suiciding by trying to jump off a balcony. That is not at all unusual.

"It really is the best and the worst, the hardest and yet the most worthwhile week of the year for most of us. We believe, as I'm sure thousands of parents would also believe, that the Red Frog Crew is now an essential part of Schoolies Week and The Salvation Army is proud to be involved."

For information about the Red Frog Crew, visit [www.redfrogs.com.au](http://www.redfrogs.com.au)

# Ready for the mines Woorabinda celebrates

"I'm a mother of six [and] entered this course hoping to further my job experiences ... I'm doing this for [the other mothers] and my kids. It's an amazing opportunity. I just hope this program will open their eyes and give them a chance to grab hold of something that's really good and that's going to financially stabilise their lives."  
WOORABINDA RESIDENT PATRICIA RANKIN WHO RECENTLY GRADUATED FROM THE NEW MINE READINESS COURSE.

In September 2008, a joyous and hope-filled graduation ceremony in the Indigenous community of Woorabinda in Queensland saw 10 local men and women graduate from the first 'mine readiness program', coordinated by **The Salvation Army** Employment Plus. Nine of the graduates have already gained full-time employment.

Employment Plus is the first Job Network member in Australia to provide permanent office in a remote Indigenous community (Woorabinda, around two hours from Rockhampton).

Kirrilee Trist of Employment Plus says: "With the resources boom came high hopes among Indigenous communities of new opportunities and a way out of long-term unemployment in these remote areas. This has generally been much easier said than done, however.

"The mine readiness program is all about helping equip members of the Woorabinda community with the skills they need to participate in the mining industry. So you'll understand our excitement at the 100% graduation rate, and 90% employment rate, of the first intake!" says Kirrilee.

The program grew from collaboration between community elders, The Salvation Army Employment Plus, the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, the Mining Industry Skills Centre, Anglo Coal, Downer EDI Mining and local community training organisations.

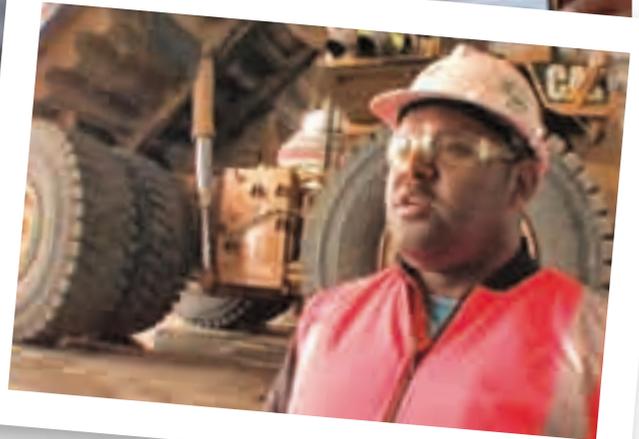
Program participants undertook a healthy living course, a mine theory component, and then truck simulator training, followed by a three-week placement on site at the mines as paid



PHOTOS: JIM LOUNSBURY

**ABOVE: PATRICIA RANKIN PROUDLY DISPLAYS HER CERTIFICATE WITH A FELLOW GRADUATE.**

**& INSET: RECENT GRADUATE NYULANG SAYS THE PROGRAM IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY NOT JUST FOR HIM, BUT HIS COMMUNITY AS WELL.**



trainee truck drivers.

Nyulang, a recent graduate, sees his whole community benefiting from the program: "Everybody was excited that we got an opportunity to work in a mine," he says. "So ... when everybody saw us going there, they were asking us, 'When's the next program happening? Is the next one starting up soon?'"

"We want to get out there and work," says Nyulang. "If the opportunities are there ... we'll take it with both hands which can lead to better and greater things, not just for myself, but for the community as well."

Kirrilee Trist has witnessed in Woorabinda a great degree of determination to embrace change,

develop and create opportunities for the young people: "They're prepared to put in the hard work, to travel long distances to access employment and to find the training they need.

"We're seeing a new sense of hope for the community and of a future for the children. Our role is to simply help facilitate these opportunities, and it's a great privilege to work with the people here."

Woorabinda Town Councillor Steve Kemp says he believes Woorabinda is on the way to becoming the best Aboriginal community in Queensland, "and eventually in a few years' time we might say to the government ... 'we can support ourselves'. That'd be the greatest day ever." ○

# Christmas care shines bright in darkest times

"In our work for The Salvation Army, we've sat in a bush hut in Papua New Guinea and eaten a corn cob for Christmas. We've been in Russia and seen kids take one sweet off a tree as their Christmas present. But to visit areas like Bourke in NSW and hear about people's hardships at Christmas – I never thought we would hear those types of stories as typical outside a third world country."  
**MAJOR JOHN REES, THE SALVATION ARMY.**

While many Australians will enjoy their usual Christmas celebrations, for many others, who are desperately fighting to make ends meet, Christmas 2008 will be a time of intense struggle. The year has seen drastic increases in housing and living costs, and the incomes of many self-funded retirees decimated. Rural areas – where over 70% of NSW and 50% of Queensland remain in drought, and diesel and fertiliser costs have skyrocketed – continue to be particularly hard hit.

In response, this Christmas **The Salvation Army** – with enormous support from thousands of Australians – hopes to provide more than \$10 million worth of food vouchers, hampers and toys to those in need; Christmas lunch to over 8,000 people; and 9,000 beds to the homeless, those in crisis, aged care and rehabilitation (nationally). Salvation Army rural chaplains plan a series of visits and events to bring Christmas cheer to struggling communities across NSW, ACT and Queensland.

Salvation Army Christmas Appeal Director Major Gary Masters says: "This will be another good Christmas for many people ... but unfortunately there are others who are daily struggling to put food on the table and ... struggling to make decisions about whether they feed the family or pay the electricity bill. Some of those



PHOTOS: ROBERT CHAPPEL



**ABOVE: MAJORS PETER AND JEAN RIDLEY ARE PREPARING FOR ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL CHRISTMAS BUSH MISSION.**

people 10 years ago, maybe even two years ago, were quite happily making ends meet. They are the ones who are going to be deciding whether they can buy Christmas gifts for the children – whether they can put on a Christmas meal at all."

Despite the hardships many are experiencing, Gary Masters says Australians often show enormous strength and care to others during times of disaster and hardship. "The way Australians care for others is always inspiring," he says. "We will be relying on our loyal supporters more than ever this year."

Across western NSW this Christmas, a team of more than 30 Salvation Army volunteers headed by rural chaplains Majors Peter and Jean Ridley will visit townships such as Walgett and Bourke, bringing much-needed support and cheer as they seek to reflect the love of Jesus.

The team was shocked during last year's Christmas bush mission by the extent of rural poverty they witnessed, and expect it will be worse this year. Divisional Commander for Greater West NSW, Major John Rees, who joined the team, says: "The struggles we saw were

confronting and shocking, yet the strength we saw in people was, in equal measure, incredibly inspiring."

One memorable encounter for John was talking to a farming family who was planning to sit down and share a small packet of ice blocks on Christmas day. "There were to be no presents and no special treats, but they were not complaining," he says. "We were able to give the kids a small present each and they were just thrilled."

John says: "We heard about some drovers – a husband and wife with two teenage kids – who had been doing it really tough on the road for years. We went out to visit them, chatted a bit and at the end we gave the woman a small 'pamper pack' – just a few bits of shampoo and hand cream – and the kids a Christmas parcel. And you know, that tough, resilient woman just broke down and wept with gratitude.

"We saw hundreds of people and they were overwhelmed that we had come to visit them, and so many said 'please come again next year, don't worry about bringing presents with you, just come back, please come ...'"

If you would like further information, please tick the relevant boxes and return by mail to: **The Salvation Army, GPO Box 9888, Your Capital City.**

Or fax to: **02 9266 9805.**

- Worship and church programs
- Community services
- How I may become a member of The Red Shield Club (our donor association)
- Wills and bequests

## My contact details

**Title** Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms / Dr \_\_\_\_\_

**Given name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Surname** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Suburb** \_\_\_\_\_

**State** \_\_\_\_\_ **Postcode** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

## I would like to donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

- Cheque/ money order** payable to The Salvation Army
- Credit card**  Visa  Mastercard
- Diners  Amex

No

**Name on card** \_\_\_\_\_

**Expiry**    /    **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

Please be assured your details remain confidential. Donations are tax deductible. Donate by credit card by phoning **13 SALVOS (13 72 58)** or log onto **salvos.org.au/ots**

*Letters & feedback welcome!*