

On the Scene

WINTER 2010 NEWS AND STORIES FROM THE SALVATION ARMY AUSTRALIA EASTERN TERRITORY

Marked increase in homeless families

"We had a mum come to us who had five children under five who spent weeks living in their car before a vacancy became available. She had a three-month-old, a two-year-old, twin four-year-olds and a five-year-old. And, in some ways, she was one of the 'fortunate' ones – fortunate enough that she had a car to sleep in! At least they had shelter – they didn't have to sleep rough under a bridge as too many do." CAPTAIN TRACEY SCHUTZ, THE SALVATION ARMY STILL WATERS EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION, QUEENSLAND.

There was little to outwardly distinguish the three-year-old girl from all the others playing in the park, except for the look of desperation in her parents' eyes. Long after all the other children had been taken home to be cleaned up and tucked into warm beds, her family was still there.

When darkness fell, the young girl and her two-year-old sister were washed as best they could be under the hand-basin taps and then the whole family bedded down for another long night in their car.

When her parents' lease had ended, they found themselves out of a home and unable to secure affordable housing in a highly-competitive housing market. They were forced to put their furniture into storage and sleep in their car while looking for accommodation.

They were fortunate that this situation didn't last. The family was given emergency accommodation through **The Salvation Army's** Noosa



ABOVE: THE SALVATION ARMY SAW A 30 PER CENT INCREASE IN THE NUMBERS OF FAMILIES WHO WERE HOMELESS (INCLUDING SLEEPING ROUGH) FROM 2008 TO 2009.

Shire Crisis Housing Program in Queensland. They were then assisted to find stable long-term accommodation.

Manager of the program Carol Hilditch says: "(The family) came to the living skills group that we were running, both parents managed to find work, the kids loved their new school and everything worked out really well for them."

Far from being the exception, their story is becoming all too familiar as rental markets grow increasingly competitive and rent and utility prices continue to rise sharply.

According to Australia's peak national homelessness body, Homelessness

Australia, "... families with children are the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness in Australia" and "of every 42 Australian children under four, one has experienced homelessness."

Salvation Army figures reflect this trend, recording a 30 per cent increase during 2009 in the number of people seeking welfare assistance who were homeless – either sleeping rough, or in cars or tents (compared to 2008). Carol Hilditch says they have been housing homeless families for years but it "(seems to be) reaching a real crisis point."

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Call for support

The Salvation Army is aiming to raise \$75 million nationally through the 2010 Red Shield Appeal, which includes a business appeal, direct mail campaign, and the Doorknock on 29-30 May.

Although things seem to have improved economically for many Australians, for those we assist the struggle continues.

To give to the Red Shield Appeal, which concludes on 30 June, please call **13 SALVOS (13 72 58)** or visit salvos.org.au. Donations may also be made at any Westpac branch, or by posting a cheque to PO Box 9888 in your capital city.

Rebuilding after disaster

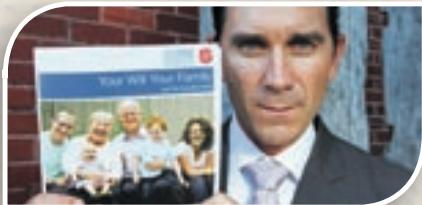
As the rebuilding process continues in Haiti, The Salvation Army has assumed responsibility for the care of 20,000 people living near its compound in Port-au-Prince.

The Salvation Army is also working to support survivors of the devastating earthquake in Chile in late February.

Visit salvos.org.au/news

'Will' you care?

Australian cricketing legend Justin Langer recently headed a Salvation Army awareness campaign to encourage Australians to make a Will to protect their family's interests and to consider remembering the work of the Salvos in their Will. For more information or to receive a free booklet please call **1800 337 082** or visit salvos.org.au/wills



Celebrating the 'Sallyman'



ABOVE: MEMBERS OF THE TREK CARRY THE HEAVY PLAQUE ALONG THE GRUELLING KOKODA TRACK.

To celebrate the Spirit of the "Sallymen", who served on the Kokoda Track and beyond, eleven of the 27 modern-day Australian Sallymen, known officially as Red Shield Defence Services representatives (RSDS), recently undertook a pilgrimage to walk the Kokoda Track and erect a memorial to their predecessors and the troops they cared for.*

The Australian "Sallyman" legend grew during WWI through the work of **Salvation Army** Chaplains such as Brigadier William McKenzie who, in a three-day period, in Gallipoli, conducted 647 funeral services while under continual fire. More than 260 Sallymen cared for defence personnel during WWII.

Salvation Army RSDS Representative, Envoy Lyndley Fabre, based at Duntroon Royal Military College in Canberra, participated in the Kokoda Trek.

He says: "(The plaque) will now stand

as a permanent reminder of the sacrifice and commitment of the Kokoda Sallymen."

Modern Australian Sallymen and women today work on a variety of defence force bases, and on the field, supporting personnel and their families with refreshments, referrals and a 'listening ear'.

Australian RSDS Representative, Captain Colin Kingston, was deployed to East Timor last year, where he spent five months supporting troops.

He says: "For a lot of them it's their first time overseas and it starts as an adventure. But, it wears on and they start to look at the months they've been there and they have months before they go home. It's especially hard for those with young children.

"You really do become one of them. They know there's someone at the end of the day who is there simply to support them." O

* The majority of the Kokoda Track venture was self-funded by participants.

FROM PAGE 1 She says: "In this area, the rents have gone from \$200 for a basic house to \$350 plus. That's not sustainable for many families, especially a single parent with more than one child. If everything goes well, they just may do it, but if they have health problems, or (other) issues – it doesn't take much for (it) to come apart.

"Homelessness puts huge pressures on kids," Carol says. "One of the things we try and do (as an emergency housing service) is to strategically secure emergency houses

close to local schools... If kids can stay in the same school it stops them from feeling dislocated, and keeps their friends and support networks around them.

"Often when families move into crisis accommodation, things start to go well and the downward spiral starts going upwards again. A lot of families end up moving out – getting jobs – getting their own businesses ... some have done really, really well because they've been given support and an opportunity to get their lives back on track." O

Elderly and Alone – caring for the vulnerable

As Tom's sight has deteriorated, his world has closed in around him. Once strong and confident, Tom* who is in his 70s, now rarely leaves home. The street that felt so familiar – so full of friendly neighbours ten years ago – now seems dangerous and alien.

Tom feels great fear when groups of young men walk past him – worrying they might see him as a vulnerable target. The state of his home embarrasses him, so he invites no-one in. He rarely shops for food, regularly misses medical appointments and is afraid to bathe in case he falls.

In the past few months, Tom has become a client of **The Salvation Army** Foster House Senior Support Service – an intervention program in inner Sydney (NSW) that works with more than 40 clients at a time. The service provides support to seniors who are experiencing a particular struggle or crisis, loneliness or social isolation, or who may be in danger of becoming homeless.

Manager, Salvation Army Major Bruce Stoltenberg says: "We specialise in meeting an often unseen need – helping with the small things. If, for example, someone is ageing and alone and their refrigerator breaks down, or they are having medical issues and have no assistance, or can't shop for food, things can rapidly deteriorate."

Bruce says: "Our service has helped Tom significantly through simple acts such as escorting him to medical appointments. We also installed an inexpensive bath-board for him. He is starting to feel far less isolated."

The Salvation Army Aged Care Plus, which administers 17 Salvation Army Aged Care facilities in NSW, ACT and Qld, is also developing a range of models to meet the needs of the vulnerable ageing. The service recently ran a pilot "Social Isolation Project" in Newcastle (NSW).

The program aimed to support older people living in the community who were at risk of becoming, or were already, homeless.

Community Services Program Manager Nicola Rosenthal says: "We were helping older people who were homeless, or at risk of becoming



SHARON PATTERSON

ABOVE: MAJOR PETER DOLLIN, CHAPLAIN AT THE SALVATION ARMY FOSTER HOUSE, PROVIDES SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE ELDERLY MEN IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

homeless – an example would be someone living in a boarding house who was getting dementia or who had mental health problems, and who was facing eviction because they weren't coping.

"Our hope is that we can re-run and expand this program in the near future. It was the first program of its type and very successful. While those in need stayed short-term at our Carpenter Court hostel, we worked with health services to stabilise medical needs, housing services to stabilise accommodation, and Newcastle Lake Macquarie Community Options provided case management and future care planning. When the person left Carpenter Court, the program was able to offer support for the transition back into the general community."

Non age-specific Salvation Army services can also provide a level of protection and care to those who are most vulnerable.

In Katoomba (NSW), Salvation Army Major Colin Young heads The Salvation Army Upper Blue Mountains Corps (church), which runs a breakfast program six days a week. He says: "For around 80 per cent of the people who come to our breakfast service, it is the only hot meal

they will have for the whole day."

Colin says: "We had one lady who used to come to breakfast daily until one day she just stopped. We were very concerned.

"So we sent one of our welfare workers around to see her and discovered her dog (who was her only companion) had died. The worker found her alone in her house, which was in an abysmal state, with her dead dog.

"Our worker also found out that the woman had been covering up the fact that she had been suffering cancer for some time. We were able to give her immediate help and support, get her to hospital and contact loved ones from interstate. Sadly, she has since passed away."

"Without coming to know others through the breakfast program, she almost certainly would have died alone, in her home, with absolutely no-one to care. Instead, she died loved and surrounded by friends."

"For some, this community breakfast is their only contact with others – and apart from it, they are completely isolated," he says. "Our goal is to make this one place they are truly cared for." *O*

*NAME AND SOME DETAILS CHANGED

Positive Lifestyles changing lives

David* had been in and out of juvenile detention centres since he was only 12 years old, and had spent more than 28 of his 40 years in detention and prison.

Somehow, despite a serious drug habit, during his times on 'the outside', David managed to gain excellent work qualifications and was – and still is – very talented in his field. But he would regularly sabotage his life and fall back into heavy drug use and then crime to fund his habit.

He desperately wanted to change for the sake of his partner and children whom he loved dearly but, deep down, believed he never would, or that he never could change. He had never really known how to function in life in a healthy way. His own father had died tragically during the Vietnam War and his extended family was troubled.

During one court appearance, David sought out **Salvation Army** Major Cheryl Hall (Chaplain to the Campbelltown Regional Courts, NSW) as a last ditch effort to turn his life around. Seeing that he was really serious, she immediately referred him to drug and alcohol counselling. She then began to work with him, on a one-to-one basis, through the 10-12 week Salvation Army Positive Lifestyle Program (PLP).

Cheryl says: "PLP is an extremely confronting program and I tell participants they have to be completely open and deal with their issues as we get to them. Where needed, as issues arise, we also refer them on to specialist counselling such as drug and alcohol counselling, relationship counselling or financial counselling."

The program looks at a range of topics including self-awareness, grief and loss, anger, depression, assertiveness, loneliness, creative problem solving, self esteem, stress and goal setting.

Cheryl says: "For David, the course

helped turn his life around.

"He has completely given up the drugs, completely changed the people he mixes with, he's finished a course and has returned to work, and he's sorted out his relationship. His family is now very close and supportive. They have seen such huge changes in him."

"David is just so happy and he wants to help other people now that he's stable himself. He really is a completely different man."

Cheryl runs the PLP for a range of clients at the court complex and has recently worked through the program with a number of inmates from Silverwater Correctional Facility in western Sydney. As well as running the program, Cheryl is available to play a support role, or offer referrals to anyone who enters the Campbelltown court complex, including staff members, magistrates, police, lawyers, victims, the accused and their families.

She says: "Recently I spent time with a young mother who had a drug problem and mental health issues and would compulsively shoplift. She appeared in court fairly regularly, and at one stage the court mental health nurse asked if I could work with her. She ended up going right through the PLP, and made a commitment

during the program to accept medical help. She had her medication stabilised, and has stayed completely off the drugs. I keep in contact with her and she is doing extremely well."

The PLP was initially developed by The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda Territory Correctional and Justice Services. It was introduced to Australia in late 1992. Today a vast range of Salvation Army services use the program.

"It is a very, very good program, and the results are extremely encouraging," Cheryl says. "However, I believe that ultimately it is God changing lives, and that is just such a blessing to be a part of." *O*

*NAME CHANGED



SHARRON PATTERSON

ABOVE: COURT CHAPLAIN MAJOR CHERYL HALL INTRODUCES MANY OF HER CLIENTS TO THE POSITIVE LIFESTYLE PROGRAM.

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.**

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

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Letters & feedback welcome!