

On the Scene

WINTER 2011 NEWS AND STORIES FROM THE SALVATION ARMY AUSTRALIA EASTERN TERRITORY

Road to recovery

“A lot of farmers that you talk to in this area, you can see they are severely traumatised and depressed through what’s happened ... and, tragically, some have even turned to suicide ...”

CAPTAIN MARK BULOW, TOOWOOMBA

The ‘inland tsunami’ that devastated the city of Toowoomba, Qld, in January made headlines around the world. However, it’s the farming communities around the city that are finding it hardest to recover, according to **Salvation Army** Captain Mark Bulow.

Mark says one of the greatest concerns is the fact that the large cotton farming communities in areas such as Millmerran and Cecil Plains (Qld) had already received advance ‘forward’ payment for crops that were then destroyed by floods.

“There have been reports of farmers suiciding. They’d been very excited – this was going to be a bumper crop. They thought they were going to break out of some of the debt they were in, but it has just put them further into debt,” he says.

Mark and a local council representative have visited around 65 families on farms, offering a listening ear and some financial help. They drove 9,000 kilometres in the first few days after the flooding, and



ABOVE: CAPTAIN MARK BULOW MEETS WITH A LOCAL FARMER.

many thousands following.

“There’s a huge need out there,” he says. “There are fences that have been completely washed away and the farmers can’t put stock back on their properties until the fences are fixed up.”

As well as giving out the flood appeal grants, Mark has been providing emotional support to shell-shocked landowners.

He speaks about one farmer who met them on the road and just broke down and wept: “He said, ‘Look, I’m doing okay but it’s my wife. My wife isn’t coping at all.’ So we stayed and spoke to him for a bit ... These are hardened farmers. This guy was 55 years old. Strong, calloused hands, worked outside all his life. A real bushy. And he broke down because his wife was struggling.”

Mark was able to offer financial assistance to the family and is also handing out copies of The Salvation Army’s *Braver Stronger Wiser* DVD – a powerful tool produced to help combat depression in rural communities.

In it, four people tell of their personal battle with depression: “They can watch that and they can see that there’s hope,” says Mark. “There are chances and, although it’s tough, we can get through it.”

The Salvation Army Flood Assistance Line is 1300 66 22 17 and the *Braver, Stronger, Wiser* DVD is available free of charge by calling 13 SALVOS (13 72 58).

Information and updates about The Salvation Army Flood Response efforts are available at salvos.org.au/disaster

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focus



RED SHIELD APPEAL

The Salvation Army aims to raise \$79 million nationally through the 2011 Red Shield Appeal, which includes a business appeal, direct mail campaign, and the Doorknock on 28-29 May.

The rising cost of living is impacting many people and, more than ever, The Salvation Army is asking the Australian community to give generously to help fund our day to day social programs – which must continue alongside our ongoing, extensive flood and cyclone response effort.

To give to the Red Shield Appeal or to volunteer as a Doorknock collector, 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.

New Australian leaders New world leader

Canadian-born Commissioner Linda Bond – who headed The Salvation Army in the Australia Eastern Territory (ACT, NSW and Qld) from 2008 until early 2011 – has been elected the new Salvation Army world leader, based in London.

Commissioners James and Jan Condon have been appointed as the new territorial leaders of The Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory.



Salvos Stores online

Salvos Stores (NSW, ACT, Qld) recently launched the first online charity shop in Australia. For more information visit salvos.org.au/stores

Facing the world with a smile!

Around four years ago, Liz Dawson, a community welfare worker with The Salvation Army was approached by a Salvation Army client in her late 20s: “She needed a food voucher, but I also noticed she had only one tooth left on her entire upper jaw,” Liz says, “and that haunted me for weeks”.

According to Liz, around 25 to 30 per cent of the people asking for food vouchers, emergency accommodation or clothing, also have serious dental problems.

So Liz worked to develop a free local dental health service, as a partnership between **The Salvation Army**, ACT Health, a number of dental health experts (who provide their services for free) and a range of community organisations.

Most of the 46 beneficiaries of the program (to date) have had scant if any dental attention in their adult lives, according to Dr David Griffiths – principal dental officer for the program.

He says: “There’s a large group in society from the ages of about 20 to 40 who tend to neglect themselves very badly for the good of their children, and we’re seeing more and more people now suffering quite badly (with their dental health).”

Liz says there are a range of problems faced by those waiting prolonged periods for dental care. She says: “Many who are waiting for dental treatment have malnutrition by the time they receive care because they can only eat soups and soft food.”

However, once treated, Liz says one of the most exciting aspects of the service is a massive growth in client confidence, and, because part of the program’s mission is to give clients a better chance at gaining employment, Liz has also enlisted the help of her own hairdresser, Angelo Cataldo, to provide free haircuts to the dental patients.

Participating hairdresser Sheldon



ABOVE: PATRICK, 39, HAS HIS DENTURES CHECKED AS PART OF THE DENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM.

Brown, 22, says: “You forget how ... much your hair and your appearance affects how you feel as a person and gives you the confidence to overcome challenges.”

In Queanbeyan, NSW, Salvation Army Majors Peter and Debbie Hindle are actively working to establish a dental clinic modelled on the ACT service.

Local Queanbeyan GP Dr Ross Bills says that long delays in receiving dental treatment can have devastating effects for those in greatest need and says one of the great dangers is the prolonged prescription of painkillers (which are narcotic).

He says that groups such as “the poor, nursing home residents, age care recipients, pensioners, Indigenous Australians and migrants” are most severely impacted by the rising cost of dental care.

“Now if you’re looking at dental work costing a thousand dollars and you’re on a pension, how much do you have left after you have paid your rent, got your groceries, paid for any transport you may need, paid for any regular prescriptions you may need for your other medical conditions?” he says. ○

(Used with the kind permission of *The Sunday Canberra Times* and *The Queanbeyan Age*)

Streetlevel team gives back

Major Bryce Davies is Team Leader at The Salvation Army's Brisbane Streetlevel Mission which aims to help those with drug and alcohol addictions kick their habits and lead a better life.

Bryce Davies, along with three volunteers who have been helped by the Streetlevel program, arrived in Rockhampton on New Year's Eve in the aftermath of the devastating floods. They spent the next 10 days putting their skills to use at an emergency kitchen preparing meals for people taking shelter at evacuation centres in Rockhampton.

"Three of the guys were willing to come up [to Rockhampton] with two hours notice for seven to 10 days and they were really keen to give back to the Salvos and help out with the flood relief effort," said Bryce.

"They're really looking for a sense of mission and purpose in their life and this is some of the sort of frontline stuff.

"These guys had maybe abuse issues or difficulties that have happened to them and they've decided, 'well I can whinge and be a victim and allow it to crush me or I can decide to respond in a more positive way'.

"So I think that's what they're doing here, and they're willing to help others get to that point too."

Among the team from Streetlevel was Matt Hitzman whose story was featured with his new wife Louise in Spring edition of *On the Scene* last year (2010). Matt, who came through a drug rehabilitation program at the Army's Moonyah Recovery Services Centre in Brisbane, jumped at the chance to help out with the flood relief effort.

"This is my chance to help others," he said. "The Salvos helped me to turn my life around and now, through volunteering my time here, I have the chance to give back to others.

"Cutting up about 1000 carrots each day can sometimes get a bit tedious but I've been motivated by the bigger purpose we're here for and that's to help others who are doing it tough.

"I just had to come up here and do my bit. I've left my wife and four-month-old son back in Brisbane, but my wife has been so supportive and is very proud of what we're doing."



ABOVE: MAJOR BRYCE DAVIES (RIGHT) WITH MATT HITZMAN FROM BRISBANE STREETLEVEL WHO, WITH OTHER TEAM MEMBERS, SPENT 10 DAYS HELPING PREPARE MEALS FOR FLOOD VICTIMS IN ROCKHAMPTON.

Teams of volunteers from Streetlevel also went on to assist with the flood recovery effort in Brisbane and surrounds, going out each day to strip clean flood affected houses, ready for tradesmen to come in. They also served coffee and meals during the clean-up effort for up to 100 volunteers each day (in association with other local churches).

Bryce Davies explained that many clients, when they present to **The Salvation Army** Streetlevel program, are poor, homeless or living in substandard accommodation – often marginalised, hurting (and often with mental illnesses and addictions) and with no self belief or resources to know where to begin to improve their circumstances.

The service offers referral to help clients into detox, rehabilitation, and on to lists for emergency accommodation.

A vibrant 70-strong worship service is also held weekly, and 'family' style meals are shared.



Streetlevel regulars are, where possible, also encouraged to reach out to help others which also helps them build self esteem and a deeper sense of purpose, according to Bryce – hence the teams assisting with the flood response efforts.

Bryce said: "Creating a sense of community is a key purpose of Streetlevel. We try to connect with more and more of the most needy and vulnerable and see if we can help them find greater stability." ○

Story courtesy of The Salvation Army Pipeline magazine.

Champions arise and fight!

Few could imagine the well-spoken and confident young professional, addressing the audience at a range of corporate functions, had only a few years earlier suffered from a highly turbulent home life, homelessness, addiction and depression, regularly cutting her arms and legs in a desperate cry for help.

Today Bee (who was employed as a team leader in a Sydney law firm after completing an Oasis employment course and “never looked back”) shares her story of homelessness and restoration, not for sympathy or shock value, but in her role as a Virgin/ Oasis ‘Champion’.

‘Champions’ is a new program formed in a partnership between **The Salvation Army** Oasis Youth Support Network and Virgin Unite (the Virgin Group’s non-profit foundation).

The program works to equip a team of business people, youth workers, and young people who have been assisted by Oasis as spokespeople for the issue of youth homelessness.

(Head of Virgin, Sir Richard Branson, recently became the latest Champion when he visited the Oasis Youth centre in Surry Hills, Sydney, to launch the program as well as a Virgin Active fitness centre for disadvantaged youth.)

Today Bee sees herself as an “inspiration for young people who have come from a dark place” and says: “We need to make Australia aware, not only of how severe the issue of homeless youth is, but how amazing the outcome can be if people do receive help.”

As such, she is now employed by The Salvation Army in the position of Oasis Schools Liaison Officer, and will work



ABOVE: VIRGIN HEAD SIR RICHARD BRANSON JOINED ASHER (LEFT) AS A VIRGIN OASIS CHAMPION – SPEAKING OUT AGAINST YOUTH HOMELESSNESS. & **RIGHT:** BEE SPEAKS AT THE LAUNCH OF THE OASIS SCHOOLS PROGRAM.

SHARON PATTERSON



with schools in raising awareness of youth homelessness.

Joining Bee in the fight against youth homelessness is fellow Champion, Asher, who explains to audiences (including at the 2010 Miss World Australia Gala Crowning in Sydney) his own story of horror and restoration.

He says: “My father ... started one of the biggest ... criminal syndicates Australia had ever seen and was shot and killed by his own gang members. My mother was abused at a young age and ran away from home. This was the life I was born into.”

Asher was abandoned at six months old in a pub by his 16-year-old mother who was unable to cope. He says: “My grandmother ... took me in and raised me from the age of six months to 14 years.”

Later, Asher moved interstate to live with his mother, but says, after a year “she ... found herself in an abusive relationship ... (and) moved back into ... drugs”.

Asher says: “I gave my mother two options. It was either me or the life she

was living. Sadly my mother chose the life she was living, so I was out on the streets.”

At 16, Asher began his own slide into drug and alcohol use and gang membership. Asher knew he desperately needed help and contacted Oasis. He received support to get accommodation and full-time work through the Oasis Pathways Employment Program, as well as accessing a range of services.

Now, as a Champion, with a stable home and a steady job, Asher made this plea to the audience at the Miss World ceremony: “... there are so many young people like me out there looking for ... somewhere to belong. It’s up to us as a nation – and this is my dream – to find a voice for these young people to find their way back into services and programs, similar to the ones that helped save me.”

More info at salvos.org.au/oasis

People featured in photographs in this newsletter (and past editions) are not necessarily the clients of the services.

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 make regular donations to the Red Shield Appeal
- Wills and bequests

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Letters & feedback welcome!