

## **The Salvation Army Positional Statement - Australian Territories**

### **ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES**

In the light of the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, and the Salvation Army's international mission statement by which we are committed to 'meet human needs without discrimination', The Salvation Army is greatly concerned by the many millions of people fleeing, or being displaced from their homes and countries because of a well-founded fear of persecution. Many of these have experienced significant grief and trauma, which have potential long-term consequences for their health and well being.

The Salvation Army, in co-operation with other agencies supports international efforts through the promotion of peace, tolerance, understanding and respect for human life and dignity, to eliminate persecution and displacement.

Because God's loving concern and welcome for the stranger and foreigner (alien) are made quite evident in both the Old and New Testaments (1), The Salvation Army believes that individuals and nations should respond in a compassionate and humane manner to the plight of displaced persons seeking asylum.

The Salvation Army respects the right of sovereign nations to take reasonable measures to control who crosses their borders. The Salvation Army condemns the actions of those who would seek to gain from the plight of displaced persons.

The Salvation Army believes that asylum seekers should not be held in detention for any longer than the shortest required period necessary to carry out identity, health and security checks, and should also be provided access to legal facilities. (2) The claims of asylum seekers should be processed expeditiously since unnecessary delays, and the resulting uncertainty, can have long term detrimental effects on their health and well being.

The Salvation Army believes that the family unit is the fundamental building block of society and that in the processing of asylum seekers, priority should be given to maintaining the integrity of the family unit. Special protection and assistance should be given to children. Unaccompanied children should not be kept in detention, and families with children should be given priority and released in the shortest possible time.

The Salvation Army believes that refugees (3) should be immediately offered every assistance necessary for them to quickly become contributing members of that society.

- (1) Exodus 23:9, Leviticus 19:9-10, Numbers 35:15, Psalm 146, Matthew 22:34-40, Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 10:30-37, Hebrews 13:1-3. The Bible often describes God himself as a "Refuge", (Deuteronomy 33:27, Ruth 2:12, 2 Samuel 22:3,31, Psalm 5:11, Psalm 16:1, Psalm 17:7, Psalm 31:2,4, Psalm 34:8, Psalm 36:7, Psalm 46:1, Psalm 62:8, Psalm 91:2, Psalm 144:2, Nahum 1:7).
- (2) In Old Testament times God instructed the Israelite people to apply their law equally to Israelites and Aliens, Deuteronomy 1:16.
- (3) ie Asylum Seekers who have been determined to be genuine and have been accepted for resettlement within a country.

**Approved by International Headquarters June 2006**