

# Wills Update

News & stories from The Salvation Army Wills & Bequests team

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- Fighting addiction
- A bolt of life

## Fighting addiction

– Honoured Friends partner in essential transformation



**“Money bequeathed to The Salvation Army means capacity to deliver essential services to those Australians putting their hand up for treatment for addiction – so thank you for making this possible!”**  
– Craig Stephens

The consequences of addiction can be devastating – not only for the individual but also for families and communities as a catalyst for depression, suicide, poverty, isolation, family break-up, health issues, generational flow-on, crime and violence and more.

At the forefront of helping people escape the vice of addiction is Craig Stephens, Manager of The Salvation Army's Dooralang Transformation Centre on the NSW Central Coast, which is the largest residential treatment centre in Australasia.

Craig believes the need to support The Salvation Army's work has never been greater. He says generous legacies from bequests and donations are essential to running the front-line service and make a real and lasting change in the life of individuals, their families and our communities.

“Research indicates that the longer someone is retained in treatment, the better their recovery from addiction,” Craig explains, “and our retention rates in treatment are at an all-time high. This means more people are finding freedom from addiction than ever before.

“Methamphetamine (ice) and other illicit drugs are a blight on our communities and, remarkably, most addicts want to give up using – they just need treatment to help them.”

### Thousands helped

Around 4,200 people every year are helped through eight Salvation Army residential services known as “therapeutic communities”, where clients live-in for up to 10 months and complete the award-winning Bridge Program.

“We have three major Australian universities conducting ongoing research into the Bridge Program to ensure the best evidence-based practice delivered at all times,” Craig says.

“But, most importantly, we are committed to helping even those that other organisations won't accept

into their programs, and this often results in the most breathtaking transformations in the most broken of lives!”

### Life transformed

One of the Bridge Program's success stories is Adam, who recently went through residential recovery as a participant and is now studying in Canberra to help others. He has been offered employment in the same service and says: “Those donors who were willing to invest in such a life-changing program, changed not only my life but my children's lives.

“This program has not only saved my life; it has repaired my relationships; it has given my children a father with longevity, with stability. It has given me the opportunity to be the dad that they need me to be. I get to look forward to watching my children grow up and I get to train to learn how to help other people. I never in my wildest dreams thought I could end up with a future that is this bright and this positive.”

“I want to thank Salvation Army supporters and I continually thank God for such an amazing opportunity.”

# A bolt of life

**“I was so ashamed of where I got to and was becoming, that I didn’t even want to talk to my own family. They never turned their backs on me; they were always there, but I wasn’t there. I wasn’t there as a son, a brother a family member and not even a member of society – I was just this shell of a person.” – Mitch**

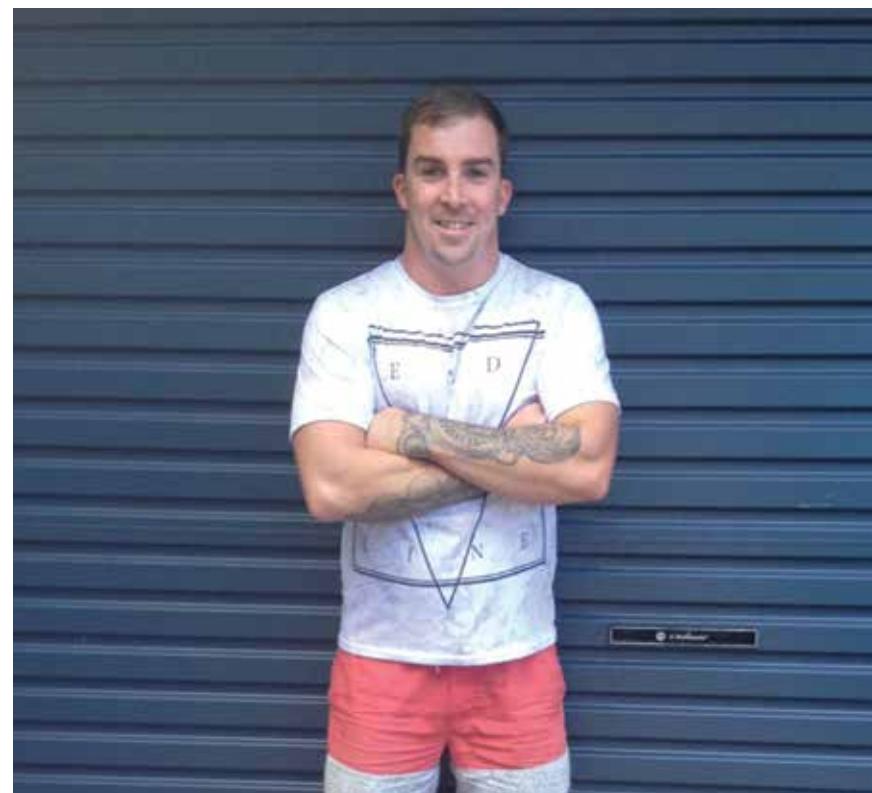
As a teenager, Mitch always wanted to impress others and “be the cool kid at school.” For a while he succeeded, but years of partying led him down a dark path to drug dependency. In his 20s, Mitch became addicted to the drug “ice” and found himself homeless, having lost everything that was precious to him.

“I remember waking up one morning in the middle of winter, homeless. It was freezing cold, pouring down rain. I was in a sleeping bag just under this tiny shelter and just went: ‘If I don’t get help, if I don’t do something about it, I’m going to die,’ he says.

## Essential support

After 13 years of “living in darkness”, Mitch entered The Salvation Army’s Dooralang Transformation Centre on the NSW Central Coast, which has more than 70 staff and around 140 participants from all walks of life. The core of the centre’s operations is the Bridge Program, which provides the recovery needs for people suffering from addictions.

Working through a “very, very confronting process of peeling back layers” over eight to 10 months, Mitch says: “You get a caseworker; there are group sessions; psychologist; psychiatrist. Because you’ve done a lot of damage over the years, they dig deep. They also have work therapy as well, which is about



getting ready for the real world.” Mitch graduated after eight months and has now been “clean” for the past 16 months.

“It’s just an amazing program, the Bridge Program (which runs at all Salvation Army Recovery Services centres),” Mitch says. “It’s been around for 50-plus years and ... it helped me dramatically.”

Currently studying a Certificate 4 in Community Services (with the aim of becoming a residential youth worker) Mitch is now passionate about helping others and says he has already been privileged to share his story at schools and in the media to try and help other young people.

## A new life

Deeply thankful for all the support he has received, Mitch says: “I love The Salvation Army – I love everything about

Dooralang and everybody that is part of my life including the Hope Ministry I’m now involved with at The Salvation Army in Newcastle. I can’t give them enough praise.”

Mitch says he initially began his recovery journey to save himself, but to have also experienced such deep “healing and restoration”, to have deeply reconnected with his family and see the pride in his parents’ and younger brothers’ eyes, Mitch says with a wide smile: “You just can’t put a price on that!”

And the pinnacle, he says, after observing the joy and glow in the faces of those who had a Christian faith, “I decided to hand my will and my life over to the care of God and – it was like this bolt of life entered me.”

*\*This article is based on an interview on Rhema Central Coast (radio)*



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