



*January 2021*

As the leaders of The Salvation Army in Australia today, we take this opportunity to reiterate The Salvation Army's apology to survivors and our commitment to redress and reconciliation.

We sincerely and unreservedly apologise to each and every person who has experienced any form of abuse within The Salvation Army.

We firstly want to say sorry to every adult who was abused as a child, while living in a Salvation Army Children's Home. Words cannot express the depth of our sorrow and regret for every instance of suffering and criminal activity that you were forced to endure.

We would like to thank every person who has come forward to tell their story; we honour your strength and courage in doing so, yet we also recognise the anguish and suffering of those who remain silent.

We have been deeply impacted by the descriptions of abuse that so many children were subjected to. It is with absolute horror and deep shame that we have listened to you share your experiences of sexual assaults, extreme physical punishment, bullying and humiliation. Our hearts break as we read of the evil actions inflicted upon you by staff and Salvation Army officers as well as other residents. We want to assure you that we believe all that you have said.

We want to say sorry to the child you were, when you suffered such pain and trauma while in our care. We are sorry that we did not provide you with a place to call home that was loving and fun, where you were taught well and given help and guidance. We are sorry that you could not trust the people who were supposed to look after you to protect you from harm and keep you safe. We are so sorry for all the hurt and confusion that you lived with; for the daily fear of further abuse and the nights you were too scared to go to sleep, and for the times when running away seemed the only option.

We want you to know that you were not to blame for any of the abuse you experienced. What happened to you was not your fault. You did not deserve it. We are sorry that we did not listen to you and believe you when you bravely risked reporting what was happening to the officers in charge.

The Salvation Army had a moral responsibility to provide you with a safe, clean, nurturing environment, where you could be educated well, build healthy friendships and have positive role models as you grew into a young adult. We failed you in fulfilling this responsibility.

The actions demonstrated to you were the complete opposite of the loving God whom it is our responsibility to represent. There is no excuse for any abuse toward any child whatsoever. It is with great regret that we did not recognise, acknowledge and investigate the perpetrators of abuse and hold them accountable for their actions.

We also want to sincerely apologise to every person who was abused as a child while attending any Salvation Army centres, church services, activities or camps. We are sorry that we did not keep you safe. We are so very sorry for all that you have suffered.

And it is with deep heartache that we recognise the suffering of children of Salvation Army Officers who were abused at the hands of others, while their parents were faithfully ministering to the needs of people, totally unaware of what was occurring. Again, words cannot express the depth of our grief for all that you have been through.

Finally, and of no less significance, we sincerely apologise to any adult who has experienced abuse within The Salvation Army, whether as an employee or volunteer, visitor, friend or church member.

We recognise the devastating impact the enduring effects of abuse can have on family relationships and we extend this apology to your partners, your children, your parents, siblings, families and friends. We are sorry for their pain and heartache and suffering; we are sincerely sorry for the effect this has had on their lives too.

To every mother and father who brought their children to The Salvation Army to be cared for, rightly expecting that we would provide well for them, we are so sorry that we betrayed your trust in us. As parents, we can only imagine the depth of your distress upon learning of the abuse of your child. We genuinely understand any anger you may feel toward us.

And we remember the victims of abuse who are no longer alive, and we extend this apology and our deepest sympathies to their families, friends and supporters.

To each and every individual whose life has been affected by abuse experienced within The Salvation Army – sexual, physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual - and for the profound impact this has had upon you throughout your life, we humbly ask you to accept this heartfelt apology.

We cannot change the past however we want to assure you that all leaders of The Salvation Army today are doing everything possible to ensure that the abuse that happened in the past never happens again. The Salvation Army is committed to preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people and have embedded child safety in all our Policies, Procedures and our Code of Conduct. We hold all our personnel accountable for creating safe and welcoming spaces for children and families and for ensuring that children and young people's rights to safety and wellbeing are upheld.

We have undertaken decisive disciplinary action against all personnel who have ever been involved in child sexual and physical abuse, and in reporting their behaviour to the police. All our child protection policies have been made retrospective so that no person involved in any form of child sexual abuse will be allowed to serve as a Salvation Army officer.

We recognise that no amount of money can ever make up for the abuse that you have experienced, yet if you have not already done so, we encourage you to seek redress from The Salvation Army as a tangible way of showing that what happened to you was very wrong and help to bring closure to the pain of the past.

Winston Churchill often used the phrase “Grasp the larger hope”, that is, look beyond the current circumstances and believe that things will get better by trusting in a power beyond your own means. It’s what (who) we trust in but don’t yet see that keeps us going.

Despite all that has happened in your life, you are loved by God and you are a person of great worth and value in His eyes. He has promised to be with you always. He feels your pain and He truly understands your suffering. He is your hope and peace.

Our heartfelt prayer is that you will be able to continually move forward in life, with healing, freedom, peace and hope.

Commissioners Robert and Janine Donaldson  
***Leaders of The Salvation Army, Australia Territory***