



Direct from the **TC**

Royal Commission announces dates for public hearing into The Salvation Army

Dear friends,

I want to share with you the news that the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse will be holding a public hearing into The Salvation Army commencing 28th of January 2014. The focus will be on four boys homes:

- Alkira Salvation Army Home for Boys, Indooroopilly, QLD
- Riverview Training Farm (known as Endeavour Training Farm), Riverview, QLD
- Bexley Boys' Home, Bexley, NSW
- Gill Memorial Home, Goulburn, NSW

The Royal Commission will hear evidence from men who were in the homes and suffered abuse. There is no doubt that people will be distressed by some of the tragic accounts which will be given. Please join with me in prayer that those who testify will find some healing through this experience. Several of them have not yet been in touch with our Professional Standards Office, and we want to reach out to them after they have testified. We need to expect that witnesses will name certain officers as abusers years ago.

The Commission will also consider the way The Salvation Army managed any allegations of abuse which came to its attention at that time. The Commission states: The hearing will also examine The Salvation Army's processes in investigating, disciplining, removing and/transferring anyone accused of, or found to have engaged in, child sexual abuse in these homes.

Over the past eight months we have been supplying large quantities of documents and records to the Commission in response to summonses we have received. We anticipate further summonses in the coming weeks, as the Commission prepares for the hearing. This work, which has seen us compile detailed database, has given us a much fuller picture. We have been at all times transparently honest with the Commission, and intend to remain so. We intend to carry out further investigations ourselves, in order to have the most accurate answers we can give. Nothing is being concealed or held back.

A working group led by Major Peter Farthing, Royal Commission Response Coordinator, and including Luke Geary of Salvos Legal, members of the Professional Standards office team, and Major Bruce Harmer, meet regularly to develop our best response. The Communications and Public Relations Team is also developing careful plans for media work. We are also in discussions with the Southern Territory.

We anticipate that the Army's spokespeople at the hearings will be myself and Major Peter Farthing. The Army will be represented by a very able senior barrister.

This hearing will not be the last. Quite possibly a future hearing will look into the way we provide restorative justice and assistance to people who report past abuse.

As the Royal Commission does its work, people may speak with you about The Salvation Army's response to child sexual abuse. Please listen respectfully. It is wise not to try to defend ourselves, or to minimise the wrongs done. Here are some key messages:

1. The Salvation Army openly admits to serious past failures, and apologises to all who were harmed.
2. The Salvation Army today is responding to allegations of past abuse with compassion and honesty.
3. The Salvation Army makes payments to victims out of surpluses from our humanitarian enterprises, not from donated funds such as the Red Shield Appeal.
4. The Salvation Army encourages any person who was abused in any way to contact our Professional Standards Office on 02 9266 9781.
5. Today's Salvation Army has strong policies in place to protect children and it ensures those policies reflect that the protection of children is of the most serious of our obligations.

Please pray as we approach the hearing. Above all pray that we will act justly and compassionately towards all who have been wronged. Pray that we will speak the truth about all matters and all people, being fair to all.

James Condon
Territorial Commander
The Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory

The media statement regarding this announcement can be viewed at
<http://salvos.org.au/about-us/media-centre/documents/20131206TSARoyalCommission.pdf>