



Media Release

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The Salvation Army Urges Mental Health Reform

This weekend marks the start of Mental Health Week, which is why The Salvation Army is encouraging more open discussion about the way we can all provide care and support communities and workplaces to deal with one of Australia's major public health issues.

The Salvation Army, through its Hope for Life Suicide Prevention and Bereavement Support Program, provides comfort, training, advice and connection to people who feel they have lost hope or are struggling to deal with the loss of a loved one, including those bereaved by suicide. The Hope for Life team also conducts Mental Health training for legal and paralegal professionals, funded by the Federal Government.

The Salvation Army is committed to engaging and supporting those who are struggling with mental health issues. The program also seeks to build partnerships with mental health providers and offer support to anyone within the broad community who feels a sense of loss, helplessness and hopelessness.

The National Program Manager of Hope for Life, Bill Sayers, says that many people living with mental health challenges fail to come forward due to issues such as social stereotyping, stigma, geographical isolation and cultural/language barriers.

"Many of these people have complex issues, be it poverty, addiction, homelessness, unemployment, domestic violence or loneliness," Mr Sayers said.

"We need to build stronger, more inclusive communities that can talk maturely and engage openly about mental health issues are at the heart of recovery and wellness. We need to support the work of clinicians and health professionals who make an enormous difference, but cannot walk along side everyone, every day."

Whilst welcoming an increase in workplace education, Mr. Sayers says many businesses still offer minimal training on mental health.

"Employers have a responsibility to adequately educate all of their employees on how they can make a positive difference to workplace culture," he said.

"The net cost of not doing this is personal and ultimately financial, through Workers Compensation claims, or reputational."

The Salvation Army's Hope for Life Suicide Prevention & Bereavement Support service is available to provide support, advice and training on Suicide Prevention, Bereavement support and Self Care. Hope for life can be contacted on (02) 9356 2120 or via email at admin.hopeforlife@aue.salvationarmy.org

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For more information or to organise an interview with Bill Sayers, please contact: The Salvation Army Media Office- (02) 9266 9820