



Environment and Public Affairs Committee Inquiry into past forced adoptive policies and practices

Submission by The Salvation Army

Acknowledgement of the Terms of Reference

1. The Salvation Army acknowledges the important work of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs (the **Committee**) in its inquiry into past adoptive policies and practices (the **Inquiry**). The Salvation Army welcomes the opportunity to participate in this Inquiry and will be guided by the Committee as to how it may best offer its support and co-operation.

2. The Salvation Army notes the Committee's Terms of Reference:

To inquire into the past adoptive policies and practices of the twentieth century, notably the years between 1939 and 1980.

In particular, the Committee will seek to:

- 1. understand the lived experiences of those affected by historical forced adoption practices*
- 2. examine the role of the State Government, health services and private institutions in these practices*
- 3. identify what measures are currently available to assist persons experiencing distress, their effectiveness, and how those persons may be supported further*
- 4. consider any other matter that arises during the course of the inquiry deemed to be relevant by the Committee.*

3. The Salvation Army also acknowledges that the Inquiry will apply a definition of 'coercion' which will include 'circumstances where a mother has signed a consent to adoption, but only as a result of family or institutional pressure' or because of 'circumstances of economic disadvantage or lack of support systems'.

Apology

4. The Salvation Army is profoundly sorry for the role it played in Australia's former adoption policies and practices and acknowledges the devastating emotional impact these past practices have had – and continue to have – on the mothers, fathers and babies who are now adults, as well as their other family members. We have been grieved to hear of the lived experiences of all of those affected, and of the devastating impact of these past practices, not only on the mothers, but the fathers, children and families of those involved.

5. The Salvation Army acknowledges that at the time, society's understanding of what was best for a mother and a child was significantly different to what we understand today. While our desire was always to support the young women who came into our homes under extremely

difficult circumstances and to treat them with care, compassion, dignity and respect, we recognise and sincerely regret that this was not the experience of some mothers. We have been grieved to hear of those lived experiences and to all those impacted we offer our most sincere apology.

6. The Salvation Army takes this opportunity to state its commitment to working with the mothers, fathers and children, as well as federal and state governments, including this Committee, as we seek to resolve the long-term consequences of Australia's former adoption policies.
7. The Salvation Army has been working with adoption support groups and individuals to address issues relating to these policies and practices with the aim of bringing closure and healing to those effected.
8. In providing this submission, we recognise the truly sensitive nature of the information and experiences that will be before the Committee. We understand that some terminology used in the context of discussing forced adoptions will be very distressing for some people. Where possible, we have tried to use language which is sensitive to those people with lived experiences of past forced adoption practices.

Background to The Salvation Army

9. The Salvation Army is an international Christian organisation which seeks to spread the message of Jesus Christ through its evangelical and social work. Originally founded in the East End of London in the United Kingdom by William Booth, its mission is centrally based on love and service to the forgotten, the poor and the marginalised.
10. The International Headquarters of The Salvation Army is based in London, United Kingdom, and the worldwide leader is the General, who is elected to the position under The Salvation Army's Constitution.
11. The organisation is distinctly hierarchical in nature, based on a military style model. All official positions under the General are appointed.
12. The Salvation Army is present in 126 nations around the world and is a single, global, unincorporated association. Under the direction of the General there are five International Secretaries (Africa, Americas and Caribbean, Europe, South Asia and South Pacific East Asia). Within each of those zones, there are various 'territories' which are then further divided up into 'divisions'. Each territory is managed independently and has its own assets and reserves. In some cases, a territory may also have its own policies and procedures. However, all territories share the same international regulations, mission, doctrines, and allegiances. In this respect, it is viewed as one Army.

The Salvation Army in Australia

13. Prior to 1 December 2018, The Salvation Army in Australia was divided into two territories, the Australia Eastern and the Australia Southern Territories. Each of these territories carried out its operations through various statutory property trust entities as trustee for the Social Work and General Work trusts of The Salvation Army in the relevant jurisdiction.
14. The Australia Eastern Territory included:
 - (a) The Salvation Army (New South Wales) Property Trust; and
 - (b) The Salvation Army (Queensland) Property Trust.
15. The Australia Southern Territory included:

- (a) The Salvation Army (Northern Territory) Property Trust;
 - (b) The Salvation Army (South Australia) Property Trust;
 - (c) The Salvation Army (Tasmania) Property Trust;
 - (d) The Salvation Army (Victoria) Property Trust; and
 - (e) The Salvation Army (Western Australia) Property Trust.
16. On 1 December 2018, the Australia Eastern and the Australia Southern Territories joined to become one Australia Territory.
 17. The Australia Territory is led by a Commander, often holding the rank of Commissioner. The Territorial Commander is also the Chair of The Salvation Army Board. Currently, the Territorial Commander of The Salvation Army in Australia is Commissioner Miriam Gluyas, who reports directly to International Headquarters.
 18. The Salvation Army (Western Australia) Property Trust is a body corporate, incorporated pursuant to section 3 of *The Salvation Army (Western Australia) Property Trust Act 1931* (WA).

Officers

19. The work of The Salvation Army within each territory is carried out primarily by its Officers. Officers are ordained ministers who have entered into a covenant relationship with God and The Salvation Army, committing their time to the service of The Salvation Army's mission. They are known as Commissioned Officers.
20. Officers are not employees and do not receive a salary, but their housing and other expenses are met by the Territory.
21. Officers are appointed to different roles in the Territory, with some managing local Corps (Churches), some to positions within Headquarters and others to various social work or 'field' roles.
22. Officers hold different ranks, beginning at Lieutenant and progressing to Captain and then Major, based on their years of service. Some Officers in senior governance positions may be awarded the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel or Colonel. Historically, there were also other ranks, such as Brigadier, which were above Major.

Envoys

23. Aside from Officers, certain roles may also be appointed to Envoys. Envoys undertake a full-time service role but are not commissioned as Officers and would usually have less ministry training than Officers.

Membership

24. Membership of The Salvation Army is generally within two categories. The primary category being referred to as Soldiers. Soldiers are members of a Salvation Army Corps (Church) and will typically wear formal Salvation Army uniform when undertaking official service, such as attending a Sunday service. All Officers and Envoys are Soldiers, however there are also many Soldiers that do not hold any formal appointment within The Salvation Army.
25. The other category of members within The Salvation Army are known as 'Adherents'. Adherents are persons who typically attend a Salvation Army Corps and who are committed to the mission of The Salvation Army. Adherents do not wear a uniform. There are also non-

adherent attendees of Salvation Army Corps who represent a more casual member of the congregation who is neither an Adherent nor a Soldier.

Maternity Homes

26. Some of the earliest work of The Salvation Army is referred to as its 'Rescue Work', which included maternity care, support for unmarried mothers and the provision of child care.¹ In the late 1800s, the daughter-in-law of William Booth, Mrs Bramwell Booth, established the first homes for women in London, England. The homes provided care for destitute women, many of whom were unmarried mothers.
27. As part of its Rescue Work, The Salvation Army offered support to expectant mothers through their pregnancy and delivery. Recognising that many of these mothers had been abandoned by their families and broader society, The Salvation Army provided support in the form of childcare, to enable the mothers to find employment and gain some security for themselves and their child.
28. The Salvation Army's work with babies and mothers continued as a key pillar of its social work around the world well into the 20th century.

Hillcrest Maternity Home

History of Hillcrest

29. The Salvation Army undertook work with unmarried mothers and children in Western Australia from as early as 1898. Firstly, at Cornelia Home (later known as Graceville), a Rescue Home for women and maternity home for unmarried mothers, and later at The Open Door in North Fremantle (later known as Hopetoun).
30. The Open Door was established in 1903 as an unmarried mothers' home with newspapers reporting at the time that the name represented The Salvation Army's desire to 'open the door to 'unmarried mothers' who might be shunned by society'.² From at least 1910, the home provided general maternity services, with separate sections for single and married women.³
31. The services later moved from Hopetoun to Hillcrest after a property was donated by Mr and Mrs Pearse. The Hillcrest Maternity Hospital (**Hillcrest**) was officially opened on 5 April 1922 and was registered as a training hospital in obstetrics in May 1922.
32. In 1928, Dr Dorothy Parker became the honorary doctor in obstetrics. She continued her service until her retirement in 1967.
33. Various extensions were added to Hillcrest, firstly in 1934 and then in 1938.
34. By 1942 the property was requisitioned, along with other Salvation Army homes, for use by the defence forces during World War II. As a result, Hillcrest was moved to 44 King's Park Road, Perth for two years. During this time, the services for single women ceased, along with

¹ The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre, 'Darkest England Gazette Research Guide, Maternity and child care', *The Salvation Army* (Webpage, July 2019), p 1-2
<<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/2020-06/Maternity%20and%20child%20care.pdf>>.

² Debra Rosser, 'The Open Door (1903 – 1922)', *Find & Connect* (Webpage, 17 February 2014)
<<https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE01321b.htm>>.

³ Ibid.

the training functions of the Hospital. Hillcrest was no longer used as a training hospital after this time.

35. Following the return to its original location, significant upgrades were made to Hillcrest in 1958, with the Premier of Western Australia opening a new 25 bed maternity hospital wing. The new modern facilities meant that private patients also elected to give birth at Hillcrest.
36. From around 1967, King Edward Memorial Hospital provided honorary medical services to Hillcrest with the assistance of the local General Practitioner, Dr E Simpson and a paediatrician who conducted examinations of the babies for adoption. It is also understood that the Child Welfare Department provided the services of a Clinical Psychologist.
37. From May 1969, Hillcrest was used solely for unmarried mothers. As of October 1969, the hostel, which was the accommodation provided to the women prior to their confinement, had 29 beds. The hospital wing had 12 beds and there was additional nursery space for 20 babies.
38. Hillcrest was registered as an adoption agency by the State Government, although we have not yet been able to confirm the date of registration.
39. As well as the adoption service, 1969 saw the introduction of a Rehabilitation Scheme which assisted the young women at Hillcrest to learn or retain professional skills, such as typing, hairdressing, dress making, or other academic skills, so that they would be able to return to the workforce or make a new start in society with confidence.
40. From the late 1960s, changes in societal attitudes and increased support for single mothers, led to a decrease in the number of admissions to Hillcrest. With the expense of further upgrades being required to the facilities, the decision was made to close Hillcrest in 1974.

Operation of Hillcrest

41. The Salvation Army has very limited records available regarding the operation of Hillcrest or the processes and procedures that were in place. The following information has been prepared based on the limited information we have been able to gather so far.
42. Management of Hillcrest came under the Matron, who was an Officer appointed to the position by the Territorial Commander, in conjunction with The Salvation Army Appointments Board. The Matron reported to the State Social Services Secretary, who in turn reported to the Territorial Social Services Secretary.
43. Other Officers and staff were appointed or engaged at the home, undertaking domestic, midwife and other duties. Officers and staff tended to work either in the hospital or the hostel.
44. Young women came to Hillcrest at varying times during their pregnancy, but commonly stayed for around three months before giving birth, and anywhere from two weeks or more afterwards, with that time being used by the girls to recover and decide what they wanted to do as to an adoption.
45. Often the girls were brought to Hillcrest by their parents, or sometimes they came with a friend. The prevailing social attitudes at the time meant that the young women often had pressure placed on them by their family to adopt the baby out and there was still often a desire by the families to keep the pregnancy quiet. Some girls were not permitted by their own families to return home after the birth.
46. While many of the admissions to Hillcrest resulted in the mothers deciding to adopt, not all the babies at Hillcrest were adopted. Some of the mothers decided to keep their babies. For

example, of the 172 admissions in 1968, 113 resulted in adoption, being approximately two thirds.

47. Where a mother decided to keep her baby, she would often return home to her parents. However, at other times, Hillcrest assisted mothers to find accommodation.
48. During their stay, the women did light domestic duties for an hour or two during the day. This served as something to keep them occupied. There were also activities and handicrafts they could take part in.

Adoptions at Hillcrest

49. So far, we have not been able to locate any detailed information on the adoption process at Hillcrest. The adoptions were largely handled by the Matron. However, all the Matrons who were appointed to Hillcrest are now deceased.
50. Due to the lack of available information, The Salvation Army's actual involvement (if any) in obtaining the consent of the mother and/or the involvement of State agencies such as the Child Welfare Department in the same process is largely unknown. Our enquiries so far suggest that the Child Welfare Department provided a Government Social Worker, who attended Hillcrest to talk to the women about the adoption process. We do not have any details of the formal role of the Social Worker.

Historical maternal care claims

Response to enquiries and claims

51. Over recent years, The Salvation Army in Australia has received enquiries from former residents of its maternity homes.
52. Some former residents have contacted The Salvation Army seeking copies of their records, while others have made allegations relating to time they spent at a particular home and/or in relation to the adoption process.
53. All enquiries in relation to The Salvation Army's former maternity homes are handled through The Salvation Army's Centre for Restoration.
54. The Salvation Army's policy in relation to all enquiries relating to its former maternity homes is to firstly ensure that a written response is provided to the individual within five business days unless the circumstances do not permit. That response should include an acknowledgement of receipt of the person's enquiry and an assurance that their enquiry is being looked at and a response will be provided.

Records

55. Following receipt of an enquiry, searches will be undertaken for any records held by The Salvation Army relating to the person.
56. Where records are held by The Salvation Army, they are provided to the individual, subject to any considerations of the relevant privacy legislation and adoption laws. At the time of disclosing the individual's records, a letter will also be provided with information regarding any other bodies, such as State Government agencies, that may hold records of that person.

Hillcrest records

57. The Salvation Army does not hold any records of the mothers who were admitted to Hillcrest or of the adoptions that took place at Hillcrest. It is understood that upon closure of Hillcrest,

these records were handed over to the Child Welfare Department.⁴ To date, The Salvation Army has only been able to locate two documents relating to Hillcrest. Those documents are annexed and marked 'TSA-1' and 'TSA-2', respectively.

58. Accordingly, all enquiries received by The Salvation Army for access to records relating to Hillcrest are directed to the Government of Western Australia's Adoption Services.

Pastoral Support

59. In keeping with mission and objectives, The Salvation Army's position is that pastoral support (being support offered through The Salvation Army's Chaplaincy services) is available on a without prejudice basis, to all former residents of its maternity homes who experienced adoptions and all children adopted from its homes. In this regard, The Salvation Army recognises that the impact of past adoption practices on all persons involved, even in situations where the adoption was entirely voluntary.
60. The offer of pastoral support is available irrespective of whether an individual has made allegations against The Salvation Army.

Restorative meetings

61. The Salvation Army also recognises that some individuals who were resident in or adopted from its maternity homes may wish to meet with The Salvation Army to tell of their experiences. The Salvation Army recognises the need for these persons to be heard and the importance of this in the restorative process. Should the individual wish, The Salvation Army will arrange for them (and if they wish, a support person of their choice) to meet with an appropriate Senior Officer from the Centre for Restoration.

Closing statement

62. The Salvation Army is grateful for the work of the Commission and sincerely hopes that the Inquiry will provide an opportunity for the voices of those impacted by past forced adoption practices to be heard. We will listen with compassion to the stories of those affected and will remain open to learning from the past, while we look towards how we might best assist those in need into the future.
63. The Salvation Army will assist the Commission with any enquiries or requests for information.

14 September 2023



Commissioner Miriam Gluyas
Territorial Commander and Chair of the Board
The Salvation Army Australia Territory

⁴ Debra Rosser, 'Hillcrest Records (1912 – 1974)', *Find & Connect* (Webpage, 22 March 2012) <<https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00619b.htm>>.