



The Salvation Army

Responses to Questions Taken on Notice, Sydney NSW (Monday 17 August 2020)

Public hearing of the Legislative Council Public Accountability Committee
Inquiry into the NSW Government's management of the COVID-19 pandemic

The Salvation Army again thanks the Legislative Council Public Accountability Committee for the opportunity to present our evidence on Monday 17 August 2020.

At the hearing Mr Tony Devlin committed to providing a response on the topics below.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: *One of the things raised with me as an emerging issue is the access to rehab beds for people exiting prison—there has been a general closure under COVID. Would any of you be able to comment on that? Perhaps Mr Devlin? I think the Salvos are closing its 70-bed rehab up at the Central Coast.*

The Salvation Army has 17 residential alcohol and other drugs (AOD) centres across Australia. As part of a national project, The Salvation Army has chosen to diversify the type of AOD rehabilitation services we offer in order to support more people in their long-term recovery. Residential rehabilitation services will be maintained with a reduced number of beds but an increase in non-residential and community-based treatment services.

The Doralong Transformation Centre on the Central Coast of NSW has operated as a very large residential facility of 140 beds for many years. With issues of ongoing property maintenance and security, the service has become financially unviable, relying substantially on internally generated funds. The bed numbers were reduced to 70 in 2019 and there is an intention of closing the Doralong facility altogether in favour of more suitable properties. This will be accompanied by further programmatic changes.

There is strong evidence for the effectiveness of community-based AOD treatment services. Additionally, it is expected that we will be able to reach more people through a more diverse range of AOD services. Smaller scale residential centres will be retained for situations where they are the most appropriate mode of service delivery. Larger centres will reduce bed numbers, may move sites (as in the case of the Doralong Transformation Centre) and will host additional treatment options.

Demand for The Salvation Army's AOD services has remained relatively steady throughout the pandemic. However, distancing requirements have required us to reduce our occupancy numbers at most of our residential AOD services, especially those with shared bedroom and bathroom facilities. Our non-residential services have continued to be delivered online throughout the past months.



The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: *I think the head leasing, two years' safe accommodation for some people would be very important. Of the support that you have received, how much of that funding has gone into temporary hotel arrangements versus the private head leasing arrangements?*

The Salvation Army has been pleased to take part in the NSW Government's Rough Sleeper Initiative, which initially allowed The Salvation Army to maintain 25 rooms, later increasing to 33 and finally 40 rooms, at a Sydney hotel to accommodate people experiencing homelessness.

The Salvation Army has received a total of \$1,005,327 (GST exclusive) from the Department of Communities and Justice for the six months to September 2020. These funds are being used for accommodation costs, deep cleaning, domestic and family violence supports and telephone support resources. The breakdown of the use of these funds can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Department of Communities and Justice Funding Allocations

Purpose	Funding (GST excl.) \$		
	April - June	July - September	Total
Hotel – Accommodation	410,400		410,400
Hotel – Staffing	63,130	115,182	178,311
Deep cleaning	176,006		176,006
Telephony support	2,640		2,640
Inner city domestic and family violence support	150,000		150,000
Broken Hill domestic and family violence support	87,970		87,970
Total	890,145	115,182	1,005,327



The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: *Can I just ask one follow-up on that? Obviously it has been a really difficult time and people are seeking different types of financial support than they might usually be. During the remote schooling period, did you have people approaching you for that support for that, to engage that digital divide? Did you have anyone coming to you seeking support either for themselves or for their families?*

Further to the response provided by Mr Devlin, the Committee may find the experience of The Salvation Army's Oasis College of interest.

Oasis College is an independent secondary school for Years 11 and 12 operated by The Salvation Army in Surry Hills. It transitioned its learning program entirely online from the end of March 2020. This decision was made to ensure our students continued to receive the best possible education given the circumstances.

Salvos Schools has a policy of providing computer equipment for all those who require it. As many of our students did not have a computer or internet access at home, the transition to online learning required a significant investment, including lending school equipment and purchasing internet dongles for our students. We also provided resources and other supports to help students cope with the challenges of remote learning.

The current situation has highlighted the fact that access to the internet is an essential service and is increasingly vital for both education and employment. Although our data does not reveal the level of support provided to assist students with online learning through our Doorways emergency relief services, our actions of alleviating other cost of living pressures may have allowed families to redirect funds toward these needs.



The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: *Retail outlets are starting to reopen, how is operating in a COVID-safe environment impacting on them?*

Salvos Stores are now operating with a much higher level of Personal Protective Equipment (**PPE**) and other COVID-19 safety measures. These includes the installation of sneeze guards and floor markings to aid with social distancing. We expect these measures will continue be a feature of our retail trade for the foreseeable future.

Due to the specific nature of COVID-19, our stores are currently operating with fewer volunteer staff. We are conscious of ensuring the safety of all volunteers as they return to their normal activities as and when they feel it is safe to do so.