



The Salvation Army Australia Territory

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Mr Joe Kelly MP
Chair
Queensland Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Mental Health
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Via email: mhsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Inquiry Into The Opportunities To Improve Mental Health Outcomes For Queenslanders

Dear Chair,

The Salvation Army thanks the Queensland Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Mental Health for the opportunity to provide input into the inquiry into the improvement of mental health and mental health outcomes within the state of Queensland.

The Salvation Army is an international Christian movement with a strong presence in Australia. Our vision is to confront hardship and injustice by living, loving and fighting alongside others to transform Australia one life at a time, with the love of Jesus.

Although not a provider of clinical mental health services, in our capacity as a church, and one of the largest providers of social services within Australia, we have significant exposure to the social and economic implications of mental ill-health upon individuals, their families and the broader community. It is with that experience that we make our submission.

Mental Health as a Social Justice Issue

The Salvation Army has recently conducted a significant body of research in which we asked people from across Australia the biggest social justice issues they see within their communities. Mental health ranked as the largest issue nationally, and in almost every region, approximately half of surveyed people ranked Mental Health as the biggest issue in their community. Most survey respondents recognised that mental ill-health, and the need for access to appropriate mental healthcare, is a critical factor in improving their community.

In almost all of our services and mission expressions, The Salvation Army sees the implications of mental ill-health upon a person's total social, and economic wellbeing and the ways in which disadvantage can be both a cause of, and a consequence of mental ill-health. Mental illness can cause a person to lose, or struggle to maintain secure housing. It can force a person into economic hardship and poverty, it can be a factor within scenarios of family and domestic violence, unemployment, and social isolation and loneliness.

Founders **William & Catherine Booth**
General **Brian Peddle**

*Wherever there is hardship or injustice, Salvos will live, love and fight
alongside others to transform Australia one life at a time with the love of Jesus*

salvationarmy.org.au

All forms of disadvantage can push people to the margins or cause stress, loneliness and acute mental illness. Where multiple and complex areas of disadvantage merge, the pressures mount and force people into a deeper spiral of social and economic hardship which has a toll upon their mental health.

The Salvation Army believes that a holistic approach to addressing mental illness must also encompass fighting hardship and disadvantage.

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“Too often we treat the symptoms, without looking into the baseline trauma. That’s not good enough.”

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- A Salvation Army caseworker.

The breadth of services offered by The Salvation Army allows us to provide a more comprehensive wraparound service model, connecting community members with as many of our services, or those of other service providers within our network, as required to address the needs of the whole person.

Recommendation

- The Queensland Government work with community groups, health, education, housing, and other service providers to ensure that those experiencing or at risk of experiencing disadvantage or mental health crisis have wraparound support and access to appropriate services, including community-based services that support social connection and well-being.

Alcohol and Other Drugs

The Terms of Reference for this inquiry specifically focused upon the provision of alcohol and other drug (AOD) services as a significant component of Queenslanders’ mental healthcare needs. In many cases there is a well-evidenced co-occurrence of mental ill-health and substance use disorders. As one of the largest national providers of AOD treatment services Australia, The Salvation Army’s service providers actively seek opportunities to provide wraparound support to those experiencing substance use disorders. This can take the form of emergency financial relief, financial counselling, housing and homelessness services, and coordination and cooperation with mental healthcare providers.

The Salvation Army AOD treatment services throughout Queensland work to build the capacity of our own staff to respond to mental health issues in our community members, particularly higher prevalence mental ill-health. This includes getting to know community members with past mental ill-health conditions and working to get them reconnected with previous mental health services, and providing access to co-located psychologists or other mental health specialists where



possible. In many of our locations we have existing agreements with mental health professionals to immediately and conveniently help community members access mental healthcare. However, there is a shortage of mental healthcare professionals throughout Australia, and the mental toll of the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to stretch these resources.

Recommendation

- The Queensland Government work to increase numbers of psychologists or other mental health care professionals within the state, with priority access given to those who cannot otherwise meet fee-for-service mental healthcare costs.

The Salvation Army also sees the need for not only additional mental health professionals within the state, but also the opportunity for mental health sector and AOD sector professionals to strengthen coordination of their services. Our service providers have experienced scenarios where a client has been referred back to an AOD service for treatment, as a precursor to receiving psychological care. Ideally mental health professionals would be available to support community members at the same time as AOD services are accessed, and vice versa. The Salvation Army would value the opportunity to partner with mental health professionals and vocational training institutions to facilitate a more multidisciplinary approach to AOD support services, thus better supporting people experiencing mental ill-health.

Recommendation

- The Queensland Government work with the community sector, professional bodies and tertiary institutions to continue to strengthen the capacity and capability to provide Alcohol and Other Drug treatment within mental healthcare training.

Coordination, Cooperation and Colocation

The Salvation Army welcomes AOD services being a focus area within the Terms of Reference for this Select Committee. The frequent co-occurrence of substance use with mental ill-health makes it necessary to examine AOD services alongside the broader provision of mental healthcare, however, it is important not to conflate these issues.

Our experience is that although mental ill-health and substance use often occur together, there is still a significant difference in the cohorts who utilise mental health and AOD services. Community members accessing our AOD services most often have high prevalence, low acute mental ill-health. On the other hand, public mental health services generally see rarer and more acute mental illness, with a range of substance use levels and difficulties. Similarly, the two areas of care require differing skill sets. Coordination, cooperation and colocation of mental healthcare, along with an increased focus on providing wraparound, holistic support where appropriate, is the best way to deliver best outcomes for community members with both mental ill-health and substance use.



Recommendation

- The Queensland Government work with the community sector, and professional bodies to better enable alcohol and other drugs services to identify and assess the need for referral to mental healthcare services.
- The Queensland Government work with public and private providers of mental healthcare services to maximise the effectiveness and availability of referral pathways from alcohol and other drug services.
- The Queensland Government work to improve the capacity of mental healthcare supports, including to improve the availability of support for less acute mental ill-health referrals.

Rural and Regional Differences

Despite all of The Salvation Army's AOD services across the state offering community members dedicated, quality care, there is a noticeable difference between the number of staff we are able to attract and retain in regional communities. There are numerous reasons for this and one of the critical impediments is the limited access to affordable accommodation. In some regional centres the lack of appropriate rental accommodation has led suitable, even eager, candidates to decline job offers.

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“Sometimes they call back and say I can't, I just can't find anywhere to live [in the area].”

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- A Salvation Army caseworker in regional Queensland.

Recommendation

- The Queensland Government work to with the Commonwealth and local governments to improve housing affordability in regional areas.
- The Queensland Government work with alcohol and other drug service providers to attract and retain qualified alcohol and other drug service staff in regional and remote areas of the state.
- The Queensland Government work with mental healthcare providers to attract and retain qualified mental healthcare service staff in regional and remote areas of the state.

COVID-19

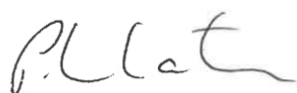
Finally, it is not possible to examine mental health in Queensland without a consideration of the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mental ill-health was a significant issue within the



community prior to the pandemic, and it is undeniable that the pandemic and necessary public health orders have had a negative impact upon the mental health of many. However, as we have also seen throughout the past two years, governments can and must play a significant role in supporting those with mental ill-health, both clinically, but also through more holistic support that considers the wellbeing of the whole person, not just their mental health needs, including addressing the causes of poverty and disadvantage in all of its forms.

Again, The Salvation Army would like thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide input into this inquiry and for the focus and attention being given to this important issue.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Hateley, Major
Head of Government Relations
The Salvation Army Australia

10 February 2022

The Salvation Army acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters throughout Australia.

We pay our respect to Elders and acknowledge their continuing relationship to this land and the ongoing living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

We also acknowledge future aspirations of all First Nations peoples. Through respectful relationships we will work for the mutual flourishing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians.

We commit ourselves in prayer and practice to this land of Australia and its people, seeking reconciliation, unity and equity.

