



Supplementary questions: Inquiry into community safety in regional and rural communities

March 2025



Our commitment to inclusion

The Salvation Army Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet and work and pay our respect to Elders, past, present and future.

We value and include people of all cultures, languages, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and intersex status. We are committed to providing programs that are fully inclusive. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of people of all ages, particularly children. Our values are:

- Integrity
- Compassion
- Respect
- Diversity
- Collaboration

The Salvation Army is a worldwide movement known for its acceptance and unconditional love for all people. We love unconditionally, because God first loved us. The Bible says, “God so loves the world” (John 3:16, RGT). As both a church and charity, we believe all people are loved by God and are worthy of having their needs met. Everyone is welcome to find love, hope, and acceptance at The Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army Australia Territory wishes to acknowledge that members of the LGBTIQA+ community have experienced hurt and exclusion because of mixed comments and responses made in the past. The Salvation Army is committed to inclusive practice that recognises and values diversity. We are ensuring our services affirm the right to equality, fairness, and decency for all LGBTIQA+ people, rectifying all forms of discriminatory practice throughout the organisation.

We seek to partner with LGBTIQA+ people and allies to work with us to build an inclusive, accessible, and culturally safe environment in every aspect of Salvation Army organisation and services. Everyone has a right to feel safe and respected.

Learn more about our commitment to inclusion: <salvationarmy.org.au/about-us>



Answers to Supplementary Questions

Could you provide more information about how you have developed relationships with Local Courts? Can you comment on working with courts in areas that don't have a permanent/longer term magistrate/s?

The Salvation Army's local youth services in the Central Coast and Hunter region proactively and intentionally engage with magistrates, court registrars, and legal professionals. Our engagement comprises meetings, regular court visits and attendance at hearings with young people we support, to ensure we have a consistent presence within the courts. In developing relationships with courts, our aim is to:

- Provide information about our services and referral pathways; and
- Advocate for the use of and engage with Youth Justice Conferences (YJC) as an alternative to sentencing.

We are aware that there are some Children's Courts where youth workers from local services attend on the days that matters are heard. With a physical presence within the court, Magistrates can refer to youth workers if they are not aware of the local services available. This provides an initial entry point for a young person to engage with support.

The absence of a long-term magistrate

The absence of a permanent or long-term magistrate can create challenges in building solid and consistent relationships. It can result in a loss of local knowledge of services, support networks and referral processes, and creates inconsistency in case outcomes.

Other youth justice relationships

Collaboration with stakeholders including Youth Justice NSW, Legal Aid and other frontline community services results in strong partnerships and referral pathways for young people to access community and legal support. Where there is no long-term magistrate, this collaboration is even more critical.

How do you think service provision can be focused to build the capacity of parents and carers facing hardship and disadvantage? How do you think service provision should be coordinated?

Community-led responses which address community need and programs targeting the root causes of offending – including the provision of holistic family support – outlined in Chapters 3 and 5 of our submission, are essential in youth justice service reform. The Salvation Army points to the following as critical for effective service provision in building the capacity of parents and carers facing hardship and disadvantage:

- **Integrated service responses that meet the needs of the whole family.** In our experience, disconnected and siloed service systems, where therapists, programs and services take different approaches and have little or no communication with each other, significantly reduces the quality of care. Families and carers can become overwhelmed and disengage, especially those who face additional barriers to support. We suggest that integrated responses can be bolstered by:
 - Funding services to work collaboratively with each other to promote holistic support, enable effective warm referrals and improve quality of care provision. We see the benefit of multiagency approaches that include social workers, youth justice, health and mental health, education, parenting and cultural supports.

- Embedding specialist services. Families experiencing disadvantage are more likely to access services when they are co-located.¹ For example, youth support services being situated alongside parenting workshops in a community centre that also provides emergency relief. Providing easy access to a range of services where children and families gather improves engagement and supports integration.
- **Funding flexible service delivery.** In our experience, a lack of flexibility complicates access to services due to a lack of appropriate service and program availability. For example, many parents and carers work during standard business hours. Our services also report that families may be unable to access supports due to public transport limitations, financial hardship, or other caring responsibilities.
 - To ensure all families have access to the benefits that support services provide, we call for funding that allows for the delivery of flexible service options. This must include increased operational funding to allow programs to be facilitated outside of standard business hours, and funding to make information, education and support available and accessible in a range of different formats including online, face-to-face, and over the phone.
 - We also suggest funding be provided to mobile outreach programs which can offer specialist support in the home, or which can move between locations. This could include programs that offer home visits for parents or carers by health professionals (prenatal and from birth) and caseworkers, or travelling community centres that provide support around childhood development, offer cultural groups and opportunities for community connection.
- **Considering the needs of priority cohorts.** Specific reforms are required to ensure services are accessible and inclusive of parents and carers from priority cohorts – including but not limited to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, and LGBTIQ+ communities, and families with an experience of disability, family and domestic violence, and financial hardship. When working with priority cohorts, we stress the need to invest in community-led responses and initiatives, the wide development and distribution of appropriate information and resources, and enhanced cultural competencies of the wider sector workforce.
- **Leveraging local expertise and leadership.** We see in some communities a distrust of government services. In implementing services for parents, families and carers, resourcing existing local services such as those provided by the not-for-profit sector and leveraging existing community leaders and Elders is critical.
- **Alleviating financial hardship.** Experiences of financial hardship and distress has a corrosive impact on families and can impact the actions and choices made by parents and carers. To prevent the impacts of raising children in poverty, we identify the need for the New South Wales Government work with the Commonwealth Government to meaningfully increase the rate of income support payments.
- **Diversifying educational opportunities.** Our services suggest that educational opportunities such school holiday immersion camps for children and their parents or carers could be beneficial in encouraging connection and incorporating living skills and capacity building for the whole family unit.

¹ Centre for Policy Development. (2021). Starting Better Report. <https://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CPD-Starting-BetterReport.pdf>.



Conclusion

The Salvation Army thanks the New South Wales Government's Committee on Law and Safety for the opportunity to provide answers to the supplementary questions arising from the public hearing for this inquiry.

The Salvation Army would welcome any further queries concerning the content of this supplementary submission should any further information be of assistance. Further information can be sought from [REDACTED]