

salvos

magazine

Pathways to hope

A helping hand
through the
cost-of-living
squeeze



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FEATURE

The need
for social
connection

FAITH TALK

Tower of
strength

MY STORY

Back from
the darkness

*"The whole world is a series
of miracles, but we're so
used to them we call them
ordinary things."*

- Hans Christian Anderson





The Salvation Army is about giving hope where it's needed most.

What is The Salvation Army?

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church.

Vision Statement

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.

Mission Statement

The Salvation Army is a Christian movement dedicated to sharing the love of Jesus by:

- Caring for people
- Creating faith pathways
- Building healthy communities
- Working for justice



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.

Salvos Magazine

Founders William and Catherine Booth

Salvation Army World Leaders

General Lyndon and Commissioner Bronwyn Buckingham

Territorial Leader Commissioner Miriam Gluyas

Secretary for Communications and Editor-In-Chief

Colonel Rodney Walters

Publications Manager Cheryl Tinker

Editor Simone Worthing

Graphic Designer Ryan Harrison

Enquiry email publications@salvationarmy.org.au

All other Salvation Army enquiries 13 72 58

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Hidden impacts

We all know too well about the cost-of-living crisis. Most of us experience and live it, to varying degrees, every day.

What we don't always hear about is the loneliness and social isolation that often comes with financial hardship and housing instability. But it's real. And it heavily impacts a person's mental, physical and spiritual health when they don't have the social connections that, as humans, we all need.

Our feature this week includes snapshots of how the Salvos are helping those struggling financially, as well as advocating for those impacted by loneliness. We also suggest ways anyone can reach out for help and assist those who are struggling, too.

Michelle Gibson writes about her role as a flying chaplain for the Salvos, and how grateful she is for air-traffic controllers – the “unseen” people in the airport who keep her safe. She likens them to God and how we can't see him, but we know he is there, with our best interests at heart.

For these stories and more, check out salvosonline.org.au

Simone Worthing **Editor**

Pathways to hope

A helping hand through the cost-of-living squeeze

Over the coming weeks, *Salvos Magazine* will feature Salvation Army research, and the difference its services are making, in four key areas: cost of living, housing and homelessness, food insecurity and financial hardship.

OVERVIEW

It's not news that Australians are facing a cost-of-living crisis. It is becoming increasingly difficult to afford the rising cost of housing, food, utilities and fuel. Some are resorting to their savings or using credit cards to manage budget pressures.



However, those with limited resources have fewer choices. People experiencing financial hardship and disadvantage are disproportionately impacted by the surge in living costs. Low-income households, with fewer disposable funds, struggle to manage price rises, even for basic essentials. Many are at a financial breaking point and unable to cope.

The Salvation Army's Research and Outcomes Measurement team conducts research each year to better understand

the experiences of the people we serve. The 2023-24 research project examined the financial circumstances, cost-of-living pressures, housing situations, life challenges, and aspects of health and wellbeing of more than 1500 community members who had accessed assistance from our emergency relief services in the past year.

The Red Shield Report 2024, on which this series is based, outlines the key findings from the research project, providing valuable insights into the lives and circumstances of many vulnerable households.

Many respondents found themselves at financial breaking point, reporting they would not have managed financially if it was not for the support they received from the Salvos. This life of uncertainty and financial stress is no way for people to live. The findings in this report highlight the wide range of challenges and difficulties many people encounter when dealing with immediate hardships and enduring poverty.

It also serves as a reminder of the resilience people demonstrate when faced with adversity, and the importance of fostering hope and pathways toward financial security and stability.

To access the Red Shield Report 2024, go to salvationarmy.org.au/red-shield-appeal/report-24/

Living costs



94%

found it difficult to afford essential living costs such as housing, groceries, medical care and utilities – 10 percentage point increase compared to research findings two years ago.

98%

reported an increase in their household expenses in the past year, such as the cost of groceries, fuel, utilities, housing or health.



How the Salvos help

2022/23FY



The Salvos distributed nearly **\$25 million** in financial assistance to people in need, including gift cards, vouchers, food parcels and assistance with household bills.



The Salvos provided nearly **13,000 people** with financial counselling.

2023

Salvos Doorways Emergency Relief and Community Services:



Assisted nearly 100,000 people due to financial issues such as difficulties meeting unexpected expenses and the increase in basic living costs.



More than six in 10 (**63%**) **sessions of care** were provided due to financial issues.



Scan here for more information on Salvation Army Financial Services.

Five minutes of social justice – Social isolation and loneliness

Social justice means different things to different people, but it generally includes the idea of a fair and equitable society.

In Australia, social justice challenges are multifaceted. Some of the issues we face are huge and will take effort to fix, but all of them can be improved.

Social isolation and loneliness have been issues in Australia for many years and were only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies show that 55 per cent of Australians have experienced loneliness since the start of the pandemic in 2020 (bit.ly/4cOxslM).

Disadvantage also contributes to social isolation and loneliness. For example, a person experiencing poverty may find it difficult to join in on social events, or those caught in addiction may withdraw due to shame.

GOT FIVE MINUTES?

- ReachOut Australia (bit.ly/4cOx-GcC), which focuses on mental health and wellbeing for young people, is a place where youth can express themselves, get a deeper understanding and perspective on what's happening in their lives, connect with people who will provide judgment-free support, and build the resilience to manage their challenges. The site also provides a quick list of 11 things to do if you're feeling lonely and allows people to 'check in' with feelings of loneliness and realise they are not alone.

WANT TO DIG DEEPER?

- As a community, we are in the driver's seat for addressing social isolation and loneliness. This might involve dedicated outreach to attract more participants to events or activities, or checking in and building deeper connections with currently active members.
- As individuals, we can be open to building connections with new people – even with a wave, a smile or a 'hello'. Check out the information, resources and ideas at the Ending Loneliness Together site (see QR code below) including tipsheets on identifying and responding to loneliness, and calls to action.



Scan here to access the Ending Loneliness Together site.

The significance of social connection

New report focuses on loneliness and isolation

By Anthony Castle

The Salvation Army has drawn upon the experiences of its churches and social services for a new inquiry into loneliness and social isolation in the ACT.

The inquiry, from the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, is considering social isolation in the nation's capital.

"We consulted with people on the front-line to learn from lived experience," explains Jaimie Jones, a Policy and Advocacy Advisor with the Salvos. "We consulted with corps officers (pastors), with alcohol and other drug services, with youth homelessness services, Doorways (emergency relief) and the No-Interest Loans team. We drew on data from our online records and the research team."

The submission focused on those groups of people experiencing the most disadvantage during the cost-of-living crisis.

"Our Moneycare services noticed that people were diverting money for social activities towards paying off debts, which was leading to decreased social engagement," Jaimie says. "It has an impact on health and wellbeing. If you're under financial pressure, it's one of the first things people do: put the social spending onto the mortgage and food budget. Now Moneycare has introduced social inclusion funds into budget discussions."

COST OF LIVING AND ISOLATION

Jennifer Kirkaldy, The Salvation Army's General Manager of Policy and Advocacy, presented a statement at the inquiry's public hearing that highlighted the connection between the cost of living and isolation.

"If you cannot afford rent and groceries, you cannot afford a cup of coffee with a friend," Jennifer said. "If you are homeless, the stigma and discrimination make maintaining connections extremely difficult, and, of course, isolation is one of the devastating hallmarks of family violence."

“

Loneliness has significant impacts on health and wellbeing ...

”

The Salvos serve Canberra through their churches and a range of social supports. The inquiry particularly sought to consider the experiences of seniors, young people, people with disabilities, parents, carers, the LGBTIQ+ community, and recently arrived migrants and refugees.

Loneliness has significant impacts on health and wellbeing and can be a recurring theme for the people The Salvation

"I couldn't even shout a friend a cup of coffee. It was easier to stay home as much as possible, so I didn't spend any money. It [the jobseeker payment] cut me off from my friends and family."
Maria - community member

"Of all the services we provided, people needed things like financial support, but people also needed to talk. We could give them a welfare card, and a blanket, but the companionship, it was about what was really in their heart or on their mind."
- Salvation Army officer (pastor).

Army works alongside. Disadvantage can push people to the margins or cause them to withdraw from their community.

MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT

"There's a club for anything you can imagine in Canberra, but there's still difficulty in people getting access to them," explains Josh Gani, Senior Policy and Advocacy Advisor. "Sometimes it's hard to access social connection. It can lead to significant mental ill-health. It can be extremely hard to escape, with physical health complications, social economic disadvantage and further barriers."

The Salvation Army's submission states that everyone has a role to play in addressing social isolation in the ACT, including individuals, community groups and the government. The Salvation Army has made 22 recommendations in its submission, from increasing Jobseeker payments and social housing

to increased funding for no-interest loan schemes, improved public transport, action on family and domestic violence, and meaningful collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"Social connection to other human beings is as much a part of a healthy human life as having access to food and shelter," explains Josh. "Loneliness and social isolation can also lead to a real deterioration in someone's quality of life. Human connection is a foundational part of someone's life, and the Salvos care for the whole person. All people should have access to love, care and support."



Scan here for more information on Salvation Army services.

Tower of strength

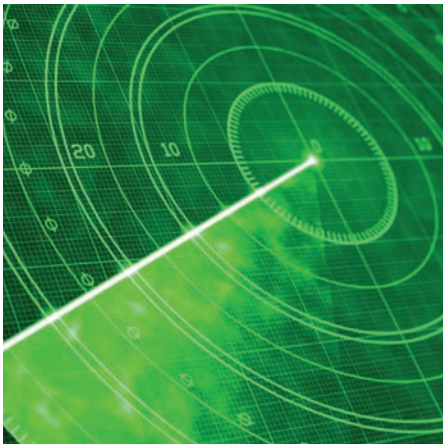
The unseen eyes keeping us on the radar

By Michelle Gibson

Living in Katherine, Northern Territory, I've flown in and out of Darwin International Airport many times – but never in The Salvation Army's small Cessna 182 ... until recently.

My husband Niall and I are the Salvos' Rural and Remote Chaplains, based in Katherine, 300km south of Darwin, and we were ready to fly home. So, there we were, in the little Cessna, lined up on the taxiway with small planes, a commercial plane and a huge RAAF plane.

The control tower advised us that the military planes would be prioritised as they were participating in an exercise. So, the huge plane went, then a small plane, then the big commercial one, until we were alone. We were told to wait three minutes for the wake turbulence from the commercial plane to disappear before venturing onto the huge runway.



Niall has had his Private Pilot Licence for quite a few years, and I have flown in and out of many airports and small remote airstrips with him. However, I don't think I have ever felt as small and insignificant as I did that day, sitting on that huge runway. It was scary!

When Niall first started flying, we lived in Albany, Western Australia. I was always comforted when he'd make a radio call and we heard back, "Albany Aerodrome". This meant that no other planes had made a call in the last five minutes; we were on our own and could land safely.

These days, we fly in and out of a small airstrip not far from an Air Force base. Sometimes they are 'active' so the person in the tower gives us instructions. Other times, when they are not active, we listen to the radio calls from other planes to help us navigate when it is safe to land. We often say that although it's a bit of a nuisance to wait for clearance to take off and land, it really is safer when the person in the tower controls where planes are.

So, returning to sitting on Darwin's huge runway, the tower knew where we were. I couldn't see the air traffic controller. I couldn't even see the tower, but I could trust the person to tell us when it was safe to go.

As we left the airport, they had us on their radar until we had left the controlled air space. We might have only been a dot on their screen, but they



Majors Michelle and Niall Gibson are Rural and Remote Chaplains, based in Katherine, NT.

knew where we were and where any other planes were too.

Thinking on this later, I thought about how trusting this unseen person is like trusting God. God is like the air traffic controller. We can't see him, but we know he's there. The person in the tower is focused on our best interest and that of all the other planes in the area. We are more than a dot on the screen. We are people who need to be kept safe. God, too, has our best interests at heart. We are important to him.

“

**We can't see him, but
we know he's there.**

”

Sometimes, when there is an Air Force exercise, we cannot fly directly to the places we visit for our work. Once, when

we were going to a place almost directly west of Katherine, we had to fly north, west, and then south to avoid the big Air Force jets.

There's a Bible verse that says, "We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps" (Proverbs chapter 16, verse 9 *New Living Translation*). We might decide to do this or that, but if we trust God, he might advise us to go a different, safer way – his way.

I thank God that when I am in situations that make me nervous, he is my strong tower (Psalm 62, verse 2), watching over my every move.

Majors Michelle and Niall Gibson are Salvation Army officers living on the lands of the Jawoyn, Dagoman and Wardaman peoples, Katherine.



Scan here for more stories of hope.

Back from the darkness

Bridget's life burns brightly after long-term addiction

In a room of more than 500 people, you could hear the proverbial pin drop as a remarkable young woman, Bridget Shirley, shared her journey through anorexia, addiction, mental ill-health and homelessness at the Brisbane launch of the Red Shield Appeal on 3 May.

Bridget, supported by her mum, Melinda Edwards, and Bill Hunter, leader of the Salvos God's Sports Arena church, shared some of the darkest moments of her life and how the love of family and friends, connection, and God – her "higher power" – have brought her to a place of hope and a future.

Bridget's life began happily. "Basically, I had the kind of childhood you'd want," she shared. "There was Mum, Dad, brother, lots of music, lots of craft and a golden retriever!"

In high school, Bridget experienced bullying over her weight and began dieting. At 14 years of age, she was diagnosed with anorexia nervosa.

After some very dark years, Bridget finished high school and moved to Byron Bay for the party lifestyle. Increased drinking, traumatic experiences and mental ill-health resulted, before she returned home to the unconditional support and love of her mum, Melinda.

ROCK BOTTOM

"People talk about hitting rock bottom, but I'm one of those people that have to go to rock bottom and then find a basement and then find a closed-down railway and then the remains of an ancient civilisation before I might take one of the hands that's at least been reaching out to me," Bridget shared.



Bridget Shirley, second from left, shares her story on stage alongside her mother Melinda, left, Bill Hunter from the Salvos and ABC presenter Rebecca Livingstone. Photos: Roger Phillips.

"I don't do anything in half measures, that's for sure."

After a heartbreaking series of rehabilitation centres, psychiatric facilities and attempts to break the cycle, Bridget experienced yet another relapse in March 2022, ended up in hospital, and her family was called in to say their farewells. After pulling through that terrifying experience, Bridget made the personal and life-changing decision to ask for help.

“

I have my miracle ...

”

SEEKING HELP

She went through detox and graduated from the 12-week rehabilitation program at Moonyah – The Salvation Army's Brisbane Recovery Services – and found acceptance, encouragement and an extended family at God's Sports Arena. She is now 17 months sober, has qualifications in community services, facilitates recovery and boundaries groups for others experiencing AOD (alcohol and other drugs) issues and is looking forward to a hopeful and faith-filled future relying on God, her higher power.

"A miracle happened, and this beautiful young woman is now back in my life, and she has a future, and she loves life," said Melinda, who now volunteers for the Salvos.

"I started this as a conscientious type, a perfectionist, control freak lawyer – it was a wild journey," Melinda continued. "Anorexia and addiction are wild and fierce animals, and they disrupt the



Bridget gives her life back to God every day.

lives of everyday families and everyday people – every day. They don't discriminate. You cannot run. I tried that. You cannot hide. I tried that, and no matter how hard you try to fight you eventually are beaten into submission. But I sit before you today, incredibly grateful and the happiest I have ever been.

"A huge shout-out to every single person in this room who is associated with The Salvation Army ... I have my miracle ... she has come from a dark and shadowy place and is now a bright light ... and that's why I'll turn up at God's Sports Arena every Sunday and at the Streetlevel Mission (drop-in centre) on Thursday nights, and I'll make sandwiches and I'll make coffees and I'll give hugs because every single person in that room is somebody else's son or daughter."

Bridget says the The Salvation Army is there for every Australian, every day. "That's just insane to me, but wonderful!"



Scan here for more information on Salvation Army alcohol and other drugs services.

Rice pudding



Ingredients

48g short-grain rice, 2⅓ cups whole milk, 3 tbs sugar, 1½ tbs butter (save ½ tbs for the dish), 1 pinch ground cinnamon

Method

- Lightly butter the dish. Rinse rice under cold running water, then drain well.
- Combine rice and milk in a bowl and let stand for 30 minutes.
- Preheat oven to 150°C.
- Stir sugar into the rice. Pour into dish, dot with butter and sprinkle with cinnamon.
- Bake for 2½ hours, or until top is golden.



Serving suggestions: Serve with fresh berries, toasted almonds, warm cinnamon apples or whipped cream, and/or drizzle with caramel sauce.



Quick quiz

1. What is the only mammal that willingly delays sleep?
2. How long can a snail sleep for?
3. What is the sudden feeling of falling while you sleep called?
4. In which country is napping at work considered honourable?
5. What is the fear of falling asleep called?
6. Which animals hold hands when they sleep so they don't drift away from each other?

Bible byte

"In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety."

Psalm 4 verse 8
New International Version

Tum-Tum

On which page of this week's *Salvos Magazine* is Tum-Tum hiding?



W S T N K S D B Y B X U X N D B
 M A H R S B L O T H O F S E R L
 A B T E H H E E O E I U J S I A
 I E S O E Q I D E N D D Y W F N
 W D T F O T C V T P A D P A T K
 O S O D L T S B E I Y F Y T I E
 O P R M R A H W A R M O W E N T
 L R I P F E N B I T S E K R G Z
 L E E J K O A N R N H F V W P C
 E A S L X L N M E U T V G O I U
 N D K I L A X E I L S E F W L D
 N P M F N A V R S N E H R F L D
 G O O D N I G H T I G T S V O L
 S B S N U G G L Y N E T T S W E
 X Z T K H P Y J A M A S Z E G S
 G S L E E P I N G O X E D V K Y

Wordsearch

Words are hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, forwards and backwards. Enjoy!

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| Bath | Pyjamas |
| Bedspread | Sheets |
| Bedtime | Shivers |
| Blanket | Sleeping |
| Cuddles | Sleepy |
| Doona | Snuggly |
| Dreaming | Stories |
| Drifting | Teddy |
| Flannelette | Toothbrush |
| Goodnight | Water |
| Onesie | Winter |
| Pillow | Woollen |

HAVE A LAUGH



What do you call a snoring dinosaur?
A tyrannosaurus

Why are dragons asleep during the day?
So that they can fight knights.

What should you do if you can't go to sleep?
You lie on the edge of the bed and soon you'll drop off.

WHO AM I?

I am the only mammal that can fly.

There are over 1300 species of me worldwide.

I can live for up to 30 years and fly at speeds of up to 96km per hour.

I use sound to 'see' the world around me.

I sleep for around 20 hours per day.

Quiz answers: 1. Humans 2. Three years 3. A myoclonic jerk 4. Japan 5. Somniphobia 6. Sea otters
 I am: A bat
 Turn-Turn: is hiding in the plane with Michelle and Niall on page 11.



Have you taken care of your Will?

A gift in your Will can help The Salvation Army create a long-lasting impact in the lives of those experiencing hardship.

Find out how you can start or continue your legacy of generosity. Contact The Salvation Army's Wills and Bequests team and ask for a free Wills booklet.

Together, we can give hope where it's needed most long into the future.



CONTACT US TODAY

1800 337 082 or visit
salvationarmy.org.au/wills

