

Apology By The General of the Salvation Army General Shaw Clifton

7th December 2010

I am very pleased that this gathering is taking place today.

It is a gathering I have long anticipated and I was looking forward keenly to being with you all in person for this highly significant and deeply sensitive occasion. Imagine therefore my profound disappointment on being required to undergo a few weeks ago open heart surgery for a double bypass and a replacement aortic valve.

All this has denied to me and to my wife, Commissioner Helen Clifton, the privilege of being present with you in person today. I am deeply grateful to Commissioner Barry Swanson and Commissioner Sue Swanson for agreeing to travel from London, England, to be with you all as our personal representatives. I have asked Commissioner Barry Swanson, as second in command of the Army world, to speak for me as you meet.

I send you warmest personal greetings. I record also my personal sense of deep sorrow and regret at the events of the past which are being remembered today. I know that these events are constant memories for you all and in many cases also for your loved ones. I am grateful for this opportunity to speak on behalf of The Salvation Army to men and women who were children in the care of The Salvation Army in years past. I want to thank Jim Luthy for the courage to write to me and initiate the idea that has culminated in this gathering. I acknowledge the support of CLAN (Care Leavers Australia Network) in working toward this day. The territorial leaders of The Salvation Army in Australia: Commissioner Linda Bond and Commissioner Raymond Finger are also here to show their support on this significant occasion.

Between 1894 and the early 1990's, The Salvation Army operated children's homes throughout Australia. During those years, over 30 thousand children were cared for in over 55 Salvation Army homes staffed by more than 3,000 Officers and employees. Some children were only infants, many were young teenagers. Some were with us briefly, others for their whole childhood. There were many and varied circumstances that led to these children being placed in our care.

To our great regret, some of these children did not benefit from their experience and were not well cared for by our staff. We acknowledge that at certain times in our history, the atmosphere in some homes was rigid, harsh, and authoritarian. Many children did not experience the gentleness of love that they needed. Some children suffered abuse and deprivation. As

a result their stories are full of hurt, rejection, discouragement and a failure to realise potential.

As the International Leader of The Salvation Army, I express to all Australian care leavers, our deepest sorrow for these failures and hurts. The Salvation Army offers you our heartfelt apology. To you all, we say 'Sorry.'

That greater love was not given when you were so vulnerable – we are sorry.