

RED SHIELD APPEAL 2002

OFFICIAL OPENING

Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre
Tuesday 16 April 2002, 7.15am

Chief Justice Paul de Jersey AC

Chairman, Your Excellency, Mr Premier, Minister, Mr Whittaker, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I belong to a profession which is frequently criticized. I am refreshed to speak now of an organisation which is invariably applauded!

My goal this morning is to convince you, ladies and gentlemen, community and business leaders, of your capacity to ensure the Red Shield Appeal 2002 is an unqualified success. That it should be, is axiomatic; and that will help me today, because after 17 years on the bench, my advocacy skills are a little rusty. But it's easy to speak with glowing enthusiasm of the Salvation Army's social welfare programs.

My courageous wife Kaye has spoken publicly in recent times of the effect of life threatening experiences, as to focusing the mind on what really matters. We felt that was also an immediate consequence of 11 September: I expect that realisation hasn't dimmed.

The daily fare of our host organisation's social welfare programs is very much rooted in survival itself: emergency practical relief for people facing financial crisis, 1,300 of them a day; accommodating the homeless, more than 2,250 every night; protecting disadvantaged youth, about 800 a day; relieving unemployment, with assistance to approaching 200,000 people a year; rehabilitating the addicted – more than 30,000 a year, many of them prisoners who have passed through our criminal courts; and the list goes on...

May I use this opportunity to announce that the traditional "Opening of the Law Year" church service will this year on 15 July be held, for the first time, at the Salvation Army Brisbane City Temple. We are excited about that! This service is redolent of the devotion of the Courts to the community they serve. Especially through the criminal courts, there is clear connection between our endeavours and those of the Salvation Army. We are very grateful the Army is making the City Temple available to us.

I pass for a moment to another topic. I suppose it is unsurprising that the legal profession, including the judiciary, should be blamed for the current woes of the insurance industry. We lawyers have developed thick skins, although it's not necessarily in the community's interest that they become too thick! But in response to some of the critical hype, I recently suggested, as an imperative stipulation, that in our contemporary society, innocent persons significantly

injured through the negligence of others should be fully compensated. That is, I think, a basic right, and I use it to illustrate the strikingly fundamental character of the Salvation Army's thrust.

Many of the rights primarily addressed by the social welfare programs of the Salvation Army are plainly anterior even to that one: I mention the right to personal security – especially for vulnerable youth, the right to a place even to sleep, to a job, to food on the plate, and sadly, to protection from one's own weaknesses. Who addresses those concerns?

"Thank God for the Salvos!" Unfortunately I fear that catchcry may sometimes mask a complacent unpreparedness to come to grips with what the Salvation Army daily does, how it really does provide much of the cement which holds things together.

Maintaining current programs for the year 2002 to 2003 in the Eastern Territory – which is Queensland, New South Wales and the ACT, will cost \$163.2 million. Allowing for government grants, client contributions and institutional fundraising, \$29.5 million of that will still have to be found. Nationwide \$52.5 million must be found. That defines the goal of this appeal.

I have discerned some similarity in process, you might think rather unusually, between the courts of law, and the Salvation Army's social welfare thrust. Each is concerned very much with the individual person.

What has through my now 31 years' legal experience, particularly, and essentially, impressed me about the courts of law, is our abiding concern for the individual person. We are not in the courts concerned with legislative or executive generalities or abstractions! The individual person, before us, is the focus of all intellectual and emotional force. One who rose to international heights, J F Kennedy, once said that "the poor man charged with crime has no lobby". But in our courts of law, he or she is undoubtedly our only concern. For the other arms of government, he or she is but the representative of others. Those other arms of government are, we accept, deeply concerned with the betterment of the people. Ours is instrumentally focused on the welfare of the individual.

Likewise, undoubtedly, the Salvation Army! But what shouldn't be overlooked is that by its relief of the individual, the Salvation Army concurrently, and necessarily, serves the overall community very well. The community as a whole is diminished by the distress of its individual members: it is enhanced by their restoration to full function.

I hope, ladies and gentlemen, you are all recalling the critically important nature of the work this appeal will secure. If weren't for the Salvation Army's

embracing this responsibility, our society would frankly be put at risk – one need only recall the nature and extent of the programs to accept that.

The money sought through the appeal will not come from any other source...and neither should it! There is surely, in our community, sufficient capacity for philanthropy and financial support for our fellow citizens, that we should not be driven to demanding that executive government provide the lot. As well as our own contributions helping those we should naturally support, the act of contributing is, in itself, personally ennobling.

I urge you, ladies and gentlemen, to assist the campaign, and to seek to influence others to assist the campaign – to facilitate the work of an organisation which is, as I said at the outset, to be applauded in all its endeavours.

On 5th September 1880, Edward Saunders and John Gore led the first Salvation Army meeting from the tailgate of a greengrocer's cart in Adelaide's Botanic Park. When Gore said: "If there's a man here who hasn't had a square meal today, let him come home to tea with me", he was identifying the Army's concern for both a person's soul and body. The contemporary approach is comprehensive, as we know, but it is based on the same fundamental human concern, in this Christian context. The 2002 publicity campaign uses the phrase, "Help the Salvos shield those in need". That, my fellow Queenslanders, is what I must respectfully urge you to do.