

Red Shield Appeal Launch
6 May 2014

Greetings

1. Deputy Mayor, Councillor Tony Williams,
2. Councillor Rose Swadling
3. Member for Capricornia Ms Michelle Landry, MP
4. The Salvation Army Divisional Secretary, Central and North Queensland Division, Major Neil Dickson and colleagues Major Kelvin Pethybridge and Major Cheralynne Pethybridge,
5. Red Shield Business Appeal Chairman, Capricorn Region, Mr Andrew Broadfoot and fellow Committee Members: Mr Jeff Carlos, Mr Gerard Houlihan, Mr Ian Mill and Mr Mark Shore, Ms Vicki Bastin Byrne, Ms Helen Schweikert
6. Leaders and Members of the Rockhampton and Capricorn Region business community,
7. Sponsors,
8. Student Representative Daniel Mellish
9. Ladies and Gentlemen, Students,
10. I wish you all a very good morning and thank you for getting up so early to join us for this special occasion.
11. Thank you, also, Mark (Shore) as MC, for that warm introduction.

Speech

12. Good morning ladies and gentlemen. As you have just heard I am a lawyer. A 19th century French philosopher once said that “the law in its majestic equality forbids all men to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets and to steal bread, the rich as well as the poor”. We are here this morning to answer a call to meet the needs of those who do sleep under bridges, beg in the streets and sometimes steal bread.
13. You are mostly business people and I am here to ask you for money. This isn't a promising start to any speech. Remember that most of us started out with nothing and we still have most of that. Although you might feel like death so early in the morning hopefully you are well short of the French philosopher who said “I owe much, I have nothing, the rest I leave to the poor”.

14. And I know that you don't consider yourselves wealthy but you might recall that "wealthy" is defined as an income a \$100 a year more than your wife's sister's husband's income. As for the husbands here statistics show that women spend 85% of the family budget, children 15% and the husband the rest. So, I hope the wives and children are here.
15. We have support from the rural community of course. The business folk should not think that their obligations are any lighter because of it. I made that mistake. When I married my wife I thought she said that her father owned the farm but it turned out he owed the farm. It is said that of the three easiest ways to lose money racing horses is the quickest, women the most pleasant and farming the most certain.
16. We have some accountants here. Bless them. When I asked my accountant if anything could get me out of the mess I was in she thought for a long time and eventually said: "Yes, death would help."
17. Speaking of death there are some doctors here. Mark Twain said of a doctor "He has been a doctor a year now, and has had two patients, no three, I think – yes, three. I went to their funerals." One of those here I know has been a doctor for 38 years now. Lot of funerals. We have a few lawyers here too. An American lawyer was called on to cross examine his old friend the town doctor. They knew each other very well but the lawyer had to paint his friend in a bad light. So he asked him: "Mrs Smith was your patient was she not? Yes she was. How is she now? Dead. And Mr Jones, was he your patient? Yes he was. And how is he? Dead. And so on.
18. It is said that a lawyer is a learned gentlemen who rescues your estate from your enemies and keeps it for himself. I of course am a lawyer. It is said of lawyer jokes that lawyers don't think they are funny and their clients don't think they are jokes.
19. A few in this room know me well. They are in the organising committee. That's why I'm here giving this speech. Most of you don't know me at all. For the latter group, I came here nearly 37 years ago in 1977. I had borrowed money to acquire a car, packed my few belongings into a suitcase and headed off from Brisbane incidentally, at least that was what I thought at the time, giving a lift to a pretty young lady whom I had met only two weeks before at a cousin's home. She turned out to be my wife of the last 33 years and more.

20. I have to thank the Salvation Army for that fortuitous occurrence. They are responsible for my wife's conception or at least the timing of it.
21. Why blame the salvos for her conception? In 1957 my wife's parents were newly married. Liz' dad Tom was a builder. He had decided to seek his fortune in Papua New Guinea. I am not sure that the fortune ever materialised but at this time it certainly had not. The salvos were making their initial foray into New Guinea. Major Keith Baker was in charge. He asked Tom, then young and no doubt keen to help, to construct the salvos first home in Port Moresby. Part of the arrangement included the young couple being provided with accommodation. So as Tom built he provided a place for he and his bride to live. Of course they shared that accommodation with Major Baker and several others. A blanket was hung to separate their bed from their nearest neighbour. Each morning Major Baker would throw the blanket aside and clap his hands for all to attend to morning prayers and the like.
22. While most of us can barely remember what it is like to be 18 and newly married as was Liz' mother Ruth then, the presence of Major Baker on the other side of the curtain had a certain calming effect, if not a chilling effect, on the newly weds. Liz was conceived only after the building was finished.
23. So life is full of accidents, some good, some bad. Had my wife been born a month or two before she would not have been at my cousin's home at lunch that day we met. And but for the salvos my wife should have been born months before she was. Had I not met my wife and given her that lift I would not have stayed in Central Queensland. So I wouldn't be here but for Major Baker. And you would have been spared this speech.
24. I am a judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland. I spend a good deal of my life dealing with those charged with crimes. Usually murder or at least homicides. And trafficking in drugs. In asking me to speak today the organising committee thought that I might give you some insights into my world and specifically the impact of drugs as I see it in my daily work. Drugs are a big part of the work of the Salvation Army too. Drugs destroy families and they destroy lives. The salvos pick up the pieces.
25. First a few facts to give you an idea of the scope of the problem. I put to one side alcohol which is always a problem. It is said that there are two reasons for

drinking. One is when you are thirsty, to cure it. The other is when you are not thirsty, to prevent it.

26. Amphetamines, cannabis and ecstasy are the problem drugs.
27. The 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS) indicated that 7 percent of Australians aged 14 years and over had 'ever' used amphetamines/methamphetamines (AIHW 2011). The population of Rockhampton and surrounds – the old R'ton Regional Council area - is about 120,000. That's 8,400 users of amphetamines at least once, in our district taken as an average.
28. The Survey showed that use of amphetamines was most common in the 20–29 year old age group, with 5.9 percent reporting use in the 'preceding 12 months'. These figures made amphetamines the third most common illicit drug used in the Australian community in 2010, behind cannabis (10.3%) and ecstasy (3.0%) (AIHW 2011).
29. The Amphetamines in Queensland (AIQ) project examined the views and experiences of 665 amphetamine users in both rural and urban Queensland (Lynch, Kemp, Krenske, Conroy & Webster 2003). The majority of respondents (54.4%) described their use as 'recreational', whereas 20.8 percent reported being 'binge' users, and 13.3 percent described themselves as 'dependent' (Lynch et al. 2003). Translated to our area and again on the averages that's over 1000 dependent users of amphetamines. It has been found unsurprisingly that dependent users were more likely than the general population to experience mental health problems that resulted in moderate to severe disability. (Lynch et al. 2003).
30. In the court last month a young man was convicted by a jury of murdering his 17 year old girl friend. He cut her throat. He did so, he said, at her request. At the time of the act his mind was not deranged by drugs or alcohol. But he had been a regular user of drugs from a young age. As had she. The drugs included amphetamines and cannabis.
31. The month before that at Bundaberg a man was on trial for stabbing and killing his girlfriend of many years. He was convicted of murder. He argued that he was so intoxicated that he could not form the intent to kill. They had been taking drugs – amphetamines amongst others - and drinking alcohol all day and into the night. They had a fight. He couldn't remember what it was about. Her father said that the murderer had, until then, been like a son to him.

32. Some of you – perhaps many of you - will recall this case. In 2006 at Cawarral not so far from here, a 19 year old killed his father and step mother. He shot them as they each came home from work. He stuffed their bodies in an old disused mine shaft. Not long before the murders he had had sufficiently serious problems with drugs to have been hospitalised shortly before being brought home by his father presumably to help him dry out. The prosecution theory was that he objected to his father restricting his access to drugs and so killed him. He had taken cannabis from early teenage hood. His parents were very widely respected, a perfectly normal couple.
33. It is not just the deranging effect on the mind of taking the drugs that is the concern, although that is bad enough. Drugs corrupt.
34. The vast majority of those who come before the courts are not hardened criminals. The 8000 or so youths in and around Rockhampton who on average have tried amphetamines are not criminals as you and I understand that term. But they are breaking the law and they can so easily end up in the dock.
35. Overall there were 22 pleas of guilty in the Supreme Court in Rockhampton in 2012 -13 cf. 34 the year before. They were all drug related convictions. Don't feel good about the significant drop in numbers – the government moved the lesser drug cases to the District Court. There were 163 guilty pleas there, not all drugs directly but up 53% on the previous year.
36. By way of example a few weeks ago a 25 year old male pleaded guilty here in Rockhampton to trafficking in multiple drugs including methylamphetamines, cannabis and ecstasy. His parents had separated when he was young. He grew up in a home where his mother used drugs regularly as did her many boyfriends. By 14 he was using cannabis regularly. He left school at 15. By 21 he had graduated to LSD and amphetamines. Ironically his use had escalated as he coped with his mother dying of cancer. He trafficked to feed his habit as well as to live when work ran out. As he stood in the dock his female partner came into court carrying a baby in her arms – his child born three weeks before and whom he had not seen until that moment as he had been held on remand.
37. In almost every case the story is the same – broken homes and early drug use. I sometimes wonder what those parents that I hear about every day, the ones who weren't there when the drug users were young and who are now criminals facing

gaol time, would have given to have prevented that future coming to be? The ones who care, would, I suspect give a great deal.

38. Those in this room are the fortunate ones. One joke that is told of the salvos is of a soup kitchen where food was being given out to the needy and some of the needy were taking their time about it and the night grew late. Eventually exasperated one of the helpers said “come on fellows, some of us have homes to go to”. Well you all have homes to go to, food on your table, and probably drink! By and large you have good health and good luck on your side. I don’t expect to see you ever in my court room. But I will see others, mostly who have taken a wrong turn along the way.
39. The majority of those convicted were in their 20s. Many were young parents, some with babies in their arms. They had all made bad choices. Not only are there lives ruined and those that depended upon them, but this impacts on us too – every day in court costs something like \$20,000. Every prisoner costs something like \$75,000 a year to house. Every abandoned mother and child is likely to need welfare. All involving money much better spent in a hundred ways. So this costs every one of us.
40. Fortunately few of us have the tragedy of having a daughter killed by her lover. But every one of us knows a family touched by drug use. I have had the children of politicians and prominent business men before me in the dock. The problem is not one for the others to worry about whoever they might be – it is a personal one for each of us.
41. Well what can we do?
42. One thing we can do is support those ready to give up their lives and their energies to pick up the pieces. And not only pick up the pieces but better still prevent these events occurring.
43. Not all of us can thank the Salvos for our partners in life, as I can. But we can all thank them for the society in which we are so lucky to live. It is sometimes forgotten just how wide is the net, the safety net, that the Salvation Army puts in place to assist those who are weary, weak and worn by time and fate. Whether you are unlucky, unfortunate, under privileged and unknown. The forgotten the downtrodden, the homeless and the starving can all find a place in the Salvation Army home. Their activities cover lost children, lost youths, lost partners.

Gamblers, drinkers, the aged, those in financial trouble, and the victims of violence whether at the hands of man or of nature are their clients.

44. You are mostly business people. And you business folk think about balance sheets, efficiencies, costs and rewards. You know the importance of money. And you like to make sure that it is well spent. Well you know it will be well spent here. Our target in Central Queensland is \$250,000. And the help will be practical, intensely practical. Last year over 1100 families or individuals were helped by the Salvation Army. We all know of the aged care facility the army operates at Bethesda. But did you know that 550 job placements were secured by them. A youth engagement program was conducted. A half way house was provided for prisoners making their way back into society. There is an addiction recovery programme conducted in Townsville and Brisbane. Chaplaincy services were provided for the rural community, and for prisoners and their families. The salvos operate a 24 hour careline and a family tracing service for tracking missing persons. Family stores, financial counselling for those in desperate straits, referral services to expert agencies are all provided. All this achieved on what is really a shoe string.
45. For 127 years the salvation army has lived up to its mission of 'serving suffering humanity' here in Central Queensland. With our help they will be here for another 127 years when we are but dust.
46. Once a year the Salvos ask us to remember that not everyone is as lucky as we are. Once a year they remind us that we can make a difference. By supporting them in their work - work we all agree with; work that is direct, life changing for some, life saving for some, work that costs us so little and which we are rich enough to afford.
47. I know that there are many deserving causes and many worthy organisations to which you could commit your support and donate your time and funds. For most Australians, however, this annual Red Shield Appeal seems to have claimed a place as one of the very best.
48. The officers of the Salvation Army have our respect, they have our affection, but what they need most of all is our money. Dig deep and "trust the salvos".