9 June 2011

Mr Edward O’Donohue MLC
Chairperson
Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

charter.review@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr O’Donohue,

**Re: Submission to the Inquiry into the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities**

I am writing to you on behalf of The Salvation Army’s Victoria State Council, which is a forum representing leadership from each of the four Victorian Divisions (Melbourne Central, Eastern Victoria, Western Victoria and Northern Victoria).

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee (Committee) into Victoria’s Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (Charter). Consistent with our values of human dignity, justice, hope, compassion and community, The Salvation Army is also committed to the promotion and protection of human rights.

I write to endorse our submission to the Committee as part of the Victorian Council of Churches.

The Salvation Army is a worldwide Christian movement. In Australia, we are also one of this nation’s largest providers of welfare services, including homelessness services. We are dedicated to helping Australians in crisis. Our mission is to:

- Transform Lives
- Care for People
- Make Disciples
- Reform Society.

The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory (AUS) includes over 300 centres that provide community services and social programs through networks of Salvation Army Churches, Community Centres and Social Service Networks located throughout Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Tasmania.

The Salvation Army (AUS) provides supported accommodation and specialist services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness from over 30 specialist homelessness service centres. This includes extending care to over 5,000 homeless people each day. Salvation Army (AUS) youth services support more than 12,000 young people each year and accommodate more than 1,000 young people each night in its housing programs. Key services to people experiencing homelessness include:
- Crisis accommodation
- Transitional accommodation
- Long-term housing
- Accommodation and support for women and children escaping domestic and family violence
- Personal counselling and support
- Support with drug and alcohol issues
- Support with co-morbidity issues
- Life skills development
- Material aid and Emergency Relief
- Education, training and employment support.

The Salvation Army’s key points for the Committee

The Salvation Army undertook a project during 2007-08 in response to the introduction of the Charter. The project included the following objectives:

- To assist The Salvation Army to determine the legal relevance of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities specific to Victorian social programmes

- To assist The Salvation Army to develop appropriate responses to the introduction of the Charter, including training and information provision for the organisation and social programmes.

The Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee may consider costs that are avoided as a result of better decision-making and processes within services providers, together with any flow-on benefits generated across the community, as components of any more comprehensive cost-benefit analyses.

Conclusion

This review of the Charter is a timely reminder of what has been achieved in just four years of operation and also provides opportunities to consolidate the wealth of experience and good work to date across the Victorian community. In particular, the ongoing opportunities under the ‘dialogue model’, will continue to see Parliament, public authorities and the courts together ensuring human rights are taken into consideration at the outset and throughout decision making processes.

The review also provides opportunities for the reinvigoration of the Charter’s implementation moving forward, with the strengthening of Charter-based education and training, improved compliance monitoring, clear legal remedy and the possible inclusion of new protections such as economic and social rights.

Should you have any queries about this letter or would like more information about our work with the Charter, please contact me by telephone on 9353 5210 or via email graeme.rigley@aus.salvationarmy.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Graeme Rigley (Major)
DIVISIONAL COMMANDER

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