

REDACTED

Ourimbah NSW 2258

5 th May 2000

To Major Colin Lingard , Public Relations Secretary, the Salvation Army.

Dear Major Lingard,

I have much appreciation for the work of "the Salvos", but one aspect of the organisation is troubling me at present.

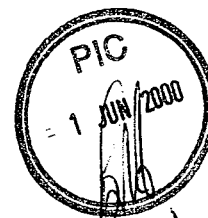
I have two very good friends, a couple, who have suffered greatly over the years as a result of the husband's experience as a child (from aged ~~two~~<sup>seven</sup> to fifteen about) in one of the Salvation Army homes, Eden Park at Mt Barker in South Australia. He does not wish to have publicity for himself, so I don't want to mention his name. I'll call him John for the purposes of this letter. You may know from other sources who he is.

He was abused over the years, emotionally, physically and sexually, by some of those in authority (S.A. officers), though he was well treated by others. The culture of abuse existed throughout the community, with the older boys mis-treating the younger ones. I won't go into the details, that is for John and his peers to do. They know what happened only too well, and have the emotional scars and nightmares as a consequence.

John has always had a clear memory of events, but has repressed them, until recently when the nightmares became so unbearable that he decided to return to Eden Park (an ironic name indeed). This as you can imagine required a deal of courage. He met the present owners who have been deeply concerned to learn the history of the house. One person there is an historian who has been involved in recording the experiences of holocaust survivors, so is able to listen to John's story with great sensitivity and understanding.

John has also spoken to a counsellor, and to an Anglican priest who contacted the S.Army, asking whether counselling or other help might be available. He was met with a strong "No". Other requests for information about John's contemporaries at Eden Park have been refused. "It's past history". No-one wants to know.

I have always understood that the Salvation Army had great expertise in finding "Missing Persons". Their bureau has re-united many distressed people with lost children or parents. I've seen TV programs on this topic in relation to adopted children. Surely with their meticulous documentation there are records that could be made available?



1) Noted  
2) Acknowledge  
3) Forward to Southern Territory

All organisations have had incidents of abuse in residential homes. The Catholic church has recently been open on this topic and has apologised publicly to those who have been harmed. The continuing disgrace is not in admitting past criminal behaviour, but in refusing to do so. Surely to refuse to acknowledge that these things went on, and doubtless not only at Eden Park, is to live a lie as an organisation? The Salvos have a fine public reputation as good people with "a mandate to help the poor" (I heard an officer say this at a Red Shield lunch I attended). Who could be emotionally poorer than an abused child in an institution?

I beg the hierarchy of the Salvation Army to consider acknowledging past harm to John as an individual, and to many other "survivors" in the community. These people could be helpful to each other, in healing and rehabilitation, with counselling and truthful dealing from the S.A.

It seems to me that these histories will come out anyway, and it would be to the S.A.'s credit that they are seen to be willing to take part in "coming clean".

Sincerely, and on behalf of a good friend,

BMM

Mrs BMM