Service Delivery Policy and Practice Guide and Resource

Housing and Homelessness Programs
July 2008
The development of this resource has been made possible through the commitment and dedication of many people. On behalf of the Victoria State Council, I would like to thank the people who gave their time, energy, commitment and support to this initiative.

Many of these people are our program staff, who not only have the important responsibility of ensuring the delivery of high-quality services to consumers, but also engaging in the multiple streams of sector reform as part of the pursuit to improve service standards and outcomes for consumers.

Thanks are also extended to the Australia Southern Territory – Territorial Social Policy and Resource Unit for their guidance, support and dedication, not only in the development of this resource but also for their support of the Victoria State Council and our program providers.

The purpose of this resource is to assist housing and homelessness programs to reflect and further improve on good practice and policy.

I would encourage you to utilise this resource as a Continuous Quality Improvement tool, and thus complement, existing policy and practice program procedures.

Major Rodney Barnard

Chairperson

Victoria State Council (VSC)
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Acronyms
CALD   Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CHP    Council to Homeless Persons (Victoria)
CQI    Continuous Quality Improvement
DHS    Department of Human Services (Victoria)
DV     Domestic Violence
FV     Family Violence
HAS    Homelessness Advocacy Service
HASS   Homelessness Assistance Service Standards
HEF    Housing Establishment Fund
HIR    Housing Information Referral Worker
HR     Human Resources
NCHS   National Community Housing Standards 2003
OHR    Office of the Housing Registrar
OoH    Office of Housing
OSH    Occupational Safety and Health
PESP   Peer Education Support Program
QICSA  Quality Improvement and Community Services Accreditation
RTA    Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (with amendments)
SAAP   Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SAMIS  Salvation Army Management Information Systems
SMART  Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Time-tabled
TSA    The Salvation Army
TSPRU  Territorial Social Policy and Resource Unit
VHS    Victorian Homelessness Strategy
VSC    Victoria State Council
TTY    Text Telephone / Telephone Typewriter
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quality
The adoption of a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) framework is a strategic direction by The Salvation Army. This ensures the mission, vision and values underpin all service activities and that the inputs and processes applied to The Salvation Army’s operations deliver the outcomes envisaged.

The Salvation Army endeavours to provide services of excellence and so to be driven by values that help build an organisational culture consistent with:

- **The articulation of values, measures and monitoring systems against agreed standards**
- **A focus on the delivery of quality service outcomes**
- **The promotion of consumer participation within the service delivery context.**
- **An organisational culture that promotes a safe and respectful environment for employees, volunteers and consumers.**

It is within and through a CQI framework that this document and the guidance it provides have been developed and exist. It is therefore important in making the most of the resources and guidance provided through this document to have an understanding of the core principles of effective CQI practice and what distinguishes CQI from other quality-related concepts and approaches.
In community sector workplaces there is a longstanding familiarity with quality control activities relating to certification, such as safety inspections and safety certificates. More recently, programs have found themselves engaging with the demands of quality assurance initiatives, requiring programs in various areas to meet certain levels of defined standards. Continuous Quality Improvement goes beyond that approach through applying a systematic approach with the objective of continuing to improve beyond those levels on an ongoing basis.

If a system is a set of interacting or interdependent entities, real or abstract, that form an integrated whole, then systems theory concerns the framework by which one can analyse and/or describe any group of objects that work in concert to produce a result.

A workplace system might be conceptualised thus:

The “Plan — Do — Check — Act” sequence, represented opposite, is a popular reference point when approaching the systematic focus of CQI.

The three questions which need to be answered are:
1. What are we trying to accomplish?
2. How will we know that a change is an improvement?
3. What changes can we make that will result in an improvement?

Adapted from New South Wales Health Department 2001
The significance of ‘records’ is a key distinction between a workplace system and other systems. Further key considerations when looking at a system include:

- **Purpose**
- **Guiding documents**
- **Assigned responsibility**
- **How people know and understand their role**
- **Monitoring of the system**
- **Evaluation of the system**.

While the above provides an outline of what might constitute a systematic approach, in CQI discussions ‘system’ often refers to a higher order purpose as opposed to, for example, a ‘process’.

**System ➔ Sub System ➔ Process ➔ Function**

An HR system, for example, might concern itself with the overarching aspects of getting the right people to do the job. The setting of questions for interview would be considered normally at the ‘process’ end. Higher order systems in an organisation are often concerned with high-level considerations regarding leadership, management, risk management, legal compliance, HR and financial management. However, organisations may well ‘cut’ their systems differently which may mean they will not necessarily fit immediately with set standards. Additionally, systems will relate, and need to connect with, other systems.

This is not intended as a definitive discussion on CQI. However, it provides an outline of the approach and considerations employed not only in the development of this document but the approach that is intended to permeate the guidance contained therein and the subsequent character of the development and content of The Salvation Army Programs’ policies and procedures.¹

¹ Please refer to the Appendices for an outline of the Programme Logic framework which is a key focus for The Salvation Army’s social programs in implementing a CQI-consistent strategic approach.
»HOME«
The Salvation Army emerged in London in the 1860s with a vision from God of a spiritual and social mission that were inextricably linked. The Salvation Army has its international headquarters in London. The Salvation Army in Australia is divided into two territories, the Eastern and the Southern Territories:

- **The Australia Eastern Territory**, with Territorial Headquarters based in Sydney, is comprised of New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory.

- **The Australia Southern Territory**, with Territorial Headquarters in Melbourne, is comprised of Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.
The Australia Southern Territory is comprised of four Divisions - one for each State and/or Territory, with the exception of Victoria, which is further divided into four Divisions:

- **Eastern Victoria Division**
- **Northern Victoria Division**
- **Western Victoria Division**
- **Melbourne Central Division**.

The Victoria State Council (VSC) is comprised of Salvation Army officer personnel from the four Victorian Divisions.

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**The Salvation Army - Social Justice Statement**

The Salvation Army believes that all people have been created in the image and likeness of God and have intrinsic worth.

The Salvation Army recognises that not all people share equally in the benefits of Australian society and it is imperative that options exist for those most disadvantaged.

The Salvation Army believes that the natural environment is God’s creation and should be treated with reverence. Therefore, people coming to The Salvation Army for assistance:

1. *Should be served without discrimination*
2. *Should be treated with respect so that their dignity as individuals is preserved*
3. *Should be recognised as people capable of making decisions and choices for their own lives.*

On behalf of these individuals, The Salvation Army is resolved to seek excellence in provision of service.
Purpose of this Document

The Victorian Homelessness Strategy (VHS) Action Plan and Strategic Framework: *Directions for Change*, was commissioned by the Victorian Government in 2000 to examine the State’s response to housing and homelessness. With input from the community, it was to identify actions and approaches that would improve that response.

During 2007, the Victorian Government allocated $2.1 million over three years to support a range of initiatives, including the implementation of accreditation for organisations that were providing housing, housing support and case managed housing support services.

In response to the Victorian State Government’s requirement that all programs in receipt of Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) funding comply with Victorian Homelessness Assistance Service Standards (HASS), The Salvation Army Victoria State Council (VSC) identified the need for an overarching policy and procedure document to give guidance and to promote consistency of understanding, approach and general excellence in The Salvation Army’s housing and homelessness programs across Victoria.

HASS has a specific focus on:

1. Improving responsiveness
2. Improving and developing practice consistency
3. Upholding consumers’ rights
4. Ensuring effective and transparent organisational governance and management
5. Improving and promoting effective collaboration between service providers, consumers and other stakeholders, in the pursuit of a rights-based service system that ultimately seeks to provide a quality consumer service.

This Service Delivery Policy and Practice – Guide and Resource addresses the core areas of focus or ‘standards’ of HASS. This guide and resource is intended as a broad framework to assist individual programs in assessing compliance with The Salvation Army’s corporate approach to housing and homelessness service delivery. There is a clear and highly intentional relationship with HASS. However, this guide and resource should not be referred to as a definitive guide on ‘How to do HASS’. While this guide and resource is designed to be a key support for programs in their compliance with HASS, in the first instance those programs subject to HASS accreditation must directly assess themselves against the published HASS standards and signposts. The Homelessness Assistance Service Standards are accessible via the DHS’s Office of Housing website according to the path outlined below:

Home ➔ Housing Sector Development ➔ Sector Capacity Building ➔ Standards and Accreditation ➔ Industry and Service Standards ➔ Homelessness Assistance Service Standards (HASS) Second Edition

November 2006
This Service Delivery Policy and Practice – Guide and Resource has been further cross-referenced with the requirements of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 – with amendments (RTA), Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies (Victoria) and in turn the National Community Housing Standards (NCHS). Again, however, this guide and resource should not be referred to as a definitive guide on ‘How to satisfy NCHS’ or for that matter ‘the RTA or Housing Registration’. Programs providing housing and tenancy management must directly assess themselves against the requirements of the RTA and the NCHS.

This document is designed to inform the service delivery policies and procedures of individual programs. Whilst there may be some specific applications suggested that are more appropriate for some programs than others, the policy statements and all but a relatively small number of suggested applications apply to all of The Salvation Army Housing and Homelessness programs in Victoria.

A program’s individualised policies and procedures should be consistent with the policies, principal applications and principles of the applications outlined in this document and should explicitly reflect the CQI principles of Plan – Do – Check – Act.

Please note that the governance and business management components of the HASS framework are not addressed through this service delivery focused document.
Process

During 2007, the VSC contracted the Territorial Social Policy and Resource Unit (TSPRU) to project manage a State-wide approach to HASS Accreditation.

The key milestones involved:

1. **The development of a project plan for The Salvation Army housing and homelessness services to be HASS accredited by December 2009**

2. **The gathering of HASS supporting documentation, and representation at relevant sector meetings and forums**

3. **Communication of the plan to The Salvation Army Victorian Divisions**

4. **Planning and facilitation, from consultation forums to workshops and producing a Salvation Army HASS Policy and Practice Guide and Resource**

5. **Nominations from The Salvation Army Victoria's Divisional Social Programme Secretaries (DSPS) for key personnel from their areas of responsibility to participate in resource manual consultation forums**

6. **The establishment of a HASS Editorial Committee, to include key personnel, The Salvation Army State-wide Housing Working Group Chairperson, TSPRU Manager, and the Project Manager from Council to Homeless Persons**

7. **The facilitation of a State-wide Informal Accreditation Workers Support Network for The Salvation Army housing and homelessness personnel involved with HASS Accreditation**

8. **The facilitation of a Learning Circle for The Salvation Army housing and homelessness personnel to debrief after participating in HASS Accreditation**

9. **The provision of ongoing reporting regarding accreditation to The Salvation Army Divisional Social Programme Secretaries, Network Directors, and The Salvation Army Victoria State-wide Housing Working Group**

10. **Acting as a conduit between The Department of Human Services (State Government) and The Salvation Army Victoria State Council**

11. **Hosting bi-monthly meetings with QICSA to maintain dialogue regarding The Salvation Army Housing and Homelessness HASS Accreditation contracts**

12. **Completion of a Policy and Practice Guide and Resource for sign off by the Editorial Committee**

13. **Completion of a Policy and Practice Guide and Resource for sign off by the Victoria State Council**

14. **Communication of The Salvation Army Policy and Practice Guide and Resource to Victorian Divisions and housing and homelessness programs.**
Implementation

Subsequent to briefings and approval by the VSC, a hard copy and an electronic copy (protected) of this document have been sent to the internal contact and the Director of each program undertaking HASS accreditation. Further electronic copies have been sent to each Divisional Social Programme Secretary and Director of any housing and homelessness-related program in the Territory for their reference.

Review

The VSC will instigate a review of the document in May 2009. This review will include direct consultation with consumers and program staff. In the meantime, comments and suggestions may be submitted to feed into that review. Such comments and suggestions should be sent electronically to the TSPRU and headed: HASS Resource Document.

Whilst not every submission will necessarily generate a direct response, all comments and suggestions will feed into the review of the document.
Overview

The development and authorisation of policies and procedures within The Salvation Army occur at all levels including individual programs, networks, divisions, territory and international according to established processes and principles of good governance. Service delivery policy and procedures are developed at program level and are authorised by the relevant network, within the policy and procedure frameworks, specifications and directives handed down from divisional, territorial and international Salvation Army levels.
In Victoria, this ‘Housing and Homelessness Service Delivery Policy and Practice: Guide and Resource’ provides a key reference with which housing and homelessness programs must ensure compliance in the service delivery policies and procedures those programs develop. Programs must ensure that their service delivery policies and procedures, including the processes employed in developing those policies and procedures, comply with the specifications of:

- The rights-based approach
- Complaints, disputes and appeals
- Consumer participation
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Access to housing and support for people in need
- Initial assessment
- Effective referrals
- Direct service delivery and case management
- Working with the community
- The physical environment.

Further key Salvation Army processes and policy and procedural directives with which programs must ensure their service delivery policies and procedures comply include:

- The Salvation Army - Australia Southern Territory Finance Manual
- The Salvation Army - Australia Southern Territory Human Resource Manual
- The Salvation Army - Australia Southern Territory Code of Conduct
- The Salvation Army - Australia Southern Territory Official Minutes.

These can be sourced via The Salvation Army - Australia Southern Territory extranet. Their focus ranges from the strategic to the operational and from Corps to social programs.

External reference points include law, quality standards and good practice.
Application

Every program has a documented process for the transparent development of service delivery policies and procedures. Such processes refer to how such development is initiated, how and when the Program’s quality group and/or equivalent consumer and staff participation/reference groups are involved, the responsibility for authorisation (presumably the network director or equivalent) – including acknowledgment of the occasions when the network director (or equivalent) will seek advice and/or authorisation from divisional and/or territorial levels.

Policies and procedures are written in clear, precise and plain language. They are presented according to a consistent format and in line with good document control practice (including dates of authorisation as well as the responsible body and dates and responsibilities pertaining to review).

Alterations, amendments and/or additions to policies and procedures that lie outside a network’s scope of authority are channelled up to and through divisions with the agreement of the network director or equivalent.

Territorial Programme Planning Council

The Territorial Programme Planning Council (TPPC) is the body responsible for approving new social programs and tenders for new social programs. Further approval is required from the Territorial Finance Council should any proposed service or tender require any financial contribution from The Salvation Army. The TPPC is chaired by the Secretary for Programme.
Territorial Finance Council

The Territorial Finance Council (TFC) is the territory’s supreme policy and decision-making body for the control and management of territorial financial and property resources. The TFC is responsible for approving:

- The territorial budget and any subsequent revisions
- Non-budgeted expenditures
- Capital spending
- The price at which property is bought and sold
- Grants to divisions and other centres
- Allowances of officers and employees
- Investment of funds
- Transfers to and from reserves and trust funds
- Furniture requisitions for leading officers
- Grants to officers
- Annual statements of accounts.

The TFC also monitors the performance of the territorial budget, plans future financial strategy (including the raising of money), deals with serious matters arising out of audit reports, considers matters of a confidential nature, and supervises the work of expenditure boards. It meets on a weekly basis.

Membership of the TFC is currently 11 members, reviewed and approved annually by International Headquarters, one of whom must be the Financial Secretary. The Territorial Commander presides ex-officio. In the absence of the Territorial Commander, the Chief Secretary presides. No meeting can be held without one or the other present. Four members form a quorum.

Territorial Policy Council

The Territorial Policy Council (TPC) is the policy-making body for the strategic and mission direction of The Salvation Army. The TPC tables its recommendations on policy matters to the TFC or other appropriate board for approval. It meets on a weekly basis.

Membership comprises the executive leadership of the territory, with the Territorial Commander presiding. In the absence of the Territorial Commander, the Chief Secretary presides. No meeting can be held without one or the other present.
The Salvation Army publishes a variety of policies by way of its Official Minutes. These are statements of policy covering operational, financial, administrative and organisational issues affecting the organisation. The international headquarters of The Salvation Army issues Official Minutes to all territories and commands throughout the world, on matters of policy and procedure supporting the mission and values of The Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory issues its own Official Minutes, on the authority of the Chief Secretary, to address policy and procedural matters relating to a wide range of activities and situations that confront the territory.

These policy statements are periodically reviewed and updated, to ensure that they remain relevant to the current needs of the territory, including its officers, employees and members.
The Rights-Based Approach

Policy

The Salvation Army believes that all people have been created in the image and likeness of God and have intrinsic worth. The Salvation Army recognises that not all people share equally in the benefits of Australian society and it is imperative that options exist for those most disadvantaged. The Salvation Army believes that the natural environment is God’s creation and should be treated with reverence. Therefore, people coming to The Salvation Army for assistance should be:

- Served without discrimination
- Treated with respect so that their dignity as individuals is preserved
- Recognised as people capable of making decisions and choices for their own lives.

The Salvation Army is committed to the delivery of quality housing and homelessness support programs to people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness, within a rights-based approach.

The Salvation Army recognises a rights-based approach to involve:

- Informing consumers of their rights and responsibilities within a service provision environment
- Recognising and working to redress the power imbalance that exists between service providers and consumers within the service provision context regarding access to referrals, information, housing, support and advocacy
- The endorsement and adoption of service standards across the sector that provide a benchmark of expectation, quality improvement and performance

This informs both the service provider and the service consumer of their respective rights and responsibilities, within the context of service provision.
The endorsement and implementation of the Victorian Homelessness Strategy ‘Consumer Charter of Rights’ for people accessing or engaged with homelessness or housing services

This empowers consumers with the right to make a complaint or appeal a decision made

Requiring all housing and homelessness programs to have complaints procedures in operation

Ensuring the existence of – and access by consumers to – an independent advocate in raising complaints, grievances and issues with service providers

In Victoria, the Homelessness Advocacy Service and Housing Registrar provides this service to consumers

Adopting an active approach in securing the rights of consumers to the entitlements that apply to all citizens, and which seeks to focus on the aspirations of a person within a framework of self-determination, reliance, empowerment and dignity

Case-management is often a prime vehicle for the delivery of this approach, not least as case planning is led by the consumer with the professional support of qualified personnel

The promotion of an organisational culture that ensures awareness, respect and active promotion of rights, including staff training and development on the application of a rights-based approach.

The Salvation Army recognises that informing people of their respective rights and responsibilities is core to both programmatic culture and service delivery for reasons including:

1. An individual’s rights and responsibilities made explicit reflects the broader ethos and philosophy of The Salvation Army

2. Informing people of their rights and responsibilities promotes a culture that places the consumer at the heart of an organisation

3. It is vital in the facilitation of self-determination

4. Informing people of their rights and responsibilities is essential to a rights-based program service system as well as a human rights approach

5. It serves as a key component within a broader strategy of redressing the power imbalance between consumers and service provider

6. Service provision becomes more effective when the consumer is enabled to make informed decisions based on the available information
Promoting a programmatic culture which encourages consumer feedback, including the identification of service strengths, gaps and improvements as part of service planning and that welcomes complaints and does not disadvantage complainants.

It is a requirement of the contractual arrangements between The Salvation Army and the Government within the provision of housing and homelessness services to ensure that individuals are informed of their rights and responsibilities and this is further expressed within the SAAP Act 1994.

Legal Framework

This rights-based approach has at its heart the development and implementation of a Human Rights approach. Current Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) legislation provides the impetus for this approach.

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Act (1994) states “homeless people form one of the most powerless and marginalised groups in society. Responses to their needs should aim to empower them and maximise their independence. These responses should be provided in a way that respects their dignity as individuals, enhances their self-esteem, is sensitive to their social and economic circumstances, and respects their cultural backgrounds and beliefs”.

Australia has acted to protect the rights of all its citizens, including people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, by recognising the International Standards for the protection of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms through:

1. The ratification of the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights; and

2. The ratification of the Conventions on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and on the Rights of the Child; and

3. The acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women; and

Application

1. The development, implementation and annual evaluation of complaints procedures within services according to an explicit process that provides for transparent appeals processes, access to advocacy and, where applicable, compliant with the RTA and particularly Section 97

2. Upon entry to a service as a consumer, the provision of a program’s complaints policy and procedures as well as information on the Victorian Homelessness Advocacy Service and, where relevant, the Housing Registrar and a copy of the RTA to be made available to tenants

3. The development of documented and consistent policies and procedures specific to case-management that ensure consumers are informed and regularly reminded of their rights and responsibilities through the case-management engagement

4. The development of consistent policies and procedures specific to housing tenancy that ensure consumers are informed and regularly reminded of their rights and responsibilities through tenancy engagement as consistent with and relevant to the RTA

5. The development and implementation of consumer material, specific to rights and responsibilities, with due consideration to the issues and needs of the consumer group. This includes, but is not restricted to, considerations relating to:
   - Accuracy and up-to-dateness of material
   - The language used within publications, including the publication of material in community languages and plain English, in recognition of the difficulties some may experience in understanding the legal language; for example, tenancy agreements
   - The availability of audio material
   - The review of program material specific to rights and responsibilities at least on an annual basis, with consumer input.

6. In response to specific individual consumer service requirements, encourage and facilitate a program environment that will enable the promotion of individual rights and responsibilities to maximise consumer outcomes

7. Adherence to the requirements of ‘Your Rights and Responsibilities Explained – Consumer Charter for Community-Managed Housing and Homelessness Services’, published by the Department of Human Services (Victoria), 2006

8. Adherence to the Department of Human Services (Victoria) ‘Duty of Care’ policy requirements, along with the relevant State and National Privacy legislation
9. Adherence to the requirements of The Multicultural Victoria Act 2004, that states all Victorians are equally entitled to access opportunities to participate in the social, cultural, economic and political life of the State. Salvation Army programs encourage the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community involvement.


Your Rights and Responsibilities Explained

Consumer Charter for Community-Managed Housing and Homelessness Services (Victoria State Government 2006)

IF YOU ARE SEEKING OR RECEIVING HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE OR HOUSING SERVICES, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

→ Assistance during a crisis or to prevent a crisis

→ Be considered for accommodation and housing, based on fair policies

→ Receive help finding and staying in suitable housing on a long-term basis

→ Feel safe

→ Be free from discrimination

→ Respect for your culture

→ Respect, dignity and privacy

→ Make choices that will affect your future

→ Participate in the decision-making process of organisations providing services to you

→ Help applying for income support, employment and health services, educational opportunities and other support services

→ Make a complaint or appeal a decision you do not agree with and receive an answer that makes sense to you.

YOU ALSO HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO:

→ Supply the correct and necessary information about yourself and your situation to organisations providing services to you

→ Respect the rights of others to feel safe

→ Respect the cultural backgrounds and privacy of others

→ Treat others with respect and dignity

→ Meet your responsibilities as a tenant.
Related Policies and Links

› Supported Accommodation Assistance Program 1994

› Consumer Charter for Community-Managed Housing and Homelessness Services (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2006)

› Information Privacy Act 2002 (Victoria)

› Health Records Act 2001 (Commonwealth)

› Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)

› The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory - Case Note Policy (2006)

› Language Services Policy (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2006)

› Complaints Management Training Package – ‘Taking it Seriously’ (Department of Human Services, Victoria)

› Multicultural Victoria Act 2004

› Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (with amendments) (Victoria)

› National Community Housing Standards 2003

› Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies (Victoria)

› The Salvation Army Employees Code of Conduct 2007

› Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2007
APPEALS
Policy

The Salvation Army housing and homelessness services provide for all consumers accessible and appropriate complaints procedures that ensure all consumers are aware of the procedure and are encouraged to regard it as a positive process for issue resolution.

The Salvation Army identifies the key importance for all housing and homelessness programs to establish, implement, promote and evaluate complaints procedures, in accordance with the requirements of the SAAP Act 1994, the Homelessness Assistance Service Standards and, where appropriate, the Housing Registrar and the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (with amendments) - notably Section 97.

The Salvation Army is committed to ensuring that complaints and grievances raised by both consumers and other parties, including other service providers and members of the public, are managed through transparent, timely and accountable processes that maintain the dignity and confidentiality of all parties.

The Salvation Army recognises the power imbalance between organisation and consumer and maintains that the existence and operation of complaints procedures is a key mechanism within a broader commitment to redress the power imbalance.

Further to this, The Salvation Army maintains that the right to an advocate is a fundamental component to any complaints procedure. This right must be clearly articulated, promoted and committed to by service providers.
**Application**

Within a CQI framework, the complaints process can directly and indirectly inform service improvement and positively impact on the program culture, as well as contribute to the personal development of both consumers and program staff.

The Salvation Army housing and homelessness services welcome information and feedback from consumers. The associated processes and learnings enhance the quality of the services provided through:

1. **Consumers being made aware of their right to complain, without fear of retribution**
2. **All complaints being dealt with promptly, with the organisation taking steps to ensure that consumers feel comfortable to continue accessing the service after making a complaint**
3. **Any complaint that has been lodged, as far as possible and appropriate, along with the details of that complaint, being kept confidential amongst those directly concerned with its resolution**
4. **Permission from individuals involved in any complaint, or appeal, being obtained prior to information being given to other parties, subject to the duty of care or other legal requirements**
5. **The Salvation Army involves consumers in the design of:**
   - Information packs
   - Pamphlets/brochures to display in common areas
   - Wallet cards.

**Process**

Information on how to raise issues, make complaints and appeal decisions is provided to consumers in a clear, simple format, using appropriate language. The information is also verbally conveyed. This information details for consumers the key advocacy services available to them including, as appropriate, HAS and the Housing Registrar.

In the first instance, and as appropriate, The Salvation Army housing and homelessness services encourage consumers to attempt to resolve any grievance directly with the person involved, be it an employee or fellow consumer or a neighbour.

If the matter remains unresolved, or approaching the person directly involved in the grievance is deemed inappropriate, the issue is brought to the attention of line managers, supervisors, network directors or corps officers.

Any complaints implying a breach of criminal or civil law are immediately reported to the relevant agency (e.g. Police). In a situation where procedures apply by law, those procedures will take precedence over any Salvation Army program’s internal procedure.

In the event that the matter remains unresolved, after all of the above are considered and pursued as appropriate, the consumer will be encouraged and fully
supported in taking their complaint to the Homelessness Advocacy Service (HAS) or the Housing Registrar, as appropriate.

All complaints and appeals from program consumers, and program applicants, are monitored by programs to identify and, in turn, inform appropriate action regarding

- **The number of complaints and appeals**
- **The issues involved**
- **The time taken to resolve complaints**
- **The outcomes of complaints and appeals**
- **Input from program consumers, or service applicants who have used the system.**

The Salvation Army program involved should make public non-identifying information that reports on the outcomes of program consumer complaints or appeals.

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**The Housing Registrar**

The Housing Act 1983 establishes a role for the Registrar in the investigation of complaints by tenants or prospective tenants about rental housing matters that are not resolved by the agency within 30 days.

The Act also provides an option for the Registrar to appoint another party to investigate complaints on the Registrar’s behalf.

The effective and timely management of complaints is an important aspect of performance monitoring and compliance.

A registered agency should specifically address the role of the Registrar as an external mechanism to review relevant complaints in their information for housing applicants and tenants.

The Act requires registered agencies to maintain a complaints register. The term register is not defined in the legislation. For the purposes of this guidance, a register is a record, ideally electronic, of details and correspondence of relevance to the complaints management process.

Complaints may be directed to the Housing Registrar through a number of different ways. These channels include:

- **An OoH business unit, Department of Human Services (DHS) regional office**
- **Member of Parliament, the Minister of Housing, or the Victorian Ombudsman who then seek a resolution**
- **The Secretary of DHS, or the DHS Corporate Complaints Unit and the matter being referred to OoH from there**
- **Direct contact with complaints investigators - either the Manager, OoH Housing Appeals and Complaints Management, or Regional Housing Managers.**
The VHS Homelessness Advocacy Service (HAS)

The Homelessness Advocacy Service (HAS) is an initiative of the VHS and was launched in January 2005 by the Council to Homeless Persons. This service forms the Victorian Government's response to ensuring that the rights of people experiencing homelessness, and who access homelessness services, are secured and protected.

All complaints raised through the Homelessness Advocacy Service are recorded through the Integrated Strengthened Complaints Management system, which offers redress to users of homelessness services who have had their rights breached through effective complaints resolution mechanisms. Complaints raised through the HAS are measured against the HAS Standards.

The HAS promotes the Office of Housing (OoH) Consumer Charter for homelessness consumers and encourages people who feel that their rights under the Charter have been breached, to seek the assistance of the HAS and/or lodge a formal complaint. Homelessness organisations are expected to demonstrate evidence of a commitment to the 11 rights articulated in the Charter. The Charter is embedded in the Homelessness Assistance Service Standards (HASS) and funding 'rounds' are tied to compliance with these standards.

Related Policies and Links:

- The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory Official Privacy Statement
- The Department of Human Services Victoria, Duty of Care (2000)
- The Salvation Army Employee Code of Conduct (2006)
- Consumer Charter for Community-Managed Housing and Homelessness Services, Department of Human Services, Victoria (2006)
- The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory - Case Note Policy (2006)
- The Health Records Act 2001 (Commonwealth)
- National Community Housing Standards 2003
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (with amendments) (Victoria)
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies (Victoria)
- The Housing Act 1983
- The Information Privacy Act (2002) Victoria
- The Privacy Act (1988)
- Amendments to The Privacy Act, The National Privacy Principles (2001)
Consumer Participation

Policy

The Salvation Army regards consumer participation as being both core to a rights-based approach as well as reflective of the organisation's ethos and philosophy. Through consumer participation and the subsequent expression of people's experiences, such experiences directly inform policy and programmatic advocacy, development agendas - including the formation and ordering of priorities - and ultimately societal change.

Consumer participation is defined as being an expression of individual and collective rights and should serve as the catalyst for structural reform. Further, consumer participation, as defined by The Council to Homeless Persons, Victoria, fosters a culture of transparency, inclusiveness, accessibility and diversity.

The Salvation Army recognises the vital importance of promoting a culture of consumer participation, as defined by

- A commitment to and promotion of human rights
- A commitment to consumer participation that moves beyond the requirements of a funding and service agreement
- The promotion of creative, innovative and relevant models of consumer participation, that engage consumers in the planning processes of The Salvation Army housing and homelessness programs
- A firm belief that consumer participation is central to the continual improvement of service quality, in that it supports the delivery of responsive, effective, accessible, flexible and relevant service delivery
- A strategy designed to empower people to work towards self-determination
- A strategy that seeks to redress the power imbalance between the service consumer and the service provider
- Consumer participation promotes both individual and collective ownership, a sense of belonging and the creation of a community within the program setting
A firm belief that consumer participation encourages a commitment towards high service standards, transparent practice and accountability

The promotion and facilitation of learning opportunities between consumers, and program staff, and also between program staff and other program providers

Model development that reflects sound planning, including the identification of resource considerations, challenges as well as solutions, evaluation, and the direct input of both consumers and staff

An operational framework which recognises that consumer participation operates in many forms. It is a learning process and should reflect an incremental approach, ensuring the sustainability and viability of models.

Application

Issues for Consideration

The selection, design and/or adaptation of consumer participation models and tools need to be centred around consumers’ strengths and resources, needs and preferences. The development, evaluation and implementation of consumer participation models and tools, including locally-based policy and practice guidelines, need to demonstrate consideration of the following:

Program Culture:

- Programs show a recognition and respect for all circumstances surrounding the journey process of a consumer group, including the right to not participate
- Address issues likely to be of interest
- Prioritise people whose experiences may make participation more difficult to secure, such as indigenous consumers, young people, people with disabilities, and people suffering family violence
- Demonstrate a service culture that encourages open and honest communication between consumers and staff about any aspect of the services they receive
- Utilise appropriate interpreter services, ensuring consumers understand the service being provided and are able to communicate their needs
- Use language which is appropriate
- Promote consumer participation models
- Consult regularly with the Homelessness Advocacy Service (HAS) which is resourced to provide State-wide advice to programs. This includes assisting programs with consumer participation through the Peer Education Support Program (PESP).
- Monitor levels and impact of participation, setting targets as appropriate in consultation with key stakeholders.
Program Infrastructure:

- Consumer participation models need to be integrated with program infrastructure and related systems and processes
- Organise meetings in accessible locations and at times when people can attend
- Advertise meetings well and provide refreshments
- Program resources need to include funding for ‘safe space’, transport, child-care, meal expenses, respecting the value of the consumer (including provision of incentives)
- Plan financial assistance prior to events to ensure consumers are reimbursed in a timely and efficient manner for out-of-pocket expenses.

Human Resources:

- Allocate and budget for appropriate funding to support activities that will enable consumers to participate more fully
- Position descriptions and consumer participation policies address how consumers fit within the organisation and responsibilities for promoting consumer participation
- Staff are supported in developing the skills, competencies and experience necessary to work effectively with consumers
- Reviews of a program's performance include reviewing complaints and outcomes, evaluated against key performance indicators in work plans and/or in consultation with consumers, staff and other key stakeholders
- Accountability and reporting should involve:
  - The creation of transparency and accountability to both staff and the consumer group
  - Documented systems capturing verbal and written feedback in a consumer and staff improvement log system.

Consumer Achievement:

- Consumer plans are consumer centred. Established program criteria should not be confused with what consumers actually need
- Consumers' strengths should be emphasised rather than their 'problems'
- Time needs to be invested in learning about consumer preferences and, as necessary, goals may also need to be changed for ones that are more achievable and realistic.

Feedback:

- The focus and impact of consumer participation activities need to be communicated and publicised to consumers, staff and other stakeholders.
Consumer Participation Models

The Salvation Army recognises and values diverse models that operate with regard to consumer participation. In recognition and in celebration of this practice diversity, the following consumer participation components have been identified. This list is by no means exhaustive and, therefore, consumer participation should not be restricted to the following strategies, but rather considered as a commencement point.

Case-management is and should be regarded as a model of consumer participation. Case-management is defined as a collaborative, consumer-focused approach, aimed at empowering and working with consumers to effectively meet individual needs.

The benefits associated with case-management for consumers are well evidenced and include:

- **Improved quality of service leading to improved outcomes**
- **Increased empowerment as consumers measure and evaluate their own progress and change**
- **Increased involvement in decision-making and service provision**
- **Increased access to services.**

*Consumer representation* on working parties and at management meetings: Programs should consider establishing an ongoing consumer committee that reports to management on a range of consumer and policy issues.

*Residents’ meetings* have the capacity to serve as an effective consumer participation model. As practicable, residents should be supported to own and direct such meetings. Resident meetings:

- **Enable consumers to provide feedback and proposals relating to services provided**
- **Address service gaps and strategies to address gaps**
- **Provide opportunities for consumers to create social networks through interaction with other consumers and staff.**

*Consumer focus* groups provide opportunities to consult on a range of programmatic issues, such as:

- **The services provided**
- **Gaps in service delivery**
- **External policy and programmatic directions that impact on the lives and experiences of the consumer group.**

*Consumer suggestion boxes* are relatively easy to develop. They provide a ‘snapshot’ of consumer feedback on a range of issues. They can be instrumental in canvassing direction on ways to improve the service around a range of issues such as
accessibility, access to service facilities such as waiting rooms, public transport, etc. As part of this model, it is important that consumers are provided with the opportunity to identify any further areas where they believe views should be sought.

The consumer suggestion box is a model that might be particularly useful in housing and homelessness services providing short-term services, such as crisis housing and crisis support programs.

This model provides a degree of anonymity, as consumers would not be required to provide any identifiable data unless they choose to.

*Consumer program feedback forms* provide a measure to assess the impact of housing and homelessness programs in meeting the identified issues and outcomes of consumers, as well as providing opportunity for consumers to have direct input into the broader program itself. Housing management programs should provide for tenant satisfaction surveying, at least upon exit.

This model is most useful when it is implemented on a regular basis, and forms part of a service delivery model to consumers, for example SAAP case-management.

*Program reviews* that form part of a program’s planning cycle present a further opportunity to integrate consumer participation with the program.

Program reviews often provide the setting for internal reflection and assessment of program objectives, directions and outcomes, as well as possibilities, within the context of future planning. The active recruitment and participation of consumers within this process can be invaluable.

*Local corps* are The Salvation Army’s worshipping communities. In addition to a spiritual response, the local Salvation Army corps provides numerous opportunities for community members, including social program consumers, to engage and participate with others.

These opportunities include:

- **Children’s programs**
- **Community care**
- **Community services**
- **Women’s groups**
- **Community support services (emergency relief) and other forms of practical assistance**
- **Education programs**
- **Education and life skills groups**
- **Youth groups**
- **Volunteering**
- **Creative Arts**.
A strength of the local Salvation Army Corps, within a consumer participation framework, is that they provide a permanent setting for personal growth and development, as well as increased social interaction opportunities, that promote an inclusive community.

Complaints procedures are a further illustration of consumer participation within a program setting. The Salvation Army is committed to ensuring that complaints and grievances raised by consumers as well as other parties, including other service providers, are managed through transparent, timely and accountable processes that maintain the dignity and confidentiality of all parties. Within a consumer participation framework, an internal grievance procedure not only serves as a tool to protect the rights and responsibilities of consumers, but also provides opportunity for consumers to participate in the development of the program.

The Salvation Army programs should communicate, including displaying, but not limited to displaying:

- Complaints policies and procedures
- Consumer charter of rights and responsibilities
- The Salvation Army’s mission and vision statements
- Codes of conduct
- Processes on how to raise issues and provide feedback, including any structural consumer participation models embedded within the Program.

**Consumer Participation Models - Review Strategies**

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation need to be designed into models. Issues and features that should be considered include:

- The purpose of the model and how it fits with an overarching consumer participation system and other related systems, such as strategy, clinical governance and HR
- Consumer involvement on working parties and at management meetings
- An ongoing consumer committee that reports to management on a range of consumer and policy issues
- Information Management ‘Programme Logic’ - The Salvation Army Information Management Framework that supports the assessment of performance in The Salvation Army housing and homelessness services

Programme Logic survey tools measure ‘consumer achievement’ which refers to feedback received from both a consumer and a member of staff, when consulting their evaluation of outcomes involved in consumer engagement processes.
Consumer participation is made available through ‘consumer satisfaction’, or ‘consumer experience’ survey tools that focus on the feelings of a consumer and how they found the service. It links to the participation benefits factored into The Salvation Army Programme Logic Information system.

- Installation of consumer feedback/suggestion boxes in common areas
- Conduct regular consumer group feedback sessions to afford consumers an opportunity to provide feedback on organisational policy and practice - including participation models
- Create opportunities for reflection even in crisis situations:
  1. Ask potential consumers for feedback
  2. Do people understand how the service works?
  3. Why are certain processes followed?
  4. Are people satisfied with the service received?
  5. Can people suggest how the service could be more effective?
- Regularly review policies, guidelines and work plans to ensure mechanisms for consumer participation are appropriate. At the same time, regularly seek consumer feedback on the development of participation mechanisms to ensure they are reasonable and achievable.
- A review of consumer engagement performance should include auditing feedback or improvement logs, and further include analysing outcomes and take-up of suggestions, seeking specific feedback from consumers about their knowledge, and use of consumer participation mechanisms
- Evaluation reports should be pro-actively shared with consumers.

Related Policies and Links

- Consumer Participation Kit for Housing and Homelessness Assistance Services (Rural Housing Network and HomeGround Services)
- SAAP Case Management Resource Kit
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (with amendments) (Victoria)
- National Community Housing Standards 2003
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies (Victoria)
- Information Management ‘Bringing Programme Logic to our Social Programmes’
Privacy and Confidentiality

Policy
The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory’s Privacy Minute (IPP 1102) addresses the need for Salvation Army social programs and corps to comply with privacy laws. Key legislation in this regard includes the Health Records Act 2001 and the Information Privacy Act 2002 (Victoria). The Salvation Army upholds privacy and confidentiality consistent with all relevant privacy legislation.

All persons, including employees, contractors, volunteers and students who come into contact with, or have access to, confidential information have a responsibility to maintain privacy, confidentiality and security of such information.

Application
In the application of the broad intent of The Salvation Army’s Privacy Statement, specific to housing and homelessness programs in Victoria, due consideration should be given to the following requirements.

Training
1. Upon employment, all program staff, including volunteers are provided with a copy of the program’s privacy and confidentiality policy

2. Upon employment all program staff including volunteers, are required to provide written agreement to a confidentiality and privacy statement

3. As part of the program’s induction into The Salvation Army, the program will ensure that the subject matter of privacy and confidentiality forms part of the induction program

4. The program makes available, in a range of appropriately written and visual material, information detailing the program’s privacy and confidentiality policy. Such material should be displayed in public areas, including reception and interview rooms.

5. Prospective and established consumers are to be regularly provided with information pertaining to complaints procedures, including the contact details of the Victorian HAS, Victorian Privacy Commissioner and the Housing Registrar, as part of informing the consumer of the rights and responsibilities specific to privacy and confidentiality.
Management of Consumer Information

1. The Salvation Army is committed to taking all appropriate measures to ensure housing and homelessness program consumers’ personal information is protected from unauthorised access, loss, misuse, disclosure or alteration.

2. The Salvation Army services comply with legislative requirements by using a private place to collect personal information, including personal information taken by telephone, or mobile phone.

3. Information collected is used only for the purpose for which it is collected and all records and electronic data are protected from unauthorised use, or access. The disposal of information that is no longer required for such purposes is carried out in accordance with legal and organisational requirements.

4. Only program staff with a direct professional involvement in service provision to the consumer have access to consumer files.

5. Unauthorised disclosure of information and breaches of confidentiality will result in disciplinary procedures and possible dismissal.

6. Staff should not access information that does not pertain directly to their position.

7. Upon entering as a program consumer, the program is required to disclose to the consumer the program staff and services likely to have access to their consumer file, within the service provision context. Staff inform consumers how the program manages information about them.

8. Where possible, disclosure of information to other services or organisations when seeking general information reflects the disclosure and is performed in a way that does not personally identify the consumer concerned.

9. Personal information which is no longer required is destroyed or permanently de-identified. The types of measures implemented vary, depending on the program type and the relevant legislation, as well as the contractual arrangements with the funding body.

Consumer Authorisation

1. Disclosure of consumers’ information to other services or organisations should be performed with the authorisation of the consumers concerned. Programs have policies for when duty of care considerations (including safety, health and wellbeing, and/or legal or ethical issues) dictate that consumers’ information is shared where authorisation by consumers has not been secured.
2. Extreme care and vigilance is exercised in the use of any identifiers that may be passed through to a government agency. Such identifiers should be used solely in accordance with the requirements of the funding and service agreement.

3. In all cases, capacity to provide authorisation is considered. It is noted that authorised representatives can be guardians, attorneys under ending powers of attorney, agents under the Medical Treatment Act 1988, administrators under the Guardianship and Administration Act 1986, parents in the case of a child without capacity, and/or a person otherwise empowered to act or make decisions in the best interests of the program consumer. In instances where the preferred language of the consumer is other than English, consent should be obtained via an interpreter.

4. Reasonable access to the information will be provided to individuals or their appointed representative, should they require details about the information held.

5. All programs are to establish a consumer consent form, including the details of any third parties that the consumer provides his or her consent to, as part of the services provided.

6. In instances where a case-management service is provided, the consumer consent form should remain current, i.e. discussed and updated with the consumer’s authority, at a minimum of every two months.

7. Where possible, consumer consent should be obtained in writing.

8. In instances where consumer consent is verbally obtained, this should be documented in the consumer file, dated and authorised by the relevant staff member.

Media

1. All communication with the media must first be discussed with the Divisional or Territorial Public Relations department.

2. Media statements maintain the anonymity of all program participants and staff unless written consent has been obtained from the individual concerned.

3. Any disclosure of information regarding a particular consumer can make The Salvation Army liable by law.

Dispute Resolution

Prospective and established consumers are provided with information pertaining to programs’ complaints procedures, including the contact details of the Victorian Homelessness Advocacy service and the Victorian Privacy Commissioner, as part of informing the consumer of the rights and responsibilities specific to privacy and confidentiality.
Related Policies & Links

- The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory Official Privacy Statement
- The Department of Human Services (Victoria) Duty of Care (2000)
- The Salvation Army Employee Code of Conduct (2006)
- Consumer Charter for Community-Managed Housing and Homelessness Services, Department of Human Services, Victoria (2006)
- The Health Records Act 2001 (Commonwealth)
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (with amendments) (Victoria)
- National Community Housing Standards 2003
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies (Victoria)
- The National Health Act (1953) with amendments
- The Information Privacy Act (2000) Victoria
- The Privacy Act 1988
- Amendments to The Privacy Act, The National Privacy Principles (2001)
- The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory - Case Note Policy (2006)
- Language Services Policy, Department of Human Services, Victoria (2006)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Victoria)
Access to Housing and Support for People in Need

**Policy**

The Salvation Army is committed to pro-actively assisting people at risk of homelessness, or experiencing homelessness or family violence, to access the services they need.

The Salvation Army’s support and tenancy management programs alike have a core regard and concern for the holistic needs of consumers. Programs therefore have systems and processes in place towards ensuring that consumers access appropriate supports. Programs are pro-active in assisting consumers in establishing and maintaining engagement to appropriate support.

Each person seeking a service from The Salvation Army will have access to services based on eligibility, relative need and available resources.

The Salvation Army works within the principles of Equal Opportunity and Social Justice and is committed to the inclusion of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal people.
Application

1. A Commitment to Improving Equitable Access

The Salvation Army housing and homelessness programs are communicated and made available pro-actively to all people eligible for such services, free from any form of direct or indirect discrimination, e.g. on the basis of a person’s country of birth, language, culture, gender, age, race or religion. Housing allocation policies, for example, are therefore fair, transparent and pro-actively communicated to consumers – including where such policies are effectively determined by another agency such as Government (e.g. in regard to eligibility, ranking and grounds for withdrawals of offers).

Programs that charge rent to consumers ensure that those rents are at levels consistent with the consumers being targeted and, where applicable, are set in keeping with OoH policy.

Housing and homelessness programs are developed and delivered offering fair treatment to all who are eligible to receive them.

The Salvation Army is aware that the homelessness system can be confusing and difficult to navigate. During 2007 the Office of Housing (OoH) implemented sector development initiatives designed to strengthen the service system. Features include enhanced access and coordination across all Victorian housing support services through designated ‘entry points’.

2. Suitable Operating Hours

The Salvation Army programs provide hours of operation that are linked to peak usage periods and fulfil both demand and funding requirements.

The Salvation Army programs have follow-up procedures for people who have sought assistance out-of-hours.

3. Contact details Ensuring Timely Access to Assistance

Updates to service contact details occur regularly to accomplish the following:

⇒ Keep other relevant programs in the service area aware of updated contact details, i.e. address/phone contacts, etc.

⇒ Information in pamphlets/brochures is kept up-to-date

⇒ Where eligibility criteria have not been met and a further referral needs to be made, monitoring of unmet need is used to inform service development.
4. Culturally and Ability Appropriate Services

In order to provide services and activities that are culturally and ability-appropriate, programs identify any physical and other barriers preventing or materially impeding access.

The following strategies are instrumental in the building of good working relationships with a range of potential consumers, representative of groups in the community.

- **Strong liaison with sector agencies that provide culturally specific services, e.g. migrant resource centres, Aboriginal land councils, gay and lesbian advocacy services**

- **Consideration is given to literacy levels when designing written information**

- **The active recruitment of staff from a variety of diverse backgrounds would make it helpful to the target population**

- **The use of interpreter services, including signing**

- **Access to a TTY phone service for people who are deaf or hearing-impaired**

- **Regular sensitivity training for staff and management to increase understanding of target populations and their cultures**

- **Utilise appropriate venues to hold meetings, taking into consideration the consumer group being assisted.**

5. Integrated Services

- **Access and utilise resources from other agencies**

- **Network and consult with other relevant organisations to obtain the best outcomes.**

6. Monitoring of Accessibility

- **Adherence to the requirements of ‘Your Rights and Responsibilities Explained – Consumer Charter for Community-Managed Housing and Homelessness Services’ published by the Department of Human Services, Victoria (2006)**

- **The Salvation Army and individual programs monitor accessibility to a full range of applicants, and recognise that eligibility needs to be transparent and communicated positively**

- **Housing management programs monitor turnaround time on tenancy units as well as related voids loss**

- **Should a prospective consumer exclude themselves, or be excluded due to non-alignment with expectations, The Salvation Army considers it important to operate**
transparently and to obtain feedback from prospective consumers as to what the ‘barriers’ were at the point of exit, regarding the inability to gain or retain access to the program

→ The Salvation Army is clear that whilst a prospective consumer may not be eligible ‘at that point in time’, this does not necessarily mean the potential consumer cannot access the service at a later date. It may well be more appropriate for a potential consumer to return at a later date. It is recognised that potential consumers need to be involved in the process of deciding their own eligibility.

→ It is as important to monitor and obtain feedback from potential consumers as to what the barriers are in not being successful in accessing the service as it is to monitor and obtain feedback from consumers successful in accessing the service.

7. Communication/Information

Programs have strategies so that eligible consumers are appropriately informed as to:

→ What services are available

→ What the entitlements are

→ How entitlements are obtained.

8. Commitment to Improving Access

The Salvation Army is committed to the Office of Housing Homelessness Assessment and Referral Framework introduced in 2007, which builds upon the existing good practices and partnerships of the sector and previous assessment and referral projects. The framework is a major component of achieving an integrated service system that will see better outcomes for people seeking assistance.

Related Policies and Links

→ Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (with amendments) (Victoria)

→ Code of Practice for Specialist Family Violence Services for Women and Children (Domestic Violence Victoria 2006)

→ Common Risk Assessment Framework for Family Violence Services in Victoria (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2006)

→ State-Wide Homelessness Assessment and Referral Framework (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2006)

→ National Community Housing Standards 2003

→ Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies (Victoria)

→ The Protocol for the Case Management of Unsupported Young People (Commonwealth and State Governments)

→ Quality Improvement Council – Site Inspection Tool [Core Standards 1.3, 1.6, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5]
Policy

The Salvation Army is committed to delivering quality housing and homelessness support programs to people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness, within a client centred, rights-based approach.

The Salvation Army mission values of human dignity, justice, hope, compassion and community are inherent and evident within every contact. The Salvation Army housing and homelessness programs have with consumers. This is especially relevant to the first point of contact where power differentials are most evident.

The Salvation Army programs promote a welcoming environment for consumers within a framework of assessment skills designed to understand consumers’ immediate and longer-term needs and the supports necessary and available to meet those needs. Where these supports are found outside the organisation, staff support the consumer through the process of establishing access to those supports within appropriate time frames.

The Salvation Army is committed to an assessment process that is collaborative with the consumer, transparent, client-centred, relevant and where appropriate involves an advocate. Where additional information is needed from a third party to provide a more comprehensive service, consumer consent in line with relevant privacy legislation will be sought and documented.

The Salvation Army housing and homelessness programs have documented systems in place for dealing with unaccompanied young people less than 15 years of age.

Application

Assessments may well be shaped by and subject to the stipulations of memoranda of understanding, protocols and/or agreements with other organisations, including situations where key aspects of an assessment are conducted by other programs.

An initial assessment where a potential consumer seeks to access a Salvation Army housing and homelessness program will proceed with the following approach:

- All potential consumers are provided with a timely, quality response at initial contact, and any subsequent meeting contact. Those presenting are treated with respect and dignity, and in a non-judgmental manner.
The eligibility criteria and process of assessment for potential consumers must be clearly articulated by staff at an initial assessment.

When a person presents for an initial assessment staff are responsive in ensuring immediate physical needs (including safety and shelter) are addressed. At the same time, staff will promptly identify further appropriate services that equate to the needs of each person presenting for assistance and the resources appropriately available, including the person’s strengths and abilities.

Intake staff will refer to their program’s documented approach when responding to requests for assistance, matching people’s needs with eligibility and availability.

The Salvation Army involves prospective consumers and encourages them to have input into the decisions reached regarding an initial intake assessment and further ongoing needs.

The Salvation Army respects the right of people to either accept or decline services offered. Assistance is provided to work through any associated complaint.

Assessment processes should be transparent, with consumers being properly advised of their rights to appeal any decision and the avenues available to them to assist in appealing and/or making a complaint.

**Systems for Initially Responding to Requests for Assistance**

The Salvation Army programs have documented systems and processes for responding to requests for assistance and for matching people’s needs with service availability in a timely manner.

Initial assessment meetings reflect a transparent process that at times leads to immediate exclusion. This may be due to:

- **Demographics**
- **Program engagement requirements, after negotiating/exploring all possible avenues**
- **Consumer actions causing immediate risk, or criteria that render exclusion with implications involving both the person presenting and intake staff**
- **Programs have policies and procedures in place regarding how to safely exit consumers from programs**
- **Any consequences for potential consumers disengaging with the program should be explicit and transparent. Programs make every endeavour to assist people in making themselves eligible again. Programs monitor and review the nature of consumer exclusions at intake so as to inform service development.**
Approaches for Assisting Unaccompanied Young People under 15 Years of Age

The Salvation Army housing and homelessness services’ approach to unaccompanied young people under 15 years of age is guided by the Protocol for the Case Management of Unsupported Young People, ‘the Youth Protocol’. This protocol between the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments sets out the respective expectations and responsibilities of government agencies responding to the needs of young people.

Duty of Care

The Salvation Army housing and homelessness programs are committed to the policy and principles of The Department of Human Services (Victoria), ‘Duty of Care’ (2000) document. Employees must comply with the law relating to negligence in all aspects of their work. Individual programs’ policies and procedures are consistent with obligations arising from the Department of Human Services (Victoria) ‘Duty of Care’ (2000).

Duty of care is balanced with dignity of risk, i.e. the right of informed individuals to take calculated risks. Everyone has the right to an assumption of competence. Informed decision-making involves a general awareness of the consequences of a decision and any decision is made voluntarily and without coercion.

Duty of care is breached by failing to do what is reasonable, or by doing something unreasonable that results in harm, loss, or injury to another. This can be physical harm, economic loss, or psychological trauma.

The law of negligence affects the way The Salvation Army delivers services. It sets minimum standards for programs in the way that services are delivered. All program staff will, at all times, provide a standard of care that is reasonable and consistent with the policies and procedures outlined in the Department of Human Services (Victoria) ‘Duty of Care’ (2000) Manual.

Related Policies and Links

➔ The Department of Human Services (Victoria) ‘Duty of Care’ (2000)

➔ National Community Housing Standards 2003

➔ Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies (Victoria)
»EFFECEVE«
Effective Referrals

Policy

The Salvation Army is committed to pro-actively assisting people at risk of homelessness, or experiencing homelessness or family violence to access the services they need.

Each person seeking a service from The Salvation Army has access to services based on eligibility, relative need and available resources.

The Salvation Army support and tenancy management programs alike have a core regard and concern for the holistic needs of consumers. Programs therefore have systems and processes in place towards ensuring that consumers access appropriate supports. Programs are pro-active in assisting consumers in establishing and maintaining engagement to appropriate support, both within and outside the organisation.

The Salvation Army works within the principles of equal opportunities and social justice and is committed to the inclusion of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal people.

Application Assistance to Gain Other Services

Staff provide at minimum a general intake, assessment and referral service to consumers seeking housing and/or support. The Salvation Army management ensures that program workers have a sound knowledge base of the service system and the necessary resources required to undertake this function.

The Salvation Army recognises that in some cases consumer expectation cannot equate to service delivery and it may be necessary to refer a consumer to another service. People who are not offered an immediate service are fully informed of alternative options and offered an active referral as appropriate.

The Salvation Army recognises its duty of care towards young people less than 18 years of age and other more vulnerable people who access services from agencies to which they are referred.
Housing and homelessness programs’ approaches to unaccompanied young people under 15 years of age is guided by the Protocol for the Case Management of Unsupported Young People, ‘the Youth Protocol’. This protocol between the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments sets out the respective expectations and responsibilities of government agencies responding to the needs of young people.

Duty of care is breached by failing to do what is reasonable, or by doing something unreasonable that results in physical harm, economic loss or psychological trauma.

**Assistance with Advocacy**

People seeking assistance are encouraged to act independently and to advocate on their own behalf wherever possible. Staff advocate for them when requested and appropriate.

**Documented Referral Processes**

The Salvation Army staff ensure consumers and potential consumers presenting for assistance have smooth access to appropriate available support. This is accomplished through formal protocols with other networks and services to obtain the best possible outcome for the person presenting for assistance.

An effective referral where a person seeks to access a service is facilitated by an effective and explicit referral framework featuring:

- **Timeframes for referrals**
- **Referral forms**
- **Information consent forms**
- **Guidelines for the electronic transfer of information and the types of information that can be shared between agencies (with and without a person’s consent).**

**Key points in working with women escaping domestic violence are:**

- **The Safety and Security of Women and Children is ensured**
- **Women are aware of all their options**
- **Women and children are assisted to meet their own goals**
- **The mother is supported to care for her children.**

*(Case Management Resource Kit for SAAP Services)*
Protocols with Other Agencies

The Salvation Army housing and homelessness programs recognise that written protocols are more effective when supported by active networking and relationship-building between key services. The Salvation Army programs comply with any legislative requirements and related obligations, e.g. privacy. Written protocols between The Salvation Army programs and other providers feature:

- Contact protocols, including after hours responses
- Resolution method for disputes
- Time period for the support
- Each agency’s roles and responsibilities
- Confidentiality
- Cost and payment periods if they occur
- Services to be provided
- Review processes
- Method for dealing with breakdowns in the agreed procedures.

Review and Evaluation

- Outcomes of referrals are monitored
- Programs regularly liaise with agencies to whom they refer consumers
- Programs regularly review the services of agencies to which consumers are referred
- Service data should be regularly checked with agencies to whom consumers are referred and used to inform partnership strategies.

Related Policies and Links

- The Department of Human Services (Victoria), ‘Duty of Care’ (2000)
- Case Management Resource Kit for SAAP Services
- Protocol for the Case Management of Unsupported Young People (Commonwealth and Victorian Governments)
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies (Victoria)
Direct Service Delivery and Case Management

Policy

The Salvation Army housing and homelessness programs are committed to providing good case management practices to a range of people towards meeting a range of needs. The case management provided is collaborative and consumer-focused and is performed with the objective of empowering consumers to meet their own individual needs. The principles and principal practices of case management equally apply to a program’s tenancy management engagement with a tenant consumer as it does to the delivery of a ‘support’ service by a program to a consumer. Similarly, the tenancy management approach of programs is fundamentally based on the same regard and concern for the holistic needs of the tenant consumer as it does for consumers within all housing and homelessness programs.

Application

Case-management is an approach to service delivery that respects, values and promotes consumers’ individuality and that works towards specific outcomes being met. It is a carefully documented process that focuses on consumers’ strengths to meet their needs and achieve goals according to flexible strategies and SMART plans. Case-management involves ongoing, structured and carefully documented consultation with consumers and, as agreed with the consumer, other relevant services, family members, friends, or other individuals involved in the consumer’s life.

The Salvation Army tenancy management programs exercise a pro-active regard for the holistic needs of their tenants. Where the case-management of a tenant’s support needs effectively rests with another program, Salvation Army tenancy management programs play an active role in informing the setting, review and exit processes and approaches of tenants’ case plans, according to the case-management principles outlined in this document.
Timely, clear, accurate, objective, dated and identified case note records are basic to case management. Staff should always be clear as to their purpose in making a case note and should receive clear direction as to the expectations with regard to case note and case file upkeep (including how case file documents are organised).

Case files relating to consumers for whom staff have case worker responsibility often form a core focus for those staff members’ practice supervision.

Managers conduct audits of consumer case files at least twice a year. This may result in scoring of files according to quality criteria such as possibly clarity, objectivity, accuracy (e.g. dated, contributor-identified), structure, etc.. Such scoring may well form part of the program’s performance monitoring.

Skill and a broad knowledge base of what is commonly regarded as a complex sector is required of staff engaging with consumers through a case-management model.

Case-management is known to be a successful model of service and can involve, but is not limited to, the following, depending on the needs of each consumer:

- Emotional support
- Sustainable housing
- Parenting assistance
- Living skills development
- Family reunification
- Legal assistance
- Employment
- Education and training.

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) is a crisis response to all people affected by homelessness who have acute needs and require immediate support. The Salvation Army Housing and Homelessness programs ensure the National SAAP Case Management Practice Principles are utilised for the following:

- To provide clear guidelines to both consumers and program staff on what can be expected from the service
- To ensure consumers know what they can expect from the service and to ensure consumers receive a consistent quality of service
- To increase the understanding of consumer needs, provide feedback to services and develop more effective services
- To assist in improving and assuring the quality of service provision
- To provide a tool by which service delivery can be evaluated and reviewed, and by which quality assurance strategies are implemented.

(National SAAP Case Management Practice Principles)
Engagement

- Salvation Army housing and homelessness staff need to be conversant with the Privacy Act [see Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Application]

- Case management engagement requires a confidential and private environment

- Engaging consumers is about establishing rapport and trust, while also informing them of housing and homelessness program processes. At the point of engagement, a case-worker needs to know how the consumer wishes to be assisted.

- Authorisation must be received from consumers before any information about themselves or their child/children is given to another stakeholder [see Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Application].

Ongoing Assessment and Review

- Assessments are documented activities between a program and consumers - non-judgemental in nature - that explore the strengths as well as the needs of consumers within the context of the challenges they are facing

- An initial assessment that focuses on a consumer’s more immediate needs is often necessary, followed by a process of matching the consumer to the most appropriate service(s) available

- Referring agencies are informed as to the outcome of their referrals

- When the consumer is more fully engaged in the program, further identified needs of the consumer are assessed

- The ongoing eligibility criteria and ongoing processes of review and planning for consumers must be clearly articulated by staff throughout the course of engagement with consumers.

The assessment and review process:

- Takes a holistic approach, incorporating strengths, hopes, preferences and needs, along with short/medium/long-term goals

- Provides an agreed, flexible, case-managed response to a person’s situation and personal circumstances

- Appropriately identifies the whole range of consumers' service needs

- Assesses service requirements against the identified needs of the consumer

- Is conducted regularly between the program and a consumer towards ensuring accuracy and relevance, including, for example, identifying changing housing needs

- Runs in conjunction with the review of progress against agreed actions and the attainment of identified and specific goals and outcomes

- Monitors consumer achievement of goals and outcomes which in turn forms part of programs’ performance monitoring at staff member level and aggregated to program level, e.g. including tenant rent arrears and tenancies maintained.
Assessment processes should be transparent with consumers being properly advised of their rights to appeal any decision and the avenues available to them to assist in appealing and/or making a complaint.

Reviews are documented and signed as an accurate record by the consumer and the staff member involved, with a mutually agreed time, date and location for the next review similarly documented, as well as being documented as agreed, by all parties involved.

**Exclusion**

Exclusion (including eviction) of consumers already engaged with a program is one of the most grave scenarios within the operation of a program. However, in addressing non-compliance with tenancy agreements, Tenancy Management Programs must comply with the requirements set out in the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (with amendments) (Victoria) where the RTA applies. Every program must have a clear process addressing the circumstances and behaviours that might lead to a premature and unilateral withdrawal of services.

Unless otherwise dictated by the RTA, these processes must:

1. **be pro-actively and clearly communicated to consumers**
2. **directly refer to specific aspects of the program’s duty of care and other related policies including the program’s violence policy**
3. **involve the consumer in every stage, including reasonable prior written and verbal notice of what circumstance and/or behaviour relating to them is to be discussed and when and how they will be able to feed into that process (including advocacy), before a decision is reached that might result in the withdrawal of services or lead to the withdrawal of services**
4. **ensure that decisions are reached by at least two staff members**
5. **detail those situations relating to risk whereby an immediate temporary withdrawal of services is authorised possibly by a single staff member, pending a review of the decision at the earliest practicable opportunity that also provides for consumer input**
6. **detail a consumer’s right to appeal and the process for that appeal (including the right to an advocate and contact details for HAS)**
7. **commit the program to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the consumer’s critical needs are provided for during the process, including that of appeal**
8. **direct the program to take all reasonable steps to ensure that alternative services are explored with the consumer, not least should the decision to withdraw services be upheld**
9. **provide for any decision reached at any stage to be communicated to the consumer in writing and verbally where practicable**
10. **direct the program to clearly communicate to the consumer, including in written form, how the consumer can re-engage with the program**
11. **feed into the program’s monitoring and evaluation systems so that the number and nature of exclusions including evictions, inform service development.**
**Planning**

Planning activities focus on developing an action plan that addresses the needs of the consumer, as identified through the assessment process, clarifying goals and aspirations, setting priorities and identifying actions necessary to achieve these. Planning involves:

- **Consumers’ active involvement in the process**
- **The development of a documented action plan explicitly addressing the needs identified through the assessment process**
- **The development of a support plan that builds upon consumers’ strengths**
- **Achievable goals being set**
- **Explicit co-ordination of case management efforts with other services involved with the consumer**
- **Regular reviews of action plans being conducted with consumers to check progress against agreed activities and outcomes and relevancy in light of ongoing assessments of strengths, needs and wants.**

**Referrals**

A referral is an active process towards ensuring that a consumer is accepted for assessment by another service consistent with the consumer’s needs and wants. Throughout the referral process, staff identify the need to refer, establish appropriate mechanisms for accessing the service and then support the consumer through the process of accessing and establishing stable contact. This involves sharing information and forwarding relevant documentation required, and consistent with the consumer’s authorisation, to facilitate a coordinated and smooth referral transition.

Making a referral can involve the following tasks:

- **Providing information to a consumer about an outside service**
- **Liaison with other services ensuring they can provide an appropriate response for the consumer being referred – as per the consumer’s needs assessment**
- **Gaining the consumer’s consent to be referred to another service, and having authorisation to forward information to that service**
- **Providing the service with relevant information concerning the consumer, to establish whether the referral is appropriate**
- **Securing an appointment for the consumer with the service and, if warranted, accompanying the consumer to the service**
- **Following through with the service to ensure that they were able to assist**
→ Assisting consumers to self-refer where appropriate

→ Having a prior knowledge regarding what is appropriate and available

→ Establishing with the next service any ongoing role with the consumer being referred

→ Matching consumers to appropriate accommodation (e.g. not placing a family violence victim in a motel near the perpetrator)

→ Considering the existing consumer group when referring/receiving a consumer into a program.

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) is a crisis response to all people affected by homelessness who have acute needs and require immediate support. The Salvation Army housing and homelessness programs ensure the National SAAP Case Management Practice Principles are utilised for the following:

1. To provide clear guidelines to both consumers and program staff on what can be expected from the service

2. To ensure consumers know what they can expect from the service and to ensure consumers receive a consistent quality of service

3. To increase the understanding of consumer needs, provide feedback to services and develop more effective services

4. To assist in improving and assuring the quality of service provision

5. To provide a tool by which service delivery can be evaluated and reviewed, and by which quality assurance strategies are implemented.

(National SAAP Case Management Practice Principles)

Non-Acceptance of Referral

People have a right to services that are well-managed and efficient. The Salvation Army is acutely aware that some people who have experienced a crisis or traumatic experience may be incapable of making decisions without resolving or dealing with issues such as loss, grief or even fear.

Staff need to recognise the emotions that a consumer is experiencing and respond appropriately. This is particularly so with regard to the non-acceptance of people attempting to gain access to a service.

Non-acceptance of a referral, or applicant might be for the following reasons:

→ Protocols and program specifications relating to the geographical sources of referrals

→ Unresolvable absence of appropriate documentation from a referring agency

→ Maximum capacity of the service
Gender of applicant – e.g. male person presenting at an all-female service.

Age of applicant does not match the service (e.g. older person presenting to a youth service taking 15-year-olds to 18-year-olds)

Young person with a child/children presenting to a facility that is not set up to take children.

All people presenting for assistance should be treated as potential consumers and assisted and referred appropriately to alternative services that cater for their relevant circumstances.

Referring agencies are informed as to the outcome of their referrals.

Assessment processes should be transparent with consumers being properly advised of their rights to appeal any decision and the avenues available to them to assist in appealing and/or making a complaint.

If children and youth are involved, staff need to be aware of their legal responsibilities outlined in The Department of Human Services (Victoria), Duty of Care 2000 document.

**Advocacy**

People seeking assistance are encouraged to act independently and to advocate on their own behalf wherever possible. Staff advocate for them when requested and appropriate. Advocacy is undertaken through the assertion of the consumer’s rights and entitlements (including freedom of expression) within an empowerment model that encourages consumers to act independently (including assisting consumers to develop the necessary skills and confidence to act on their own behalf in the future), while recognising the power imbalance that often prevails through, for example, the institutional and individual use of language and behaviours.

Making a referral can take on an advocacy role. This might occur when, for example:

- The consumer is lacking in self-confidence and an assertive approach may be required with the service to which the consumer is being referred
- The consumer is being assisted to develop the necessary skills and confidence to act on their own behalf in the future
- It is felt misrepresentation or withholding of information may occur.

**Assessment Considerations**

- Meet Criteria
- Prioritise/Risk Factors
- Match to Worker – Meet flexible needs
- Capacity/Case load
- Alternative
- Inform Referrer of Outcome.
Exit Planning and Case Closure

Programs need to clearly articulate from the first engagement with a consumer how long they can be accommodated/supported and what the indicators are for case closure. This might be upon:

- Achievement of goals
- The consumer's ability to work on goals without support
- Obtaining long-term secure housing
- A consumer wishing to discontinue with the service.

Planning for when a consumer exits the program involves a process of facilitation and linkage of all continuing supports and services that are to remain in place in support of the consumer after exiting. Exit plans are distinct plans though they flow on from action plans and are consistent in terms of principles of approach with those action plans. Every exit is unique and does not always go according to plan.

- Exit planning can be part of further ongoing support
- Exit planning can be seen as a separate process that needs its own plan.

Further considerations in regard to exit planning include:

- Continuity, integration of the action plan
- Duration
- Agreement on length of time support will continue with handover agency
- Review of the case after a set period of time, to evaluate the exit process
- Acknowledgement of any difficult processes experienced
- Consideration of the program's funding agreement.

Consumer Group Specific Considerations

Families

The Salvation Army housing and homelessness services provide each consumer with opportunities for ongoing assessment and reassessment of their needs, and the needs of any children.

An awareness and need to place consumers within an appropriate gender mix/setting is essential.
Women and Children Escaping Family Violence

The Salvation Army supports a coordinated response to both family violence and to homelessness and believes this is in the best interests of consumers. Family violence is about violence, abuse, control and coercion; it is not simply about homelessness. Women and their children attempting to leave an abusive situation are at risk of, and often experience, homelessness. While a major cause of homelessness, family violence is a complex social problem requiring a specialist response. The support needs of women and children experiencing family violence are unique to their experience of abuse. Safety is of paramount concern for services responding to women and children experiencing family violence.

There is an increasing awareness within services of the issues that need to be considered when working with women and their children. A key reference for programs is the Code of Practice for Specialist Family Violence Services for Women and Children produced by DV Vic in 2006. Further information and guidance can be found at www.dvvic.org.au.

The Women's Safety Strategy 2002–2007 provides a detailed framework for the government’s commitments to addressing violence against women over a five-year term. The key directions of the strategy are:

Protection and Justice

The strategy focuses on reforming criminal law and procedure; increasing reporting and reducing attrition; improving pathways between police and other services and improving responses to psychological and emotional abuse.

Options for Women

Improving the range of options available to women including addressing the barriers to seeking assistance:

- Providing information to women through universal services
- Increasing awareness among family members and friends
- Enhancing the capacity, quality and flexibility of service
- Supporting women to remain in the home and assisting the healing process.

Violence Prevention and Education

Supporting a mix of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention activities to include:

- Providing consistent messages across sectors; ensuring violence prevention initiatives reflect the gender differences; supporting education and violence prevention programs in schools; targeted communication activities; encouraging involvement and ownership; professional education; and responding in an appropriate manner towards men who use violence and creating safer public places.
**Victorian State Disability Plan 2002–2012**

The Victorian State Disability Plan seeks to redress the social discrimination and marginalisation of people with disabilities. With regard to violence against women, the plan seeks to ‘promote people’s rights’ to ensure that support providers, and the Victorian community as a whole, respect, promote and safeguard the rights of people with a disability. It specifically states the need to:

- **Ensure access to appropriate support for people with a disability who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, physical, emotional or sexual assault, or sexual harassment.**

- **Support the criminal justice system (police, courts, corrections and other organisations) to better respond to the needs of people with a disability. This includes building closer working relationships between the Department of Human Services (Victoria) and justice agencies.**

**Children and Young People**

The Salvation Army seeks to promote the safety and wellbeing of all children and fully supports the United Nations International Charter of the Rights of the Child, along with the Charter for Children in Out-of-Home Care (Department of Human Services, State Government, Victoria).

Children accompanying their parents or carers into homelessness assistance services, along with homeless young people up to 18 years of age, are considered to be among the most vulnerable of the homeless population. Children and young people need specific care, ensuring their social, physical and emotional needs are met within the context of their family situation and presenting needs.

Principles underpinning working with children and young people include:

- **Acknowledging the rights of each child and young person presenting, and to have their individual needs assessed and met**

- **Ensuring a safe, age-appropriate, welcoming and accessible environment that meets relevant community standards, expectations and legal OSH requirements**

- **Adopting appropriate and respectful approaches when working with children and young people**

- **Having established systems for the reporting of abuse, relevant to the protection or development of a child (e.g. Child FIRST) or reporting to Child Protection**

- **Having an established system for dealing with the risk of suicide and self-harm in young people**

- **Where appropriate, identifying important relationships and family reunification**

- **Ensuring parents’ and children’s participation in case planning, where appropriate**

- **Employing/training staff with appropriate skills and knowledge in child-centred practice**

- **Networking with appropriate external agencies linking to programs that enhance a young person’s independent living skills, health, income, housing and recreation opportunities.**
The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 requires that there is a charter for children and young people in care in Victoria, that provides a framework for promoting the wellbeing of children and youth. Although the charter itself is not legally enforceable, the statements within it embody concepts that are reflected in law, as well as in the registration standards for community service organisations that provide out-of-home care services.

The Charter is for all people working with, or who care for, children and young people. This would include child protection workers, foster carers, residential care workers and case managers, etc. It provides a guide about action needing to occur for children and young people in care.

Children and young people should learn about the charter. It is vital that those people who work with and care for children and young people play a lead role in discussing the charter, the statements contained within it and what it means regarding the expectations that children can have throughout their time in care.

**Charter for Children in Out-of-Home Care**

As a Child or Young Person in care I need:

- To be safe and feel safe
- To stay healthy and well and go to a doctor, dentist or other professional for help when I need to
- To be allowed to be a child and be treated with respect
- If I am an Aboriginal Child, to feel proud and strong in my own culture
- To have a say and be heard
- To be provided with information
- To tell someone if I am unhappy
- To know information about me will only be shared in order to help people look after me
- To have a worker who is there for me
- To keep in contact with my family, friends and people and places that matter to me
- Careful thought being given to where I will live, so I will have a home that feels like a home
- To have fun and do activities that I enjoy
- To be able to take part in family traditions and be able to learn about and be involved with cultural and religious groups that are important to me
- To be provided with the best possible education and training
- To be able to develop life skills and grow up to become the best person I can
- Help in preparing myself to leave care and support, after I leave care.

Related Policies and Links

- National Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Case Management Principles (Commonwealth)
- Quality Improvement in Case Management (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 1998)
- Working With A Multicultural Community (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 1998)
- The Privacy Act (1998)
- The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory – Case Note Policy (2006)
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (with amendments) (Victoria)
- Duty of Care (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2000)
- National Community Housing Standards 2003
- Language Services Policy (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2006)
- Homelessness Assistance Program Guidelines and Conditions of Funding (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2006)
- Code of Practice for Specialist Family Violence Services for Women and Children (Domestic Violence Victoria 2006)
- www.dvvic.org.au
- The Protocol for the Case Management of Unsupported Young People (Commonwealth and States)
- Victorian State Disability Plan (2002-2012)
- The United Nations International Charter of the Rights of the Child,
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies (Victoria)
»COMMUNITY«
Working with the Community

**Policy**

The needs of consumers and the services to which consumers require access dictate that programs be effectively and pro-actively linked to individuals, groups, agencies and initiatives in the wider community. Working in partnership with the wider community benefits consumers through, for example:

- **Smother referral pathways**
- **Improved communication**
- **Better resourcing of existing and new services.**

It is essential that programs seeking to support the integration of consumers with the life of the wider community are themselves integrated appropriately with the community. The duty of programs to ensure that consumers’ needs are met efficiently further requires programs to constantly seek opportunities to develop and deliver services in close collaboration with relevant parties external to the organisation, consistent to the mission, vision and values of The Salvation Army. There is a particular responsibility on the part of programs to play their part towards cultivating meaningful and productive relationships with Salvation Army corps. Programs should take a strategic approach to the cultivation of relationships external to the organisation.
Application

The aim in collaborating with individuals, groups, agencies and initiatives external to a program's own organisation is always 'the good of the consumer'. The objectives of collaboration should always be clear but are likely to vary as is appropriate. Similarly, stakeholders with whom programs seek collaboration should be judiciously identified and should be able to provide access to the resources required on the part of the program.

Examples are provided below of activities and initiatives through which programs collaborate with the wider community and groups with whom programs might seek to collaborate:

- Tenders
- Memorandum of understanding
- Protocols
- Network membership
- Community development
- Visits to services
- Visits from services
- Students on placement
- Community activities
- Reform consultations
- Chaplaincy services
- Joint location of services
- Primary care partnerships
- Universities
- Local services – directly and indirectly related
- Peak bodies
- Lobby groups.
Related Policies and Links

- National Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Case Management Principles (Commonwealth)

- Quality Improvement in Case Management (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 1998)

- National Community Housing Standards 2000

- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies (Victoria)
PHYSICAL
The Physical Environment

**Policy**

The Salvation Army recognises the need for premises provided for engagement with consumers and especially premises that will be regarded by consumers as ‘home’ – even for the briefest of periods – to be of the highest possible quality that speaks of the inherent value and dignity of each consumer, regardless of the issues with which they present. Programs communicate, through the premises used for their purpose, the quality of their intangible services.

Premises are designed, equipped, maintained and managed so as to promote consumers’ ease of access, safety, wellbeing and self-esteem. The needs and wants of consumers regarding programs’ premises are systematically sought directly from consumers, documented and transparently considered as consistent with case-planning and consumer participation good practice, as well as business planning and related asset management planning (where applicable).
Application

Programs are mindful at all times of the requirements of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (with amendments).

Each program has a program of inspection, maintenance and upgrade for all premises for which they are responsible. Such work is undertaken by appropriately qualified tradespeople.

Similarly, those programs have processes and procedures regarding standard maintenance, urgent repairs, non-scheduled maintenance and upgrades that link with programs’ business-related plans, e.g. asset management and risk management plans.

Programs maintain accurate and current lists of the properties for which they are responsible.

Programs establish performance targets which are monitored and evaluated that include focus on urgent repairs, priority repairs, routine repairs, tenant satisfaction regarding maintenance, responsive maintenance expenditure and planned maintenance expenditure.

Related Policies and Links

- The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory Risk Management - Policy and Procedures (on line)
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (with amendments) (Victoria)
- National Community Housing Standards 2003
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies (Victoria)
- Quality Improvement Council - Site Inspection Tool [Core Standards 1.3 and 1.6]
APPENDIX 1
Appendix One

Social Programme Information Management: Programme Logic and Quality

As The Salvation Army seeks to continually increase the effectiveness of its social programs in delivering its mission, issues of mission accountability and quality become paramount. In dealing with quality assurance and management, The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory needs to be assured that mission is embedded in such concepts and practices.

Programme Logic is a critical concept for ensuring quality in the program design and performance planning. Hence, it contributes to total quality management.

Programme Logic assists in the effective and logical design of social programs. It is informed by evidence-based data collection, including Consumer Participation, utilising designed Programme Logic survey tools.

Such data will enable The Salvation Army to monitor consumer outcomes, review programs and evaluate goals. Assessing the way The Salvation Army mission is delivered is fundamental to this.

SAMIS (Salvation Army Management Information System) is a client management and data collection tool that will inform client outcomes and service activity of social programs, based on Programme Logic plans and provide data, monitoring, review and evaluative information to ensure quality program design. It assists The Salvation Army housing and homelessness services to operate effectively within quality management.

Programme Logic enables The Salvation Army Southern Territory to use one framework for:

- Establishing a shared understanding of what social programmes do and why
- Developing operational plans for social programs
- Assessing the performance of The Salvation Army social programs.

Further information is available from the SAMIS Team within The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory - Social Programme Department.
Appendix Two

Homelessness Assistance Service Standards (HASS) - development

Following a formal selection process, The Department of Human Services (Victoria) announced in late 2007 that QICSA (Quality Improvement and Community Services Accreditation) would be the single provider appointed for accreditation of the State Government-funded housing and homelessness services.

The Homelessness Assistance Service Standards (HASS) were developed following extensive consultation with program clients and service providers from the sector between 2003 and 2004. Additionally, a range of other related documents and references, including the development of a charter of rights for people experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness, was developed.

In response to the accreditation reform, the Territorial Social Policy and Resource Unit (TSPRU) undertook an organisational analysis of the status of housing and homelessness programs towards formal accreditation. This information provided an invaluable foundation for the identification of the commitment of Salvation Army programs to the Continuous Quality Improvement Framework, self-assessment progress as well as the benefits in the development and implementation of The Salvation Army service delivery policy and practice guide and resource.

The intent of the service delivery policy and practice guide and resource is to serve as an overarching framework that will assist housing and homelessness programs, by providing a point of reference to the policy and practice benchmarks within the program setting. This resource is designed to relate to, and co-exist alongside, any existing policy and practice program procedures.
Appendix Three

The HASS Self Assessment Process

An important component of the Continuous Quality Improvement Framework is the process of self-assessment, which is defined as a program assessment measured against the first five sections of the Homeless Assistance Service Standards within the context of existing policies and procedures. These sections are:

- **Section 1:** Upholding and promoting rights
- **Section 2:** Access to support for people experiencing homelessness
- **Section 3:** Direct service delivery and case-management
- **Section 4:** Direct service delivery to specific groups
- **Section 5:** Working with the community.

HASS-related Legislation, Regulation and Guidance

**Standard 1: Upholding and Promoting Rights**


2. *The Information Privacy Act 2002* (Victoria)


5. *The Privacy Act 1988* (Commonwealth)


**Standard 2: Access to Support for People Experiencing Homelessness**


Standard 3: Direct Service Delivery and Case Management

1. The National Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Case Management Principles (Commonwealth 1996)
2. The Quality Improvement in Case Management (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 1998)
3. The Working with a Multicultural Community (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 1998)
4. The Duty of Care (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2000)
5. The Language Services Policy (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2006)
6. The Homelessness Assistance Program Guidelines and Conditions of Funding (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2006)
8. The Protocol for the Case Management of Unsupported Young People (Commonwealth and States).

Standard 4: Direct Service Delivery to Specific Groups

1. The Working with Children Act 2005
2. The Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (with amendments)
3. The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
4. The Duty of Care (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2000)
5. The Women’s Safety Strategy (Office of Women’s Affairs 2002)
6. The Language Services Policy (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2006)
7. The Working with a Multicultural Community (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 1999)
8. The Victorian Indigenous Homelessness Study (Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria, 2001)
9. The Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Strategy (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2001)
10. The Protocol for Case Management of Unsupported Young People (Commonwealth and States)
11. The NTV Standards for Men’s Behavioural Change Group Work


13. The Homelessness Assistance Program Guidelines and Conditions for Funding (Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2006)


**Standard 5: Working with the Community**

*All of the above*
Appendix Four

Housing Registration Policy and Procedure focus

To meet registration, there are a number of policies and procedures that programs need to evidence to meet each of the performance standards. These include policy and procedures, templates, forms and sample documents.

Below is a list of documents required by the Housing Registrar to meet and maintain registration as a rental housing agency. It is the content of such policies, procedures, etc. that programs need to evidence in their own documented operations. Programs are not required to have documents whose headings exactly match those listed.

**Probity**
- Code of ethics or ethics policy
- Privacy policy
- Record of conflict of interest at staff level.

**Risk Management**
- Risk management policy and procedures
- Risk profile describing all material risks and how they are managed
- Workplace safety processes
- Workplace accident/incident documentation
- Reporting on OH&S to The Salvation Army
- Reporting to The Salvation Army on risk management.

**Management of the Agency**
- Senior staff role descriptions
- HR policy and procedures
- Financial management policy and procedures
- OH&S policy and procedures
- Organisational planning processes
- Information management policy and procedures
- Purchasing policy and procedures
- Office infrastructure policy and procedures
Outsourcing or subcontracting agreements

Sample copy of inter-agency protocol or agreement

Organisational chart

Staff selection, supervision and appraisal and development policy and documents

OH&S documents for inspections, reporting and staff training

Core business information systems for data collection, analysis and reporting.

Financial viability

Financial management policy and procedures.

Tenancy Management

Tenancy allocations and accessibility policy and procedures

Affordability of rents policy and procedures

Security policy and procedures

Client service policy and procedures

Client participation policy and procedures

Sample tenancy agreement

Information to tenants re rights and responsibilities

Public information about service, office hours, etc.

Register of complaints (or relevant form)

Information to clients that encourages participation

Client surveys.

Asset Management and Maintenance

Maintenance plan, policy and procedures

Asset management plan, policy and procedures

Property inspection sheet

Report on property condition

Tenant request for maintenance form.