



# INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

## A Short History of Army Involvement

### *Salvation Army Aboriginal Ministry Advisory Council (SAAMAC)*

- Established 10 years ago as an advisory to the Territorial Aboriginal Ministries Consultant and to the cabinet.
  - Consultants included:
    - Mr. Roy Niasmith
    - Captain Bruce Parkinson
- SAAMAC members were appointed by the CS and represented Corps involved in Indigenous ministry, Indigenous Salvationists, General Eva Burrows, Vince Ross and others.
- The Secretary for Program, and the Territorial Corps Program Secretary chaired the advisory.
- The Aboriginal Newsletter, (discontinued in 2004) edited by Ms. Glynis Brown was a voice of this council and for indigenous issues.

### *Multicultural and Indigenous Australia Council (MIAC)*

- Established in 2004 this Council combines the Cross Cultural Ministries Council and SAAMAC.
- This is not an attempt to minimize either group but recognition of the fact that many principles of cross-cultural communication and action are appropriate to all cultures.
- The council recognises that Indigenous Australians are not “alien” to this country but are in fact the original Australians and there are specific issues that must be addressed in the journey towards a reconciled and egalitarian Australia.



## **A STATEMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

### ***THE SALVATION ARMY AND AUSTRALIA'S ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE***

**A**t this time in our nation's history, The Salvation Army gives thanks to God for what has been achieved, and pledges to continue to move together in reconciliation with our aboriginal Australians.

Let us, therefore, strengthen our purpose in seeking before God a spirit of true fellow-citizenship.

#### **WE RECOGNISE:**

1. That Australia's aboriginal people have sustained grievous and unacceptable discrimination throughout these latter years of their vast history, that is from the time of white settlement.
2. That the original inhabitants of this land have been denied the full extent of their birthright in terms of personal dignity, adequate health, and a place to 'grow'.
3. That this nation has not adequately addressed the issues which give rise to the custody of some aboriginal people, nor the full impact of such custody on those concerned.
4. That, all too often, good intention and integrity of purpose by Australian governments have been negated by a failure to acknowledge the rights of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, to consult with them in the decision-making processes, and to understand the cultures and customs which impact upon legislation passed 'in their best interests'. The separation of children from their families is a case in point.

#### **WE AFFIRM:**

1. The right of ALL Australians to harmonious, peaceful co-existence, free from stigma, discrimination, and racism.
2. The right of ALL Australians to maintain cultural identity within the wider Australian community and law.
3. The right of aboriginal people to regard their affinity with the land as sacred and, where possible, to secure native title.
4. The right of ALL Australians to the dignity of citizenship, provision of adequate health care, equality in educational standards and facilities, opportunity for full employment, availability of adequate housing, the sense of belonging to community.

#### **WE PLEDGE:**

1. To listen to the voice of suffering, rejection, loss, and despair, to acknowledge past failures, and to resolve to work together for the good of all Australians.
2. To learn from our past, and to activate an effective response to inequality, marginalisation, and discrimination.
3. To endorse cultural identity, to be enriched by it, and to encourage its full expression.
4. To encourage a respect that is mutual, a harmony that is healing, and to seek a joint commitment to work together towards the achievement of reconciliation of our peoples.
5. To respect the heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to encourage this heritage to be valued and utilised effectively as an integral part of Australia's shared wealth.

We, The Salvation Army, will work towards the healing of the wounds from the past and promote the ideals expressed in this statement as we move towards a shared future in the ongoing process of reconciliation.

Signed on 8 November, 2000

## Statement on the dissolution of ATSIC

The Salvation Army believes that the reality of indigenous marginalisation is a national crisis. We advocate that there must be a formal process by which Australia's indigenous voice can be heard and respected. It is imperative that we provide opportunities to hear the voice of the powerless, and build policy that engages in a journey toward self-determination; this is the right of any and every Australian citizen.

We acknowledge that there is an inequality in the standards of health and well-being amongst the citizens of Australia (Aborigines have a higher death rate than Caucasian Australians in every age group, and die mostly of preventable diseases). This is also recognised by the political parties who make numerous promises of money and policy, but this will only ease the symptoms.

We do not disagree with the decision to dissolve ATSIC, but there must be provision made to respect the indigenous voice. Returning to a policy of assimilation (mainstreaming) is not the answer. Throwing money at indigenous health issues only serves to provide expensive band-aids to hide the symptoms.

A policy of self-determination is the single most powerful promise a government could make in the journey toward a reconciled Australian society. "If you want significant, sustainable improvement in the daily lives of indigenous citizens and indigenous communities, begin by putting substantive decision-making power in indigenous hands" (Stephen Cornell, Professor of Sociology)

The Salvation Army believes that Government must create policy that allows people to take power and responsibility over their own affairs. People must be empowered to participate in their own destiny, and determine their own path: it is only in engaging with all Australians that this, our amazingly multicultural nation will fulfil its potential.

## STATEMENT OF WELCOME AT PUBLIC MEETINGS

There are two statements that have been developed by MIAC and ratified by THQ for use in Salvation Army meetings:

### **FOR MEETINGS WHEN AN ABORIGINAL PERSON OF THE LOCAL AREA IS PRESENT AND PRESENTS A STATEMENT OF WELCOME ON BEHALF OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE**

1. Welcome statement from the local Aboriginal representative
2. Response statement from an appropriate Salvationist.

*On behalf of ..... I thank you for your welcome. I wish to acknowledge the ..... people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we meet. We respect your people and your culture, and on this day express our commitment to work for reconciliation and justice for indigenous people.*

### **For meetings when no aboriginal representative is present to give the welcome:**

*We, The Salvation Army, acknowledge that we meet on land for which the ..... people are the traditional owners and custodians. We remember their ancestors with respect, and commit ourselves to work for reconciliation and justice for indigenous people.*