



Land Transport Amendment Bill Transport and Industrial Relations Committee

The Salvation Army (New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga Territory) Submission

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Salvation Army is an international Christian and social services organisation that has worked in New Zealand for over one hundred and thirty years. The Army provides a wide-range of practical social, community and faith-based services, particularly for those who are suffering, facing injustice or those who have been forgotten and marginalised by mainstream society.
- 1.2 We have over 90 community ministry centres and churches (corps) across the nation, serving local families and communities. We are passionately committed to our communities as we aim to fulfil our mission of caring for people, transforming lives and reforming society by God's power¹.
- 1.3 The Salvation Army has a history of helping those facing addictions to alcohol and/or drugs. We currently run 14 high quality treatment centres across New Zealand for those facing these addictions.² Additionally, we have consistently advocated for stronger alcohol law reforms and greater support for those addicted or suffering harm from alcohol in our nation. Consequently, we are passionately committed to engaging in any discourse involving alcohol reforms, issues or harm in New Zealand.
- 1.4 This submission has been prepared by the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit (SPPU) of The Salvation Army. This Unit works towards the eradication of poverty by encouraging policies and practices that strengthen the social framework of New Zealand.
- 1.5 This submission has been approved by Commissioner Robert Donaldson, the Territorial Commander of The Salvation Army's New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga Territory.

2. THE SALVATION ARMY PERSPECTIVE

- 2.1 We submit that we as a nation should seriously consider the implementation of a zero alcohol limit for all drivers regardless of age. We cannot continue to ignore the extremely high cost in lost

¹ <http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/our-community/mission/>

² <http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/need-assistance/addictions/alcohol-and-drug-addiction>

lives, suffering and resources that driving while intoxicated causes in our families and communities. We acknowledge that implementing a national zero-tolerance policy for driving might be difficult given the prevalence and normalcy of alcohol in our nation, and the other associated legislative, policy and practice changes that would need to happen. But in recent years, national discussions have occurred regarding alcohol reforms and also our 'binge drinking culture' in New Zealand. Furthermore, national campaigns around a smoke-free New Zealand have gained huge public and political momentum in New Zealand over the last decade. We submit therefore that similar national conversations and debates are needed regarding limits for driving while intoxicated. Part of this debate should be consideration of a national zero-tolerance breath alcohol limit for all drivers.

However, The Salvation Army submits that in the event that a zero-tolerance limit *is not* considered or accepted by this Committee, then we have provided submissions below on a reduced breath alcohol limit.

2.2 We support any move to reduce the harm caused by alcohol in New Zealand. Driving while intoxicated is part of the wider issue of alcohol related harm in New Zealand and causes undeniable harm not only to those choosing to drive drunk but other road users. Therefore, stronger messages must be sent to our families and communities that driving while intoxicated and being over the legally-set limits of intoxication cannot and should not be tolerated in our nation.

2.2.1 Evidence has shown that the current drink-driving limits are too low. Evidence is also clearly showing that significant harm is caused by those who are choosing to drive under the influence of alcohol but who are not breaching the current legal drink-driving limit. The introduction of the effectively zero limit for people under 20 has successfully reduced the number of young people choosing to drive while under the influence of alcohol. We sincerely hope that this Bill will bring about similar positive results for those over 20 as it has for younger New Zealanders.

2.2.2 We submit that reducing the legal drink-driving limit will likely reduce the amount of alcohol people consume in general. Lowering the limit will ideally reduce the amount of people having 'just one more' as people become more aware of the dangers and consequences of driving while impaired by alcohol.

We therefore fully support this Bill.

2.2.3 We support the introduction of an infringement offence for those found to have a blood alcohol level of between 51 milligrams and 80 milligrams per 100 millilitres of blood, or found to have 251 micrograms to 400 micrograms of alcohol per litre of breath. Unnecessary criminalisation can have a disproportional impact on peoples' livelihoods and puts

added pressure on the accused and their family, on our justice system and on court processes. We also support the Police having the ability to prevent people driving for 12 hours if given an infringement notice to prevent the risk they may pose to other road users.

2.2.4 We contend that the penalty of 50 demerit points with the \$200 fine will be a strong deterrent for most drivers, as two offences in two years would result in a loss of licence.

3. RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC AMENDMENTS TO LEGISLATION

3.1 We support the action taken by *clause 4* to reduce the drink-driving limit from 400 micrograms of alcohol per litre of breath to 251 micrograms and from 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood to 51 milligrams. While this still allows most people to have a few drinks before driving, we submit it will lead to more people having a greater awareness of the lower limits and ideally changing any potentially harmful drinking behaviour.

3.2 We generally support the introduction of an infringement offence as prescribed by *clause 5*. We believe that an infringement notice will allow the message that putting other drivers at risk by driving while intoxicated will not be tolerated, while not criminalising or excessively punishing people who slip up once.

3.3 We support the action in *clause 13* allowing the Police to forbid a person from driving or immobilise a vehicle for 12 hours if a person gives a positive breath alcohol test and is either issued with an infringement notice or a criminal charge. We contend that the risk to other road users must be minimised as much as possible

4. CONCLUSION

The Salvation Army supports this Bill. The harm caused by people driving while under the influence of alcohol, but within the current legal limits is too great to ignore. While attitudes towards driving drunk are slowly changing, we submit that further action is needed to discourage people driving while under the influence of alcohol.

We support introduction of an infringement offence for those found within the proposed limit and existing limit while retaining the existing criminal charges for those found to be in excess of the current drink driving limit.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this Bill.

Major Campbell Roberts
National Director, Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit
The Salvation Army New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga
+64 27 450 6944 | + 64 9 261 0883 (DDI)
campbell_roberts@nzf.salvationarmy.org