



Criminal Records (Expungement of Convictions for Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill

Justice and Electoral Committee

The Salvation Army New Zealand Fiji and Tonga Territory Submission

BACKGROUND

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.
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 through God in Christ by the Holy Spirit's power.¹
3. This submission has been prepared by the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit 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.
4. This submission has been approved by Commissioner Andrew Westrupp, Territorial Commander of The Salvation Army's New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga Territory.

THE SALVATION ARMY PERSPECTIVE

5. **The Salvation Army supports this Bill.** The Salvation Army believes that this Bill is an important reflection of the need for care, justice and mercy in society and we thank the Committee for this opportunity to support on this Bill.
6. The Salvation Army appreciates that for the men and families of men who have historical homosexual convictions, such convictions have been both discriminatory and distressing. Such convictions also do not reflect New Zealand law today, and have not since the passing of the Homosexual Law Reform Bill in 1986. The enactment of this Bill will ensure that this discrimination is not continued and that people can fully experience the freedoms given to them under current law.

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

7. We work with many people in New Zealand society who are marginalised and discriminated against for a variety of reasons in many facets of their life, including those who have historical criminal convictions. We support this legislation as an attempt to remove marginalisation and discrimination due to criminal convictions under outdated law.

8. In considering this Bill, The Salvation Army is acutely aware of its own actions in 1986 when it opposed the passing of the Homosexual Law Reform Bill. In July 2006, The Salvation Army acknowledged the deep hurt experienced by the gay community caused by its opposition to the 1986 Bill.² In the intervening years since 1986 The Salvation Army has realised that some of its past actions in regard to LGBTI people were wrong and has moved to put things right.

CONCLUSION

9. The Salvation Army supports the Government's intention to correct past errors through this legislation. We believe that this Bill is important at this time and we thank the Committee for this opportunity to support this Bill.

² http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/uploads/TSA_and_Homosexual_Law_Reform_Bill.pdf