

Unit 2 / 24 Winbirra Parade
Ashwood VIC 3147

Ryan McGlaughlin
Chief Executive Officer
Suicide Prevention Australia

September 1 2010

Dear Mr McGlaughlin,

I must start by saying how grateful I am for the work that Suicide Prevention Australia does in bringing awareness to the issues of suicide and its prevention in the community. I should mention I was a financial member of SPA for some time.

Over the past few years now I have become increasingly concerned about SPA's association with the Salvation Army. I understand the Salvation Army is committed to suicide prevention, as per its web site¹, and this is great.

As you are aware, especially following the release of the SPA Position Statement "Suicide and self-harm among Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Communities"², same-sex attracted youth are over-represented in suicide statistics. I am sure this is one of the major focuses of your organisation.

However, you may not be aware that the Salvation Army promotes an attitude of intolerance of homosexuality and bisexuality, as outlined in its Positional Statements³. I refer you to the statement on Human Sexuality, section C "Homosexuality". I have attached a copy of this document for your reference.

In particular, it states:

Homosexual practice, however, is, in the light of Scripture, clearly unacceptable⁴. Such activity is chosen behaviour and is thus a matter of the will. It is therefore able to be directed or restrained in the same way heterosexual urges are controlled. Homosexual practice would render any person ineligible for full membership (soldiership) in the Army.

...

4 Romans 1:26-27 Also highlights bi-sexual practice as unacceptable.

This statement would not be supported by researchers in the area of suicide prevention, sexual orientation or anyone that takes suicide prevention seriously. My concern is that for as long as the Salvation Army is attempting to prevent suicide, whilst it does not offer unqualified acceptance of homosexuality and bisexuality, it cannot be taken seriously about its full commitment to suicide prevention.

¹ <http://salvos.org.au/suicideprevention>

² <http://suicidepreventionaust.org/PositionStatements.aspx#section-9>

³ <http://salvos.org.au/about-us/overview/documents/tsa-positional-statements.pdf>

There are numerous places on the SPA web site that refer to the Salvation Army. In particular, you state on your Links page⁴:

The Salvation Army offer a broad range of suicide prevention and bereavement services. 24-hour telephone counselling is available on the Salvo Care Line (1300 36 36 22) and face-to-face counselling is also offered. Bereaved by Suicide support groups are offered in Sydney and the Gold Coast for those who have lost a relative or friend through suicide. Hope for Life is an online information and training program designed to help concerned people respond to those at risk of suicide, and to those who have been bereaved by suicide. The Salvation Army website also offers a resources and information section which includes definitions, statistics, risk factors and warning signs.

You also have on your Facebook page a link⁵ to the Salvation Army posted in July this year:



Suicide Prevention Australia The Salvation Army has been providing support to people in crisis for over 100 years. In 1907, The Salvation Army ran Suicide Prevention Bureaus in every Capital city in Australia. Counsellors and chaplains provided practical support, advice and encouragement to people who felt they had nothing to live for. They gave them Hope for Life.

Suicide Prevention - Hope for Life

salvos.org.au

The Salvation Army's work in suicide prevention and support for people bereaved through suicide. The information and training programs which will be available through Hope for Life website are designed to help you to know how to respond to people who may be at risk of suicide and those who have been ...

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As you can see, the Salvation Army places itself in conflict when it upholds an intolerant stance on homosexuality and bisexuality and simultaneously aims to prevent suicide. I am sure you appreciate this situation.

Whilst I have made specific mention of the Salvation Army in this letter, my concern would be replicated for any other such organisation that SPA supports that remains intolerant of homosexuality and bisexuality.

I must reiterate my support for your organisation. Suicide is a very serious issue in our society and your work is appreciated.

Please feel free to contact me regarding this matter for any clarification of my concerns. I hope to hear back from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Michael Barnett.
0417595541

⁴ <http://suicidepreventionaust.org/Links/9.aspx>

⁵ http://www.facebook.com/pages/Suicide-Prevention-Australia/140572439292035?v=info#%21/posted.php?id=140572439292035&share_id=140745899271458&comments=1%23s140745899271458