Friday, 16 December 2016

The Hon Marlene Kairouz MP
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation
Level 26
121 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Minister,

I am writing on behalf of The Salvation Army in Victoria regarding the review of the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998. This Review provides a critical opportunity for the Victorian Government to implement evidence-based reforms to reduce alcohol harm.

The Salvation Army has an extensive history and an international reputation for working with marginalised and disadvantaged people in our communities, and is one of the largest providers of welfare services in Australia. The Salvation Army provides a range of services across metropolitan and regional Victoria, which responds to those with drug and alcohol addictions, including detox and residential rehabilitation programs, counselling and outreach programs. Each year, The Salvation Army provides thousands of episodes of care to clients through these treatment programs. The Salvation Army is also active in community safety activities, such as the Street Teams that operate in Melbourne’s CBD at night providing support and direct assistance to people, many of whom are suffering the negative effects of excessive alcohol consumption. In addition to direct service provision, The Salvation Army is an active advocate for better, evidence-based alcohol policy through the Liquor Control Advisory Council, VCGLR Community Stakeholder Forums and the annual Alcohol Awareness Week.

The Salvation Army is deeply concerned by the burden of death and disease attributed to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in the Australian community. The costs to society are extremely high, both in economic and social terms, with excessive and long term alcohol consumption linked to issues such as family violence, crime and social dysfunction. The increasing evidence about health impacts of drug and alcohol use during pregnancy and in brain development among teenagers is also extremely alarming.

As a partner in the Alcohol Policy Coalition (APC), The Salvation Army supports the APC submission to this Review. Of particular concern are the number of people affected by alcohol harm in Victoria through assault, family violence, road crashes, and child maltreatment. In 2012-13, there were 7,744 emergency department presentations in Victoria in which alcohol was identified as a contributing factor, a 58.6 per cent increase since 2003-04. It is time that these devastating figures were addressed and this Review can play a vital role towards that change.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to raise these important issues with you.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Coleman (Major)
State Social Commander (Victoria)