



Attn: Chief of Staff; News Editor; News Producer

22 February 2010

For immediate release

Media Release

SALVATION ARMY AND SOUTHERN WATER LAUNCH NEW CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Salvation Army in Tasmania have joined forces with one of Tasmania's new water corporations, Southern Water, in launching a Customer Assistance Program for low income householders struggling to pay water and sewerage bills.

Southern Water's Chief Executive Officer, Mr Mike Paine, released details of the Southern Water Customer Assistance Program which will be administered by the Salvation Army and its partners in the community sector. The program will be reviewed in six months to ensure it is meeting the needs of the community in southern Tasmania.

The Salvation Army's Divisional Commander for Tasmania, Major Graeme McClimont, said Southern Water was to be congratulated on moving to establish a hardship program in just its first eight months of operations.

"Southern Water has only been in existence for a short time and it is good to see that one of the corporation's first major policy initiatives has been to investigate and fund this program," Major McClimont said.

"While water and sewerage charges are only levied on property owners, there is no doubt that many householders who own or who are buying a property are struggling at this time and we welcome the assistance that is now available to them. It demonstrates that Southern Water is genuinely committed to supporting the community of southern Tasmania."

Mr Paine said Southern Water greatly valued the assistance and support being provided by the Salvation Army as lead agency in administering the scheme.

"We believe the Salvation Army and its partners in the community welfare sector are best placed to assess clients seeking assistance under the program," he said. "This ensures the integrity of the process and protects the privacy of our customers."

"While Tasmanian property owners have always paid for water and sewerage through their municipal rates we understand that the reforms in the industry and the establishment of new water corporations is a big adjustment for many people. We are trying to make this transition as smooth as possible and to provide some measure of support to those homeowners who may be experiencing financial difficulties in paying their water bills at this time."

“This policy also reinforces the close links established by our owners, the 12 local councils of the southern region, with their local communities.”

Southern Water customers seeking assistance under the program should contact their nearest Salvation Army Doorways Centres or other welfare agencies. Further information also is available from the Southern Water Call Centre on 136992.

For further information contact:

Southern Water Miriam Brotheridge on 0409 383 886

Salvation Army Major McClimont on 0419 159 010