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news

PNG team runs their race of life at Gold Coast Marathon

By Cliff Worthing

Several estimates conclude that only one per cent of the world's population has run a marathon.

For Papua New Guinea, the percentage is even less, but The Salvation Army Hope and a Future program has worked to increase those numbers since 2014.

This year was the seventh group of Papua New Guinea runners brought to Australia to participate in the Gold Coast Marathon, and the first time after COVID restrictions were lifted. Each year, 10 participants are selected to participate in the training, provided with experienced marathon runners as mentors, and brought to the Gold Coast to run and gain exposure to Salvation Army ministries in Queensland.

Kila Gwareva, from a village several hours outside of Port Moresby, ran the fastest time of any PNG runner since the start of the program at this year's Gold Coast marathon.

The program gives young nationals from Papua New Guinea, identified as future leaders in their country, the opportunity to be mentored in leadership skills and is modelled around four key pillars – faith, fitness, education and leadership.

A major aspect this year was how the group overcame obstacles to actually participate in the marathon, and life lessons to equip them for ministry and personal growth.

In addition to the challenges of six months of training, many in the group faced documentation issues, such as birth certificates, passports and visa delays. Peter Tati even had his flight cancelled at the last minute, but believing God wanted him to run, he persisted in talking to the airlines until one of the pilots found him a spare seat. Many commented on how overcoming all the obstacles and persevering was important preparation for the actual race and built their confidence to face current and future life's challenges.

"Some people saw me as a quitter, and I often found it hard to finish things," said Sandra Ali. "Now I know I can do it!"

At the team debrief following the race, many participants talked of overcoming their doubts, wanting to give up because of the pain, but pushing past physical and psychological barriers to achieve their goals. Scriptures, songs



The Salvation Army team cheers Papua New Guinea runner Rata over the finish line at the Gold Coast Marathon on 2 July.

and encouragement from mentors and the rest of the team helped each runner finish the race. Every program participant since 2014 has completed the marathon distance.

"Nobody gets left behind" became the motto for this year. One example of team spirit this year involved the whole team running back along the course to meet up with the last runner and run with her to the finish line. "I saw my teammates come for me, and I cried all the way to the finish," Rata Vele said. "We all made it together!"

Each participant has a mentor to help with training, encouragement and perspective. Several mentioned how they have been positively impacted by the example of the person they coached.

"Humility and gratefulness are two things I have learned from this group," said Bill Hunter, this year's team leader. "They encourage me in my spiritual journey." Bill explained that one example of gratitude was from Parker, a runner who had been training with various running groups since he was 13. This year, he was selected to run on the Gold Coast, but complications with his birth certificate and passport meant he couldn't make the trip. "I imagined he was devastated, but he told me that God was in charge and now wasn't his time," Bill said.

"I have never experienced such a thing in my life, but because of God's grace, now I have," Kila said.

news



The Salvation Army Tasmania officially opened 21 new community housing units on the former Moonah Corps site last month. These units are specifically for women over the age of 55.

New complex to ease homelessness crisis in Tasmania

By Kirralee Nicolle

Women in the Glenorchy region of Tasmania over the age of 55 who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness have a new chance at finding housing, thanks to The Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army Tasmania officially opened 21 new community housing units on the former Moonah Corps site on 30 June.

Tasmanian Divisional Commander Major Tracy Briggs attended the opening and said the experience of homelessness was becoming increasingly widespread among older women.

"Australia's homeless population has aged rapidly, and it is no different in Tasmania," she said. Women over 55 are identified as a cohort increasingly at risk of homelessness. Older single women are particularly vulnerable due to having lower levels of income and assets among other variables. COTA [Council on the Ageing] and Shelter Tas recognise that many older Tasmanians are experiencing housing insecurity and hardship.

Tracy said she had been blessed to come in on the project close to its completion and meet some of the new tenants. Tenants Sara and Josephine were also at the opening.

Tracy quoted former Divisional Commander Captain Kim Haworth who stated that "this initiative will transform the lives of 21 women in Tasmania. I pray that what we have

built here will provide not only lovely and safe homes for 21 people and their families but also create a beautiful community where people can live their best lives and flourish".

Chief Secretary Colonel Winsome Merrett officially opened the building, and the event was also attended by The Select Foundation chairman Bruce Neill, Minister for Housing Guy Barnett, Glenorchy mayor Bec Thomas, federal members of Parliament and Salvation Army staff, members and supporters.

The project was made possible with support from both The Select Foundation and the Tasmanian State Government, as well as the work of Vos Construction and Joinery, Matrix Management Group, architects from X-Squared and JMG Engineers.



Chief Secretary Colonel Winsome Merrett addresses those gathered for the opening of the building.

feature



Cameron Brewis has plans to grow the youth programs at Riverside Gawler Corps in Adelaide.

Cameron making a difference in young lives at Riverside

By Anthony Castle

Cameron Brewis is the youth team leader at Riverside Gawler Corps in Adelaide's outer northern region. He started the youth program four years ago after realising he could make a difference in the lives of young people. Cameron's own life changed course following a moment of prayer outside a courthouse and the prospect of time in prison.

"I was at the pub one night having a beer, and Darren (Darren Dwyer, Riverside Gawler Corps Officer) was doing the pubs ministry. We struck up a conversation and built a relationship. At that time, I had dates in court, looking at jail time and was maybe going away for six years. Outside the courthouse, Darren supported me, we prayed and put it in God's hands. I walked out with a fine. I then quit my job and went into full-time ministry. From that day on, I decided to dedicate my life to God."

Cameron began volunteering at Riverside Gawler Corps, including managing the café and helping with the other programs. Gawler is the oldest town in South Australia, but urban sprawl is quickly turning it into an outer northern suburb of Adelaide. Rural areas surrounding the town are becoming suburban developments to accommodate the growing population and new families. With this rapid growth rate comes significant challenges, and Cameron knows the town's young people face a tough time.

"I wanted to see the youth space in Gawler grow," Cameron explains. "I wanted to keep young people from going down the path I went down. I can catch them and have the perspective and life experience that can help. There can be drug use and violence here. Some of these kids have been in care, parents living out of their cars. The closest suburbs are also lower socio-economic areas, and guys come up on the train line, sometimes causing trouble."

Cameron oversees the Riverside Gawler youth program on Friday nights, life groups, and school programs throughout the week. They facilitate a cooking class for young people that supports their study goals. Young people in the Gawler area are less likely to study or work, and fewer are pursuing full-time secondary education.

"We take four to six young people and go through basic cooking skills, and they prepare meals for the homelessness program," Cameron says. "They learn skills, we build relationships, and they do something for others. They also get points towards finishing high school. A lot of these guys don't have the life skills, and their schooling can go off the rails easily."

Education and employment are key challenges for young people in town, but the risks associated with the area can be higher. Tragically, young people in the Gawler area are twice as likely to die from preventable causes – such as suicide, road accident, or assault – than in the Greater Adelaide region. For young people in Gawler, the stakes are high.

"It's all at stake," Cameron says. "Unfortunately, some of these kids don't have good role models or a father who's around, or there might be parents with addiction issues. If young people don't have the right support, there's only one way to go. The repercussions of not being given the right life skills are huge."

Cameron has plans to grow the youth programs at Riverside Gawler Corps, to train leaders and build programs for different age ranges, and to continue to make some hope for those young people facing tough times.

"We have a young person who is from the foster care system," Cameron explains. "We took them to a youth event, and they gave their heart to God. It's made a huge impact on their life. There's a hope you can get out of those situations too, that there is a God who loves you and cares for you and can remove you from those tough times."

viewpoint



The Salvation Army flies the flag for reconciliation in Australia. Photo courtesy AAP Image/Mick Tsikas

Voting no is accepting the status quo

By Jennifer Kirkaldy

In the 1999 referendum, the question was put on whether Australia's Constitution should include a preamble that would recognise the first people of Australia. The very first line of the 'No' case was 'If you don't know – vote no!'

We've seen some variation on that line in the no cases of a lot of votes and we're beginning to see it now with the Voice.

There's a certain appeal to the 'if you don't know, vote no' argument (and not just because it rhymes). If you don't think too hard about it, it seems reasonable – don't take a chance if you don't absolutely have to. Maintain the status quo until you are confident things need to change. That's good, solid, 'little c' conservative advice. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

The problem is ... it is broke.

How our society treats Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures is fundamentally (but not irrevocably) broken.

We know that structural and historic injustices against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples currently mean shorter life expectancy, poorer health and educational outcomes and disproportionately higher incarceration rates. At The Salvation Army, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are over-represented in almost every one of our services – around 20 per cent of our homelessness and emergency relief work is done with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and around 35 per cent of our family and domestic violence services.

We know action needs to be taken. At the heart of previous policy failures has been action that was pursued without proper engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people actually affected.

We know the Voice is an opportunity before us right now to make sure we do better in the future.

Arguments that the Voice is not the right mechanism are many and varied, but in general, they boil down to a fear that the model might not work. The Voice might not have the right arrangements to be truly representative, it might not have the governance structures to avoid corruption, and it might, in myriad different ways, not be perfect.

That fear is valid. It just isn't a good enough reason to miss this opportunity.

When the Commonwealth of Australia was created, we did not have the right arrangements for our parliament to be truly representative. I am not talking about the injustice of segments of our society not having the right to vote. I am talking about how we didn't have proportionate representation or postal voting (and even a secret ballot was in question at Federation). We didn't reject the whole system. Over time, we improved the system and now we have one of the most robust democracies in the world.

Like every other major reform in Australia's history, there are going to be teething problems. Those problems are nothing in the face of the very real issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples right now. They are not even much compared to the policy challenges facing our governments. They certainly are not too much for us to work through sensibly.

We know the current system is not working. We know something needs to be done. We know a Voice represents a real chance to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through better policymaking. We know listening to the experience and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people themselves will lead to better outcomes.

We know too much for 'if you don't know, vote no' to really fly. So, let's call it what it is ... 'vote no to accept the status quo'.

And we know the status quo is unacceptable.

Jennifer Kirkaldy is the National General Manager of Policy and Advocacy at The Salvation Army Australia.

story of hope



The Salvos assisted Sharon in finding long-term financial security as well as assistance with budgeting.

Desperate Sharon finds hope on the Salvos' breakfast menu

Until a few years ago, Sharon's family was doing fine. Regular hard-working Aussies, Sharon was a barista and her husband, Mike, a builder. Their two teenage boys, Flynn and Jordan, loved basketball and video games.

Although they were not wealthy, the family was getting by. Most importantly, they were happy. But along with the cost-of-living crisis that was hitting everyone, Sharon and Mike were hit by a personal crisis of their own. Mike, who had always had heart issues, became seriously ill, to the point where he could no longer work.

With the family's finances already in decline, the final straw came when Mike suffered a stroke that nearly killed him. In addition to four weeks in an intensive care unit (ICU), Mike was put on a ventilator for another three weeks. By the time he came home, he had only 23 per cent heart function.

The emotional and financial strain on the family reached breaking point as Sharon had to give up work after the accident to become a full-time carer for Mike. As a result, the family that was not long ago happy and getting by found themselves drowning in bills and costs due to the combined loss of two salaries.

Following Mike's hospitalisation, Sharon started making the daily 150km round trip to visit Mike while he fought for his life in ICU.

"I'd used everything we had to keep us afloat," she says. "We had no money in reserve. I couldn't pay for fuel to visit Mike in hospital, and pay the rent too. I fell behind on my rent. I'd come home from the hospital and just break down in tears. I didn't know what to do. I felt so low, and so alone."

One day, just as she hit rock bottom, Sharon remembered something that would turn the family's lives around – a breakfast service offered every morning by a nearby Salvos cafe. She called in for the free breakfast, a coffee and a chat. What she received in return brought her to tears.

"They [the Salvos] opened their arms and their hearts, saying, 'Come with me. We will help you.' I only wish I'd gone sooner," says Sharon, "so I didn't have to struggle for so long." Sharon and her family were no longer alone.

With the support of the Salvos, the family received emergency financial assistance to get back on top of their rent, cover outstanding bills and put food on the table. And that was just the beginning.

Apart from immediate assistance, Sharon was able to gain long-term financial security with the steady, guiding hand and ongoing support of a caring Salvos caseworker, as well as financial coaching and budgeting advice.

Sharon now refers to the Salvos as her friends, who she knows will walk alongside her and her family for as long as they need in their journey towards healing and a happy and full life.

army archives

Antarctica peaks named in officer's honour

By **Garth R. Hentzschel**

The Salvation Army has links to a number of geographical locations in Australia – various parks, streets, hills and suburbs, for example.

There is, however, one that few Australians will ever get to see. These are the Gowlett Peaks in Antarctica, named after a Salvationist diesel engineer who later became an officer of The Salvation Army.

Major Alan Gowlett was born in Toowoomba, Queensland, to a well-known family in the local corps. When World War Two broke out, he tried to enlist; however, being too young, Alan moved south to work at Newport Railway Workshop in Victoria, which had been converted into an aircraft factory.

In April 1943, he joined the Australia Imperial Forces. Two years later, he saw his first action in the last major battles of the war, during the invasion of Borneo.

After the war, Alan became engaged to Elizabeth (Beth) Winifred Steinberg, whose mother was at one stage editor of the Melbourne edition of The Salvation Army children's publication *The Young Soldier*.

Their marriage took place on 11 February 1950 at Hawthorn Corps in Melbourne. In 1951, Alan joined the Government Scientific Observation Party, which was part of the new Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition (ANARE) that had been formed in August 1947.

These were the formative years of Antarctic scientific research. Alan was appointed to Macquarie Island (in the south-west Pacific Ocean below New Zealand) as the diesel and electrical engineer, and campfire officer.

Alan returned home from Macquarie Island on the Antarctic ship *Tatton*. In 1954, Alan was again chosen to join another expedition with ANARE, this time to Mawson Base on the mainland of Antarctica.

He would arrive just one year after the foundation of the base. The voyage to Heard Island (in the southern Indian Ocean) took 16 days and the ship experienced heavy seas that caused some damage.

Upon the ship's arrival in Antarctica, Alan's first job was to erect an additional 10 huts, which went up in the first three weeks. Throughout the remainder of the year more buildings were constructed until there were 19 separate buildings including scientific huts, storage huts, sleeping huts and a new surgery.

In addition to the scientific work on the base, field journeys for scientific experimentation and exploration were conducted.

In December 1955, news reached Australia of a mountain range that had been discovered. Some of these mountain peaks were named the Gowlett Peaks, in honour of Alan.



Salvation Army officer Major Alan Gowlett with the boots he wore in Antarctica.

The Gowlett Peaks are described as a small group of isolated peaks, consisting of tall, sharp twin peaks and two close outliers, in MacRobertson Land, Antarctica.

Alan assisted with the exploration parties, often leaving the base in dangerous polar conditions to maintain the equipment. For his work in Antarctica, Alan received the Polar Medal.

It was while he was in Antarctica that Alan experienced his call to Salvation Army officership. On his return to Australia, he learned that Beth had also received the call to full-time service as an officer.

The Gowletts entered The Salvation Army Officer Training College from Hawthorn Corps on 13 March 1958, in the *Courageous* session. After their commissioning, they served as officers in South Australia, Northern Territory, Victoria and Western Australia, in both corps and social work.

The Gowletts also served in the Caribbean Central America Territory as managers of the Blind Institute in Kingston, Jamaica. Alan and Beth entered retirement in 1987 and remained active in The Salvation Army.

At Alan's thanksgiving service upon his promotion to glory in 1998, a tribute was given by Fred Elliot representing the Antarctic expeditions. In the remotest places on earth, there are marks of Salvationists' service in varying ways. For Alan Gowlett's service to the exploration of Antarctica, there are peaks named in his honour, pointing heavenwards to his God.

**This is an edited version of Garth R. Hentzschel's article "Salvation on ice: An Antarctic landmark linked to an Australian Salvationist", The Australasian Journal of Salvation Army History, Vol 4, Issue 1, 2019, 40-58.*