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# PRIME MINISTER

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## TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP ADDRESS AT SALVATION ARMY CHRISTMAS APPEAL SALVATION ARMY, CANBERRA

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It is very hard indeed to visualise what Australia would be like, particularly at a time such as Christmas, without the Salvation Army. And that is why I unhesitatingly accepted the invitation of the Salvation Army to launch, throughout Australia, its Christmas Appeal.

The Salvation Army is not only a remarkable section of the worldwide Christian Church - and of course Christmas is primarily the celebration of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth - but the Salvation Army is also, as well as being a powerful section of the Christian Church, the Salvation Army is also one of Australia's leading, most admired and most loved welfare organisations. There would be very few Australians in either peace time or in times now thankfully in the distant past, in war time who wouldn't have been either touched by the work of the Salvation Army or in some cases helped by them and certainly impressed by them. And when I heard the Army band play one of the most best known of the traditional Christmas carols, I was reminded of listening to Army bands at street corners when I grew up. I grew up in the suburb of Earlwood in Sydney and there was a Salvation Army citadel nearby and they played there every Sunday evening. And as a very young boy I used to wander down to what was then called the Earlwood Tram Terminus and listen to the Army band. So it has been very much part of the Australian story.

The most dramatic contribution that the Salvation Army has made in Australia's lifetime has been the contribution it has made to the relief of poverty, distress and helping those in our community who are less fortunate. And I want to ask all Australians to give generously at Christmas time. Most of us will celebrate a very plentiful, a very happy and a very adequate Christmas. For those who have well paid work, for those who are in good health, for those whose families are united, Christmas is a time of great joy and happiness and great celebration. But there are a significant number of our fellow Australians who are not that fortunate. Their family may have

recently broken up; they may be out of work; they may have lost their job on the eve of Christmas; through other misadventure their health may be poor; they may be suffering a terminal illness - whatever the situation is, when the rest of the community is celebrating in plenty and you don't have much, it can be a particularly miserable and unhappy existence. And the Salvation Army in its wonderful, open-hearted, generous fashion, along with many other great welfare organisations such as the Society of St Vincent de Paul and the City Missions and the Smith Family - and there are many of them - they make a tremendous contribution to bringing happiness and comfort to those Australians who are not as fortunate as the rest of them. And the very least all of us can do is to put something aside and to give it to help. Australians, when they are properly asked and their sense of fairness and their sense of compassion is touched, most Australians can be very generous and I hope they are this Christmas.

I couldn't commend in stronger terms the work of the Salvation Army. Over the years it's done so much, not only at Christmas time, but at other times of distress and deprivation for many of our less fortunate citizens.

The Government very strongly supports the work of the Salvation Army. In this years budget we increased by between 25 and 30 per cent the emergency relief funding provided on an annual basis to organisations such as the Salvation Army to help with people in particular need or distress and we are examining with the major welfare organisations a new methodology to ensure that the level of that emergency fund keeps pace with real need and doesn't fall behind. So we do very strongly support their work.

I personally admire what the Salvation Army stands for. The gentlemen who...the officer who appears in the poster, David Eldridge I think it is - I think I recognise him - he is Chairman of the Youth Homelessness Taskforce that I established in fulfilment of a commitment I made in the election campaign and he's doing a remarkable job. But the genuine Christian compassion that is engaged in by the Salvation Army is a model to everybody else. And therefore I have very, very great pleasure in launching this national appeal.

On behalf of the Australian people I want to thank the Salvation Army for the massive contribution it has made to the welfare of the Australian community, for the compassion and decency and concern and the demonstration of the message of the first Christmas that it has played out in all the years of its existence. And finally, again I ask all Australians to dig deeply into their pockets and to give generously and wholeheartedly and spontaneously to the Christmas appeal of the Salvation Army, or indeed the Christmas appeals of those other great organisations that I've mentioned because all of them together are doing a remarkable job. Without them we'd be a meaner, a poorer, a more unhappy, a less generous and less decent society and we should always, at a time like this, be very thankful. And the poster says it all:- "We should thank God for the Salvos".