

# Storm victims give back

"For many affected by devastating storms and their aftermath late last year, it was just so important to have someone to stand with them, to listen to their despair, frustration and anger. In many ways taking coffee to the storm-ravaged streets was just another way to help us break down the barriers and begin to offer a listening ear."

SALVATION ARMY CAPTAIN BRYCE DAVIES

It was a simple thing – driving the devastated streets of Brisbane's The Gap after a series of violent storms in late 2008 to offer a cup of 'real' coffee and encourage stunned locals to talk about their experiences. And yet through the experience, people whose homes had been damaged or destroyed were able to meet at a central point each day. It brought together neighbours who had never met and so impressed the local community and the visiting Lord Mayor of Brisbane that local groups and individuals banded together to raise the funds to buy The Salvation Army in Brisbane a dedicated coffee van.

Captain Bryce Davies, who ran The Salvation Army church at Stafford at the time, says: "The Salvation Army already has an outstanding response plan for such emergencies through The Salvation Army Emergency Services (SAES), and indeed throughout this emergency, hundreds of SAES officers and volunteers came together to offer over 25,000 meals and drinks.

"Because our church was so close to the intense devastation, we had also sought to see what the greatest needs of people were in the immediate aftermath of the storms."

As a result, Bryce and a group of



ABOVE: CAPTAIN BRYCE DAVIES WITH JENNY LANG.

volunteers immediately organised the distribution of 1,500 bottles of water, about 40 tarpaulins and 20 packs of packing boxes. Bryce says the power was off, houses were devastated and people were milling around the streets trying to salvage what was left of their homes, so he and his team thought offering a cup of coffee might be a good idea.

He says: "We contacted a group called Cafe2U and they generously donated two vans and two baristas for two days. We just cruised the streets and connected with people in an amazing way."

Following the initial success, the team contacted The Salvation Army Ryde City Church (NSW) who generously let them use their café van for two weeks. The Salvation Army Brisbane city church street van was also active in delivering refreshments, cardboard boxes, tarpaulins and pastoral care.

Corporations donated meals and the vans turned up in the most devastated streets each day. Groups of 50-60 people whose houses had been damaged would get together for gatherings organised by The Salvation Army team. At one

such gathering, residents asked why Brisbane didn't have its own van, and so visiting Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Campbell Newman kicked off a fund with \$10,000. The idea was picked up by Network Ten which led to more donations. The Arana Leagues Club then held a major fundraiser.

Bryce says one of the most moving stories of the time was meeting the Lang family.

He says: "When I first arrived at The Gap I met Jenny Lang and her daughter Amy and offered to carry a heavy box of water home for them. There I met Ted Lang. He very quickly became a great supporter of the idea of the van.

"It was actually at the Arana Leagues Club fundraising night that Ted told me he had terminal cancer and asked me to conduct his funeral," Bryce says.

"We later held the funeral at Stafford Salvation Army and it was packed to the rafters. Ted was a well-loved man and he had decided he wanted his funeral dedicated to raising the rest of the money needed for the van.

"Of course one of the first people we visited when we picked up the new van was Jenny and the family so that I could show them part of Ted's legacy. We know it has the potential to help so many people in their hardest times." ○

## Rebuilding lives as floodwaters subside

The Salvation Army has been able to offer immediate relief in a number of areas affected by flooding in Queensland this year, as well as providing ongoing support during the recovery phase.

• Townsville Salvation Army officers Captains Lincoln and Leanne Stevens continue\* to supervise The Salvation Army response to

the recovery stage after severe flooding in Ingham. In partnership with local organisations, they have distributed over 90 cubic metres of furniture as well as white-goods and relief funds.

• After king tides and months of heavy monsoonal rain in Queensland, Salvation Army Emergency Services personnel and volunteers provided more than 2,600 meals and 6,000 refreshments (in February alone) for

Emergency Services workers and those affected.

- Salvation Army teams continue to visit flood-affected locals in areas such as Innisfail/ Tully to assess needs and assist with rebuilding.
- Salvation Army Outback Flying Chaplain Simon Steele continues to visit flood-affected remote cattle properties in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

\*At the time of print