



## THE SALVATION ARMY AND ‘WORK FOR THE DOLE’: EXPLOITING THE UNEMPLOYED

### WORK FOR THE DOLE

The Salvation Army is a key participant in the Liberal Government’s new **Work for the Dole** scheme. Work for the Dole forces unemployed people to work without pay for non-profit organisations (like charities). You either work for free, or you are kicked off unemployment payments, and forced to survive on no income at all. From July 2015, unemployed people under 30 will be forced to do 25 hours of unpaid work per week, while 30-50’s will be made to do 15 hours.

**This means tens of thousands of unemployed people across Australia will be forced to work without pay or starve.**

**The Work for the Dole scheme only functions because ‘host organisations’ like the Salvation Army agree to exploit unemployed people.** Organisations like the Salvation Army will receive government subsidies of thousands of dollars for taking part in Work for the Dole. They benefit from the unpaid labour of unemployed people and help normalise unpaid work, which drags down the wages of all workers. Taking part in Work for the Dole means that the Salvation Army

will be directly responsible for cutting people off unemployment payments by reporting whether they show up and do what they are told. For example, if someone misses a Work for the Dole shift they could be breached.

### FORCED LABOUR

As part of their ‘Freedom Partnership’ campaign, the Salvation Army say they oppose forms of exploitative work which involve “using people against their will for their own profit or advantage.” They say they are against the use of forced labour. They admit that exploitative businesses force people to work through threats, prevent them from leaving their workplace, pay them little or no money for their work, and leave them “isolated, degraded and humiliated.”

The Salvation Army say they oppose this forced labour, but what about the rights of unemployed people forced to take part in Work for the Dole? **No person should be subject to a system of involuntary labour, let alone involuntary labour for unemployment payments already well below the poverty**

**line.** Forcing people to work against their will, in places they don't want to work, and where they have little control over their work, is exploitative and unfair. It is a way of punishing unemployed people, not helping them. It also undermines the wages and conditions of all workers by setting a dangerous standard where some workers work for free.

## **WORK FOR THE DOLE DOESN'T WORK**

The Salvation Army Southern Territory Social Justice Secretary publicly admits that: "Some individuals find the [Work for the Dole] activities considered boring and ineffective." But they go on to say that Work for the Dole is effective because "the prospect of having to engage in 6 months of a structured WfD activity is all the motivation needed for a jobseeker to go out and get a job."

But countless studies have shown that being made to do Work for the Dole actually makes it harder to get a job. Jeff Borland and Yi-Ping Tseng from the University of Melbourne found that unemployed people who were forced to do Work for the Dole were significantly less likely to be able to find work when compared with unemployed people who did not take part.

Being forced to complete busy work to keep a meagre Centrelink payment does nothing to build skills. Being forced to 'volunteer' to keep your Centrelink payment makes life even harder for those with caring responsibilities. It takes up time that would be better spent studying, training or looking for paid work. There is also evidence that employers discriminate against people who put Work for the Dole on their resume.

## **NOT ENOUGH JOBS**

There are also not enough jobs to go around in the first place. According to ABS data, in September 2014 there were 156,000 job

vacancies in Australia. At the same time there were 750,000 people out of work. If you factor in the high number of under-employed people, an estimated 920,000 in July 2014, there are ten job seekers competing for each job vacancy in Australia. We need real support for unemployed people, not expensive, failed approaches that blame us for things outside our control.

## **WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?**

The **Dole Action Group** is grassroots organisation of unemployed people and their supporters. **We are calling on all non-profit organisations to boycott Work for the Dole and keep volunteering voluntary.**

Our key goals are:

- To fight for liveable unemployed payments (above the poverty line) for all people.
- To abolish Centrelink participation requirements.
- To stop unemployed people being used as a source of unpaid forced labour.

We have the power to abolish Work for the Dole by putting real pressure on the government and the organisations which enforce their policies.

If you have a tip off about a Work for the Dole provider, would like to join us or find out more, you can contact us in the following ways:

Email: [doleaction@gmail.com](mailto:doleaction@gmail.com)

On the web: <http://doleaction.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/doleactiongroup>

Twitter: @doleaction