

Only usable donations needed

ALEISHA TISSEN

CHARITY organisations need usable donations, not junk.

Advocates for those less fortunate say while they are grateful for donated goods, a line needs to be drawn.

"Donations of goods we need to get rid of are an exception, generally we receive very thoughtful donations that go a long way," said Hilda du Toit, Marketing Manager of the Abraham Kriel Children's Home.

She said the majority of people meant well, but often unusable items were donated because of thoughtlessness.

"People often throw all unwanted items in a pile and don't necessarily go through it to sort the good from the bad," said Du Toit.

Children of Fire Director Bronwen Jones said the organisation had received numerous questionable items.

"Sometimes people give beautiful condition really-useful items ... but more often than not, people dump rubbish on charities, not just ours," said Jones.

Jones said Children of Fire, an organisation that assists burn victims has received goods that can only be labelled junk – including old medicines, syringes, drained batteries, adult magazines, dirty underwear and odd shoes to name a few.

"We even have a donated boat mast, what are we supposed to do with a boat mast?" asked Jones.

Jones described receiving a large donation of designer clothing, only to discover the items had been slashed.

"I assume the slashes are meant to prevent us from selling the items again, but how can we put a child who has gone through so much trauma in such clothing. Must these poor children have clothes that are intentionally cut?" asked Jones.

Other organisations approached for comment were reluctant to speak on the record for fear of sounding ungrateful.

"We are very grateful for all the

JUNK: Advocates for the less fortunate say a line must be drawn for donated goods



HOPE. Torture and burn survivor Seiso Ratswana, 5, sits on a pile of unusable donated goods. Seiso is currently undergoing multiple surgeries to rectify the damage done during his ordeal in 2007. Picture: Neil McCartney.

donations we receive, but when there are heaps of broken items and dirty goods we can't use, it costs us to get rid of it. We accept donations but don't want items we can't use," one organisation said.

Another organisation dealing with abused children described how a urine stained mattress was donated along with soft toys

without limbs.

"We have broken children, giving them broken toys and clothing is detrimental to their self esteem. We are not ungrateful, we just appeal to people to think before they donate just anything," a representative of the organisation who did not want to be named said.

Other odd items donated to or-

ganisations include a parachute, two stunning red stiletto heels, both for the left foot, toy guns to a pacifist organisation and expired canned food.

In 2007, the Salvation Army ran a series of advertisements appealing for clothing.

The advertisements featured homeless people wearing an old

military uniform, a bridal gown and one wearing a Superman costume.

The images were accompanied by the following: "You wouldn't be seen dead in them but for a homeless person they could mean the difference between life and death. Please donate your unwanted clothes to the homeless this winter."