



Being smart on crime

Before she had contact with the youth justice system, Taree (not her real name) had disengaged from school, was experiencing family troubles and was drinking alcohol.

"Taree had left home six weeks earlier and was spending time with older, negative peers in the city," says Jesuit Social Services' Christy Hughes.

After being charged with offences relating to intentionally causing injury, Taree was afforded a chance to steer her life in a positive direction by being referred to Jesuit Social Services' Youth Justice Group Conferencing.

The organisation has operated Group Conferencing since 2003. The problem-solving approach to youth offending, based on the principles of restorative justice, can be offered to young people at the pre-sentence stage of Children's Court proceedings.

Group Conferencing aims to support young people to understand the impact of their actions, to take responsibility and to make amends, as well as being supported to address the underlying circumstances behind their offending.

Just as crucially, it empowers victims to have involvement in the justice process by allowing them to have their voice heard.

Group Conferencing has proved extremely successful in reducing reoffending by young people. A KPMG evaluation in 2010 found that 80 per cent of young people who successfully completed a Group Conference had not reoffended two years later, compared with 57 per cent of young people on probation or a youth supervision order.

Taree's Group Conference was attended by Taree, her father, her youth justice and child protection workers, a youth worker, her legal representative and the police informant.

The victim was unable to attend in person, so a victim's advocate explained to Taree how her offending had made a physical and psychological impact on the victim.

"Hearing how her actions had impacted a stranger had a profound impact on Taree," says Christy, who convened Taree's Group Conference.

"She gave her sincere apologies for her actions, and was grateful for the opportunity of a second chance."

As a result of Taree's Group Conference, she agreed to go back to school, as well as participate in a range of community programs to improve her physical and mental wellbeing and meet new and positive peers.

"Also, as Taree was disconnected from her family, an outcome of the Group Conference was that she agreed to cook dinner for her father on a regular basis to support the family."

Jesuit Social Services will expand Group Conferencing into Northern Territory in 2017.

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Balancing youth justice in Australia

Throughout 2016 and into 2017 a number of high-profile events across Australia have focused the spotlight on young people, crime and community safety.

In the Northern Territory, the revelation of horrific conditions and abuse of young people at the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre led to the establishment of the *Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory*.

In response to this, the new Northern Territory Government has announced \$18 million of annual investments focused on diverting vulnerable young people away from the justice system. This includes funding of a Group Conferencing program in Darwin, which Jesuit Social Services will operate based on our successful model in Victoria.

The Federal Government has also confirmed it will ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) by the end of 2017. This will ensure Australia's prisons and detention centres are monitored by independent inspecting bodies. We have long advocated for OPCAT to be ratified, as it is a valuable opportunity to improve oversight mechanisms in these facilities.

While the Northern Territory Government has made positive investments into restorative justice approaches, the Victorian Government has introduced a range of tough measures and legislative changes to youth justice that we believe will not make our community safer - now or in the long term. The Victorian youth justice system is suffering the effects of years of neglect and there is a small group of young people repeatedly committing serious, violent offences. This must be tackled head on - but we must intervene wisely.

In late 2016, the Victorian Government sent a small number of young people to an adult correctional facility and last month announced that responsibility for youth justice will be transferred from the Department of Health and Human Services to the Department of Justice and Regulation, which manages adult corrections.

These decisions run counter to the principles behind an effective youth justice system, which should focus on diversion wherever possible, rehabilitation and protecting the best interests of children and young people while balancing the rights of victims.



Young people involved with the justice system are among the most vulnerable in society. Many of these young people are dealing with multiple, complex issues such as childhood neglect, drug and alcohol problems and mental illness.

Recent media coverage has ignored these complex issues to instead fuel an assumption that youth crime is spiralling out of control across Australia. However, the reality is that both the numbers of youth offenders and young people under supervision (community or detention-based) are decreasing. As outlined in our *States of Justice* report, the number of youth offenders (aged 10-19 years) proceeded against by police in Australia during 2014/15 decreased by three per cent (or 2,223) to a total of 85,442, and by 20 per cent since 2010/11. In Victoria over the same period, the number of young offenders (aged 10-19) has decreased by 31 per cent.

In the context of shrill debates and disturbing punitive reforms in youth justice, Jesuit Social Services has taken a strong leadership role in advocating for balanced, clear-headed and evidence-based responses.

We have called for a focus on addressing the underlying drivers of crime (disadvantage, low education, unemployment) and investing in prevention and early intervention (especially early childhood services).

We believe there is a place for custody but that must always be used as a last resort, with the end goal being rehabilitation and successful reintegration into the community as a contributing citizen.

Ultimately, community safety is best served by a holistic approach founded on prevention, early intervention and diversion.

POLICY

National Justice Symposium 2017

With events in recent months putting the spotlight on young people and crime right across Australia, Jesuit Social Services will facilitate a National Justice Symposium to look at where we are now and where we are heading with youth justice.

The symposium will be held in Melbourne on March 21, and provide a chance for experts and decision makers to come together to explore issues and trends.

We are thrilled to welcome Vincent Schiraldi, Senior Research Fellow, Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management at the Harvard Kennedy School as our keynote speaker.

Mr Schiraldi previously served as Director of Juvenile Corrections in Washington DC, where he created and implemented innovative programs that serve as best practice models, and Commissioner of the New York City Department of Criminal Justice.

In these roles, he gained a national reputation as a fearless reformer who emphasized the humane and decent treatment of men, women and children under his correctional supervision while ultimately improving community safety.

Mr Schiraldi has also served as Senior Advisor to the New York City Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice and is currently a Senior Research Fellow directing the Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management at Harvard Kennedy School.

The symposium will feature a range of other speakers including academics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and social services representatives.

Mr Schiraldi will also speak at an event at the Wheeler Centre on the evening of March 20. Tickets to this event are available at www.trybooking.com/OZEV

Tickets to the National Justice Symposium are \$110 and can be booked at www.trybooking.com/OWPX



Vincent Schiraldi, Senior Research Fellow, Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management at Harvard Kennedy School

States of Justice

Jesuit Social Services' new report *States of Justice* shows that while the rate of offenders across Australia has remained steady over the past five years, the national imprisonment rate has jumped by 25 per cent.

This has resulted in a spike in the cost of prisons by almost a billion dollars, to a total of \$3.8 billion, during the same period.

States of Justice is a snap shot of criminal justice trends across all states and territories, drawing together data sets from multiple sources including the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Two key trends identified in the report include:

- The number of young offenders proceeded against by police has decreased by 20 per cent nationally over the past five years
- The number of young people on remand increased by 22 per cent between 2011 and 2016

The full report is available on our website at www.jss.org.au

40th year anniversary highlights

Keep up to date with all the activities to celebrate Jesuit Social Services' 40th anniversary at www.jss.org.au/40years

We have also produced a short video highlighting the founding and evolution of Jesuit Social Services which can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/2LJcgnO>

Jesuit Social Services Annual Dinner 2017

Help us celebrate 40 years working with some of the most marginalized members of our community and striving to build a just society at our Annual Dinner on March 25 at the Grand Ballroom, Sofitel Melbourne on Collins.

The major fundraising event on our calendar is always an enjoyable evening of speeches, music, entertainment and auctions.

This year we are delighted to have Senator Patrick Dodson deliver the Frank Costigan QC Address. Senator Dodson has dedicated his life work to being an advocate for constructive relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people based on mutual respect, understanding and dialogue.

Senator Dodson served as the inaugural Chair for the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, and currently serves as Shadow Assistant Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Our Annual Dinner will also feature a special performance from legendary singer/songwriter Archie Roach.

Tickets to the event are \$175pp
To book visit jss.org.au/annual-dinner



Senator Patrick Dodson

Thanksgiving celebration for 40 years



Brent from Artful Dodgers Studios

Jesuit Social Services kicked off its 40th anniversary celebrations with a Mass at St Ignatius Church, Richmond, on 3rd February. Around 100 people attended the Mass, which was an opportunity to give thanks for 40 years of Jesuit Social Services and to everyone involved in the life and spirit of the organisation. The Mass was celebrated by Australian Jesuit Provincial Brian McCoy SJ, and concelebrated by Patrick O'Sullivan SJ, Jesuit Social Services' Dave Ryan SJ and Andy Hamilton SJ, along with Robin Koning SJ.

Also in attendance at the Mass were former Jesuit Provincials Bill Uren SJ and Steve Curtin SJ, former Jesuit Social Services CEO Bernie Geary, past and current Board and Committee members, as well as current staff, volunteers and donors.

The Mass also featured a didgeridoo performance by Artful Dodgers Studios participant Brent and music by Xavier College students.

Hanging in for the long haul

How do you welcome someone who's let you down? Andy Hamilton SJ reflects on our organisational values – welcoming, discerning and courageous – and how they relate to our mission to build a just society.

This year we celebrate our 40th anniversary at Jesuit Social Services. We have been reflecting on the key words that sum up our mission: welcoming, discerning, courageous. Like most words that name ideals, they are attractive. But, of course, when we ask whether they describe how we are living, the words are also very challenging.

Welcoming evokes smiling faces and brings back happy memories. Friends are easy to welcome. Strangers can be more challenging.

When a neatly dressed, smiling young person comes to the door, it is easy to open the door with a smile. When a young person with tats, piercings and a desperate look on their face comes to the door we are more likely to be wary and to shut the door without looking into their eyes and hearing them out. To be welcoming of people whom society sees as outsiders, as scary or as rubbish is a rare gift. It is challenge.

It is also our calling at Jesuit Social Services to welcome people whom others look past, dismiss or find too difficult. We began by caring for young people who had been in prison. We still welcome them and others like them, and try to help them connect with society.

Our mission at Jesuit Social Services is to hang in with people for the long haul – in their failures to live as they would like as well as in their growth.

Many people have a gift for welcoming the most amazing range of people through thick and thin, regardless of their religious or cultural traditions. The tradition we inherit at Jesuit Social Services has stories that keep us honest. Stories like The Prodigal Son – of the young man who has cashed out the family estate and binged his half on wine, women and cards. When his cash runs out he is derelict and decides to come back home. His father not only lets him in the door – he is waiting by the window with one foot raised, ready to run out to him. He embraces him, dresses him up and puts on a feast for him.

That is welcoming.

Jesuit Social Services has worked in the area of youth justice for 40 years.

Over those years we have helped build a safer and more just community where children and young people get a chance to turn their lives around.

Please make a donation so we can continue this important work.



40 years of creating safer communities

Want to help Jesuit Social Services?

Together we can build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the wellbeing of disadvantaged people, family and communities.

I would like to make a donation of:

\$75 **\$150**

\$500 **\$1000**

\$

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