



## From a boy to a young man

When Alex\* first came to Jesuit Social Services' Dillon House (part of our Next Steps program) he was struggling with grief and mental health problems which had contributed to his anti-social and criminal behaviour.

He was exiting a youth detention centre but had no stable housing and no clear pathway to a more productive life.

"His prospects in terms of housing and finding a home were really limited," says Roger Pugh, Senior Project Officer at Jesuit Social Services.

The transformation he has undergone since being at Dillon House highlights how Next Steps can provide stability and foster growth in a young man like Alex.

"He enjoyed the fact that he felt he had independence but that there were also people around to help keep him safe. He knew it was a safe place – a refuge – and it was the first time he had a constant in his life," says Roger.

While living at Dillon House, Alex was able to develop his independent living skills such as cooking and cleaning and was also linked in with activities including a local gym and study opportunities.

At the same time, by having case management support to address some of the grief and mental health problems that were driving his anti-social behaviour, Alex was able to reduce the likelihood of falling into those same patterns of behaviour that got him in trouble and instead work towards becoming a more productive member of society.

Alex lived at Dillon House for 18 months until leaving in January 2016.

"Eighteen months is a long time to work intensively with someone but sometimes this is what it takes; and from Alex's perspective it demonstrates that he could build trust in us," says Roger.

Alex now lives in a sharehouse with friends, where he uses the independent living skills he developed during the program. Next Steps has also provided him with material aid and financial assistance, and he continues to meet regularly with case workers in community settings.

Whereas Alex was once too anxious to hand his resume in at a café, he is now actively handing out his resume at local businesses seeking casual employment.

There is still a long way to go for Alex but where he once saw little hope of standing on his own two feet, he now has the skills and support to ultimately flourish.

"Next Steps allowed Alex to strengthen his identity and develop from a boy into a young man."

*\*not his real name*

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## Creating strong and safe communities



Creating strong, cohesive and safe communities is at the heart of the work Jesuit Social Services has done in the area of justice and crime prevention for almost 40 years.

Many people who have had contact with the criminal justice system face significant barriers in accessing essentials like housing, education and employment.

This is particularly true for those also struggling with mental illness or substance abuse problems.

We know that steering people away from the justice system in the first place, and helping people to address the issues behind their offending, does more to reduce reoffending than prison – which generally results in someone exiting worse off than when they entered.

Australians were shocked and saddened recently to see the abuse and brutalization of young people in Northern Territory's youth justice system as reported in a *Four Corners* investigation. We have long advocated for better treatment of young people in the criminal justice system and welcome the Royal Commission into the Child Protection and Youth Detention Systems of the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, we know that problems within the youth justice system are not isolated to the Territory and we hope for widespread systemic change and reform.

For nearly 40 years we have been working with young people who have got caught up in the justice system. We know from first-hand experience the importance of addressing the disadvantage that often lies at the heart of offending behaviour, diverting people from the criminal justice system wherever possible, and addressing the barriers they face to getting a job and contributing to the community.

We thank you for your continued support as we continue our work with people in the criminal justice system and work to build a just society.

**Julie Edwards** CEO, Jesuit Social Service

## Pathways to better futures

Chris Ellard has always had a passion for social justice. He began volunteering with people with drug and alcohol problems in the 1980s, and has also spent time in Africa working with poverty-stricken children and communities.

"Everything you do to help them – whether it's giving them \$2 or just listening to them – makes a big difference," he says.

So when Chris discovered Jesuit Social Services' African Visitation and Mentoring Program (AVAMP), he knew it was right up his alley. The program, which recently received a further three years funding from the Victorian Department of Justice and Regulation, works with African men and women involved in the criminal justice system.

Volunteer mentors are matched with participants within the prison system, helping them make a successful transition into the community and ultimately not reoffend.

In October 2015, Chris was matched with Hakeem\*, a 24 year old man in Barwon Prison.

"He is a very vulnerable young man who has experienced a lot of trauma, but we have developed a really good relationship which is very gratifying," says Chris.

The pair meet on a regular basis, with Hakeem developing trust in his mentor.

Hakeem is eligible for release from prison in less than a year and with Chris' support, has begun planning for his return to the community.

"He wants to find secure housing and he wants to spend time with his family. The fact he is able to share these thoughts with me and to ask for my guidance makes me know work like this matters."

Chris hopes the pair's friendship will continue after Hakeem re-enters the community.

"I have told him that when he wants to fly himself with his own wings, he can do so. But until then, I will be there for him."

*\*not his real name*



*Chris Ellard is a mentor with AVAMP*

## Working together for systemic change

For people leaving prison, the pathway to finding secure housing and employment can be a challenge. For somebody exiting prison who also has an acquired brain injury (ABI), things are even more difficult.

"I was anxious, apprehensive and pessimistic when I left prison – it was a real struggle. My ABI had a huge impact on all of that," says Brian, a participant of the Enabling Justice Project.

The Enabling Justice Project, funded through the Office of the Public Advocate, is an Australian-first collaboration between Jesuit Social Services and RMIT University's Centre for Innovative Justice. The program aims to address the issues and barriers faced by people with ABIs, who are significantly overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

A 2011 snapshot by Corrections Victoria found that more than 40 per cent of male and 30 per cent of female prisoners had an ABI.

**"I try to have a routine like I had when I was inside [prison]. Being here with other men who have the same condition is good because we can work through situations together. This program is fantastic, it's something to look forward to."**

Since mid-2015, a group of people with lived experience of ABI and contact with the justice system have met to discuss ideas to improve the criminal justice system for people with disabilities.

"Waking up every morning and not knowing what you're going to do every day is not where you want to be," says participant Bill.

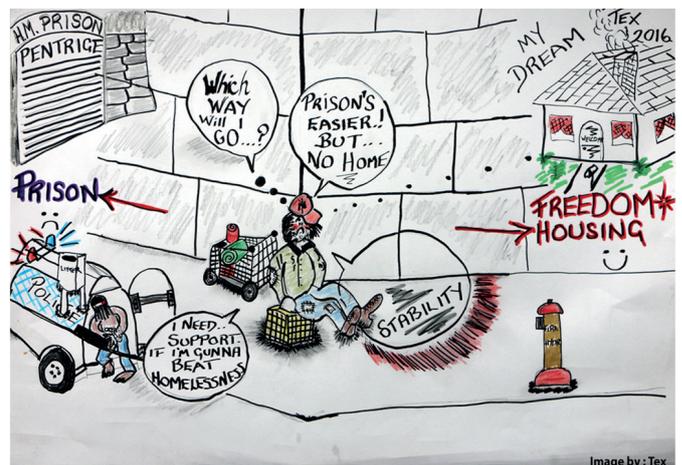
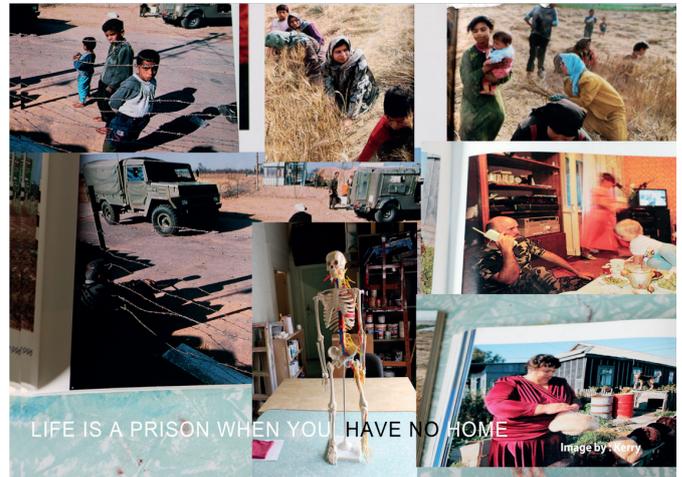
"I try to have a routine like I had when I was inside [prison]. Being here with other men who have the same condition is good because we can work through situations together. This program is fantastic, it's something to look forward to."

A consultation paper released this year showed that group members identified the lack of safe and secure housing for people leaving prison as the number one factor behind re-offending.

The group has since embarked on an advocacy campaign, *Three Hots and a Cot*. The campaign was launched by Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing Martin Foley MP to raise public awareness about the problem.

As part of the campaign, group members worked with artists from our Artful Dodgers Studios to produce a series of postcards and posters relating to themes of home and homelessness.

The program will advocate for systemic change at all levels – from policing to courts to corrections – to improve outcomes, reduce re-offending and ultimately create safer communities.



Artwork created by participants of the Enabling Justice Project

## Creating a just and safe Northern Territory

Jesuit Social Services has long advocated for better treatment of young people in the Northern Territory's youth justice system. We therefore welcome the Federal Government's announcement of the Royal Commission into the Child Protection and Youth Detention systems in the Northern Territory, following the ABC's Four Corners investigation into the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre.

This 'tough on crime' approach is not only ineffective but very expensive, with the cost of keeping a young person in youth detention in the Northern Territory more than \$900 per day. The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia's justice system is particularly evident in the Territory where this group comprises over 90 per cent of young people in detention or under community based supervision (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare).

Evidence shows the potential consequences of the appalling mistreatment of young people in custody in the Northern Territory - locking vulnerable children up increases the likelihood they will commit more offences down the track, putting them on a pathway to a lifetime of crime.

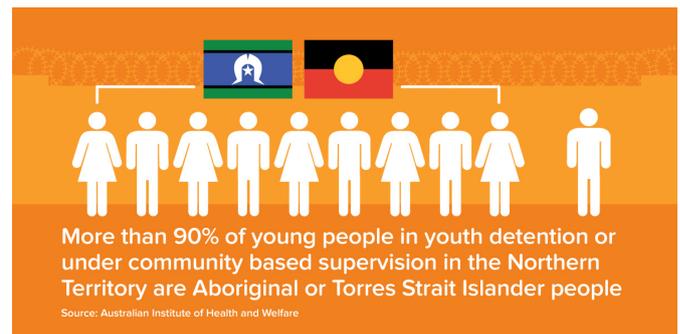
In light of recent events, Jesuit Social Services continues to call for a more just and humane approach to youth justice by:

- Raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 in line with UN recommendations
- Ensuring detention is always used as a last resort
- Promoting diversionary approaches that steer young people away from the criminal justice system and allow young people to address the factors behind their offending.

As part of our advocacy we released a Northern Territory election platform, *Creating a just and safe Northern Territory*,

which called on parties and candidates to commit to two key areas for action to tackle the root causes of disadvantage:

- Ensuring all children and young people have the opportunity to flourish: including ensuring high-quality education is accessible to all school children, funding bail support programs and bail accommodation, and investing in restorative justice programs for young people
- Providing a humane and therapeutic response for people with cognitive and psychiatric impairments in the justice system: including the abolition of indefinite detention of people deemed unfit to plead and providing alternative rehabilitative responses for these people



As a society we must look at the evidence that shows restorative justice approaches are more effective in reducing re-offending than keeping young people in detention. To truly create the safer communities we all want to live in, we must support vulnerable young people to become productive members of the community.

## Diverting vulnerable young Victorians away from the justice system

Recent reports in Victoria of young people being involved in carjackings and gang-related aggravated burglaries have attracted considerable media attention, culminating in the Chief Commissioner facilitating a Youth Summit on the issue.

Despite the youth crime rate declining nationally, including in Victoria, we know that a small group of young people are committing offences with more frequency. Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare also shows that almost three quarters of those in youth detention across Australia go on to reoffend within 12 months of release.

If we can work intensively with this small group of young people, we can address the underlying factors behind their offending and work to prevent further re-offending.

Evidence shows us that diversionary approaches, which steer young people away from the justice system by helping them address the issues behind their behaviour, are more effective in reducing re-offending than the use of custody.

These practices are based on the distinctive features of youth offending:

- There are strong links between young people experiencing disadvantage and offending
- Young people who have early contact with detention are more likely to re-offend later in life.

Jesuit Social Services conducts Youth Justice Group Conferencing, which allows young people who have committed a crime to meet with their victim, a member of the police, their lawyer and a support person to learn about the impact of their actions and to make amends.

In 2015 we also commenced operating the Youth Diversion Pilot Program, in partnership with YSAS and Centacare Ballarat. This pilot program allows young people who have committed an offence to be granted an individualised

diversion plan which aims to strengthen their links to education, family and the community, as well as linking them in with vital services to address the underlying causes of their offending.

These programs have both been successful. An independent evaluation by KPMG found that more than 80 per cent of young people who completed a Youth Justice Group Conference between 2007 and 2009 in Victoria had not reoffended two years later. Over 90 per cent of participants in the Youth Diversion Pilot Program have successfully completed their diversion plans and had their charges dismissed.



In the midst of heated debates about youth crime waves and graphic images showing the degrading treatment of young people in detention in the Northern Territory, Jesuit Social Services continues to make the case for steering young people away from the justice system, which makes sense on every level: it is more cost effective, it helps young people avoid a lifetime cycling in and out of prison, and ultimately it creates safer communities.

## 'For the first time he is happy for the future'

Young Aboriginal children who first have contact with the justice system aged 14 or younger have high risk of subsequent involvement with the justice system in later life.

With this in mind, Jesuit Social Services delivers the Barreng Moorop program for Aboriginal children aged 10-14 years, and their families, across north-east and western metropolitan Melbourne.

The program, recently re-funded for a further three years by the Commonwealth Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, is based on an understanding and acknowledgement of transgenerational trauma and works with young people and their families, including extended relatives, to achieve sustainable and genuine outcomes.

In the last financial year, the program worked with 24 young people and their families.

For mother Karen, the parent of 13 year-old Caleb, Barreng Moorop has been a life-changer.

"They're here to keep an eye on him, they are always asking what we need to make our lives easier."

Karen and Caleb are working to re-build their lives after experiencing trauma including family violence.

"The support we get from this program means we aren't living paycheck to paycheck – they've helped supply food vouchers and pay for Caleb's football registration. Sometimes I can take him to the pictures which I don't have the money for myself," she says.

"If you're used to having nothing and you get something, it feels like a million dollars."

Seeing the difference in her son – who Karen says has become more confident and trusting as a result of the program – has been a huge gain.

"He thinks they've done a hell of a lot to help him. He says life is so much better now and for the first time ever he is happy for the future."

Barreng Moorop is delivered in partnership with Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA).

## Great Australians Gala Dinner 2016



*Entertainment at last year's Great Australians Gala Dinner*

Jesuit Social Services is the charity partner of the third annual Great Australians Gala Dinner.

The event, to be held on 15th October 2016 at the Savoy Ballroom, Grand Hyatt Melbourne, will be a spectacular evening featuring dozens of Great Australians spanning fields including sport, entertainment, politics and philanthropy.

Some of the Great Australians who will be in attendance include world champion boxer Jeff Fenech, award-winning author David Malouf and entertainer Molly Meldrum.

A participant of our Support After Suicide program, which provides specialist support to people bereaved after the loss of a loved one, will share their experiences on the night.

The event will also feature entertainment by artists including Kate Ceberano and Normie Rowe, plus live and silent auctions to raise valuable funds to help us in our mission to build a just society.

For more information, visit  
[www.greataustraliansgaladinner.com.au](http://www.greataustraliansgaladinner.com.au) or  
[www.facebook.com/greataustraliansgaladinner](https://www.facebook.com/greataustraliansgaladinner)

To book phone (03) 9421 7600.

## Program statistics 2015 - 2016

Across 2015-2016 we continued to grow our work in a number of areas. Ahead of the release of our Annual Report, here are some key statistics about the people we worked with in the past 12 months:

**124**

The number of completed Youth Justice Group Conferences

**140**

The number of participants in our Youth Diversion Pilot Program

**1,559**

The number of students enrolled in accredited training at Jesuit Community College

**25**

The number of participants matched to mentors in our African Visitation and Mentoring Program

**298**

The number of participants in our ReConnect Adult Justice program

**930**

The number of Police referrals to Support After Suicide

**15,578**

The number of customers assisted with subsidised groceries at The Store in Western Sydney

**117**

The number of participants in our Asylum Seeker English Language Program

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**All members of the community, including people leaving prison, should have access to housing, education and employment to help them become productive members of society.**

**We help people break the cycle of offending and reach their full potential.**

**Please make a donation to help us on this mission.**

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**In 2017, we celebrate 40 years of standing in solidarity with those in need**

**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**

**\$**

**Contact and payment details**

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