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New legislation will not create safer communities: Jesuit Social Services

Legislation introduced this week by the Victorian Government to create new offences, penalties and minimum sentences for carjacking and home invasions fails to create safer communities, says Jesuit Social Services.

“The introduction of new offences is not supported by crime statistics which actually show the crime rate is falling in Victoria,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

There are already multiple offences that people who commit these offences can be charged with – for example, under the Crimes Act a person found guilty of armed robbery or aggravated burglary is liable to a maximum of 25 years in imprisonment - which Ms Edwards says renders these new charges superfluous.

Jesuit Social Services holds the strong view that mandatory minimum sentences remove judicial discretion.

“Jesuit Social Services has long opposed mandatory minimum sentences – there should never be a ‘one size fits all’ approach to criminal justice and magistrates must be permitted to consider all the relevant facts of an individual case before handing down a sentence,” says Ms Edwards.

The organisation has also expressed concern that a proposed amendment to the *Bail Act 1977* would include a presumption against bail for aggravated carjacking, home invasion and aggravated home invasion.

“Our prisons are already overcrowded with an alarming number of people on remand. This amendment would only add to these problems and come at a significant expense to taxpayers.

“Prison has an important role to play in our society but should be used as a last resort,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“Evidence shows us that the best way to create safer communities is to steer people away from the justice system wherever possible, and that people who leave prison are generally no better off than when they entered.

“As a society we must support vulnerable people to address the underlying causes of their offending behavior and put them on the pathway to becoming productive members of the community. This legislation will fail to create the safer communities we all want to live in.”

**Jesuit Social Services is a social change organisation working to build a just society
where all people can live to their full potential.**

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