



# SUBMISSION TO THE NSW STATE BUDGET 2017-2018

November 2016



**Jesuit  
Social Services**  
Building a Just Society

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## Introduction

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the opportunity to make a submission for the *2017-18 NSW State Budget*.

The Baird Government's recent budgets included welcome investments in education, vulnerable children and families, employment, and tackling family violence.

In a tight budget environment, spending must prioritise social and community services that enable communities to flourish. These services form the fabric needed to address the very social problems that contribute to crime, educational disengagement, concentrations of long term unemployment, drug and alcohol problems and family dysfunction.

## Our Cohort

Jesuit Social Services works with and advocates for people with multiple and complex needs. These people are often some of the most disadvantaged Australians. They can face a range of co-occurring and interrelated issues, such as homelessness, disability, substance misuse, health problems, and involvement in the child protection and criminal justice systems. These overlapping issues often mean that recovery is harder to achieve and sustain.

For a small number of people in New South Wales, the complexity of their needs means that they struggle to remain engaged in formal treatment and support services. While our social and welfare systems are able to meet the needs of the majority of people, they are often not adapted to cater for the NSW's most vulnerable people.

For people with multiple and complex needs, a whole-of-person approach is critical in addressing the unique mix of intersecting and overlapping issues that each individual faces. For many of our program participants, developing skills, such as independent living skills and interpersonal skills, and building their confidence are the building blocks to recovery.

With this understanding, we recognise that a whole-of-government approach, where the service systems work together and targets locations of entrenched disadvantage, is the most effective way to meet the needs of society's most vulnerable.

This is how to make a real difference, and underpins our recommendations in our submission.

## Jesuit Social Services: Who we are and what we do

Jesuit Social Services works to build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged people, families, and communities.

Jesuit Social Services works where the need is greatest and where it has the capacity, experience and skills to make the most difference. Jesuit Social Services values all persons and seeks to engage with them in a respectful way, that acknowledges their experiences and skills and gives them the opportunity to harness their full potential.

We do this by working directly to address disadvantage and by influencing hearts and minds for social change. We strengthen and build respectful, constructive relationships for:

- **Effective services** – by partnering with people most in need and those who support them to address disadvantage
- **Education** – by providing access to life-long learning and development
- **Capacity building** – by refining and evaluating our practice and sharing and partnering for greater impact
- **Advocacy** – by building awareness of injustice and advocating for social change based on grounded experience and research
- **Leadership development** – by partnering across sectors to build expertise and commitment for justice.

The promotion of **education, lifelong learning and capacity building** is fundamental to all our activity. We believe this is the most effective means of helping people to reach their potential and exercise their full citizenship. This, in turn, strengthens the broader community.

Our service delivery and advocacy focuses on the following key areas:

- **Justice and crime prevention** – people involved with the justice system
- **Mental health and wellbeing** – people with multiple and complex needs and those affected by suicide, trauma and complex bereavement
- **Settlement and community building** – recently arrived immigrants and refugees and disadvantaged communities
- **Education, training and employment** – people with barriers to sustainable employment.

Currently our direct services and volunteer programs are located in Victoria, New South Wales and Northern Territory. Our NSW work includes:

- **Western Sydney Program:** Through our social enterprise (store and opportunity shop) and other community building we engage young people in a number of capacity building activities, and we provide healthy affordable food, training and employment opportunities to people living in the area of Mount Druitt, Western Sydney.
- **Just Leadership:** Working in partnership with community and corporate enterprises to foster leadership for a just society. This includes the African Australian Inclusion Program, a professional bridging program developed in partnership with the National Australia Bank

providing paid work experience and a pathway to ongoing employment for African Australians.

- **Capacity building** activities in NSW (Just Reinvest project in Bourke) and the Northern Territory with Aboriginal communities to improve their situation and to have more control over their lives.

Research, advocacy and policy are coordinated across all program and major interest areas of Jesuit Social Services. Our advocacy is grounded in the knowledge, expertise and experiences of program staff and participants, as well as academic research and evidence. We seek to influence policies, practices, legislation and budget investment to positively influence participants' lives and improve approaches to address long term social challenges. We do this by working collaboratively with the community sector to build coalitions and alliances around key issues, and building strong relationships with key decision-makers and the community.

Our Learning and Practice Development Unit builds the capacity of our services through staff development, training and evaluation, as well as articulating and disseminating information on best practice approaches to intervening with participants across our programs.

## Our wider context – The challenge of overcoming disadvantage

Every Australian should have access to the opportunities in life that will enable them to flourish – to complete their education, to get a job, to access safe and affordable housing, to raise their children in safe communities and to see the next generation thrive.

In 2015, Jesuit Social Services along with Catholic Social Services Australia released the findings of its fourth *Dropping off the Edge 2015* Report (DOTE)<sup>1</sup>, which found that complex and entrenched disadvantage continues to be experienced by a small but persistent number of locations in each state and territory across Australia, including in NSW.

Of particular concern for Jesuit Social Services is the concentration and web-like structure of disadvantage within a small number of communities across the state. Our research found that those living in the 3 per cent most disadvantaged postcodes in NSW are:

- 3.6 times as likely to have spent time in prison
- more than 3 times as likely to be experiencing long term unemployment
- nearly 3 times more likely to have a low level of education and/or have suffered domestic violence
- twice as likely to have a disability or significant mental health problem.

The persistent nature of locational disadvantage becomes obvious when we compare findings of this 2015 study with previous studies undertaken in 2007, 2004 and 1999. No fewer than 24 of the state's 40 most disadvantaged postcodes in *Dropping Off The Edge 2015* were also found to be in the 5% 'most disadvantaged' in the 2007 study, and many have been in a depressed state since the early studies were undertaken in 1999 and 2004.

Jesuit Social Services has consistently argued that public policy must pay greater attention to the role of structural factors and social inequality as key determinants of health and wellbeing. These are therefore drivers of demand for community services.

In addition to addressing structural determinants, the Government can also tackle disadvantage through the provision of services. Here investment must be forward looking and preventative. From our experience, we know the best way to reduce crime and the burden on our criminal justice system is to tackle its root causes. In order to do this we need effective universal services in education, health and family services, as well as access to safe and affordable housing. We need to be able to respond to people in our community who fall through the cracks, and provide holistic interventions during times of crisis. And, fundamentally, we need to commit to long-term, local, community-led solutions in areas of deepest disadvantage.

The community sector, businesses and private philanthropy all have a vital role to play as key partners with the Government.

## Priority areas for the 2017-18 New South Wales State Budget

### Entrenched disadvantage

#### Initiative 1: Invest in long-term, place-based responses to entrenched disadvantage

Without a sustained, collaborative, long-term commitment across the government, community and business sectors, there is a significant risk that some of the state's most severely disadvantaged communities will continue to 'drop off the edge'.

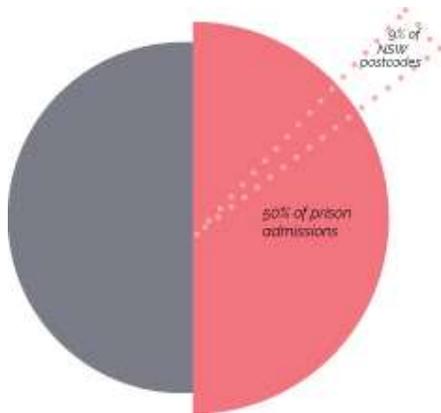
We call on the Government to commit to a longer-term vision, with greater investment in local communities to lift participation rates in education and employment in particular. Strong leadership and collaborative effort across government is urgently required to address entrenched disadvantage.

Jesuit Social Services calls on the NSW Government, in partnership with the community, to act immediately to put in place appropriate structures, plans and resources targeted to our most vulnerable communities to effectively break the web of disadvantage. We need a multi-layered, cooperative and coordinated strategy that is owned and driven by the community. It must involve all layers of government and the business and community sectors, reflecting shared responsibility and joint commitment to resolve this entrenched problem. This strategy must take account of the unique characteristics and circumstances of local communities and be sustained over the long term. It should be:

- **Targeted** – concentrated to specific areas of the most severe disadvantage.
- **Tailored** – Meet the community's needs and responding to the unique mix of issues facing the community.
- **Integrated** – Recognising the web of multiple and interconnected causes of disadvantage.
- **Cooperative** – Responses are founded on a strong relationship between government and departmental portfolios, integrated community initiatives and coordination between different levels of government.
- **A long term horizon** – A long-term commitment of 20 years to address complex, entrenched disadvantage.
- **Community owned and driven** – Community leaders drive the agenda, recognizing the strength within communities and work with them to build capacity, generate action, attract external resources and maintain direction and energy.
- **Engaged at the individual, community and national levels** – Recognising the complex interplay of the individual, their family circumstances, their community, and the broader social and economic environment in causing and addressing disadvantage.

#### Initiative 2: Reduce crime by responding to underlying drivers in vulnerable communities

Place-based, long-term initiatives must be maximised to reduce crime. *Dropping off the Edge 2015* found that 9.3% of all NSW postcodes accounted for almost half (49.6%) of all prison admissions in



NSW.<sup>2</sup> This highlights the often localised nature of crime, as well as the role of disadvantage as an underlying cause of offending.

A community capacity building approach to community crime prevention recognises the role that disadvantage in communities plays in the prevalence of crime. This a cost-effective measure directs funding to communities with high levels of crime to fund community-led initiatives as a means of preventing crime. Over time, these initiatives lead to savings in justice spending due to a reduction in levels of

crime. These community-driven responses target underlying issues that the community has identified as important to them. The Just Reinvest NSW project in Bourke is already seeing good results. There has been an improvement in school attendance, a sharp drop in domestic violence assaults and it currently has the lowest number of people jailed for driving offences that it has seen in 10 years.<sup>3</sup>

The Victorian Ombudsman identified the need for more innovative approaches to crime reduction and highlighted the efficacy of a community capacity building approach in Texas which led to a 1,125 drop in prisoner numbers.<sup>4</sup>

We commend the NSW Government’s commitment to reduce reoffending by five per cent by 2019, and welcome the \$237 million plan to achieve this target. However, NSW’s increasing recidivism rate, which went up from 42.4 per cent in 2010 to 48.1 per cent in 2015<sup>5</sup>, reflects the need to implement innovative approaches that more effectively address the underlying drivers of reoffending. Jesuit Social Services believes the effectiveness of community capacity building approaches presents an opportunity to reduce reoffending in New South Wales.

**We recommend the NSW Government develop a whole-of-government, long-term strategic approach to entrenched and localised disadvantage.**

## Addressing male Violence

### Initiative 3: Boys and young men using violence against family members

Jesuit Social Services commends the commitment the NSW Government has taken to tackling family violence in New South Wales. This effort will see long-term improvements for women and children facing family violence.

In particular, Jesuit Social Services notes the NSW Government's emphasis on prevention and early intervention. As highlighted in the *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016-21*, early intervention services currently are most often targeted at those who are already experiencing family violence.

Responding to family violence once it occurs to protect victims and prevent escalation is critical. There also needs to be attention focused on intervening early before violence occurs, and early intervention initiatives which address vulnerable groups who are at risk of perpetrating family violence, such as young people.

While there are currently many established and invaluable organisations that support the victims of men's violence, and a small range of behaviour change programs for perpetrators of violence generally linked to the justice system, there remains a significant gap in understanding and responding to boys and men who use violence or are at risk of doing so. There is an identified need for a broader range of interventions for men who use violence than is currently available, and for innovation and an expanded evidence base about strategies that are effective in stopping male violence.

Despite the cycle of harm played out across generations, not enough is being done to support children and young people's safety, and to respond early to children and young people at risk of becoming perpetrators themselves. In the words of a Jesuit Social Services Youth Justice Community Support Service Coordinator:

*We are currently coming across a number of young men who are perpetrating family violence either with family members (mum) or with their partners (females). We recently had a worker trying to find a men's behaviour change program and was calling all services who ran this type of program with the young man to make a referral. All places contacted had waiting lists of over three months and were all targeted at adult males. There were no youth specific male behaviour change programs. The young men we work with who perpetrate this violence have all had histories of witnessing and often experiencing family violence as a child.*

The experience related above is not uncommon. In Victoria, adolescent violence in the home comprises around 10 per cent of all family violence incident reports to police.<sup>6</sup>

The importance of working with men and boys who use violence was noted in the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence:

*Key areas of attention must involve improving risk assessment and management; monitoring perpetrator behaviour; harnessing the authority of the courts; working with perpetrators in ways that help them take responsibility, change their behaviours and address any specific*

*risk factors that contribute to their use of violence; exploring different program models; and delivering programs and other interventions that are proven to work.*

To respond to this issue, Jesuit Social Services proposes the establishment of an action-oriented body focused on finding solutions to the problem of male violence.

The body will be a central hub of ideas that will use evidence-based research and action to design, pilot and evaluate interventions to promote behaviour change and prevent male violence.

A key priority for the future is the development of a whole of sector approach to preventing and responding to family violence.

As victims and perpetrators of family violence interact with a diverse number of services – including police, courts and legal services, family violence specialist services, along with universal services such as health, education, youth, drug and alcohol, corrections and child protection services – there is a clear need for workforces across various sectors to have the confidence and capability to engage and intervene effectively with boys and men who use violence.

Complementing the critical role played by the NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV), the Institute would provide support to these sectors in their ability to respond to the dynamics of family violence, with a particular focus on young boys and men.

**We recommend the NSW Government contribute to the establishment of a dedicated body to address male violence, which would include:**

- **establishment funding of \$4.5m over four years**
- **specific funding of \$5.5m over four years for:**
  - **the design, piloting and evaluation of early intervention responses to boys and young men using violence.**
  - **workforce capacity building and training to strengthen existing models in New South Wales.**

## References

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<sup>1</sup> Vinson, T & Rawsthorne, M 2015, *Dropping off the Edge 2015*, Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia, <http://www.dote.org.au/findings/full-report/>

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> Thompson, G, McGregor, L, & Davies, A 2016, *Backing Bourke: How a radical new approach is saving young people from a life of crime*, ABC News. Available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-19/four-corners-bourkes-experiment-in-justice-reinvestment/7855114>

<sup>4</sup> Victorian Ombudsman 2015, *Investigation into the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners in Victoria*, Melbourne. Available at: <https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/getattachment/5188692a-35b6-411f-907e-3e7704f45e17>

<sup>5</sup> Productivity Commission 2016, *Report on Government Services 2016, Volume C: Justice*, Productivity Commission, Canberra, <http://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2016/justice/rogs-2016-volumec-justice.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Royal Commission into Family Violence 2016, *Report and Recommendations*, Volume III, Melbourne. Available at: <http://www.rcfv.com.au/Report-Recommendations>