

MEDIA RELEASE – MAY 9, 2017

Vulnerable groups recognised in bail response: Jesuit Social Services

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the Victorian Government's \$25.2 million commitment to continue and expand the Court Integrated Services Program (CISP) and the CISP Remand Outreach Pilot to monitor and supervise people on bail and remand, and target the underlying causes of offending.

The commitment is in response to Supreme Court Justice Paul Coghlan's review of Victoria's bail system.

"An effective justice system is one that works to prevent vulnerable people from having contact with the system in the first place, and when they do, supporting them to avoid further contact," says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

The organisation says the Government's announcement that vulnerable Victorians - including young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people with cognitive impairments - will have their circumstances considered in bail-related decisions is a positive step towards addressing the over-representation of marginalised groups in prison.

Victoria has experienced a 147 per cent increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison over the past decade.

"In addition to this over-representation of Aboriginal people, we know that 42 per cent of men and 33 per cent of women in prison have an acquired brain injury compared to just two per cent of the broader community," says Ms Edwards.

"Those charged with making bail decisions in this state must ensure that this knowledge underpins their work, and that vulnerable people are only denied bail when community safety is threatened.

"We need to ensure that these people, wherever possible, are steered away from prison and supported to address the issues behind their offending," says Ms Edwards.

"In [Jesuit Social Services' submission to the Bail Review](#), we provided a range of recommendations to make sure vulnerable people who engage with the criminal justice system get the support they need to reduce further contact and create safer communities," says Ms Edwards.

"We know people experiencing marginalisation and disadvantage are at heightened risk of having contact with the system, and we are pleased that this will be acknowledged and considered in bail decisions made in Victoria.

"At the same time we know our criminal justice systems are dealing with enormous numbers of people on remand, and we need to explore initiatives such as Drug Courts and a Bail and Remand Court, proposed by Mr Coghlan, to address these numbers and ultimately create safer communities for all Victorians."

Media enquiries – Kathryn Kernohan, 0409 901 248 or kathryn.kernohan@jss.org.au