



SUBMISSION TO THE 2018/2019 VICTORIAN STATE BUDGET

December 2017



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Jesuit Social Services: Who we are and what we do

Jesuit Social Services has been working for more than 40 years delivering practical support and advocating for improved policies to achieve strong, cohesive and vibrant communities where every individual can play their role and flourish.

We work with some of the most marginalised individuals and communities, often experiencing multiple and complex challenges. We work where the need is acute and there is the greatest capacity for change.

Our services span Victoria, New South Wales and the Northern Territory where we support more than 57,000 individuals and families.

Our service delivery and advocacy focus 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.

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.

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 working with participants and communities across our programs.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which Jesuit Social Services operates and pay respect to their Elders past and present. We express our gratitude for their love and care of the land and all life.

Introduction

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the *2018/19 Victoria State Budget*.

The Victorian Government's 2017/18 Budget saw welcome investment in family violence, social housing and mental health initiatives. The unprecedented commitment to reducing family violence was a watershed moment and Jesuit Social Services welcomed the full package of announcements.

The Government's commitment to expand the Navigator program, invest \$28.6 million over four years in specialist mental health services for young people aged 16-24 at risk of entering the justice system, and provide \$3.4 million over two years for a youth remand court to speed up processing of young people held without conviction, were also welcome initiatives.

However, the 2017/18 Budget was a missed opportunity to invest in prevention and intervention including smart, targeted initiatives based on evidence of what works. While the above announcements were positive, the spending pales in comparison to the \$2 billion committed to police and \$288 million for a new 224 bed youth justice facility.

We currently have record numbers in our adult prisons, including disgraceful over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, historically high recidivism rates, and the vast majority of young people in detention being held on remand without conviction. Some of the most vulnerable members of our community continue to cycle through child protection, homelessness, family violence and mental health services, and experience unemployment.

Setting the scene

Ecological justice

In an increasingly complex era of climate crisis, environmental degradation and rising social inequity, new challenges towards building a just society are appearing. The most marginalised and vulnerable are often the least responsible for ecological risks and threats but are the most affected by their emergence.

Jesuit Social Services understands justice as ecological, holistic and relational. Ecological justice therefore includes both social and environmental justice, it represents both a historical understanding and an emerging perspective of the forces which shape our world. To this end, ecological justice lends that all measures to create improved social outcomes must also consider both environmental effects and outcomes.

The pursuit of ecological justice involves a multi stakeholder approach inclusive of governance, business and community engagement. It also involves ethical transformation where healthy relationships become a central principle of pursuing justice. Jesuit Social Services wishes to invite discussion on what practices, policies and actions can be taken by governments, individuals, organisations and the community services sector within Australia, to build an ecologically just society.

A continuum of justice

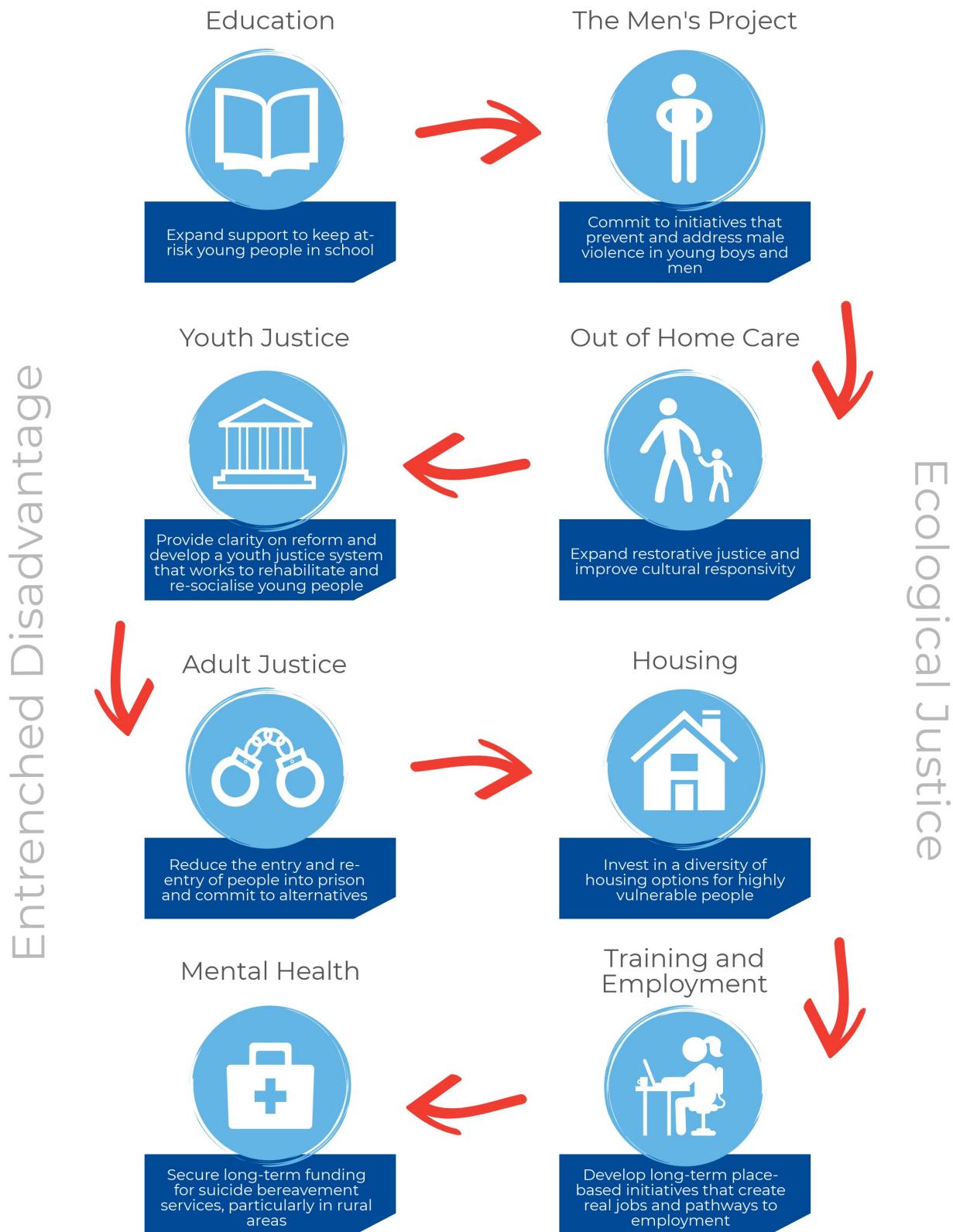
Influenced by our experience working with some of the most marginalised individuals and communities in Victoria, Jesuit Social Services imagines all of the priority areas for this year's state budget sitting on a continuum of justice.

As we look at the continuum – ranging from education and keeping kids in school, to child protection, and our justice, housing and mental health systems – we see all the critical points of intervention as opportunities to help people reset their lives in a positive direction.

Jesuit Social Services views our criminal justice system as the most pertinent example of this. Our prisons aren't working, and the revolving door of justice continues to see children, young people and adults trapped in a cycle of offending. We need to re-think and re-evaluate, disrupt the pipeline to prisons, and find new and innovative ways to build and strengthen communities.

Underlying the continuum is persistent entrenched disadvantage that continues to be experienced across the state, along with the growing impact of environmental degradation and rising social inequity. It is within this context that we view these critical points of intervention on the continuum of justice - where we must focus our efforts to improve how we as a society respond to our most vulnerable.

A continuum of justice



Education

Disengagement from education can often be the first sign that a young person has started on a trajectory into anti-social behaviour and involvement with the youth justice system. In Victoria, 56 per cent of young people in youth detention had been previously suspended or expelled from school.¹

Not only are most children and young people who have contact with the justice system developmentally, socially and economically vulnerable, but they also tend to be disengaged from the support and education that can provide positive development. Attendance and engagement at school is important for children's development as well as for social awareness.

In response to children and young people at risk of disengaging from education, Jesuit Social Services currently works in Hume/Moreland as part of the Victorian Government's Navigator initiative.

Navigator

Recognising the importance of school engagement as a protective factor against involvement in the criminal justice system, Jesuit Social Services is delivering casework and support to disadvantaged young learners in Hume/Moreland as part of the Victorian Government's Navigator initiative. Navigator works with disengaged learners aged between 12 and 17 to engage with them and their support networks to return them to education or training.

Re-engaging vulnerable young people in educational, learning and employment pathways gives them the foundational skills and opportunities they need to flourish. The Navigator pilot program operates in eight pilot areas in Victoria that experience significant disadvantage including higher rates of long-term unemployment and family violence. The program's work includes the development of individualised learning and cultural plans, and restorative practice including therapeutic and practical support.

An initial process evaluation of Navigator² conducted by Synergistiq was favourable with schools expressing an overwhelming support of the assertive outreach practice. Providers shared some positive early outcomes for young people who are already being reengaged back into education through the program. In the Hume region in which Jesuit Social Services delivers the program, 26 young people engaged in Navigator had returned to an education setting.

Jesuit Social Services' experience delivering Navigator has revealed that significant demand for the program – at times highly concentrated in individual schools - warrants a doubling of investment from the Victorian Government to ensure that young people disengaging from education are provided with the support they require. Young people would also benefit from better coordination between the varying services they interact with, beginning with the school but also extending to youth justice, family violence services and child protection.

Additionally, by lowering the age of eligibility for the program to 10, we can intervene earlier with these at-risk young people to disrupt the potential pathway into the youth justice system.

We recommend the Victorian Government double investment in the Navigator program to meet demand, and lower the age of eligibility to 10.

Most boys go through childhood and then into adulthood as productive members of society. But some boys disengage from school early. Their family relationships are dysfunctional. They live on the margins. They fall in with the wrong crowd. They are preyed on by those who would take advantage of them. And they end up in trouble. They cycle in and out of crisis services and the justice system, with immense costs. And as men they are often the ones responsible for the most horrific crimes - murders, violence, and acts of extremism.

We are learning more about the pathways these boys take to end up at the margins. But at the moment, our responses are too often inadequate or too late. More efforts are needed that focus on identifying, understanding and responding to boys aged 8 - 14 before the first signs of trouble often present in order to achieve:

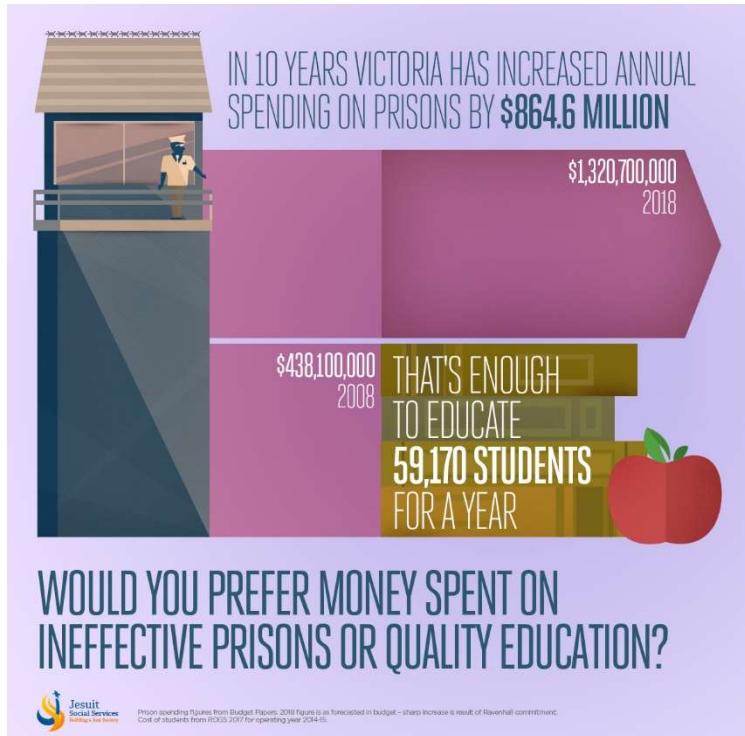
- improved health and wellbeing
- more meaningful and respectful relationships with family and in their personal lives
- engagement in pathways to productive futures (education, employment, etc.)
- prevention of involvement in antisocial groups and pathways to radicalisation, and
- reduction in involvement in the criminal justice system.

We call on the Victorian Government to trial interventions in selected locations across Metropolitan Melbourne that target boys prior to disengagement from school.

We recommend the Victorian Government trial interventions in selected locations across Metropolitan Melbourne that target and respond to boys aged 8 – 14 before they disengage from school.

The Men's Project

Boys and men are in trouble – and they are causing trouble. Not all of them. Not even most. But too many. We see it in high levels of substance abuse, mental health issues, radicalisation and violence.



Prison spending figures from Budget Papers, 2018 figures as forecasted in budget - sharp increase is result of Ravelsthorpe commitment; Cost of student from FDOIS 2017 for operating year 2016-17

The impact on women, children, families, communities and society as a whole is profound. As a society we have recently begun to acknowledge one significant aspect of the problem – violence against women. The focus has been, as it should be, on supporting the victims of this violence.

But we need to do much more. Around 95 per cent of victims of violence experience violence from a male perpetrator,³ 93 per cent of all prisoners in Victoria are male,⁴ and on average, six men suicide each day – three times the rate of women.⁵

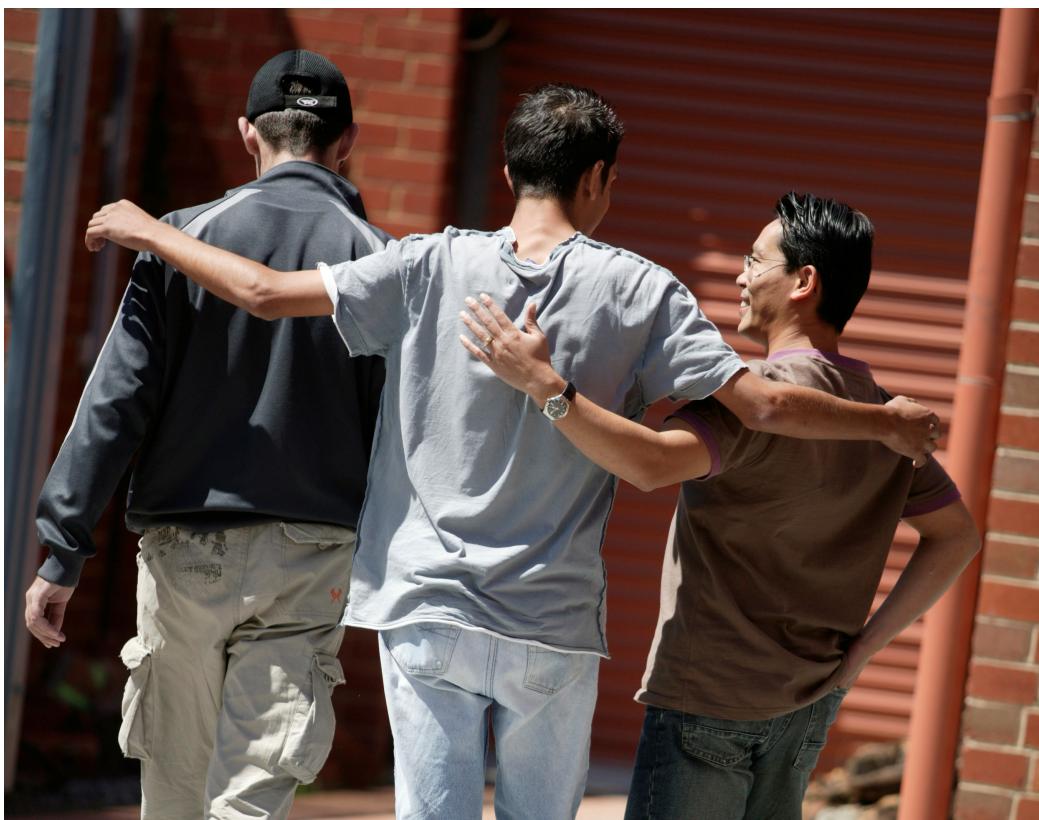
We must address the root causes of these injustices by supporting boys and men to live respectful, accountable and fulfilling lives, where they are able to develop loving relationships free from violence and contribute to safe and equal communities.

We need to promote positive change around gender norms and stereotypes and what it means to be a healthy and respectful man in the 21st century. We need to focus on the contributing factors to male violence like mental health problems, substance abuse and social isolation. And we need to collaborate with and build the capacity of others to reduce violent behaviour by boys and men.

If we can support boys and men to establish meaningful relationships, to build hopes and aspirations, and to fully realise their potential, this will benefit not only boys and men but everyone in the community – children, women, friends and families.

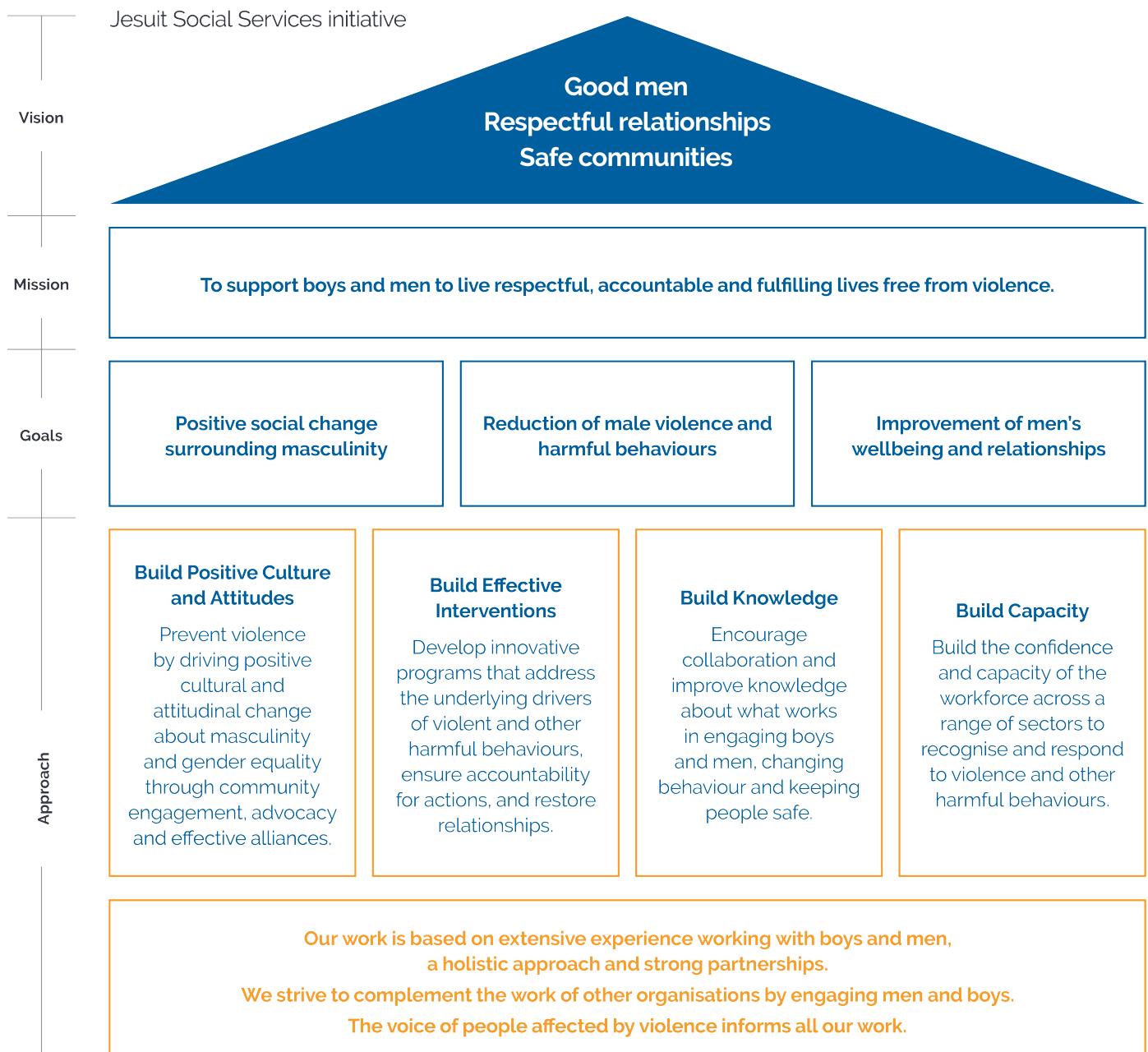
There are already some important programs that work with boys and men, particularly in responding to violence. For more than 40 years, Jesuit Social Services has been a prominent provider of these.

But these programs are disparate in nature and spread unevenly across the country. And while some are successful, they generally deal with single-issue behaviours of individual men and boys. A new approach is needed to achieve genuine change – a big picture approach that looks at the root causes of violence and harmful behaviour by boys and men. To this end, Jesuit Social Services recently established and launched the Men's Project.



the men's project

Jesuit Social Services initiative



The Men's Project aims to work initially with boys to both understand their attitudes and behaviours, as well as support them to establish meaningful relationships, to build hopes and aspirations, and to fully realise their potential. Jesuit Social Services calls on the Victorian Government to commit to and invest in the following initiatives to reduce male violence and create safer communities:

The Adolescent Family Violence Restorative Pilot

Jesuit Social Services and The Men's Project are partnering with The Children's Court of Victoria to deliver the Adolescent Family Violence Restorative Pilot (AFVRP) program. This project will run as a twelve-month pilot and commence in early 2018.

This program was developed in response to an identified absence of interventions for adolescent perpetrators in the Family Division of The Children's Court. The AFVRP program aims to deliver an effective intervention which applies restorative practice principles and offers a Family Group Conference process for civil cases involving young people who are using family violence. It will assist the family member victims and adolescent perpetrators to address the harm caused by family violence and prevent further harm being caused.

The pilot will provide a Family Group Conference process to:

- support adolescent perpetrators of family violence understand the impact of their violence;
- increase the safety of all family members;
- address the harm that has been caused to those affected; and
- put strategies in place to mitigate the risk of further violent behaviours and/or the escalation of violence in the family home.

By offering an additional intervention option in the Family Division of the Children's Court, the AFVRP also aims to prevent the risks associated with a young person entering the Criminal Division of the Children's Court.

It is an innovative response both in terms of adolescent family violence and also in expanding the use of restorative interventions. Key insights and findings from the delivery and evaluation of the AFVRP pilot will inform the work of The Men's Project to help build knowledge and capability in preventing and responding to violence among boys and men.

The program has the support of key stakeholders including Victoria Police, Victoria Legal Aid and Youthlaw who form part of the Working Group designed to inform the development of the Pilot. Jesuit Social Services is funding the direct delivery of the Pilot from its own resources and through philanthropy. Additional funding is now required to deliver the pilot in its entirety.

Attitudes and Behaviours of Australian Boys 2018

While a growing body of international research stresses the importance of engaging boys and men in addressing gender inequalities and the gendered drivers of violence against women, children and other men, little research has been done in Australia focussing specifically on boys' attitudes and behaviours on a range of related issues such as gender norms and stereotypes, gender equality, relationships, violence, and the role of technology.

The Men's Project seeks funding to develop and undertake the first comprehensive survey of the attitudes and behaviours of Australian boys on a range of issues including gender, technology, and relationships. This will provide an invaluable insight into our boys and identify specific issues to be responded to.

Jesuit Social Services would welcome the opportunity to expand on the above initiatives and work in partnership with the Victorian Government to deliver lasting change to our community.

We recommend the Victorian Government invest in *the Adolescent Family Violence Restorative Pilot* and *Attitudes and Behaviours of Australia Boys 2018* to prevent and address male violence in young boys and men.

Out of Home Care

Expanding restorative justice

It is well established that there are clear links between young people's involvement in the out-of-home care system and youth justice.

The Youth Parole Board reports that 40 per cent of youth parole clients were current or former Child Protection clients, and 34 per cent of youth justice clients had parents or siblings who have been imprisoned.⁶

Jesuit Social Services believes that there is an opportunity to work in a better way with young people who find themselves in challenging situations in out-of-home care settings. Currently these young people have limited access to a therapeutic, diversionary, restorative based process to work through the issues they face. Too often, the criminal justice system ends up being the default response for these young people. A restorative justice process using the methodology of Group Conferencing is an effective means of addressing conflict and repairing the harms experienced by children in residential units.

Restorative Justice Group Conferencing is a proven tool that works particularly well when used alongside purposeful, intentional case management targeted at the needs of the young person, their family and more broadly at community. Importantly, it is also a process that offers the victims of crime and their family a stronger voice in the justice process and an opportunity to seek closure for

what has often been a terrible experience in their life. Group Conferencing should be used as part of a range of interventions to address a young person's offending and a way of starting to get the young person to have the dialogue and begin to consider the impact of their offending.

Additional investment would complement the principles outlined in the *Roadmap for Reform* by providing an effective therapeutic and restorative intervention at the pre-court/pre-sentence stage to address issues that contribute to young people's challenging behaviour within residential units and therefore divert them from possible criminal charges.

We recommend the Victorian Government expand restorative justice conferencing to out-of-home care placement.

Culturally specific needs

The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in out-of-home care in Victoria has been well documented in recent years. The landmark Taskforce 1000 project and subsequent *Always Was, Always Will Be Koori Children* report found that more than 86 per cent of Aboriginal young people were case managed by a non-Aboriginal agency, 60 per cent were placed with a non-Aboriginal carer, 42 per cent were away from their extended family, and more than 40 per cent were separated from their brothers and sisters.⁷

As outlined in the aforementioned report, and reaffirmed through Jesuit Social Services' experience, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) young people are particularly vulnerable in out-of-home care placement. Failing to meet the culturally specific needs of young Aboriginal and CALD women in out-of-home care placement can lead to adverse outcomes, for example inadequately responding to trauma-related behaviours of Aboriginal girls in out-of-home care, resulting in suspensions and expulsions from school.⁸

Jesuit Social Services believes that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD young people in out-of-home care placement should have individual cultural plans developed to ensure that their culturally specific needs are met.

We recommend the Victorian Government develop individual cultural plans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse young people in out-of-home care placement, so that their culturally specific needs are met.

Youth justice

An effective youth justice system is one that holds young people accountable for their actions while working to rehabilitate and re-socialise them, to ultimately prevent re-offending.

Jesuit Social Services' recent #JusticeSolutions study tour was an initiative looking outside our borders for solutions to youth justice problems in Victoria and Australia. Senior leaders of our organisation undertook an international tour, taking in parts of Norway, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States.

On the #JusticeSolutions tour we learnt that a good youth justice system must have a clear vision. It seems an obvious place to start, but it became very clear that successful youth justice systems have

a clear vision and well-articulated purpose. The Victorian Government's recent *Youth Justice Review and Strategy* provided an opportunity to see this realised in Victoria with a number of positive recommendations, but the Government's acceptance of the findings of the Review, and strategy to move forward and reform the youth justice system, has lacked clarity and vision.

Jesuit Social Services' vision for the youth justice system is to enable young people who offend (or are at risk of offending) to lead healthy, productive and crime-free lives. To achieve this, our purpose must be rehabilitation.

Good youth justice systems focus on early intervention and diversion, preventing young people from further contact with the justice system, using child-specific approaches and engaging families and communities. They have thorough assessment and planning processes that are supported by strong social infrastructure and well-resourced community alternatives to locking up young people. When prison is necessary, the focus is on strong education, addressing problem behaviour and underlying needs, and building social and practical skills through programs that prepare young people for reintegration into their community. They use facilities that are small and close to the homes of detainees, with positive cultures and well qualified staff who are trained to build relationships of trust, rather than punish.

All of this is underlined by a deep commitment to take the time to hear the voices of young people, and the voices of their families, to truly understand what is driving their behaviour and ensure that those issues and needs are addressed. Please see **Appendix A** for a visual representation of our vision for Victoria's youth justice system.

If we imagine the youth justice system as a maze that entraps vulnerable young people – all too easy to enter but so difficult to escape – we must redesign the maze so that the pathways in are narrowed and the pathways out are clear.

Justice policy is complex. For it to succeed it must operate in an environment that can stand firm against political and populist pressures. We challenge the Government to show strong leadership and innovate rather than regress, so that Victoria may become a place where people from around the world come seeking solutions from us.

We call on the Victorian Government to provide clarity and vision around youth justice reform in Victoria, and commit to developing a youth justice strategy based on the evidence of what works.

We call on the Victorian Government to provide clarity and vision on youth justice reform, and commit to developing a strategy for a youth justice system that holds young people accountable for their actions while working to rehabilitate and re-socialise them, to ultimately prevent re-offending.

The #JusticeSolutions: Expanding the Conversation report can be found at
<https://jss.org.au/justicesolutions-expanding-the-conversation/>

Setting targets

The Victorian Government's plan to build a new 224 bed youth detention centre near Cherry Creek is both disappointing and inconsistent with the findings of the recent *Youth Justice Review and Strategy*. The business case for the facility is weak and represents a major new investment in youth detention capacity, despite the *Youth Justice Review and Strategy* stating that resources are already too focused on detention. Additional capacity would be greater than the current capacity of the whole system, while the number of young people in detention has been steady and implementation

of the Review's recommendations would place downward pressure on the system for example, by reducing the number of young people on remand.

If we build prisons we will fill prisons – this is not only expensive but it is also unsustainable. Instead of building prisons we should be closing them and investing in alternatives. We must set targets to reduce youth offending, incarceration and recidivism, with a specific focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

We should not accept a growing youth prison population as a given. We have seen in other parts of the world that a short-sighted and non-evidence based approach will only see more young people trapped in the maze of the youth justice system, ultimately creating more victims.

Instead of building prisons we should be closing them and investing in alternatives. We recommend the Victorian Government set targets to reduce youth offending, recidivism, incarceration, and the number of young people on remand. Specific corresponding targets should also be set for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Staff capacity

Jesuit Social Services believes that recent events in Victoria have highlighted the risk of using an under-skilled, under-resourced and casualised workforce to address the needs of a vulnerable and complex group of young people.

We can turn to international jurisdictions to see examples of best-practice in youth justice workforce capability. In the United States, industry hiring process have tightened over time largely due to staff misconduct. Juvenile corrections officers working in federal youth detention centres are required to possess a university level degree and the selection process involves a thorough background investigation that includes inquiries with family members and friends.⁹ In the Netherlands, staff require a minimum three-year bachelor degree to work in youth prisons,¹⁰ and in Spain's youth detention 'Re-education Centres' run by non-profit organisation Diagrama, front-line staff (named 'educators') are expected to have a professional qualification.¹¹

During the #Justicesolutions tour, Jesuit Social Services witnessed a particularly promising model of staff training and capacity building. In Norway, the training undertaken by correctional staff is currently a minimum of two years, and plans are in place to extend this to a three year Bachelor degree in the very near future. The course involves both academic and on the job (i.e. within prison) components. A big part of prison officer training was described as equipping new staff with capacity to focus on engagement and building relationships with people. Entrants are screened for life experience and positive, humanistic attitudes. Course participants are paid to undertake the training – they are the only paid students in the Norway system. This provides an incentive for people to embark on this career path, which is sought after, and entry is competitive. The status of this profession is respected in the community.

We envision a Victorian youth justice workforce that is highly qualified and grounded in principles that place the interests, developmental needs and rehabilitation of children and young people at the forefront

We recommend the Victorian Government require youth detention officers and other staff in youth detention centres to either possess or receive training towards completion of a relevant professional qualification.

Through-care

There is a need for greater resourcing of a through-care model as identified in the Victorian Government's recent *Youth Justice Review and Strategy*. We believe that ongoing, coordinated and youth-focused practice can produce better outcomes.

The Victorian Youth Justice Community Support Service (YJCSS), delivered by Jesuit Social Services, provides a positive example of this approach. YJCSS helps prevent re-offending by focusing on a young person's development, preparing them for adulthood and re-connecting them with the community.

Our case work focuses on broad aspects of a young person's life, such as social connection, economic participation, wellbeing and resilience, gender and identity, health, and self-determination. Through our case work, young people in the justice system develop:

- independence, resilience and pro-social connection to family and community
- skills and knowledge to make informed choices about their future
- the means to participate more fully in their community
- connections to family, education, training, employment and community

A 2013 evaluation of the program found that it delivered an effective form of support and had improved outcomes for young people in the system¹², and internal analysis of relevant casesⁱ in Jesuit Social Services YJCSS Closure Reports shows the following:

- 70 per cent involved the young person completing statutory orders
- 97 per cent resulted in improved engagement with family
- 93 per cent resulted in improved mental health
- 80 per cent resulted in improved participation in education
- 76 per cent resulted in improved engagement with employment
- 66 per cent resulted in improved engagement in training
- 96 per cent resulted in improved stable accommodation
- 88 per cent resulted in reduction in substance use.

ⁱ (Figures for 133 closed files for the period 1/7/2013- 30/6/2016 for North West and East and 2014 and 2015 for the South); based on worker report at exit ('not known' and 'not applicable' excluded)

Case Study: Youth Justice Community Support Service

Background: This young person was referred to YJCSS when he was 17 and had been in Parkville Youth Justice Centre for several years for serious offences. The young person had no prior history with Youth Justice and was extremely anxious leading up to release. He had a history of trauma prior to his offending and had previous involvement with child protection.

Upon his release on parole he was placed in a transitional housing property through the YJ Transitional Housing Manager (THM) program (part of YJCSS). The young person already had some independent living skills and was passionate about music. He was quite closed and superficial in his engagement with his YJCSS worker initially.

Support provided by YJCSS:

- financial budgeting/independent living skills
- recreational activities
- counselling
- assistance to get Learners permit and licence
- resume preparation and job seeking
- engagement in education
- family work around relationship with parents

Stable case management and housing was integral to this young person's progress and he:

- completed a lengthy parole successfully – no further offending
- successfully completed a THM tenancy, transferred into a Youth Foyer
- completed one course at TAFE and enrolled in a second course
- connected with new peers through TAFE
- gained employment at a juice bar
- passed his driver's licence test and bought a car
- has plans to drive around Australia when his course is finished
- is managing relationships with parents more easily
- is managing his anxiety.

YJCSS needs to be resourced so that it can provide support to every young person exiting youth detention. Jesuit Social Services believes that being able to work holistically with a young person, their family and their community, is critical to ensure that the young person is held in a net of support. Accordingly, investment in YJCSS needs to provide for this level of engagement.

We recommend the Victorian Government increase investment in YJCSS so that every young person exiting custody has access to the supports they need, and the program is able to work holistically with family and community.

Group conferencing

We believe that more can be done with young people who commit serious offences. In addition to proven programs like youth justice group conferencing, we believe many of these young people and their families would benefit from targeted but time-limited intensive case management support post-group conference. The focus of this work would hold young people and their families accountable for their commitment made at the group conference. This support would complement statutory work and focus on engaging the young person back into purposeful activity, including education, training and employment pathways.

We recommend the Victorian Government invest in targeted but time-limited intensive case management support for young people following participation in a youth justice group conference.

High-frequency offending

Research published by the Victorian Crimes Statistics Agency shows that the proportion of young offenders recorded for multiple incidents has increased; indeed, in 2015-16 the 3.8 per cent of high-frequency young offenders who were recorded for 11 or more incidents (i.e. 1,685 unique offenders) accounted for almost one third (28.9 per cent) of all incidents committed by those under 25¹³. In light of this data, any strategy must tackle the drivers of repeat offending.

Jesuit Social Services has identified a need to deliver more intensive case management for this small group of young people who are committing a high number of offences. This includes working with the young person's family, building social and community connections, providing purposeful activity (such as The Outdoor Experience, which engages young people with alcohol and drug problems in meaningful, safe and appropriate therapeutic adventure activities and journeys) and supporting education, training and employment pathways. This would build on the Youth Justice Community Support Service by providing wrap-around and tailored support after hours and on weekends to address the complex needs of this vulnerable cohort.

We recommend the Victorian Government invest in more intensive case management with the small group of young people committing a high number of offences, including family work and supporting education, training and employment pathways, offered after hours and on weekends.

Raising the age of criminal responsibility

A small number of vulnerable children enter the criminal justice system at a very young age. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 97 children under 15 years of age were held in youth detention in Victoria in 2015-16¹⁴. We know this group is among the most vulnerable in our community and that children first detained between the ages of 10 and 14 are more likely, compared to those first supervised at older ages, to have sustained and frequent contact with the criminal justice system throughout their life¹⁵.

Child offending experts, psychologists and criminologists agree that younger children have rarely developed the social, emotional and intellectual maturity necessary for criminal responsibility before the age of 14 years and also lack the capacity to properly engage in the justice system. Consequently, procedural fairness cannot be assured and criminal justice proceedings fail to

guarantee a just response to children's behaviour. The most effective approach to prevent these children's trajectories into the justice system is to address the issues driving their vulnerability such as family dysfunction, trauma, abuse and neglect.

The age of criminal responsibility has a more pronounced impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Statistics on the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in Victoria highlight the disproportionate impact of the current age of criminal responsibility:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders first have contact with the criminal justice system five years earlier than non-Indigenous offenders, at an average age of 14, whereas for non-Indigenous offenders the average is 19 years of age¹⁶
- Aboriginal and Torres Islander young people are 12 times more likely to be in detention than non-Indigenous young people¹⁷

In line with international standards embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and enacted in many overseas jurisdictions¹⁸, we recommend raising the age of criminal responsibility to the age of 14. According to an international study of 90 countries, 68 per cent had a minimum criminal age of 12 or higher, with the most common age being 14 years.¹⁹

Age of criminal responsibility: international comparison

AUS	NZ	CAN	ENG	USA	FRA	GER	SWE	NED	CHN	JPN
10	10-14	12	10	6-12	13	14	15	12	14	14

Source: Hazel 2008, Cross-national comparison of youth justice, Youth Justice Board for England and Wales

We recommend putting in place evidence-based approaches to supporting vulnerable children who are below this age. This should include less punitive methods of holding them to account, such as restorative justice and family centred approaches, as well as preventative measures which target the social and economic factors which lead to anti-social behaviour.

We recommend the Victorian Government raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years and fund a program that takes a restorative and welfare approach to anti-social behaviour in children under the age of 14 years.

Dual-track

The passing of the Victorian Government's *Children and Justice Legislation (Youth Justice Reform) Bill 2017* contains functions that will erode the dual track system, one of the foundations of Victoria's youth justice system.

Once the new functions are implemented, there will be a presumption that young people between 18 and 20 convicted of particular offences will be sentenced to adult prison unless exceptional circumstances apply, amongst other changes. Yet the evidence shows us that young people who spend time in adult prison are more likely to re-offend on their return to the community than young people exiting youth detention.²⁰

We call on the Victorian Government to maintain the integrity of the youth justice system by restoring the dual track system to its previous form (pre-*Youth Justice Reform Bill* amendments) and ensuring that no further legislative changes are made that will erode or dismantle its integrity.

We recommend the Victorian Government repeal the recent amendments to the dual track system, and ensure that no further legislative changes are introduced that will erode its integrity.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

More needs to be done to divert Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people away from the youth justice system to prevent them from becoming entrenched in the justice system. Responses to Indigenous youth offending need to recognise the role that intergenerational trauma and disadvantage play in children and young people's behaviour. It is equally important that responses to Indigenous youth offending are culturally appropriate, recognise the importance of community Elders and involve the whole family, including extended relatives and community.

Recognising the need to divert vulnerable children away from the youth justice system, Jesuit Social Services delivered the Barreng Moorop program in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA). The program is funded by the Commonwealth Government, and in 2017 was transitioned over to VACCA to administer and run the program, with VALS and Jesuit Social Services remaining engaged as partners.

Barreng Moorop works with 10-14 year old children, their siblings and their families residing in the North and West metropolitan regions of Melbourne who intersect the criminal justice system. The program provides a culturally responsive and trauma informed service to divert young Aboriginal people away from the criminal justice system.

Barreng Moorop works with the whole family and community (where appropriate) to provide a wrap-around response, understanding the composition of Aboriginal families, in which the extended family is the norm. The responsibility of child care and rearing is shared amongst a range of family members with, in many cases, a multi-generational core of kin providing primary care. In response Barreng Moorop works with, and provides support to, family members with the focus of using family, community and culture as a protective factor to divert young people away from the criminal justice system

Outcomesⁱⁱ from Barreng Moorop participants in 2016-17 were impressive:

- 82 per cent of participants had an improved view of self
- 76 per cent of participants had improved health and wellbeing
- 76 per cent of participants had improved connection with family
- 76 per cent of participants had an improved capacity to set goals
- 65 per cent of participants had improved participation in education or employment.

ⁱⁱ Data sourced from internal participant database measuring improvements against Jesuit Social Services' Our Way of Working outcomes in 2016-17

Case Study: Barreng Moorop

Rachel* is 13 years old and is on a Permanent Care Order in the care of her extended family member. The family have been involved with Barreng Moorop since September 2015.

Barreng Moorop's work with the family has included:

- Supporting Rachel's extended family member to access and move into a transitional housing property and relocating Rachel to live with her extended family member
- Completing and submitting a public housing application
- Linking Rachel's extended family member in with a doctor to address his health needs
- Working in collaboration with Rachel's school to improve her self-esteem and sense of self
- Providing support to transition Rachel from primary to secondary school and assisting with accessing financial aid to purchase school supplies
- Providing transport so that Rachel can continue to access counselling
- Working with the school, counsellor and Rachel's extended family member, to develop behaviour management strategies to support Rachel to manage her behaviour and interaction with others.
- Providing education about bullying and cyber safety
- Organising care team meetings with all services involved with the family

As a result of Barreng Moorop's work with the family, key outcomes include:

- Rachel has not had further involvement with the police
- The school noted that Rachel's involvement in incidents at school decreased from a couple a day to a couple a week when she moved in with her extended family member
- Rachel has smoothly transitioned to secondary school and is engaged in schooling
- Rachel and her extended family member are currently residing together in transitional housing together and her extended family member has been offered a public housing property
- Rachel's health management has improved, including sexual health awareness, and has continued engagement with counselling
- Rachel is engaged in pro-social activities which has improved her physical health as well as her self esteem
- Rachel has attended holiday camps and met other children her age outside of school
- Contact with extended family is improving
- Rachel's extended family member is receiving Centrelink benefits and Family payments, and has improved health management

*Not his/her real name

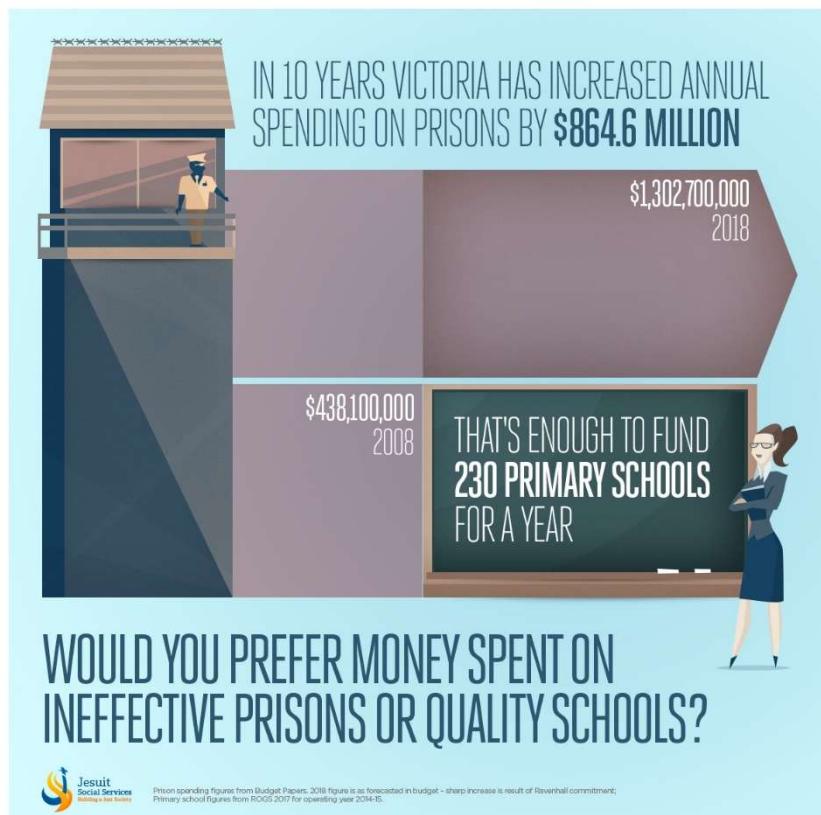
We recommend the Victorian Government expand the Barreng Moorop model throughout Victoria to provide a whole-of-family approach in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Adult justice

Victoria's booming prison population continues to be of great concern to Jesuit Social Services, as does the bi-partisan approach to build more prisons rather than invest in alternatives that are proven to reduce reoffending.

The recently opened Ravenhall Prison and \$345 million to provide additional prison beds, along with the Government's commitment in the *Victorian Infrastructure Plan* to fund the identification of land and planning for future prisons, appears to be an acceptance that our prison population will continue to grow.

As we have identified in our youth justice advocacy, if we build prisons we will fill prisons. This approach is unsustainable and ultimately will create more victims. We call on the Victorian Government to commit to reducing our ballooning prison population.

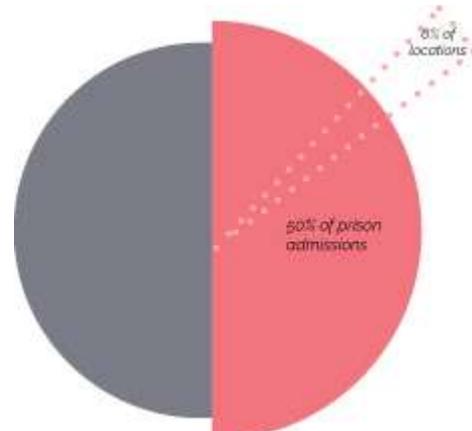


Reducing reoffending

Place-based, long-term initiatives must be maximised to reduce crime. In 2015, Jesuit Social Services along with Catholic Social Services Australia released the findings of its fourth *Dropping off the Edge 2015 Report* (DOTE),²¹ which found that 6 per cent (42) of postcodes in Victoria accounted for half of all prison admissions. 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 crime prevention recognises the role that disadvantage plays in the prevalence of crime. This 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 has the lowest number of people jailed for driving offences that it has seen in 10 years.²²

The Victorian Ombudsman identified the need for more innovative approaches to crime reduction and the efficacy of a community capacity building approach in Texas which led to a 1,125 drop in prisoner numbers.²³

By comparison, Victoria's recidivism rate is much higher than it once was with 43.6 per cent of prisoners in 2016-17 returning to prison within two years, up from a low of 34 per cent five years ago²⁴. Recidivism represents a significant cost to the Victorian community and presents a significant opportunity for savings. Modelling undertaken for Jesuit Social Services²⁵ shows that a 15 per cent reduction in the rate of male reoffending could save the corrections system between \$15.2 million and \$23.4 million per year over the long term. Achieving this reduction would also result in significant savings beyond prisons, including for mental health units, hospitals, police and other community support services.

We recommend the Victorian Government aim to reduce reoffending by 15 per cent by piloting a sustained community capacity building approach to community crime prevention in disadvantaged communities for a minimum of 10 years.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation

There is significant over-representation of Aboriginal prisoners and offenders in the criminal justice system.

Victoria's Aboriginal prisoner population has more than doubled over the past ten years, increasing by 126 per cent between 2006-07 and 2015-16.²⁶ In that same period of time, the non-Indigenous prison population increased by 53 per cent.²⁷

With the high rates of incarceration of Aboriginal people, including the significant increase of Aboriginal women entering the prison system, and the links between out-of-home care placements and juvenile justice, there is a greater need to ensure the issues facing Aboriginal people in prison are front and centre of planning and delivery of prison and post-release services.

Responding to the over-incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system needs a long-term, whole-of-government approach that is built on trusting, strong relationships with Aboriginal organisations.

A community capacity building approach provides a framework to bring together the government, community organisations, Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal communities. Through this partnership, knowledge and capacity can be built to respond more effectively, by addressing underlying issues and strengthening connection to traditional culture and ways of living.

We recommend the Victorian Government commit to reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system by:

- Funding a community capacity building pilot in an Aboriginal community
- Funding a pilot therapeutic jurisprudence response that incorporates a whole-of-family approach from an Indigenous perspective
- Funding ongoing cultural awareness training for all staff in prisons, and those delivering services to prisoners
- Funding identified positions in prisons for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander case managers to work with prisoners
- Strengthening the capacity of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to work within the justice system
- Funding a continuum of support for Aboriginal prisoners from pre-release to post-release that is built on trusted relationships with a single Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation to provide consistent, culturally appropriate support exiting prison
- Expanding the availability of programs targeted specifically towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Transition support

People exiting prison in Victoria include some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community. Yet the limited support that is available to them means they often cycle through the justice system.

The Victorian Ombudsman's *Investigation into the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Prisoners in Victoria* (2015) reported that only 700 of the approximately 6,600 people who leave prison each year are provided with transitional support and most of this group receive between 3 and 22 contact hours of support. The limited nature of support means people exiting prison do not get to adequately address the problems they face and this, in turn, exacerbates the likelihood of reoffending.

A small number of male prisoners can access 25 beds at the Judy Lazarus Transitional Centre, which has been found to reduce recidivism and better prepare people for transition back to the community. This model provides a staged release which has been shown to help people develop the skills and confidence to live in the community. The recidivism rate for those who exit via the intensive transitional support program at the Judy Lazarus Centre is 10.4 per cent compared to 44.1 per cent for the overall prison population.²⁸

The women's imprisonment rate has climbed by 40 per cent over the past decade.²⁹ The Victorian Ombudsman has recommended that the Department of Justice and Regulation investigate options to ensure the specific needs of women prisoners are recognised. There is currently no comparable service to the Judy Lazarus Centre available to women.

We recommend the Victorian Government invest in more intensive transition support services for highly vulnerable people leaving prison by:

- **expanding the Judy Lazarus Transition Centre to enable a greater proportion of the prisoner population to access intensive transitional support, and**
- **creating an equivalent transitional support facility for women.**

Housing post-release

Housing is a critical issue for people leaving prison. Having stable and affordable housing can make a significant difference in the life of a person leaving prison and whether they reoffend, yet almost a third (31 per cent) of prisoners expect to exit custody into homelessness.³⁰

In Victoria, significant limitations on the availability of housing and support mean many highly vulnerable people exiting prison are homeless or accommodated in inappropriate housing, such as unregistered private rooming houses or motels. For people seeking bail or parole, lack of suitable housing can prolong the time they spend in custody.³¹

A lack of safe and affordable housing has been identified as a significant criminal justice and public safety issue for women exiting prison, particularly Aboriginal women.³² Research shows that a high proportion of women who exit prison, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, are too often forced to return to unsafe and insecure housing (including family violence situations) due to a lack of affordable housing options³³, and unstable housing has been found to be the most significant factor affecting return to prison outcomes.³⁴

Safe and affordable housing is fundamental to people's ability to get their lives back on track, and it is vital that housing issues be resolved prior to release from prison. A range of appropriate housing options is needed, as well as support to maintain housing.³⁵

People who are exiting prison have a wide variety of needs and a diversity of housing options, including independent living and supported housing arrangements, is crucial to ensure each individuals needs are met. For some prisoners with highly complex needs the goal of economic independence may be unrealistic, and therefore a suitable, long-term living arrangement is essential to prevent further offending.

Post-release services help people find housing and work, and access health and other support services. However, only one in five prisoners receive post-release support from Corrections Victoria, and less than two per cent have access to housing through state government programs specifically for former prisoners.³⁶

Existing services target the most serious offenders and those most likely to be a risk to the community. This leaves many people transitioning out of prison with only limited access to post-release support. Access to housing support and services in the justice system for people exiting prison needs to be better coordinated.

We recommend the Victorian Government address the housing needs of people leaving prison by:

- establishing a diverse range of housing and support options for people leaving prison
- expanding and identifying the availability of affordable and appropriate housing options for women exiting prison
- identifying and funding options to address post-release housing support.

Acquired Brain Injury

Far too many Victorians with an acquired brain injury (ABI) are caught up in the criminal justice system. In 2011, Corrections Victoria reported that 42 per cent of men and 33 per cent of women, in a sample of the Victorian prison population, had been diagnosed with ABI; this compares with just two per cent across the general population.³⁷

The extraordinary overrepresentation of people with ABI in Victorian prisons reflects a broader failure of the criminal justice system to recognise and respond to the needs of people with ABI. In failing to meet the needs of people who have ABI, the criminal justice system is also failing the community.

RMIT University's Centre for Innovative Justice and Jesuit Social Services developed the Enabling Justice project to address these challenges, recognising that doing so in a meaningful way would require the involvement of people with ABI and lived experience of the criminal justice system. The project interviewed 21 people affected by ABI who had been in contact with the justice system, in order to better understand how they experienced the system and to identify 'missed opportunities', where alternative responses may have led to more positive outcomes.

The study's interviews highlighted the particular challenges faced by people with ABI in the justice system. For example, interviewees reported:

- They often felt overwhelmed and confused by their encounters with the justice system: "The things I hear are very dismissive, in the court. It's real heavy. Real heavy on your brain. And you try to listen, by the time you understand what's been said, something else has been put in front of you..."ⁱⁱⁱ
- They could not openly report their disability for fear of it being exploited by law enforcers or other offenders: "To be seen to be seeking help for anything, you're putting yourself in a position to be a target..."^{iv}
- Their ABI heightened their experiences of anxiety and vulnerability in the face of a complex legal system they could not comprehend: "There's a lot of anxiety, you don't know what's going on..."^v

The experiences of project participants indicate a lack of awareness, across the justice system, of the specific needs and circumstances of people with ABI. They also demonstrated that people with ABI have largely not been afforded the level of support provided to people with other disabilities in other contexts.

ⁱⁱⁱ Participant interview, dated 2 June 2015.

^{iv} Participant interview, dated 27 April 2016

^v Interview with 'Andy', Enabling Justice Project report, 36.

The project developed a series of recommendations designed to reduce the involvement of people with ABI in the justice system and to support more positive outcomes. Thirty-five recommendations were developed by the project partners, participants and members of the Justice User Group, addressed to the criminal justice system as a whole, as well as specific parts of the system. These recommendations were formulated, ‘road-tested’ and workshopped with the Justice User Group to ensure they were fit for purpose. The recommendations are examples of how the system might respond to the three key justice needs of people with ABI that were identified during this project: recognition, respect and support. We call on the Victorian Government to implement these recommendations.

We call on the Victorian Government to implement the recommendations developed by the Enabling Justice project.

For a copy of the report and the recommendations identified by the Enabling Justice project, please visit <https://jss.org.au/recognition-respect-and-support-enabling-justice-for-people-with-acquired-brain-injuries/>

Women with intellectual disability

Additionally, Jesuit Social Services works with women incarcerated at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre who have a diagnosed intellectual disability or cognitive impairment. These women are highly vulnerable and require specialist support which is currently very limited. We have found through our experience that staff lack the training and skills to work effectively and positively with these women, and current approaches towards providing them with support are inadequate.

We recommend the Victorian Government fund specific specialist supports for women in prison with intellectual disability or cognitive impairment.

Young adults

Several factors put young adults at more risk of becoming involved in offending behaviour, including high levels of mental health problems, higher levels of substance misuse, unemployment, homelessness, educational disadvantage and a lack of family support³⁸. We know that a significant number of young adults in the justice system are faced with considerable difficulties and that without assistance will be more likely to reoffend. Recent reports find that:³⁹

- The recidivism rate for prisoners in Victoria under 25 years of age is 52.7 per cent, more than 8 per cent higher than the rate for the general population.
- Current post-release support is voluntary and some individuals, particularly younger adults, are unlikely to put themselves forward for access to post-release support programs while in custody.

However, young adults are more amenable to rehabilitation than older adults who commit the same offences.⁴⁰ The high rates of reoffending on release from prison indicate that the current corrections system is failing too many young adults. From our experience delivering the ReConnect program, we have found that a number of young offenders in adult prisons are subject to long periods of isolation and the unnecessary use of restraint within these management regimes. Even with only a small number of young offenders subject to these regimes, the negative effect of their isolation is profound, and the flow-on impact of this as they return to the community and reoffend – both in terms of community safety and the financial burden on the taxpayer – is significant.

Although Jesuit Social Services has a number of case examples of the effects of isolation on our participants, we are unable to include them in this submission due to the risk of identifying the young people. However, common experiences we are aware of include:

- extended periods of long term isolation
- use of handcuffs, shackles, restraints, tear gas and observation cells
- significant mental health issues following release from isolation including suicide attempts
- difficulty interacting socially with other people following release from isolation
- upon release from custody, replicating isolation conditions in private accommodation (e.g. transforming a bathroom to resemble a prison cell, sleeping in the bath, preparing food in the bathroom).

Currently existing transitional services (such as ReConnect) do not target young adults and as a result many young people do not access these programs, or do not receive the type of support they need. In response to this, Jesuit Social Services proposes to deliver a youth specific program (for those 18-25 years with provision for those up to 30 years of age) to break the cycle of offending before it becomes entrenched. It will address the key difficulties facing young adults including providing pathways to education, employment, housing and reconnection to family and community, as well as provide support for people to recognise the impact of their offending on individuals, family and community.

The program model will draw on our expertise in the delivery of post-released programs to young adults – including the Youth Justice Community Support Service – and work in partnership with other agencies to provide a ‘wrap around’ response.

We recommend the Victorian Government invest in more intensive, therapeutic interventions focused on personal development through personal and vocational skill building, housing support, counselling and reintegration support for young adults post-release and on a community corrections order.

Building on the supports outlined above, Jesuit Social Services believes that restorative justice would be an effective component of a response for addressing offending behaviour in young adult offenders. Research has shown that compared to non-restorative approaches (e.g. imprisonment), restorative justice is more successful at achieving three main objectives: improving victim and/or offender satisfaction; getting the offender to comply with restitution; and decreasing offender recidivism.⁴¹ An evaluation of Jesuit Social Services’ Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program found that more than 80 per cent of participants had not reoffended two years later – this compared to 57 per cent for the comparison group.⁴²

Despite the success of various restorative justice programs, there are currently no restorative justice programs available for adult offenders in Victoria.⁴³ The use of restorative justice is not only useful because it reduces recidivism, but it also helps offenders to avoid becoming entrenched in the prison system.

We call on the Victorian Government to invest in restorative justice group conferencing for young adults involved in the justice system, for example by piloting group conferencing for young adults in prison at the pre-release stage. We would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Government in developing and delivering this initiative.

We recommend the Victorian Government invest in restorative justice group conferencing for young adults involved in the justice system.

Housing

Jesuit Social Services works with many people who rely on public and social housing to meet their most basic housing needs, such as those experiencing mental health and substance misuse issues, newly-arrived refugees and migrants, and those exiting prison. Among these groups, many have experienced homelessness, housing instability and stress, as well as other forms of disadvantage.

For people with complex needs, we know that homelessness can be both a trigger and compounding factor in their involvement with the justice system. Our experience tells us that the provision of affordable housing helps us to build safer and cohesive communities. We appreciate the significant role of public and social housing in Victoria in providing much needed stability and security for many disadvantaged people. The security and stability of long-term housing can help set a firm foundation for improving the prospects and well-being of disadvantaged people, enhancing their personal agency and addressing the underlying issues of their disadvantage. Safe, affordable and supported housing is fundamental to their ability to get their lives back on track.

As such, Jesuit Social Services recently welcomed the Victorian Government's steps towards increasing public and social housing stock and improving current dwellings to be more suitable for existing tenants. In our submission to the *Inquiry into the Public Housing Renewal Program*, we supported initiatives and outlined a number of issues including:

- 1.** Welcoming the proposed ten per cent increase in public housing stock, noting however that a ten percent increase in stock appears considerably inadequate to meet growing demand
- 2.** Noting the current shortfall in single person dwellings available in public housing, which is insufficient to address increasing demand for this dwelling type
- 3.** Support for those mechanisms which give voice and control to effected tenants over their long-term accommodation decisions
- 4.** Supporting the promotion of mixed and genuinely equitable communities amid private-public redevelopments
- 5.** Recognising the pressing need for redevelopment in those estates that have been earmarked for this renewal project



- 6.** Calling for facilities and support services to ensure that public housing estates cultivate socially cohesive and well-functioning communities.

Our submission to the *Inquiry into the Public Housing Renewal Program* can be found at:
<https://jss.org.au/submit-to-the-public-housing-renewal-program/>

Additionally, Jesuit Social Services has long called on the Victorian Government to explore and promote more innovative responses to improving Victoria's public housing system. We continue to reiterate this call so we can prevent the most vulnerable members of our community from falling through the cracks.

We recommend the Victorian Government:

- invest in a diversity of housing options for people with multiple and complex needs and provide incentives for social housing providers to offer housing to complex and high support participants
- invest in culturally safe accommodation and support to single Aboriginal men exiting prison, to reduce re-incarceration, and support men making other transitions, including from hospital services
- invest in medium and long-term supported housing opportunities for highly vulnerable women leaving state services, and deliver a rolling supply of new stock each year to provide ongoing access
- immediately increase capital funds to develop new housing stock, along with investment for housing support to enable people to maintain their tenancy
- strengthen and make consistent financial incentives (such as increasing the allowance for tenancy management) across the public and social housing sectors to ensure that people with high support needs are not disadvantaged
- introduce specific housing initiatives for singles and young people with high and complex support needs (including experience of trauma)
- introduce and strengthen measures (such as eligibility criteria and safeguards/regulations) to protect social housing households, especially for vulnerable groups presenting with challenging behaviours
- leverage capital through partnerships with the for-profit sector based on innovative models across Australia, such as Common Ground and Grocon residential developments
- create more opportunities for tenants and community sector providers to have a voice and actively participate in the process of designing the social housing system and informing ongoing improvements
- strengthen incentives for the private sector to invest in social housing.

Training and Employment

Long term place-based initiatives

Education, training and employment play a key and powerful role in addressing many of the overlapping issues facing disengaged and highly vulnerable people in our community. The promotion of education, lifelong learning and capacity building is fundamental to the work of Jesuit Social Services.

We welcome the Victorian Government's recent commitment and investment in a number of education, training and employment initiatives including the Jobs Victoria Employment Network, the Reconnect: Engagement and Learning Support Grants Program, and the Navigator Pilot Program.

Jesuit Social Services works with people who are often frustrated at the lack of access to valuable work experience and employment opportunities. This is most acute for people from disadvantaged backgrounds who often lack employment experience. The Government's recent investment has been positive and critical in this regard. We now call on the Victorian Government to look at long-term initiatives that are targeted to communities of disadvantage, to create jobs and pathways to employment, particularly for young people at risk of disengaging.

The OECD has conducted research into local strategies for youth unemployment, identifying that it is often at the local level that government policies can be integrated and combined with place-based initiatives to provide multidimensional responses to complex problems.⁴⁴ From their analysis of various case studies and initiatives, a number of key themes and lessons emerged, including:

- put in place the right incentives and success measurement to support collaboration and target action on critical areas
- improve data availability and understand the nature of local skills supply and demand mismatch as a starting point of the local youth employment strategy process
- promote employer ownership and ensure that firms invest in their future workforce
- support sectoral approaches to bring together educational institutions, industry organisations, employment agencies and other government departments to develop career pathways, articulating skills requirements and connecting youth to the local economy, and
- monitor the implementation of programmes and evaluate success.

The Victorian Government's place-based Neighbourhood Renewal program launched in 2002 is an example of a positive initiative that worked across government, in partnership with local residents, businesses and the community sector, and combined social investment, service coordination and community involvement in decision making. A 2008 evaluation of the program found it reduced disadvantage and narrowed the gap between renewal areas and the rest of the state, as well as lowering unemployment, increasing further education qualifications, and raising perceived levels of community participation.⁴⁵

The Hunter Community Renewal Scheme is another positive example of an initiative targeted towards a community experiencing disadvantage. The Scheme was developed in response to a Jesuit Social Services report released in 1999 and prepared by Professor Tony Vinson, which found that Windale – a suburb in southern Newcastle – was the most socially disadvantaged community in NSW.⁴⁶ The Scheme was funded by multiple parties including state government, local government and community sector organisations, and involved a number of components and phases:

- a Community Renewal Strategy
- a comprehensive three-year Action Plan addressing social and employment needs
- community consultations and a Benchmark Survey that collected local residents' attitudes and was used to develop the action plan

- a Place Manager engaged for a three-year period and transition of responsibilities from the Place Manager to line agencies, and
- creation of the Windale Board of Management, a resident-run collective, to oversee community renewal activities.⁴⁷

A case study prepared by the Strengthening Communities Unit - NSW Premier's Department, found that over the three-year implementation period of the Action Plan a number of achievements were made which included:

- increased student school attendance and community volunteer involvement
- creation of 25 jobs and nine new start-up businesses
- 27 local women trained in an Assistant in Nursing course
- Crime Watch established with women reporting they felt safe moving around the community at night, and Police reporting that tensions between them and the community lessened, and
- a 'School as Community' Centre established which eventually became a blueprint for similar initiatives throughout NSW.⁴⁸

We call on the Victorian Government to develop long-reaching initiatives that are targeted to communities of disadvantage, to create real jobs and pathways to employment, particularly for young people.

We recommend the Victorian Government develop long term place-based initiatives targeted to communities of greatest disadvantage, that work with community, industry and employers to create real jobs and pathways to employment.

Corporate inclusion

Jesuit Social Services also notes the significant barriers to employment faced by newly arrived and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, which can limit their sense of integration into the Australian community. For these groups, employment fosters broader participation in society, provides a sense of purpose, and creates opportunities to become contributing members of the community.

Based on our experiences engaging with migrant communities seeking employment, Jesuit Social Services formed a partnership with the National Australia Bank in 2009 to establish the African Australian Inclusion Program (AAIP).

The AAIP fosters workplace inclusion for disadvantaged and underemployed skilled African migrants by addressing the initial barriers – including a recruitment landscape which is highly influenced by bias (conscious or unconscious) – which can often prevent entry into the Australian workforce. While the AAIP produces a social good, in broadening the employment prospects of disadvantaged migrants, it also provides significant benefits to the private sector in opening up an untapped labour market of talented workers and shifting perceptions in a positive way. The program has been successful because it offers the private sector partner the competitive advantage of bringing experienced, skilled, yet underemployed, job seekers to their attention. It also serves to benefit the private sector through workplace diversification, in boosting staff engagement and in enhancing corporate reputation.

African Australian Inclusion Program

We provide African-Australians with corporate sector experience

- There are systemic barriers to entry to the Australian corporate workplace for qualified African-Australians – including lack of Australian experience, non-recognition of qualifications, lack of business networks and bias (both conscious and unconscious).
- The program provides African-Australians with the opportunity to showcase their capabilities as well as specific development to become effective, independent professionals working in their chosen field.
- The roles include finance, IT, business administration, business analysis, corporate responsibility, project management, marketing and customer contact.
- Through AAIP, participants:
 - undertake a paid internship in their chosen field
 - immerse themselves in Australian workplace culture and build powerful professional networks
 - receive mentoring to achieve assigned tasks and duties
 - work with a coach to achieve broader career goals
 - at a minimum, obtain a professional reference at the end of their placement

We offer career coaching to ensure job success beyond the program

- With the help of NAB career coaches, AAIP's impact lasts beyond the program itself.
- Participants work with a coach to help them achieve broader careers goals and search for job opportunities both within and outside NAB once the internship is complete.
- The program has been running since 2009, with 340 participants over that period.
- 80 per cent of Participants at the end of the program have found work at NAB or in their chosen field.

We collaborate with business for stronger collective impact

- AAIP shows how the social and business sectors can collaborate to achieve a stronger collective impact.
- The program delivers genuine shared value that benefits participants, NAB and the broader community – for example as role models for younger African-Australians.
- AAIP's success has been recognised with several awards, including:
 - Diversity@Work (2010)
 - Melbourne Awards – City of Melbourne (2011)
 - Australian Human Resources Institute Diversity Award (2012)
 - Victorian African Community Award (2013 and 2014)
 - Victoria's Multicultural Awards for Excellence – Business Award (2017).

"The African Australian Inclusion Program is not really about giving me a job – it's about transforming my life, transforming my household, transforming my extended family and transforming the community I represent."

Tunde Aibinu, AAIP Participant

Building on the highly successful AAIP – and with the support of the current Victorian Government over the next two years – we have developed the Corporate Diversity Partnerships program to help companies connect with a diverse talent pool of qualified people who seek an opportunity to obtain the corporate experience and professional networks needed to launch their careers. Our Corporate Diversity Partnerships approach is founded on the following principles:

- **Partnership** – collaborating to arrive at the right approach for each business
- **Proven model** – time-limited, paid work experience with built-in mentoring and support
- **Flexibility** – extensive program or individual internships
- **Support and development** – for both interns and company employees
- **Workforce supply** – the option for companies to offer post-program employment.

With a spirit of collaboration and a shared desire to open up paid internship opportunities to talented people, we can connect the dots for companies to create a partnership that works – for everyone.

Most recently we have partnered with the Australian Taxation Office as part of their ‘Opening Doors’ initiative to offer roles across a number of disciplines (finance, accounting, commerce, economics and information technology) for professionally qualified individuals from refugee and humanitarian entrant backgrounds seeking to establish themselves in Australia. For more information on this program see: <http://corporatediversity.org.au/>.

Jesuit Social Services calls for more dedicated Corporate Diversity Partnerships to be developed, adapted from the AAIP model, to offer other disadvantaged CALD groups corporate work experience and an induction into Australian workplace culture and practice.

We recommend the Victorian Government further invest in Corporate Diversity Partnerships for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities with high unemployment rates.



AAIP participant with NAB People Leader

Mental health

Postvention support

Jesuit Social Services supports a holistic approach to mental health that takes account of key drivers of poor mental health, including poverty and disadvantage, discrimination, family dysfunction and histories of trauma.

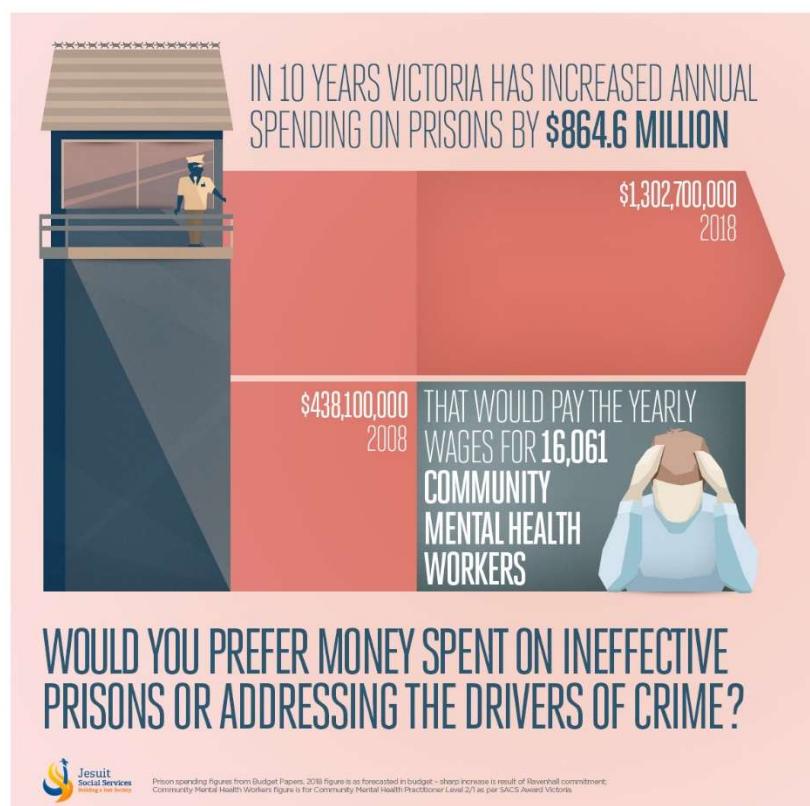
We know that mental illness (as well as alcohol and drug issues) is often a contributing factor to involvement in the criminal justice system. Strategies are required to address the drivers of poor mental health, and to provide service responses that better assist people experiencing poor mental health, including youth specific responses.

In 2016, 624 Victorians died as a result of suicide, significantly higher than 474 in 2007.⁴⁹ Just as alarming is the fact that in rural and regional Victoria, suicide rates are higher - the age standardised suicide rate is higher in the rest of Victoria at 13.1 per 100,000 people, compared with 8.9 per 100,000 people in greater Melbourne.⁵⁰

Research has highlighted the extensive ripple effect of suicide, highlighting the degree to which one person's suicide impacts the rest of the population.⁵¹ British researchers have found that bereaved people are 65 per cent more likely to attempt suicide if they are grieving for loved ones who took their own lives.⁵² Represented in terms of absolute risk, this equates to 1 in 10 people who lose friends or relatives to suicide being at risk of following suit.

Recognising the gap in service response for people who are bereaved by suicide, Jesuit Social Services has been running Support After Suicide throughout Melbourne and regional Victoria, as well as nationally through an online portal, since 2004. This service provides counselling, support groups and online resources to those bereaved by suicide, as well as delivering training to health, welfare and education professionals. The need for this specialist service for suicide bereavement is significant, particularly given the mix of grief, trauma and unique set of issues that contributed to the suicide that each person experiences.

It is critical to recognise the risk of suicide amongst those who are bereaved by suicide. The current lack of certainty regarding ongoing funding is problematic, with a risk that many Victorians may miss out on a timely service, including those referred by the police. Additionally, while Support After Suicide operates in regional areas (the Macedon Ranges, Warrnambool and Geelong), its ability to provide robust services, in spite of increased demand, is limited due to restricted funding.



Case Study: Support After Suicide – Allan, partner of Don

It's ironic that the horrific bushfires that devastated Victoria in 2009 led to my involvement with the Jesuit Social Services Support After Suicide program. I wasn't caught up in the fires myself but my partner, Don, took his own life around the same time as the devastating blazes due to his mental illness. The Coroner's Court was so caught up with dealing with the fires that rather than line up some counselling with me they connected me with Support After Suicide instead.

I am so glad they did. I don't think I would have done so myself without their prompting and it has made a big, big difference in my life. For me, counselling was really important, I think it saved my life.

Don and I were together for 22 years. He had a diagnosis of bi-polar disorder which he had managed really well for most of his life but in the last four years of his life it was a real struggle. He'd made four attempts on his life so I was living with the constant fear of his suicide and I was bracing myself for it. Every time I got home I wondered if I would find him and eventually I actually was the one who found him at home after his suicide.

I had no idea how I would get through my partner's suicide. My normal life just stopped for six months. Initially I had a lot of help from family and friends but I didn't know what to do. When I could not even take myself to the supermarket some counselling seemed a good idea.

A little door did open within me where for the first time I contemplated suicide myself. Yes, I did think of killing myself and it was scary. Seeing a counsellor helped me get through this. It was just vital for me. It was frightening to be starting to plan my death. I couldn't see my life without him. I was in deep shock after his suicide even though I had been bracing for it. He'd attempted four times, so I guess I thought he wasn't really ever going to die, that it would be OK.

A week after Don's death I had my first session with Support After Suicide. I cannot speak more highly of the support I received. I needed to talk about it over and over again. I was seeing my counsellor twice a week at some stages. I truly valued our time together and it would have been a very dangerous time for me without it.

I found it much easier to have help from a counsellor because good friends and family can't keep hearing the same old things over and over all the time. I learnt to cope minute by minute, then hour by hour and now it is day by day. I don't need the counselling now but it is very comforting to know they are still there if I ever need to talk to someone again has helped me so much."

We recommend the Victorian Government develop secure, long-term funding for postvention, early intervention services for suicide bereavement and increase access to suicide bereavement services for regional and rural areas.

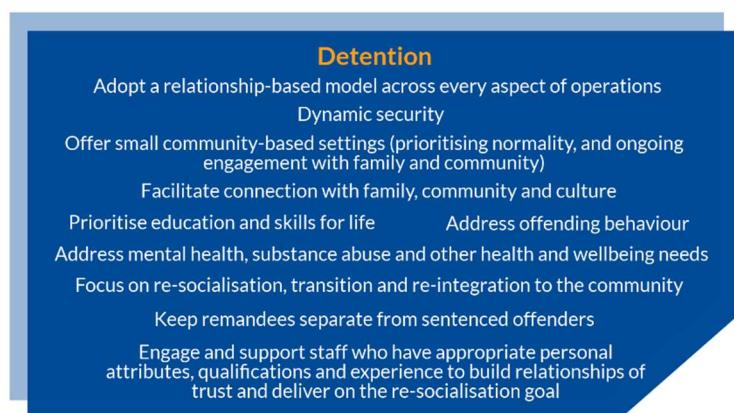
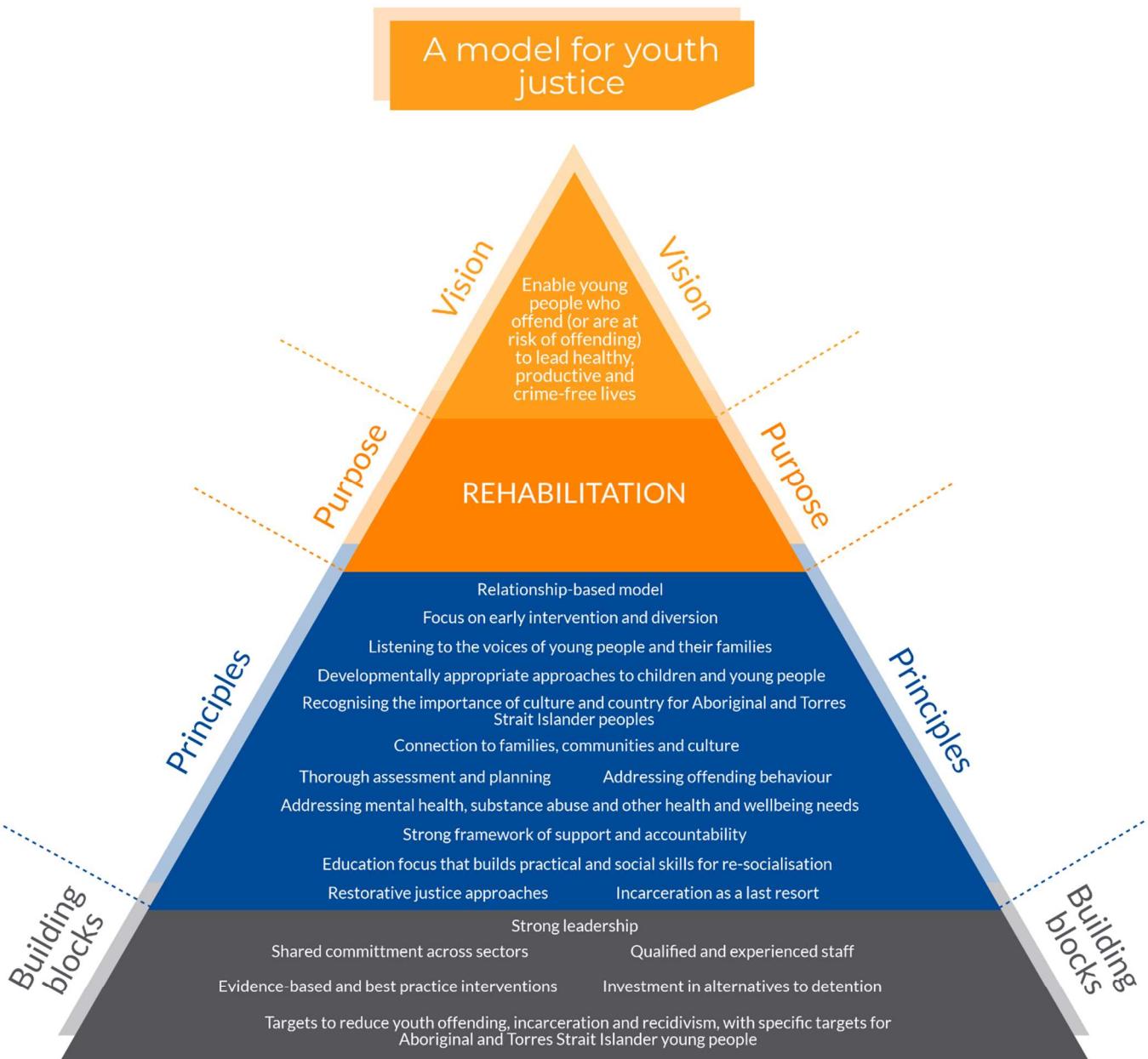
Postvention research

In addition to providing secure funding for suicide bereavement support, there is a related research gap that needs to be addressed. Unsurprisingly, mental health funding is often directed based on evidence and research.

There is emerging research on how postvention services reduce the risk of suicide, however dedicated research funding is required to develop a strong evidence base on the impact of suicide on others, and the effectiveness of bereavement support in reducing risk.

We recommend the Victorian Government provide funding for a dedicated research stream to develop an evidence base on the impact of suicide and the effectiveness of postvention services in reducing risk.

Appendix A



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