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## **Support for frontline staff means less crime and fewer victims: Jesuit Social Services**

This week's investment of \$2.77 million to support the Northern Territory's frontline workers in child protection, youth justice and domestic violence services will ultimately result in less crime and fewer victims, says Jesuit Social Services.

"Our child protection and youth justice workers play vital roles in supporting some of the community's most marginalized children and young people – many of whom have faced multiple and complex forms of disadvantage including mental illness, drug and alcohol problems or disengagement from education prior to having contact with these systems," says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

"It is critical that these workers have the experience, qualifications and personal attributes to work with young people who may have faced trauma, abuse or neglect; and also that workers are well-resourced and supported within their workplaces to be able to form positive relationships with young people and help them turn their lives around".

The funding announcement will see the establishment of a Clinical and Professional Practice Directorate, and ensure that frontline staff have access to ongoing training, professional support, mentoring and coaching to assist them with casework.

"The Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory showed the entire country the systemic and significant failings of these systems. They failed to support children and, when they did have contact with the justice system, they used punitive and inhumane approaches instead of the rehabilitative approaches that we know work.

"This is a positive step forwards in ensuring frontline staff have the type of support and training they need to adequately support vulnerable young people".

Ms Edwards and other leaders from Jesuit Social Services explored effective youth justice systems in parts of the Europe and the US last year and found that experienced, resourced and supported staff were crucial in achieving low crime, detention and re-offending rates.

"For example, in Norway, prison officers require a minimum of two years of paid study and in youth detention facilities half of the staff are social workers.

"This approach in part has led to Norway having an extremely low incarceration rate compared to a country like Australia.

"Equipping and supporting frontline staff with the skills and services they need to succeed in their roles means better outcomes for children and young people, families and the entire community".

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