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NSW must look at best practice to address juvenile justice tensions: Jesuit Social Services

The NSW Government is experiencing challenges with its youth justice system, *The Daily Telegraph* has reported.

“New South Wales is not the only state that has recently dealt with issues, sometimes violent, in its juvenile justice system,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“These issues lead to poorer outcomes for everybody – they jeopardise the prospects of rehabilitation for young people and they can have a negative impact on the safety and wellbeing of staff when everyone has the right to be safe at work.

“A good way to proceed would be for the Government to ensure the system focuses on prevention, diversion and rehabilitation to address current tensions.

“Rather than reaching for punitive measures and harsher penalties, we must look at the evidence at what works in creating safer communities when we are seeking to prioritise everyone’s safety.”

In 2017, leaders from Jesuit Social Services visited effective juvenile justice facilities across parts of Europe and the US and published their findings in the report [#JusticeSolutions: Expanding the conversation](#).

“The successful juvenile justice systems we saw had well-articulated purposes around rehabilitation and re-socialisation,” says Ms Edwards.

“These systems were staffed by experienced and well-resourced people skilled in trauma-informed practice and developing positive relationships with young people to reform behaviour. The staff were well supported and appropriately remunerated for the important and challenging work they do. The detention facilities we visited were small, home-like and close to young people’s families and communities.”

“This resulted in safer facilities where incidents like the ones we’ve seen recently in NSW occur very rarely, if ever, and ultimately mean that when young people exit the system they are less likely to re-offend. That means less crime, fewer victims and safer communities.

“We urge the NSW Government to focus on the evidence of what works in creating a juvenile justice system that benefits the entire community.”

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