



Jesuit Social Services

Submission to the 2019/20
Victorian State Budget

April 2019



Jesuit
Social Services
Building a Just Society

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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 are a social change organisation working with some of the most marginalised individuals and communities, often experiencing multiple and complex challenges. Jesuit Social Services works where the need is greatest and where we have the capacity, experience and skills to make the most difference.

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

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

Justice and crime prevention – people involved with the justice system

Mental health and wellbeing – people with multiple and complex needs including mental illness, trauma, homelessness 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

Gender and culture – providing leadership on the reduction of violence and other harmful behaviours prevalent among boys and men, and building new approaches to improve their wellbeing and keep families and communities safe.

Ecological justice - inviting 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.

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 programs 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 people's lives and improve approaches to address long term social challenges. We do this by working collaboratively with the community to build coalitions and alliances around key issues, and building strong relationships with business and government.

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 people, community, land and all life.

Introduction

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the *2019/20 Victorian State Budget*.

The re-elected Andrews Government is to be commended on a number of election commitments, including the announcement of \$200 million for 1000 new housing properties, free dental care for children and young people at public schools, 15 hours a week of kindergarten for three year olds, and a Mental Health Royal Commission. It is heartening to see the Victorian Government show strong leadership to tackle another deeply entrenched societal issue, after completing the ground-breaking Royal Commission into Family Violence. Mental health services are critical to safe, healthy and cohesive communities.

Jesuit Social Services also notes the success of the Andrews Government in delivering Free TAFE. Education, training and meaningful employment is at the heart of what we do, and we welcome initiatives that make this a reality for more Victorians.

We must continue to focus our attention on the significant number of Victorians who face disadvantage and marginalisation. Many individuals and communities continue to experience homelessness, unemployment, entrenchment in the justice system and family violence.

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 an 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.

Recommendations

Locational disadvantage

That the Victorian Government:

- Work toward implementing whole-of-government place-based approaches to addressing entrenched disadvantage across multiple domains, with a lens of ecological and environmental justice, targeting the three per cent most disadvantaged postcodes in Victoria.
- Provide funding for Jesuit Social Services to establish a centre for place-based approaches that would act as a key hub for policy, advocacy, research and evaluation, and identify and promote models of best practice in implementing place-based strategies.

Education

That the Victorian Government:

- Lower the age of eligibility for *Navigator* to 10 years.
- Provide ongoing funding for Jesuit Social Services' Flemington Homework Club.

Gender and Culture

That the Victorian Government:

- Fund Jesuit Social Services' *Before It Starts* as an early intervention strategy to target and respond to boys aged 8 – 14 years before they disengage from school.
- Invest in restorative approaches to prevent and address violence in young boys and men, including a funding extension for Jesuit Social Services' *Restore* pilot.
- Fund Jesuit Social Services to deliver community education and activation programs like *Modelling Respect and Equality* on an ongoing basis to support community driven cultural change in relation to gender.

Youth Justice

That the Victorian Government:

- 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 in order to prevent re-offending.
- Retain the site of the Parkville Youth Justice Centre for children and young people on remand and develop a purpose-built transition facility for young people, including a separate unit for young women.
- Raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years and fund programs that take a restorative and therapeutic approach to anti-social behaviour in children under the age of 14 years.
- 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.
- Require the youth justice workforce, including detention officers and other staff in youth detention centres to have a minimum professional qualification to ensure the interests, developmental needs and rehabilitation of children are adequately met.
- Provide additional resourcing for *Youth Justice Community Support Service* so that all young people exiting custody, and their families, have access to the supports they need.
- Increase and promote access to Youth Justice Group Conferencing by legislating for conferencing to be 'opt-out' rather than 'opt-in'.
- Invest in targeted intensive case management support for young people following participation in a Youth Justice Group Conference.
- Expand restorative justice conferencing to those in out-of-home care placements.

- Repeal the sections of the *Children and Justice Legislation Amendment (Youth Justice Reform) Act 2017* which introduced a presumption against the dual track system, and ensure that no further legislative changes are introduced that will erode its integrity.
- Immediately repeal the sections of the *Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Act 2019* pertaining to intimidation offences.
- Establish small transitional homes each providing safe accommodation for three to four young people involved in the youth justice system for up to 12 months. Staffed 24 hours, the houses would facilitate access to tailored life skills, education and work readiness programs, and coordinate a transition to sustainable long-term independent living options.
- Expand the *Barreng Moorop* model throughout Victoria to provide a whole-of-family approach to children in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in trouble with the law.

Adult Justice

That the Victorian Government:

- Invest in alternatives to imprisonment, such as supported housing and step-down models.
- Introduce a target 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.
- 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 more positions in prisons for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander case managers to work with prisoners
 - Strengthening the capacity and resourcing 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 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.
- 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.
- Implement the recommendations developed by the Jesuit Social Services' and RMIT's Enabling Justice project.
- Fund specific specialist supports for women in prison with intellectual disability or cognitive impairment.
- Legislate for a presumption against the use of isolation.
- Establish an Independent Custodial Inspectorate that is responsible for overseeing prisons in Victoria and reports directly to Parliament
- Commit to implementing the recommendations of the Ombudsman's upcoming report into the use of 'solitary confinement' and young people.
- Invest in restorative justice group conferencing for young adults involved in the justice system.

Housing

That the Victorian Government:

- Increase access to social housing and build at least 3,000 new public housing properties each year over the next four years and invest in support for individuals with multiple and complex needs.
- Address the housing needs of people leaving prison by:
 - establishing a diverse range of housing and support options for people leaving prison
 - identifying and funding options to address post-release housing support.
- Provide recurrent funding to the *Link* program and expand it statewide.
- Fund a housing model statewide, similar to Jesuit Social Services' *Next Steps*, for women transitioning from prison back into the community.
- Invest appropriately in supported housing and in transition planning for young people leaving out-of-home care.
- Raise the age of leaving care to 21, providing funding on an ongoing basis.

Training and Employment

That the Victorian Government:

- Expand investment in Victorian jobs initiatives, particularly targeted to Victorians who experience significant barriers to employment.
- Expand pre-accredited training programs delivered through the Adult, Community and Further Education Board, to support disengaged learners and people needing support to enter or re-enter education and training as a pathway to employment.
- Expand on the Skills First Reconnect initiative training and an employment pathway.
- Establish concrete targets for job creation for people experiencing barriers to employment as part of its Social Procurement Framework.
- 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.
- Further invest in Corporate Diversity Partnerships for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities with high unemployment rates.

Mental Health

That the Victorian Government:

- Increase investment in innovative models such as the Artful Dodgers and Connexions programs at Jesuit Social Services to strengthen 'soft entry points' to the mental health service system for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.
- Develop secure, long-term funding for postvention, early intervention services for suicide bereavement, including *Support After Suicide*.
- Increase access to suicide bereavement services for regional and rural areas.
- 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.
- Invest in short-term residential care for people who have attempted suicide or who are suicidal.
- Ensure greater integration and coordination between clinical and non-clinical mental health services and better integration of clinical mental health services with the broader social support system to meet the needs of individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder or complex trauma.

Locational disadvantage

National Centre for place-based approaches

Jesuit Social Services' experience over several decades delivering community development work in some of the most marginalised communities in Australia – along with our series of *Dropping off the Edge* research reports – has demonstrated the concentrated and overlapping nature of disadvantage. For example, the fourth *Dropping off the Edge* (DOTE) report, released in 2015, found that complex and entrenched disadvantage continues to be experienced by a small but persistent number of locations in each state and territory across Australia. The report identified concentrated disadvantage across a broad variety of locations, from remote and rural communities to regional and metropolitan areas.

Our research found that in comparison to the rest of the state, those living in the three per cent most disadvantaged postcodes in Victoria are:

- twice as likely to have criminal convictions
- 3 times more likely to be experiencing long term unemployment
- 2.6 times more likely to have experienced domestic violence
- 2.4 times more likely to be on disability support.

The persistent nature of locational disadvantage becomes obvious when we compare the findings of our 2015 study with previous studies undertaken in 2007, 2004 and 1999. For example, 25 of the state's 40 most disadvantaged postcodes in DOTE 2015 were also found to be 'most disadvantaged' in the 2007 study (the other 15 postcodes did not show significant increases or decreases) and the postcodes in the most extreme categories have been quite consistent over the past 15 years.

Place-based approaches are an effective response to addressing entrenched locational disadvantage. Place-based approaches empower communities to develop and deliver local solutions by bringing together residents, community organisations, businesses, government and public services to design and implement innovative solutions to complex social issues specific to their community, drawing on local strengths, opportunities and goals.ⁱ Place-based approaches focus on the causes rather than the consequences of entrenched disadvantage, embracing prevention and early intervention in an effort to resolve issues before they escalate.ⁱⁱ

The Victorian Government's place-based Neighbourhood Renewal Program, launched in 2001, was an example of a positive initiative targeted at specific communities 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, lowering unemployment, increasing further education qualifications, and raising perceived levels of community participation.ⁱⁱⁱ Despite these promising outcomes, the Neighbourhood Renewal Program no longer receives funding.

Without a sustained, collaborative, long-term commitment across the government, community and business sectors, some of Australia's most severely disadvantaged communities will continue to 'drop off the edge'. The web of disadvantage can be broken effectively by a multi-layered, cooperative and coordinated strategy that is owned and driven by the community.

This strategy should be:

- **Targeted** – Concentrated to specific areas of the most severe disadvantage (selected by use of a nationally agreed, transparent and shared evidence base).
- **Tailored** – Meet needs as identified by residents within these communities and respond to the unique mix of issues they face.
- **Integrated** – Recognising that the web of multiple and interconnected causes of disadvantage cannot be addressed with compartmentalised solutions.
- **Cooperative** – Responses are founded on new systemic, coordinated ways of working that draw together different levels of government and departmental portfolios, integrated community initiatives and social impact investment.
- **A long-term horizon** – A long-term commitment of 20 years to address complex, entrenched disadvantage in identified communities.
- **Community owned and driven** – Community leaders drive the agenda, recognising the strength within communities and work with them to build capacity, generate action, attract external resources, and maintain direction and energy.
- **Engaged at the individual, community and national levels** – Recognising the complex interplay of the individual, their family circumstances, their community, and the broader social, economic and ecological environment in causing and addressing disadvantage.

We call on the Victorian Government to work toward implementing whole-of-government place-based approaches to addressing entrenched disadvantage across multiple domains, with a lens of ecological and environmental justice, targeting the three per cent most disadvantaged postcodes in Victoria.

To help make this strategy a reality and break the cycle of disadvantage, Jesuit Social Services calls for the establishment of a national centre for place-based approaches. This centre would:

- Function as an ongoing, freely available, and dedicated resource for research into locational disadvantage for use by citizens, leaders, community organisations and government agencies.
- Undertake action research with vulnerable communities to design, test and evaluate their place-based projects and programs.
- Advocate for impactful place-based approaches to solve locational disadvantage to the community, impact investment and public sectors.
- Empower local communities and the organisations that work in them to understand and solve their own problems – through provision of tools, analysis, training and education to build local capacity.

We call on the Victorian Government to provide funding for Jesuit Social Services to establish a centre for place-based approaches that would act as a key hub for policy, advocacy, research and evaluation, and identify and promote models of best practice in implementing place-based strategies.

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, based on a snapshot conducted by the Youth Parole Board of 226 young people involved in youth justice, 65 per cent had been previously suspended or expelled from school.^{iv}

Jesuit Social Services delivers casework and support to disadvantaged young learners 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 program's work includes the development of individualised learning and cultural plans, and restorative practice including therapeutic and practical support. Jesuit Social Services welcomed state-wide expansion of the program in the 2018-19 Victorian Budget.

In Jesuit Social Services' experience delivering *Navigator*, we have found that young people would also benefit from better coordination between the varying services they interact with. For instance, our work with young people with histories of out-of-home care have often been disengaged from education for some time. Beginning with the school, coordination should be extending to youth justice, family violence services and child protection. 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.

Case study: Navigator program

When Steven (not his real name), a young Aboriginal boy, engaged with Jesuit Social Services' Navigator program in late 2016 he was experiencing significant challenges with his education. Steven had long-standing issues with attendance, had a diagnosed learning disability and was not receiving any extra assistance in the classroom. Steven only attended three days of school in 2017 and although his mother tried several times to seek extra support for him in the classroom, he was never provided with an Individual Learning Plan. He was also struggling with family conflict, low confidence and a lack of understanding around his own complex needs.

Steven's Navigator case worker was able to gain a deep understanding of his personal challenges, build a sense of trust with him and link him in to culturally-specific services including counselling and group activities. Steven was also supported to enrol in a flexible learning centre where his individual needs were better supported, and where he could benefit from an Individual Learning Plan. Navigator helped Steven re-engage with education and, two years later, he attends approximately 80 per cent of his school timetable. His confidence has grown to the point that he has applied for casual work, which his mother identifies as a major success in his life, and is engaged with work experience thorough his school.

Steven's story demonstrates the importance of long-term case management with a focus on a young person's health and wellbeing, and the need for a culturally sensitive and respectful framework.

We recommend the Victorian Government lower the age of eligibility for *Navigator* to 10 years.

Flemington Homework Club

Since 2004 Jesuit Social Services has run the Flemington *Homework Club*, providing a welcoming, safe, stable and stimulating environment for children from refugee or migrant backgrounds to receive educational support and assistance.

Flemington *Homework Club* successfully provides access to learning supports, such as targeted tutoring and use of computers, laptops with internet access, and printers. Students and their families are supported to gain a sense of belonging and a positive identity through regular social engagement with their local community. The Homework Club

also encourages the development of self-esteem and positive mental and physical health, with the recent introduction of weekly workshops.

The *Homework Club* actively draws newly arrived families into the community, while providing tangible and practical support and enhancing social cohesion. In October this year, Homework Club received a Community-run Out-of-School Hours Learning Support Programs Award from the Centre for Multicultural Youth. Jesuit Social Services relies on non-government grants to fund this important program.



We call on the Victorian Government to fund Jesuit Social Services' Flemington Homework Club.

Gender and Culture

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.

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,^v 93 per cent of all prisoners in Victoria are male,^{vi} and on average, six men suicide each day – three times the rate of women.^{vii}

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 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.

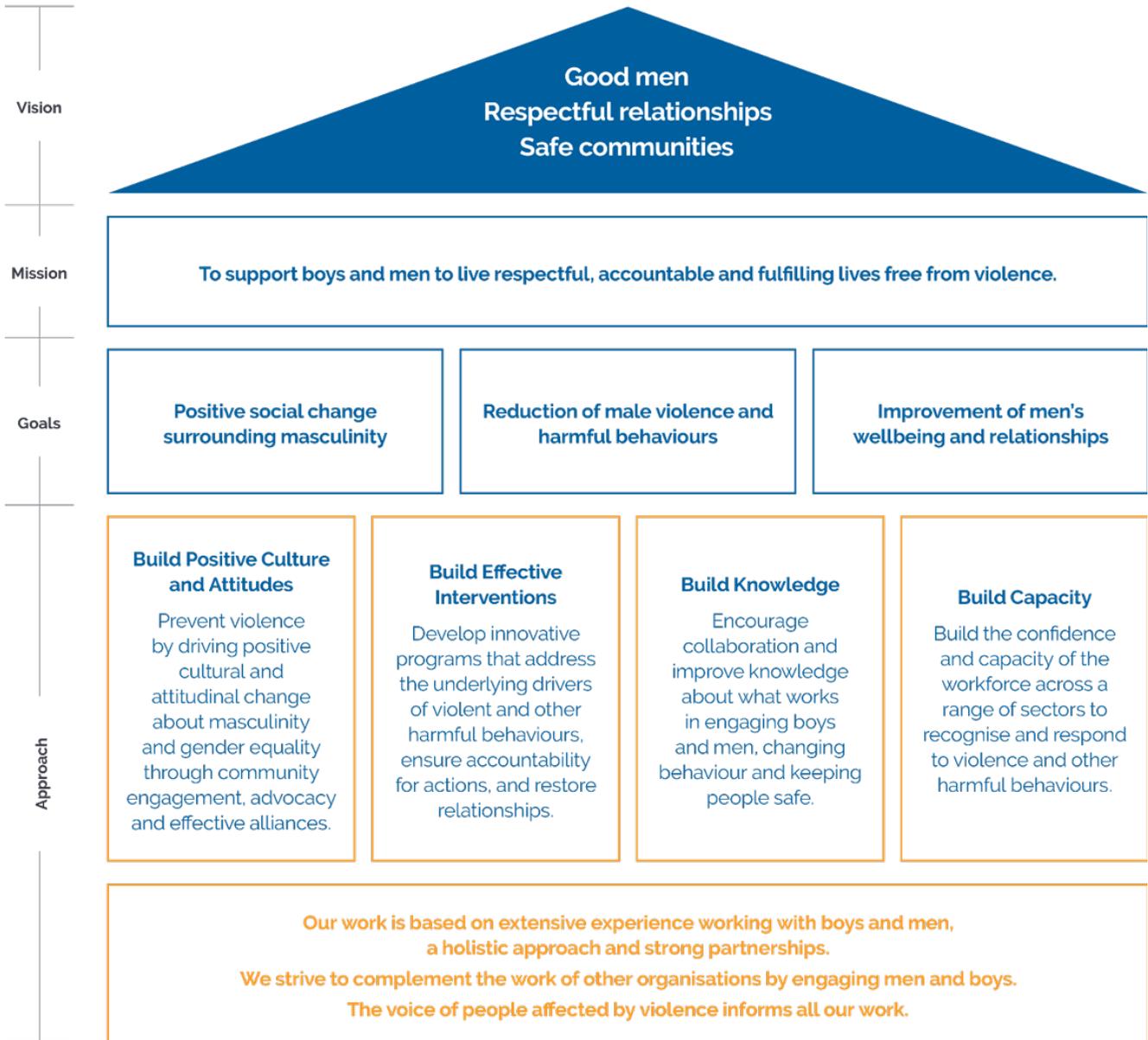
If we can support boys and men to establish meaningful relationships, to build hopes and aspirations, and to fully realise their potential, this will benefit not only boys and men but everyone in the community – children, women, friends and families.

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 established and launched The Men's Project.

the men's project

Jesuit Social Services initiative



A multi-tiered approach

Boys and men are subject to a system of social pressure that dictates how they should think, act and feel. Evidence from research into men's behaviours and attitudes conducted overseas shows that adherence to social pressures to behave in a particular way to be a 'real man' is linked to a higher likelihood of perpetrating acts of violence, and to poorer outcomes for men in a range of areas including mental health and wellbeing, drinking, and risk-taking behaviours.

To better understand these impacts in the Australian context, The Men's Project undertook a similar study, The Man Box, released in October 2018 – the first comprehensive study that focuses on the attitudes to manhood and the behaviours of young Australian men aged 18 to 30. The 'Man Box' is a set of beliefs within and across society that place pressure on men to be a certain way – to be tough; not to show any emotions; to be the breadwinner, to always be in control, use violence to solve problems; and to have many sexual partners. Findings show that the Man Box is alive and well in Australia today.

The majority of young men agree there are social pressures on them to behave or act a certain way because of their gender. The study confirmed that living up to the pressures of being a 'real man' can cause harm to young men and those around them, particularly women. Young men who most strongly agree with these rules report poorer levels of mental health, engage in risky drinking, are more likely to be in car accidents and to report committing acts of violence, online bullying and sexual harassment.

We must shift our thinking around masculinity, and adopt a public health lens to address the root causes of these harmful outcomes. We must invest in research, innovation and approaches at the individual, community, and societal level that not only focus on behaviours but the cultural systems that underpin them.

Interventions at the individual and community level

Before It Starts

Most boys grow up to be productive, healthy and responsible members of society. But some boys drop out of school early. Their family relationships are dysfunctional. They live on the margins of society. And they end up in trouble. They cycle in and out of crisis services and the justice system at immense costs. And as adult men, some of them end up being responsible for the most horrific crimes.

Our response to young boys heading down a path of trouble often comes too late, once boys have already disengaged from school.

There is a need to develop new ways to identify those at risk between the ages of 8-12 to support them to remain in school and out of trouble. *Before It Starts* will be based on the successful *Navigator* model, adapted for a younger cohort. We will work with boys and young men to achieve:

- Improved health and wellbeing
- More meaningful and respectful relationships with family and in their personal lives
- Engagement with pathways to productive futures, including education and employment
- Preventing involvement in antisocial groups and pathways to radicalisation
- Reduced risk of involvement in the criminal justice system.

Before It Starts will explore and develop approaches that account for diversity among boys, including working with culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal communities.

We recommend the Victorian Government fund Before It Starts as an early intervention strategy to target and respond to boys aged 8 – 14 years before they disengage from school.

RESTORE

When men use violence, support to change their behaviour must be grounded in the reality of their lives and the interconnected relationships of their families and communities. Restorative justice approaches hold young men and boys to account for the harm they have caused, while engaging with communities, families and loved ones.

Jesuit Social Services uses its experience delivering Youth Justice Group Conferencing to work with adolescent boys who perpetrate violence in the home. Commencing in early 2018, Jesuit Social Services and The Men's Project

have partnered with The Children's Court of Victoria to deliver the Restore program. This twelve-month pilot is being evaluated by experts at the University of Melbourne.

This program was developed in response to an identified absence of interventions for adolescent perpetrators in the Family Division of The Children's Court. Restore delivers 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 assists the family member victims and adolescent perpetrators to address the harm caused by family violence and prevent further harm being caused.

The pilot provides 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, Restore 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. Jesuit Social Services is funding the direct delivery of the Pilot from its own resources and through philanthropy. Additional funding is now required to ensure that the program continues beyond.

We recommend the Victorian Government invest in restorative approaches to prevent and address violence in young boys and men, including a funding extension for Jesuit Social Services' Restore pilot.

Addressing cultural drivers of violence

The need for individual and community-level interventions for men who use violence is clear. However, research has mixed results on the effectiveness of men's behaviour change programs to effectively combat violence in the long term. Such programs locate the need for change solely with the perpetrator, drawing attention away from the need for wider social and cultural change around ideals of masculinity and what it means to be a man.

The pressure to 'be a real man' looks different in different communities. Masculinity intersects with other social factors, like age, cultural background and disadvantage. Place-based approaches are needed, taking into account the realities of communities and the lives of individuals.

Modelling Respect and Equality (MoRE) was developed and is delivered by The Men's Project to support people who work with men and boys and build their awareness, knowledge, skills and confidence to model and promote respect and equality. The three month program, including a two-day intensive training workshop and a subsequent period of supported project work with a community of practice, equips participants to challenge harmful stereotypes and promote healthier attitudes and behaviours amongst the boys and men they work with. MoRE promotes social change across the community by fostering peer leadership and thus addressing the culture that underpins the harms experienced by both women and men, working to create healthy, respectful and thriving boys and men.

We recommend the Victorian Government commit to funding Jesuit Social Services to deliver community education and activation programs like Modelling Respect and Equality on an ongoing basis to support community driven cultural change in relation to gender.

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' 2017 #JusticeSolutions study tour looked outside our borders for solutions to youth justice problems in Victoria and Australia. Senior leaders of our organisation undertook an international tour, in 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 and well-articulated purpose. Armytage and Ogloff's *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 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.

To build effective youth justice systems, there must be collaborative knowledge sharing on what works across states and jurisdictions. To stand firm against political and populist pressures, practices must be evidence-based. We challenge the Government to show strong leadership and innovate rather than regress, so that Victoria is 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 in order to prevent re-offending.

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

Retaining Parkville

Large-scale facilities, such as the proposed Cherry Creek youth justice centre, are ineffective in reducing reoffending and rehabilitating young people. Jesuit Social Services is concerned that the Parkville Youth Justice Centre site will not be retained once Cherry Creek is operational. The *Youth Justice Review and Strategy* proposed that the Parkville site be retained and upgraded for specific vulnerable cohorts. In line with the *Youth Justice Review's* findings, we call for development of a purpose-built transition facility at the Parkville site, with a portion of the facility providing accommodation for young women, supporting young people to develop critical independent living skills before returning to the community.

We call on the Victorian Government to retain the site of the Parkville Youth Justice Centre for children and young people on remand and develop a purpose-built transition facility for young people, including a separate unit for girls and young women.

Raising the age of criminal responsibility

Children belong in school, not prison. A small number of vulnerable children enter the criminal justice system at a very young age. In Victoria, throughout 2016-17, 70 children under 14 were under youth justice supervision.^{viii} 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 lives.^x

Younger children have not 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 age^x

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are 13 times more likely to be in detention than non-Indigenous young people^{xi}

In line with international standards embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and enacted in many overseas jurisdictions^{xii}, we call for 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.^{xiii}

10	Australia
12	Belgium, Canada, Israel, Netherlands, Scotland
14	Austria, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain
15	Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Greece
16	Portugal

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2018). *Youth Justice in Australia 2016-17*.

Other approaches must be put in place to support vulnerable children below 14 years old and hold 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 call on the Victorian Government to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years and fund programs that take a restorative and therapeutic approach to anti-social behaviour in children under the age of 14 years.

Setting targets

The Victorian Government's plan to build a new 224 bed youth detention centre near Cherry Creek is both very disappointing and entirely 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.

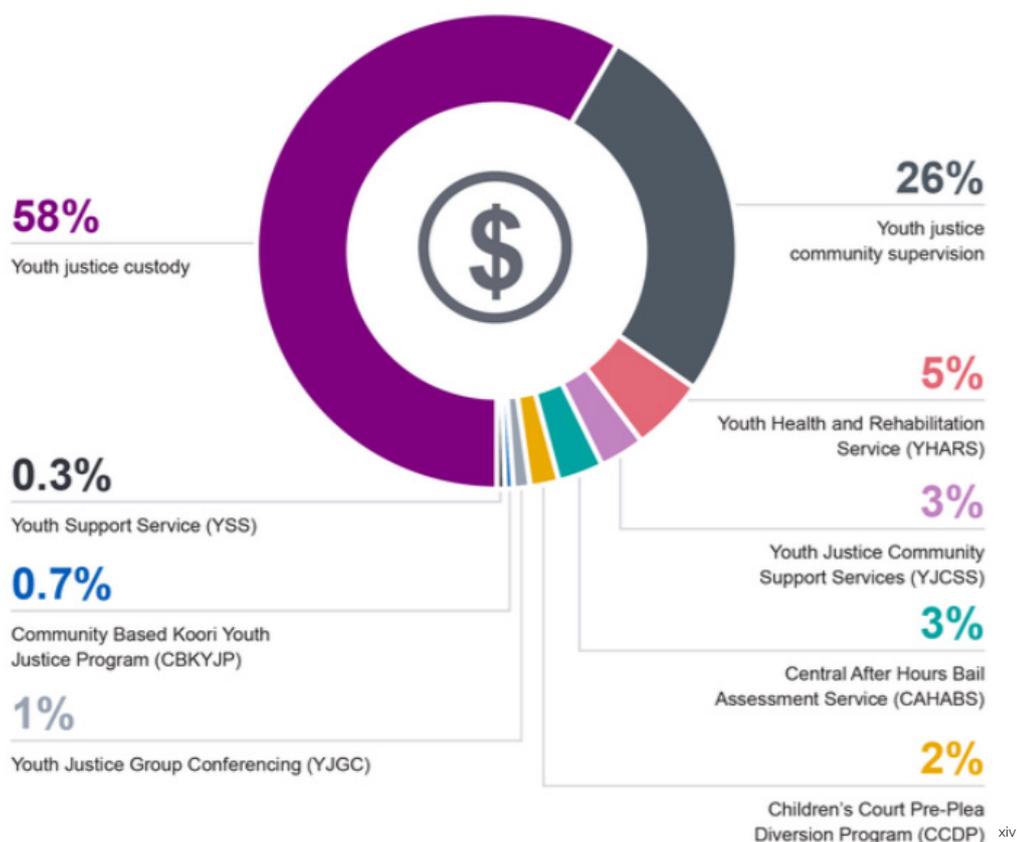


Chart reproduced from Ogloff, J. & Armytage, P. (2017). *Youth justice review and strategy: Meeting needs and reducing offending. Part 1, p.72.*

We should not accept a growing youth prison population as a given. This short-sighted and non-evidence based approach has resulted in more young people trapped in the maze of the youth justice system.

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 events over the past two years 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 children and young people.

We can turn to international jurisdictions to see examples of best-practice in youth justice workforce capability. In the Netherlands, staff require a minimum three-year bachelor degree to work in youth prisons,^{xv} 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.^{xvi}

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. Prison officer training included 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 call on the Victorian Government to require the youth justice workforce, including detention officers and other staff in youth detention centres to have a minimum professional qualification to ensure the interests, developmental needs and rehabilitation of children are adequately met.

Through-care

There is a need for greater resourcing of a through-care model as identified in the *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 system,^{xvii} and internal analysis of relevant cases¹ 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.

¹ (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)

YJCSS needs to be further 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, their community, and Youth Justice 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.

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
- resumé 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.

We call on the Victorian Government to provide additional resourcing for the Youth Justice Community Support Service so that all young people exiting custody, and their families, have access to the supports they need.

Group conferencing

To further strengthen Youth Justice Group Conferencing in Victoria, we recommend that the Victorian Government legislate for a model of Group Conferencing that is 'opt-out' rather than 'opt-in' to promote better uptake of the program.

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, with strong in-built targets and outcome measures. 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 call on the Victorian Government to:

- increase and promote access to Youth Justice Group Conferencing by legislating for conferencing to be 'opt-out' rather than 'opt-in'
- invest in targeted intensive case management support for young people following participation in a Youth Justice Group Conference.

Expanding restorative justice to out-of-home care

It is well established that there are clear links between young people's involvement in child protection system and youth justice. The Youth Parole Board reports that, of a snapshot of justice involved young people, nearly 40 per cent also had contact with child protection at some time.^{xviii}

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. Immediate steps must be taken to prevent the criminalisation of young people in out-of-home care. 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. Restorative approaches to diversion at the point of initial contact with the justice system are critical. 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. These approaches must also include specific responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care.

Additional investment would complement the principles outlined in the Victorian Government's *Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children* 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 call on the Victorian Government to expand restorative justice conferencing to those in out-of-home care placements.

Dual track

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

Amongst other changes, there is now a presumption that young people between 18 and 20 convicted of particular offences will be sentenced to adult prison unless exceptional circumstances apply. 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.^{xx} The effects of these changes are already beginning to show. The number of young people aged 18-20 sentenced to adult prison rather than youth justice facilities has significantly increased. In 2013, just under half of young people sentenced to detention in the County and Magistrates' Courts were sentenced to youth detention. By 2017, only one third were sentenced to youth detention, with two thirds sentenced to adult prison.^{xx}

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 call on the Victorian Government to repeal the sections of the *Children and Justice Legislation Amendment (Youth Justice Reform) Act 2017* which introduced a presumption against the dual track system, and ensure that no further legislative changes are introduced that will erode its integrity.

Repeal regressive legislation

The new *Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Act 2019* is a significant step backward in building an effective youth justice system. Specifically, under the Act (Part 2 Clause 3), a new Section 31D of the Crimes Act introduces an offence of intimidation of a police officer, public safety officer (PSO), police custody officer, custodial officer, youth justice custodial officer or a family member, carrying a maximum of 10 years imprisonment. These amendments are unnecessary. Existing laws currently cover serious conduct including reckless conduct endangering life, reckless conduct endangering serious injury, and assault of an emergency worker on duty (which includes police officers and PSOs and assault generally).

This legislation has serious implications for young people. An increase in the already high numbers of young people on remand in Victoria's youth justice centres is to be avoided. This new offence will disproportionately impact Aboriginal children who are already currently 13 times more likely to be incarcerated in Victoria than non-Aboriginal children. These reforms ignore the developmental needs of children, particularly those exposed to trauma who experience delayed brain development and who are more likely to act impulsively, given the removal of the mens rea element in relation to specific intent under section 31D(3)(b)(ii).

This new offence will see vulnerable children and young people further entrenched in both our youth and adult criminal justice systems. It will do nothing to address the root causes of crime nor will it address the current factors that are leading to incidents in our youth justice centres.

We call on the Victorian Government to immediately repeal the sections of the *Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Act 2019* pertaining to intimidation offences.

Bail and remand

Too many young people are also being held in unsentenced detention. In the past five years, the proportion of young people held in detention unsentenced has more than doubled from 23 per cent in 2012-2013 to 47 per cent in 2016-17.^{xxi} The increase was initially driven by reforms to the Bail Act in December 2013 that imposed the same conditions and restrictions on children as are applied to adults. While these amendments were reversed in 2016 by the current Government, the number of children on remand remains unacceptably and unnecessarily high. This has also been the result, in part, of recent changes to sentencing practices and an increasingly "risk averse" youth justice system.^{xxii}

Our experience is that bail restrictions fall more heavily on young people experiencing disadvantage and homelessness, who find it harder to argue for and access bail, particularly given the need to have stable accommodation. The link between disadvantage and the likelihood of not receiving bail are clear. As the Victorian Law Reform Commission highlighted:

“Although bail law appears to apply equally to everyone, it doesn’t operate that way in practice. Indigenous Australians, immigrants, children, young people, people with mental illnesses and women are all disadvantaged by the operation of the current bail law.”^{xxiii}

Many support services are not available to young people on remand. Time on remand has been shown to increase the likelihood of a young person reoffending in the community.^{xxiv} Furthermore, most children and young people who are remanded do not go on to receive a custodial sentence. On average, since 2012-13, only around 20 per cent of those remanded were sentenced to a custodial order.^{xxv} In a very small number of cases, placing a young person on remand may be necessary when they pose a real risk to the community. But in most instances, this is not the case; young people continue to be locked up on remand simply because alternative accommodation cannot be found.^{xxvi}

We welcome the recent expansion of the Central After Hours Assessment and Bail Placement Service. However, there is room for more investment to reduce the number of young people on remand. We must focus on after-hours and supported housing by establishing small transitional homes for young people on bail.

This should be coupled with work by both the Victorian and Federal Governments to address the lack of affordable housing that is contributing to the soaring rates of youth homelessness in Victoria.

We call on the Victorian Government to establish small transitional homes each providing safe accommodation for three to four young people involved in the youth justice system for up to 12 months. Staffed 24 hours, the houses would facilitate access to tailored life skills, education and work readiness programs, and coordinate a transition to sustainable long-term independent living options.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

The announcement of Phase Four of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement demonstrates continued commitment to working alongside Aboriginal communities of Victoria to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system, with self-determination as the core policy approach. However, there is still more to be done to divert Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people away from the youth justice system.

We must recognise the role that intergenerational trauma and disadvantage play in children and young people's behaviour, and respond in culturally appropriate ways, involving communities, Elders and families in our approach to supporting young people.

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).

Barreng Moorop works with 10-14 year old children, their siblings and their families and their communities where appropriate 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 provides a wrap-around case management 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.

We call on the Victorian Government to expand the Barreng Moorop model throughout Victoria to provide a whole-of-family approach to children in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in trouble with the law.

Adult justice

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

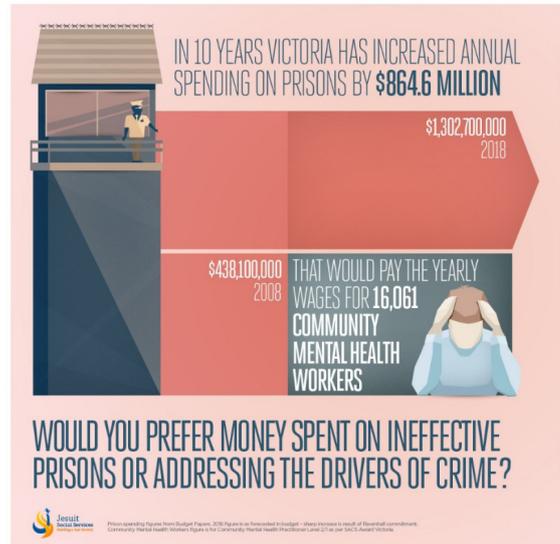
This approach is unsustainable and does not create community safety. We call on the Victorian Government to commit to reducing our ballooning prison population.

Alternatives to remand

Victoria's unsentenced prisoner population continues to grow at an unprecedented and unsustainable rate, with nearly 40 per cent of prisoners on remand or awaiting sentencing.^{xxvii} Imprisonment must be reserved as a last resort, and appropriate investment must be made in a variety of mechanisms to both monitor and support individuals on bail in the community.

To reduce the number of people on remand, we need to develop alternative options to imprisonment, coupled with effective screening and monitoring processes to promote community safety. This should include community-based options such as home detention and the reintroduction of suspended sentences, which enable judicial discretion in the best interest of rehabilitation and community safety.

Another option is bail housing, where intensive support can be delivered while maintaining connections to community, family and employment. Jesuit Social Services' Perry House, longer-term housing for people with intellectual disabilities exiting custody, and *Next Steps*, preventing homelessness for vulnerable young people aged 16–24 involved with the justice system with intensive case management support and supported accommodation, provide models for this option.



We call on the Victorian Government to invest in alternatives to imprisonment, such as supported housing and step-down models.

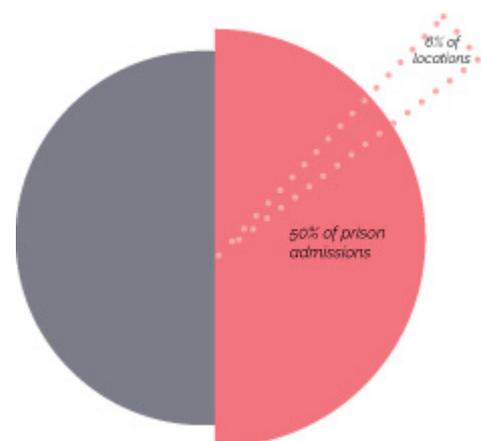
Reducing reoffending

Place-based, long-term initiatives must be maximised to reduce crime. DOTE 2015 found that six per cent (42) of postcodes in Victoria accounted for half of all prison admissions.^{xxviii} 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.^{xxix}

By comparison, in Victoria, the recidivism rate is increasing: 43.7 per cent of prisoners released from prison return to prison within two years.^{xxx} Recidivism represents a significant cost to the Victorian community and presents a significant opportunity for savings. Modelling undertaken for Jesuit Social Services^{xxxi} 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 call on the Victorian Government to introduce a target 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, ongoing over-representation of Aboriginal prisoners and offenders in the criminal justice system. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are 10.6 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous people in Victoria.

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. Phase Four of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement is a strong basis for this, and must be met with appropriate investment in community and divestment from prison expansion.

A community capacity building approach provides a framework to bring together the government, community organisations, Aboriginal Community Controlled 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 culture and community.

We call on the Victorian Government to 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 more positions in prisons for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander case managers to work with prisoners
- Strengthening the capacity and resourcing 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 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations 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. Thirty-one per cent of prisoners expect to exit custody into homelessness.^{xxxii}

The provision of support for people leaving prison is critical to reducing reoffending and building safe communities. However, 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 three 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 (at the time of the publication of this report).^{xxxiii}

The women's imprisonment rate has climbed by 138 per cent over the past decade.^{xxxiv} The Victorian Ombudsman has recommended that the Department of Justice and Community Safety 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.

Jesuit Social Services delivers effective transition support for people leaving prison through the ReConnect program.

Feedback from ReConnect participants

"They helped me with the practical things that I needed in order to live my life and move forward. Being out of jail - it does show you all of the things that you missed. Life is too short to be in places like that."

"Self-esteem. Just leading me the way - I've never had a social worker or anything like that and so the encouragement and support was really important."

"My thoughts of change - they were trying to help me and I put it together. Things might have been different without them."

"My personal wellbeing - basically having a secure place over my head and helping me getting back in touch with friends, and better mental health."

"Living in society without using drugs and alcohol - I used to be a fairly heavy drinker and now I'm not. Linking me in with my [recreational club] - I really enjoy it. You can't [engage in activity] when you're drunk. Finding people with common interests [...] I needed to find people that were interested in doing similar things to me - without using drugs and alcohol."

We call on the Victorian Government to 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.

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.^{xxxv}

The extraordinary overrepresentation of people with ABI in Victorian prisons reflects a broader failure of society to recognise and respond to the needs of people with ABI.

Jesuit Social Services and RMIT University's Centre for Innovative Justice 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..."²
- 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..."³
- 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..."⁴

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.

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 Jesuit Social Services' and RMIT's 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

The Ombudsman's recent investigation into the imprisonment of a woman found unfit to stand trial highlighted the system failings that brought a woman with mental impairment into contact with the justice system and details her experience of solitary confinement over an 18 month period. The investigation found that the prison environment was destructive to her condition, and the prison staff, despite good intentions, could not adequately support this vulnerable woman.^{xxxvi} This investigation should be considerable impetus to address the gaps in our justice system that impact our most vulnerable.

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. Our experience is consistent with the Ombudsman's findings - staff lack the training and skills to work effectively and positively with these women, and current approaches towards providing them with support are inadequate.

² Participant interview, dated 2 June 2015.

³ Participant interview, dated 27 April 2016

⁴ Interview with 'Andy', Enabling Justice Project report, 36.

We note that the Victorian Labor Party Platform includes reference to the growing number of women incarcerated in our state and the need for relevant supports for them, and for people with intellectual disability. This Budget presents an opportunity to invest in support as a priority.

We call on the Victorian Government to 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 support.^{xxxvii} 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:^{xxxviii}

- The recidivism rate for prisoners in Victoria under 25 years of age is 52.7 per cent, more than eight 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.^{xxxix} The high rates of reoffending on release from prison indicate that the current justice system is failing too many young adults.

Young adults and isolation

When a State takes the serious step of removing a person's liberty, standards must be set to ensure the human rights of those incarcerated, to rehabilitate detainees and to reduce re-offending.

Our report – *All alone: Young adults in the Victorian justice system* – raises a number of serious concerns regarding the welfare and treatment of young adults in Victorian prisons.^{xl} The report can be found at jss.org.au, including a full list of our recommendations.

Based on our examination of the international research and literature regarding the impact of isolation and first-hand observations, Jesuit Social Services calls for strict limits on the use of isolation and restraint practices in relation to young adults, including prohibitions on prolonged confinement.

Punitive isolation (i.e. for the sole purpose of punishment) should never be permitted. Jesuit Social Services accepts that there may be limited circumstances where separation is necessary for the protection of the young adult or others. Such separation should only be used in a situation where a person might reasonably be expected to cause serious physical harm to themselves or others, and where other de-escalation interventions have not been effective. In de-escalating situations where physical harm to self or others is not a concern, staff should not rely on separation as a solution and instead employ restorative interventions.

Separation should be for the minimum amount of time necessary, and subject to daily review. The person affected should also be informed of the reasons for the separation and the expected period it will be used for. Justice also demands the implementation of an appropriate accountability framework, including independent inspection and oversight. The use of separation should be recorded by prison operators and the relevant data made public to ensure accountability and adherence to guidelines.

Jesuit Social Services has previously expressed concern about the lack of accountability and transparency within Victoria's prison system.^{xli} Unlike other states in Australia (e.g. New South Wales, Western Australia) and countries such as the United Kingdom, Victoria does not have an Independent Prison Inspectorate that is responsible for overseeing Victorian prisons.^{xlii}

An Independent Custodial Inspectorate can create mechanisms of accountability that would ensure that the use of isolation in Victorian prisons is kept at a minimum, and only used as a last resort. It would also help to monitor the behaviour of custodial staff, and ensure that they are dealing with escalating situations with appropriate techniques to minimise risk of violence and property damage. The transparency of such a body could also ensure that data and information about adults in management regimes is made available, so that prisons can be held accountable by the public and relevant organisations.

CASE STUDY: James

James* is an Aboriginal man who was transferred to an adult prison in Victoria from a youth justice centre at the age of 16. James was released from an intermediate regime placement (22 hours in cell, two hours out of cell with a small group of prisoners) at the age of 19.

Following this transfer, he struggled to manage his transition back into the community. While James secured a transitional property, he found this too challenging to live in, and made his bathroom into a cell. He slept in the bath and prepared his food in the bathroom. James brought a number of items, including a radio, a kettle and a toaster, into his bathroom to replicate the cell he had in prison.

James returned to custody shortly following his release and his struggles in the community were the source of much concern to his family, who were not immediately aware of his transfer to an adult prison at the age of 16.

** name has been changed*

CASE STUDY: Jack

Jack* is currently living with his girlfriend, however, he has been experiencing difficulty in adjusting to the community after being held in isolation. He often spends most of his time cleaning the house, as this is something he would do in his cell during his time in isolation. Jack often walks laps of his backyard and his hallway, as this was something he would do in his cell. He finds these activities comforting. He also often paces in public places and experiences anxiety around other people. Jack recently celebrated his 25th birthday in the community, but locked himself in his friend's bedroom for the day as he found this experience overwhelming.

** name has been changed*

We call on the Victorian Government to:

- legislate for a presumption against the use of isolation
- establish an Independent Custodial Inspectorate that is responsible for overseeing prisons in Victoria and reports directly to Parliament
- commit to implementing the recommendations of the Ombudsman's upcoming report into the use of 'solitary confinement' and young people.

Restorative Justice

Jesuit Social Services believes that restorative justice would be an effective component of a response for addressing offending behaviour not only for children and young people, but for adults who offend. Research has shown that compared to non-restorative, retributive approaches, 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.^{xliii} 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.^{xliiv} In the ACT, a recent analysis of 10 years of the Territory's Restorative Justice Scheme found 98 per cent of victims and participants in restorative justice conferencing between 2005 and 2016 were satisfied with the process. Young people were less likely to reoffend, or reoffend as often, compared to young people who had not gone through the process.^{xliv} The ACT has taken a number of steps to expand access to restorative justice, including making restorative conferencing available in cases of family violence and sex offences, and increasing access for young people who may wish to plead not guilty.^{xlvi}

Despite the success of various restorative justice programs, there are currently no restorative justice programs available for adult offenders in Victoria.^{xlvii} The Victorian Government should implement restorative approaches to community reintegration, including 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 call on the Victorian Government to invest in restorative justice group conferencing for 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, those exiting prison, and those leaving out-of-home care. Among these groups, many have experienced homelessness, housing instability and stress, as well as other forms of disadvantage.

The provision of public, social, and affordable housing helps build safer and more cohesive communities. Long-term housing can help set a firm foundation for improving well-being and enhancing personal agency. Safe, affordable and supported housing is fundamental to supporting people to get their lives back on track, particularly for people with mental illness, alcohol and drug problems, and other complex needs.

Social housing

The state of social housing in Victoria is in need of urgent attention, and Jesuit Social Services has long called for more innovative responses to improving Victoria's public housing system. We welcome the Government's announcement of \$200 million for 1,000 new housing properties by 2022. However, this is not enough to address urgent need across Victoria. The Victorian Government must immediately increase capital funds to develop new housing stock, invest in housing support to enable people to maintain their tenancy, and strengthen incentives for the private sector to invest in social housing. We support the Council to Homeless Persons' call for 3,000 new public and community owned homes each year.

The Victorian Government must invest in a diversity of housing options for people with multiple and complex needs. Specific housing initiatives are needed for single people, people leaving prison, young people, women, and people with experience of trauma. The Government must also provide incentives for social housing providers to offer housing to complex and high support participants. Measures such as eligibility criteria and safeguards and regulations should be introduced and strengthened in order to protect social housing households, especially for vulnerable groups presenting with challenging behaviours. In addition, supportive and therapeutic housing programs arrangements offering 24 hour support are needed. Finally, more opportunities are needed for tenants and community sector providers to actively participate in the process of designing the social housing system and informing ongoing improvements.

We call on the Victorian Government to increase access to social housing and build at least 3,000 new public housing properties each year over the next four years.

We call on the Victorian Government to invest in supported housing for individuals with multiple and complex needs.

Housing for vulnerable people leaving prison

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, yet almost a third of prisoners expect to exit custody into homelessness.^{xlvi} A range of appropriate housing options is needed, as well as support to maintain housing.^{xlvi}

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 individual's 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.

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.ⁱ

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 call on the Victorian Government to address the housing needs of people leaving prison by:

- establishing a diverse range of housing and support options for people leaving prison
- funding options to address post-release housing support.

Many young people leaving youth justice exit into homelessness. The Youth Parole Board found that, of a snapshot of young people involved in the youth justice system, 13 per cent were homeless with no fixed address or living in insecure housing before being taken into custody.ⁱⁱ Young people leaving the justice system need access to appropriate transitional, step-down housing, and often require tailored supports. In the last annual report, the Youth Parole Board highlighted that a lack of appropriate accommodation after release from custody can compromise a young person's ability to re-engage in the community and desist from offending behaviours.ⁱⁱⁱ

The *Link Youth Justice Housing Program* supports young people aged 15 to 22 exiting the justice system homeless or at risk of homelessness, through a unique, integrated model to secure and sustain appropriate and stable housing and provides essential after hours support. It engages young people at high-risk times - outside of business hours and on the weekend - when young people exiting the justice system are most likely to reoffend - and when tenancies and relationships break down in the community.

The ultimate goal of *Link* is to support young people to transition from residential services to private rental, assisting them to develop independent living skills. Jesuit Social Services delivers the program in partnership with VincentCare to a small cohort of young people at risk of homelessness after justice supervision. Currently the program operates across North West Metropolitan Melbourne. The program provides exit planning and case management and feeds into the development of a housing support continuum. A specific strength of the program is that young people work closely with their support workers to identify a suitable property and are directly involved in the procuring of their home. Learning these skills is an important element of maintaining housing in the longer term.

We call on the Victorian Government to provide recurrent funding to the *Link* program and expand it statewide.

Many women leaving prison do not receive effective transitional support that caters to their unique needs. The result of this is that women are at high risk not only of re-offending, but also of post-release death. One Australian study found that young females under 25 had 20 times greater risk of death than their counterparts in the community, which was higher than any other group of post-release prisoners, including young men.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ

To address this need for appropriate housing services Jesuit Social Services developed the *Next Steps* project, a model of supported accommodation for young people aged 16-24 who have been involved in the criminal justice system and are at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness.

Next Steps aims to prevent homelessness and reduce recidivism rates. Its key features include long-term intensive case management support, small caseloads, stable and appropriate housing, and outreach to young people and their families. Given the particular vulnerabilities of women leaving prison, Jesuit Social Services has identified the need for a dedicated program for young women based on the *Next Steps* model already used for young people.

We call on the Victorian Government to fund a housing model statewide, similar to Jesuit Social Services' *Next Steps*, for women transitioning from prison back into the community.

Out-of-home care

Children and young people in out-of-home care are some of Victoria's most vulnerable. Many young people transitioning from out-of-home care have experienced histories of trauma, and must leave state care without social and economic safety nets to support them. Outcomes for young people transitioning from out-of-home care indicate the considerable challenges these young people face. Young people transitioning from out-of-home care are:

- **more likely to have low levels of educational attainment:** a study of 77 care leavers found that 53 per cent had an educational attainment level of Year 10 or below,^{liv}
- **more likely to experience periods of homelessness:** 35% of young people experience homelessness within the first 12 months of leaving care^{lv}
- **more likely to have or to develop mental illness^{lvi}**
- **more likely to have low levels of educational attainment:** a study of 77 care leavers found that 53% had an educational attainment level of Year 10 or below^{lvii}
- **more likely to have a problem with substance abuse:** a study of 77 care leavers found that 53% had a substance abuse problem^{lviii}

Jesuit Social Services endorses raising the age of leaving state care to 21 years old, and welcomes recent commitments to make this a reality. However, more must be done to support young people as they leave care, when they are at their most vulnerable.

Young people leaving care need a graduated transition into adulthood that provides ongoing, holistic support for their needs. These young people have restricted accommodation options within the current housing climate and many have not been supported during their placements in care to actively develop their independent living skills, causing living placements post-care to break down.^{lix} For this reason, access to stable, supported housing plays a crucial role in assisting those leaving care to transition successfully. Providing the security of a stable living environment and support from carers and support services helps to create an environment for young people where they can build their confidence as young adults and transition safely to independence.

We call on the Victorian Government to invest appropriately in supported housing and in transition planning for young people leaving out-of-home care.

We call on the Victorian Government to raise the age of leaving care to 21, providing funding on an ongoing basis.

Training and Employment

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.

People facing barriers to employment often need assistance to upgrade their skills and their readiness for work. For example, individuals who have lost work at an older age and been unable to secure new employment, who have left school early or arrived as refugees, who experience poor mental health, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, or who have been involved in the justice system, may experience significant barriers to securing employment.

Current initiatives, such as the Jobs Victoria and Jobs Bank programs, have enabled organisations such as Jesuit Social Services to work closely with individuals to address issues affecting their ability to secure employment - their skills, their work readiness, their understanding of Australian workplace cultures - and to maintain employment once a job is secured. The programs enable individual support, provided over a longer period of time, and enhanced where necessary by tailored training. Jesuit Social Services has worked closely with employers to identify vacancies and provide suitable and reliable candidates.

These programs offer support for Victorians who are not eligible for Commonwealth Government services, and who have previously been unsuccessful in securing employment, especially those Victorians who are also engaged with other State Government agencies. However, the current funding cycle for Jobs Victoria ends in June 2020. Investment is needed on an ongoing and long-term basis.

We call on the Victorian Government to expand investment in Victorian jobs initiatives, particularly targeted to Victorians who experience significant barriers to employment.

Access to pre-accredited training provides an opportunity to successfully engage in education and enhance skills and work readiness. For some, this is the first such opportunity in many years. Through the pre-accredited training provided by Jesuit Social Services, participants gain the essential vocational and personal skills they need to make a successful transition to employment.

We call on the Victorian Government to continue to provide and expand pre-accredited training programs delivered through the Adult, Community and Further Education Board, to support disengaged learners and people needing support to enter or re-enter education and training as a pathway to employment.

The Skills First Reconnect initiative represents a critical support to people who have left school early, enabling them to re-enter education and training and begin improving and enhancing their vocational skills. It has enabled many hundreds of people to successfully undertake training. For many participants, this is not an achievement they may ever have thought themselves capable of, and often forms a critical first step in gaining work.

We call on the Victorian Government to continue to provide and expand on the Skills First Reconnect initiative training and employment pathway.

Long term, place-based initiatives

Victorian Government's Social Procurement Framework, in effect since September 2018, is intended to embed considerations of social procurement in the government's procurement processes.^{lx} The framework, which establishes social objectives such as facilitating employment opportunities for disadvantaged Victorians, applies to the procurement of all goods, services and construction undertaken by or on behalf of Victorian Government departments and agencies. While the Framework requires departments to consider setting targets for job creation in disadvantaged communities, there is opportunity for clearer targets that encourage, support and resource employment initiatives in communities experiencing high levels of social disadvantage.

We call on the Victorian Government to establish concrete targets for job creation for people experiencing barriers to employment as part of its Social Procurement Framework.

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.^{lxii} 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.

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 call on the Victorian Government to 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.

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 unemployed and underemployed qualified individuals of African heritage and addresses existing barriers such as a recruitment landscape which is highly influenced by bias (conscious or unconscious), lack of a local network, or limited understanding of Australian workplace culture and job seeking processes. While the AAIP produces a social good, in broadening the employment prospects of those marginalised, it also provides significant benefits to the private sector in opening up an untapped labour market of talented workers, mirroring those in the community that the business works with, 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. By the end of March 2019, 424 participants will have graduated from AAIP across Melbourne and Sydney

since its inception. More than half of the alumni are still working at NAB, and in the last eighteen months, this figure has been above 85 per cent at the end of each round.

Building on the highly successful AAIP, Jesuit Social Services has 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.

Recently, we have partnered with the Australian Taxation Office to deliver their 'Opening Doors' initiative to offer professionally qualified individuals of refugee background with Australian Citizenship 12 month entry level work experience roles across a range of business areas. In addition, we have developed the Pathway Program with John Holland one of Australia's leading engineering, contracting and service providers to the infrastructure, energy, resources and transport sectors offering six-month Junior Engineer roles in Victoria.

"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

"AAIP not only impacted my life it has also impacted people around me. I am in a position to set an example to my children, nephews and niece, that if you work and study hard everything is possible. Today I am proud to say I am professional person as the result of this program and I am in a position to give advice to other Africans who have left study due to the impression that employment is unattainable." – African-Australian Inclusion Program Participant

"This opportunity means everything to me, my family and my community. To me it is more than just a job, it is a passion, it is a dream that has to be lived, this is my reason for existence, this is my life. To my family it is an opportunity for me to grow and be able to provide for them. To my community this is a chance to give them hope, to show them that it is possible, it may be hard but it is possible and worth it". - African-Australian Inclusion Program participant

"At NAB we are committed to diversity and inclusion. We value our customers and understand that we will be able to provide better service to them when our workforce is representative of our community. This program brings this to life in a very real way." - Jo Cushing, Head of Finance Partner, Customer Payments & Processing, Bank & Wealth Transformation, NAB

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

Mental health

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.

We welcome the announcement of the Royal Commission into Mental Health.

Community support for people with multiple needs

People with multiple needs too often fall through the gaps. Many people do not recognise their experience as a mental health problem, or may be reluctant to define their issues in terms of mental illness. Accessing help can feel daunting and services are often limited. These problems are often more acute for people experiencing disadvantage, including vulnerable young people who lack the supportive peer relationships which are often crucial to seeking further help.

Reforms to community mental health services have resulted in a reduction in community based 'soft entry' points for people into mental health services. 'Soft entry' points provide safe places for people to engage and develop trusting relationships that are essential for them to create a pathway to recovery. Relationship-based approaches are especially important for young people who may be experiencing their first symptoms of mental illness. The Artful Dodgers Studios and Connexions programs at Jesuit Social Services provide such pathways into support.

We call on the Victorian Government to increase investment in innovative models such as the Artful Dodgers Studios and Connexions programs at Jesuit Social Services to strengthen 'soft entry points' to the mental health service system for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.

Postvention support

Jesuit Social Services has delivered *Support After Suicide* throughout Melbourne and regional Victoria since 2004. In 2017-18, *Support After Suicide* directly assisted 964 children, young people and adults bereaved by suicide. The program provides counselling, support groups and online resources. We also deliver training to health, welfare and education professionals. The reach of the service is even greater, engaging with individuals online and through phone counselling.

It is critical to recognise the risk of suicide amongst those who are bereaved by suicide. *Support After Suicide* works to reduce this risk by working closely with people affected by Suicide. However, *Support After Suicide* is significantly underfunded, and there is a lack of certainty regarding ongoing funding, putting Victorians at risk of missing out on timely service, including those referred by the Victoria Police. Additionally, while *Support After Suicide* operates in regional areas (the Macedon Ranges and Geelong), its ability to provide robust services, in spite of increased demand, is limited due to restricted funding.

We call on the Victorian Government to address this instability and commit to secure and expanded funding of *Support After Suicide*.

It is like this now

Helen

I hear the words
breathe, breathe, breathe.
The pain is intolerable
breathe, breathe, breathe.
My baby is born.
Excruciating pain, unparalleled joy.

I hear the words
freeze, freeze, freeze.
It has happened.
My child is dead.
Eruption of agonising pain.
Breathe, breathe, breathe.
Bathe in the horror of it all.

Poem by Support After Suicide participant

We call on the Victorian Government to develop secure, long-term funding for postvention, early intervention services for suicide bereavement, including Support After Suicide.

We call on the Victorian Government to 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 call on the Victorian Government to 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.

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."

Short-term residential care

We welcome the Government's expansion of the HOPE initiative, which provides support and follow up for people leaving hospital after a suicide attempt.

Research has established that people are at high risk of suicide after a discharge from hospital following a suicide attempt.^{lxiii} The Victorian Suicide Prevention Strategy cites a study in the United Kingdom which found that 43 per cent of deaths by suicide occurred within one month of discharge from hospitalisation or treatment following a previous suicide attempt, with nearly half of those deaths occurring before the first follow-up appointment. The Victorian Chief Psychiatrist's investigation into inpatient deaths between 2008 and 2010 attributed this increased risk after hospitalisation in part to the emotional isolation and lack of social support individuals often experience after a suicide attempt.^{lxiii}

We applaud the HOPE model of assertive outreach, which works with families, friends and carers of people who have attempted suicide. We know that suicide can occur in clusters, making support for the networks around people after suicide all the more critical.^{lxiv}

We call for the establishment of short-term residential care following suicide attempts, beyond a clinical environment. We can look to the UK for examples of this model – the Maytree Respite Centre offers a free stay in a non-medical setting, filling a gap in service provision for individuals experiencing suicidal crisis. However, we note that the Maytree facilitates a stay of up to five days. Jesuit Social Services believes that a longer term program, of up to six weeks, would be more effective in delivering holistic support.

Jesuit Social Services supports a short-term residential care model that is therapeutic and offers relationship-based support and counselling, and connection to peer support. A residential option will help fill a service gap for the most vulnerable who may have limited family and community support.

In addition, programs will include families of individuals who have attempted suicide, providing education on responding to suicide and suicide attempts. Tapping into family and community networks around individuals, and ensuring this network is well-informed, gives individuals at risk of suicide much-needed support.

We believe the period immediately after a suicide attempt is a critical time in which to provide support to individuals in crisis.

We call on the Victorian Government to invest in short-term residential care for people who have attempted suicide or who are suicidal.

Coordination between clinical and non-clinical services

Clinical mental health services should deliver holistic responses for people who have multiple and complex needs, with a particular focus on:

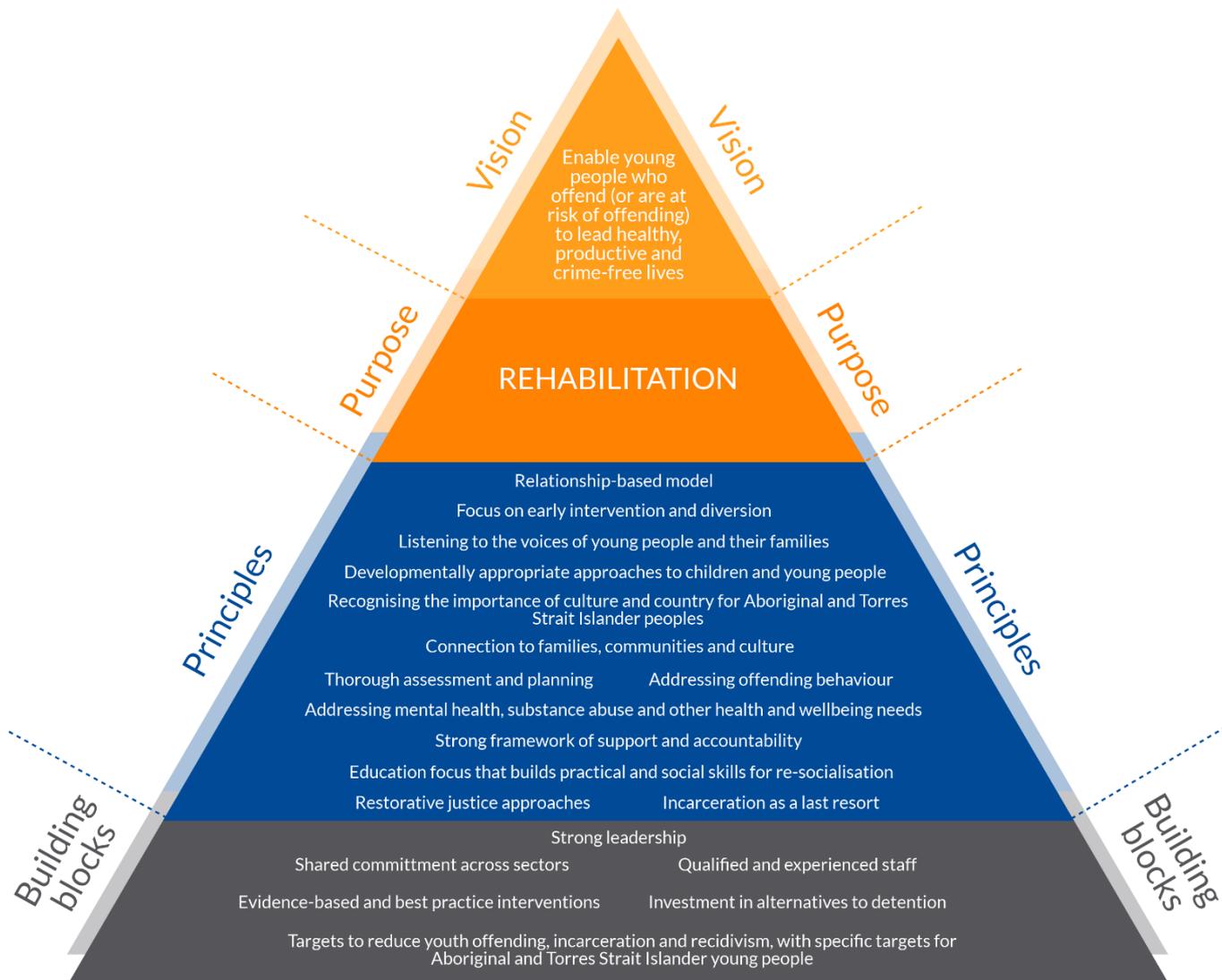
- the centrality of relationships as the cornerstone of engagement
- use of a strengths-based approach for therapeutic support
- a whole of person approach that addresses holistic needs
- a "no wrong door" model of access to health and social services that enables people to access multiple supports irrespective of where they first seek support
- a flexible approach to service delivery that can be tailored to an individual.

A significant issue noted by Jesuit Social Services is that those with Borderline Personality Disorder or complex trauma are sometimes not attended to in clinical services as their issues do not always strictly fit within a medical model. These people often fall through the gaps of service delivery, and due to the demand pressures outlined in the Victorian Auditor General's Report, do not receive adequate service responses.^{lxv}

We call for the Victorian Government to ensure greater integration and coordination between clinical and non-clinical mental health services and better integration of clinical mental health services with the broader social support system to meet the needs of individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder or complex trauma.

Appendix A

A model for youth justice



Detention

- Adopt a relationship-based model across every aspect of operations
- Dynamic security
- Offer small community-based settings (prioritising normality, and ongoing engagement with family and community)
- Facilitate connection with family, community and culture
- Prioritise education and skills for life Address offending behaviour
- Address mental health, substance abuse and other health and wellbeing needs
- Focus on re-socialisation, transition and re-integration to the community
- Keep remandees separate from sentenced offenders
- Engage and support staff who have appropriate personal attributes, qualifications and experience to build relationships of trust and deliver on the re-socialisation goal

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