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## **Increased use of youth detention highlights need for new solutions: Jesuit Social Services**

A shocking increase in the number of young people in youth detention in Victoria is at odds with the number of young people committing offences – and highlights that new solutions are required so that detention is only ever used as a last resort, says Jesuit Social Services.

The [report released today](#) by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) shows that the number of young people in detention in Victoria has increased by 36 per cent over the past five years, from an average of 148 people per day in 2013/14 to an average of 202 people per day in 2017/18. This is despite the number of young people committing offences in Victoria having dropped for the fifth consecutive year.

“It is alarming to read that the number of young people in the Victorian youth detention system has dramatically increased in recent years despite the failings of the system having been laid bare in a string of recent reports including by the Victorian Auditor-General’s office and the Commissioner for Children and Young People,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“Put bluntly, the system has been significantly failing in its duty of care to some of Victoria’s most disadvantaged children and young people, meaning that in many cases they have been exiting the system worse off than when they entered.

“This ultimately fails us all – including young people, their families and the broader community. Detention should only ever be used as a last resort and never as a default punishment.”

Ms Edwards says that the Victorian Government must focus on solutions that hold young people to account for their actions while supporting them to address the underlying factors behind their behaviour and to connect with school, family and community.

In Jesuit Social Services’ recent [submission to the 2019/29 Victorian State Budget](#), the organisation calls for a range of reforms to the state’s youth justice system, including:

- Raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years and funding programs that take a restorative and therapeutic approach to anti-social behaviour in children under the age of 14
- Committing 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
- Setting targets to reduce youth offending, recidivism, incarceration, and the number of young people on remand and specific corresponding targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

“An effective youth justice system is one that rehabilitates and re-socialises young people, to ultimately prevent re-offending. The increased use of detention takes us further away from this goal – we call on our Government to focus on the evidence of what works in creating safer communities.”

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