

MEDIA RELEASE – JANUARY 15, 2017

## **Relocating children and young people to adult prison is no magic fix: Jesuit Social Services**

News of another incident involving young people at Barwon Prison is evidence that detaining children in an adult prison does not improve community safety, says Jesuit Social Services.

The incident at Barwon Prison on Monday evening, which involved Corrections Victoria emergency response staff, followed a second major incident in January in which a 16-year old boy in Barwon Prison suffered a fractured vertebra after being assaulted.

“This further incident in Barwon Prison shows that simply relocating children and young people to an adult prison is no magic fix. The real problem that needs to be squarely faced is how to best rehabilitate children and young people to go on and have productive lives, not reoffend and help us create safer community in the long run,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“The adult prison system is unequivocally unfit for children and young people and is not achieving the promised outcome of settling their behaviour and enhancing community safety.

“This is no surprise. Youth justice facilities need to be safe, age-appropriate and staffed with skilled workers to facilitate the rehabilitation of young people. Evidence from elsewhere in Australia and internationally shows that the best results are achieved when children and young people are in small non-institutional settings, where they are supported and challenged to address their problem behaviour, and to gain basic education, employment and living skills.

“By contrast we have heard stories about the inhumane conditions these young people in Barwon have been subject to, including lockdown for up to 23 hours a day and the use of capsicum spray.”

Last week, the Victorian Government announced it will transfer responsibility for youth justice from the Department of Health and Human Services to the Department of Justice and Regulation, effective from April.

“Given the Government has decided to place youth justice in the Department of Justice and Regulation it is imperative that it operates as a separate division within this Department.

“We need to bring cool heads, evidence about what works, and a care for children and young people to the table as we work to create a safer community in the long run – for all Victorians.”

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