

MEDIA RELEASE – APRIL 24, 2017

Youth remand court will ease pressure on youth detention system: Jesuit Social Services

A new youth remand court, which will ‘fast-track’ the cases of many children currently held in detention unsentenced, will ease the pressure on Victoria’s youth detention system according to Jesuit Social Services.

“The pressure on Victoria’s youth detention system has been clear in recent months. We’ve seen a series of incidents, including one in November that forced the closure of parts of Melbourne Youth Justice Centre in Parkville, and led to children and young people being held in the adult Barwon Prison,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“Much of this pressure-cooker environment has been created by the huge number of young people on remand, meaning they are being held in detention despite not being convicted of an offence. Late last year, around 80 per cent of young people in Parkville were on remand. This is a staggering statistic. Having such a high percentage of young people on remand is not doing anything to create safer communities.”

According to media reports the court, funded for \$3.4 million over two years, will commence in late May.

“This will mean children will be able to have their cases heard in a timely manner – and the young people who do get detained should have better access to the vital rehabilitation and education programs they need.

“These children in detention will one day return to the community, and any effective youth justice system must ensure that they do so with the best opportunity to lead good lives and avoid further contact with the system.”

Last week, Jesuit Social Services told a parliamentary inquiry into youth justice centres in Victoria that the high percentage of young people on remand was a contributing factor behind the current situation.

“The recent environment has not been conducive to effective outcomes for the children the young people, or the staff, or for the broader community.

“This welcome investment will ensure that more young people have their cases heard in a timely manner and reduce pressure on the youth detention system.”

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