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Northern Territory has opportunity to lead the nation in youth justice reform: Jesuit Social Services

The Northern Territory Government's acceptance of all 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory means the Territory has an opportunity to lead the nation in meaningful youth justice reform, says Jesuit Social Services.

"The NT Royal Commission, after consulting with young people, their families, the community sector and Aboriginal communities, provided a roadmap to reform that if implemented will change the trajectory for many vulnerable children and young people towards positive pathways," says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

"We commend the NT Government on their acceptance of all recommendations, and look forward to working closely with the Government and our colleagues in the sector, particularly Aboriginal Community Control Organisations, to improve outcomes for young people in the Territory and the broader community."

Jesuit Social Services' General Manager in Darwin, Jared Sharp, says the NT Government has already demonstrated an ability to take guidance from best practice in youth justice. Last week, it announced that the new youth detention facility in Darwin to replace the Don Dale Detention Centre will be a small cottage-like facility accommodating up to 30 young people.

"Last year leaders from Jesuit Social Services explored effective youth detention models across Europe and parts of the US and found that facilities from Missouri in the US to Spain were small, home-like and close to the families and communities of young people," says Mr Sharp.

"This has resulted in significantly less re-offending than we see here in Australia. We are pleased to see the NT Government commit to a facility aligned with international best practice and focused on education and supporting young people to become productive members of society."

Mr Sharp says there should be no higher priority for the NT Government ahead of the upcoming 2018/19 Budget than allocating funds to implementing recommendations, and that the Federal Government must partner with the NT Government on a 50/50 basis.

"The Federal Government established the Royal Commission and has a responsibility to ensure that the recommendations are fully realised and implemented.

"A coordinated approach between Territory and Federal Governments, Aboriginal communities and organisations and the broader community is required for such systemic reform.

"This is an opportunity for the Northern Territory to create meaningful reform that will benefit all Territorians – not only now but for future generations."

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