

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – MAY 1, 2018

## **Investment in education key to keeping children and young people on track: Jesuit Social Services**

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the Government's \$44 million expansion of the Navigator education program statewide.

This program, which has been operating as a pilot in selected areas, has proven successful in keeping marginalized young people in school. Jesuit Social Services delivers Navigator in the Hume and Moreland regions and in its [submission to the 2018/19 Victorian State Budget](#) called on the Government to double its investment in this successful program.

Jesuit Social Services' Acting CEO, Sally Parnell said, "Navigator is a great way to prevent young people from dropping out of school and provide the supports needed to keep them on track. Many young people in the youth justice system have failed to complete school. Keeping them in school is crucial.

"We have had significant success with this model. Since commencing the 18 month pilot program we have worked with more than 103 young people, the majority of whom were not attending school at all. More than half of these young people have successfully reengaged with school as a result of the Navigator program."

Ms Parnell said that investing in education makes sense and more focus is needed to keep young people at school and engaged rather than punitive responses, touted by both the major parties, to crime and anti-social behaviour.

A substantial investment in policing and prisons has not been matched by investment in programs that will hold young people to account while reconnecting them with education, skill development and employment opportunities.

"We know that a strong connection to school, to family and community can keep children on the right path and out of trouble," says Ms Parnell.

"We know that good youth justice systems focus on early intervention and diversion, and are part of a society that offers well-resourced community alternatives to locking up young people".

In its submission to the 2018-19 Victorian State Budget, Jesuit Social Services also called on the Victorian Government to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years and fund a program that takes a restorative and welfare approach to anti-social behaviour in children under 14 to support them and address their underlying issues.

"We continue to advocate for this in Victoria and nationally," said Ms Parnell.

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