



## Out of trouble and onto a pathway towards a bright future

Three years ago, when Charles was 15, he was asked to leave home.

"I had a pretty bad home life and my parents asked me to move out because I was a bad influence on my little brother," he says. As a result, Charles moved to a residential unit in the out-of-home care system.

Life was tough and Charles got into trouble which led him to have contact with the police and courts.

"I was getting drunk and doing property damage and shoplifting when I was drunk... when I had to go to court it was the worst experience of my life."

Charles ended up spending time in youth detention when he was 17 and was unable to get the support he needed to deal with his alcohol abuse.

"I think prisons are like a breeding ground because kids will pick stuff up from other kids or meet up when they get out," he says.

"They'll just get locked up, come out and reoffend again. It becomes a cycle."

Now, Charles' future is looking much better. After leaving detention, he was supported into private accommodation by Jesuit Social Services, where staff assist him to develop independent living skills.

"I have my own kitchen, I cook two or three nights a week because I have staff there showing me how to do it."

Charles has also developed a strong relationship with experienced youth worker Ron Zarth, whom he describes as a role model.

"I've learned a lot of things; tolerance, understanding... [and] I've matured a bit too," he reflects.

He also has a goal of completing Year 12, studying land management and getting a job with an organisation like Parks Victoria.

Charles says the opportunity for a second chance has helped him get his life back on track.

"To take accountability and responsibility at first is really hard, hearing what you've done to people... But once you take responsibility for that, the only thing you can do is move on and make the future better."

Charles shares his story in a video for our #WorthASecondChance campaign which you can view at [www.worthasecondchance.com.au](http://www.worthasecondchance.com.au).

You can read more about the campaign on page 6.

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## Responding to young people in trouble

Rarely a day goes by without news of youth offending being splashed across the front page of papers around Australia, particularly these days in Victoria. Public concern is reaching a crescendo, while politicians seek to outdo each other with their promises to crack down on crime and punish the perpetrators.

Unfortunately, the children at the heart of the debate - and their complex life experiences - are being reduced to a single narrative about 'thugs' terrorising our streets. When we reduce the issue to headlines and soundbites played out for political point scoring, we lose focus on the people - the children, their families, the victims - and the myriad of issues that lead to offending and, with that, the solutions that can prevent crime. By focusing on punishment, we turn our backs on stopping crime before it happens, on addressing the damage it has caused, and on effectively preventing further crime.

From our 40-plus years of working with young people in trouble, we know that many who have contact with the justice system have struggled with a web of complex disadvantage that plays a role in their offending behaviour. It's not an excuse for crime, but it is a red flag that we, as a community, should be responding to well before any offence takes place.

This newsletter shares the voices of young people we work with who have been involved in the youth justice system - who've done the wrong thing. These young people reflect on their lives, the pathways that led them to trouble and how they've responded to the second chance they got. I'm pleased to share these stories with you and ask you to consider how their lives might have been different had they not received a second chance.

It's up to us, irrespective of our political allegiances, to bring the best of our hearts and minds to a shared endeavour to promote kindness and compassion, and to build a safe and just society for us all.

Julie Edwards  
Chief Executive Officer

## Supported housing helping to shape new self-identity

Launched earlier this year, our Link Youth Justice Housing Program is an innovative pilot program that provides intensive support and housing to young people aged 15-22 who have had contact with the justice system and are at risk of homelessness.

The program, which has capacity for 15 young people over a two-year period, involves partner agency VincentCare taking out a private rental lease and then subletting out to a participant, bringing them into the normally exclusive rental market. The young person continues to be supported by Jesuit Social Services. Program participants are given a say in where they would like to live and the option to share housing with friends or family, should they take on the lease at the end of the two-year period.

Jesuit Social Services' Coordinator of Link Youth Justice Housing Program, Elle Jackson, believes that securing housing is the biggest challenge to at-risk young people. "Not having access to a stable place to live or sleep means you have young people offending to meet their daily living needs," Elle says.

Beyond finding suitable housing for young people, the program provides after-hours support to engage them during the highest risk time for offending (5pm to 11pm) when, Elle says, they are "most likely to experience crisis".

Elle says the program aims to help young people develop an identity outside of the justice system. "With the current discourse in the media, a lot of young people are really upset that they're put in a category that they don't want to be in. For us it's about helping them have a new identity so they're away from that path."

Jesuit Social Services has a strong history of being part of innovative justice pilot programs, including diversion and the Navigator program for young people dropping out of school, both of which have gone on to receive expanded state government funding.



## 'You see violence that young and you get desensitised'

Speaking with Ignatius\* is like speaking with any other young man.

He works as an apprentice tiler, is studying to become a personal trainer and is passionate about fitness including boxing and cycling.

"In my spare time I play chess, hang out with my family, hang out with my partner, you know, it brings joy to my life," he says.

Ignatius has turned his life around after involvement with the youth justice system as a teenager, which led to him spending time in detention.

He says negative influences in school, and exposure to violence, led to him getting into trouble.

"I saw a lot of fights, there's a lot of blood, people getting knocked out... you see [violence] that young and you kind of get desensitised to that stuff."

The support of Ignatius' fiancé and family steered him towards a positive path when he left detention. Jesuit Social

Services' Youth Justice Community Support Service program, which helps prevent re-offending among young people by reconnecting them with the community, helped him find accommodation.

In the next few months, Ignatius is planning on moving in with his fiancé.

"We're already looking for places, that's what's kinda ahead."

Having moved on from his involvement with the justice system, Ignatius says he has a new-found appreciation for the little things in life.

"I haven't completely made up for it but I really appreciate time now and the things I do."

Ignatius shares his story in a video for our #WorthASecondChance campaign which you can view here. You can read more about the campaign on page 6.

*\*not his real name*



## Isolation of young people in prison leads to irreversible damage

Victoria's adult prison population grew by 71 per cent over the 10 years to 2017 – an extra 3,006 people. This is largely attributable to changes to bail laws: the adult remand population soared more than 150 per cent over the same period, and 38 per cent of young adults in prison are on remand.

Our recently released report – *All alone: Young adults in the Victorian justice system* – raises a number of concerns regarding the welfare and treatment of young adults in Victorian prisons, and questions whether basic standards to ensure the human rights of those incarcerated are being met.

The mental and physical health of young people when they emerge from incarceration has often deteriorated significantly, while the barriers to reintegrating with the community are high. Too many young people are reoffending and returning to prison.

Especially concerning is the fact that some people are in isolation for months, even years. Isolation can mean 22 hours a day with little or no human contact in a room which may have little light or ventilation. Very often there is little significant contact with staff during this time, and certainly little or no access to programs or activities. Some people are released directly from isolation into the community.

Typically, young adults who have experienced isolation struggle on release with everyday tasks. They have little hope for their future in the community – many reoffend, often more seriously, and return to prison.

**A compelling example of the challenges associated with moving from isolation to the community is James (not his real name) who was transferred to an adult prison at age 16. At age 19 he moved directly from isolation in prison into a flat. His inability to adapt to his new circumstances was evidenced by his efforts to replicate the conditions of his isolation. He made his bathroom into a cell; he spends his time there, listening to radio, preparing his food in the bathroom, and sleeping in the bath.**

Jesuit Social Services believes isolation should be used only as a last resort when all de-escalation strategies have failed and there is a risk of serious harm to the prisoner or others. It should never be used as a punishment, nor as a way of managing behaviour.

The Government should legislate for a presumption against the use of isolation. When it is used, isolation needs to be subject to daily review by a qualified mental health professional, and any term in isolation must be kept to an absolute minimum. In line with internationally accepted standards, isolation of a person should never extend beyond 14 days, and only the most extreme circumstances could justify this period.

We also need greater accountability and transparency, which is why we are calling on the Government to require all prison operators to record data on the use of isolation and restraints, and that this data be made public. This should be supplemented by the establishment of an Independent Custodial Inspectorate that is responsible for overseeing prisons in Victoria and reports directly to Parliament.

You can read the report, *All alone: Young adults in the Victorian justice system*, on our website.

## Addressing adolescent family violence and restoring relationships

Jesuit Social Services established The Men's Project to provide leadership on the reduction of violence and other harmful behaviours prevalent among boys and men, and build new approaches to improve their wellbeing and keep families and communities safe.

The Men's Project has partnered with the Victorian Children's Court to develop the RESTORE program, which uses a restorative justice approach to work with young people who are using family violence. The program will assist the young person and their family to address the harm caused and prevent further violence.

Both Jesuit Social Services and the Children's Court had identified a gap for a program which offers an alternative to punitive responses which are not appropriate to all cases of adolescent family violence, particularly early on in the cycle of offending.

Michael Livingstone, Executive Director of The Men's Project says "RESTORE plays an important part in responding to an issue where the majority of young people who come before the Children's Court as respondents to family violence orders are boys, and there is a clear gap in program responses to this issue".

Michael believes the collaborative program model will see benefits for all involved. "In a safe and controlled way, you get the relevant parties together - the young person, family members, lawyers and other support services - and you allow everyone to talk through what's been happening, and talk through what they are going to do to try and make things better and keep people safe," he says.

To find out more, visit: [www.themensproject.org.au](http://www.themensproject.org.au)

## A grandmother's despair

A grandmother, who shares her story in Jesuit Social Services' new report - *All alone: Young adults in the Victorian justice system* - shares the impact isolation in the prison system has had on her grandson.

*My grandson, who is now 25, has experienced solitary confinement since he was 18.*

*He has been released to the community from management (isolation) on many occasions but he goes straight back in because he has not had access to rehabilitation.*

*When he has been in solitary confinement he has not had opportunities to rehabilitate or learn skills to help him get a job. He has not had access to activities. He needs something to keep his mind going.*

*This has deeply impacted his personality and outlook. He is angry, finds it hard to communicate with family including his children and I believe it has affected his brain. I have noticed he is more paranoid and has a different sense of reality now.*

*There is no communication for him with anyone, except prison officers.*

*He has even said to me he has thought at times about taking his own life. What does this mean for him when he next gets released from prison or will he even be alive after this sentence?*

*Of course, this has had a hugely detrimental impact on his family members including myself.*

*My grandson needs support to help him address his issues and support to help him prepare to return to his life in the community.*

*My grandson needs to be accountable for his actions and is by being in prison. The system needs to be accountable for the way it treats him.*

Jesuit Social Services staff have seen first-hand the detrimental impact that isolation has on young people and we are campaigning for the Government to minimise the use of isolation and, when it is used, to ensure that human rights are being met.

You can read our full report on our website.



Our new report on the use of isolation is available on our website

## Our new campaign to fix youth justice in Victoria - #WorthASecondChance

For many years, Victoria led the country in supporting kids in trouble. Now we are seeing a negative shift towards harsh punishments that close the door on kids early.

We want to give young people in crisis the support they need to get their lives back on track. This is better for them and the only way to make our communities safer in the long run.

That's why we launched the #WorthASecondChance campaign and we are asking the people of Victoria to join with us to call for the youth justice system our community deserves.

We believe that youth justice in Victoria can be fixed by:

1. **Strengthening the foundations of our youth justice system** and reinstating the approaches that will make our communities safer.
2. **Supporting kids and communities to prevent offending** by investing more in the programs proven to work, such as early intervention, local community initiatives and education.
3. **Giving kids the help they need to get back on track** by providing support of the highest quality to young people in trouble to prevent further crime and improve outcomes.

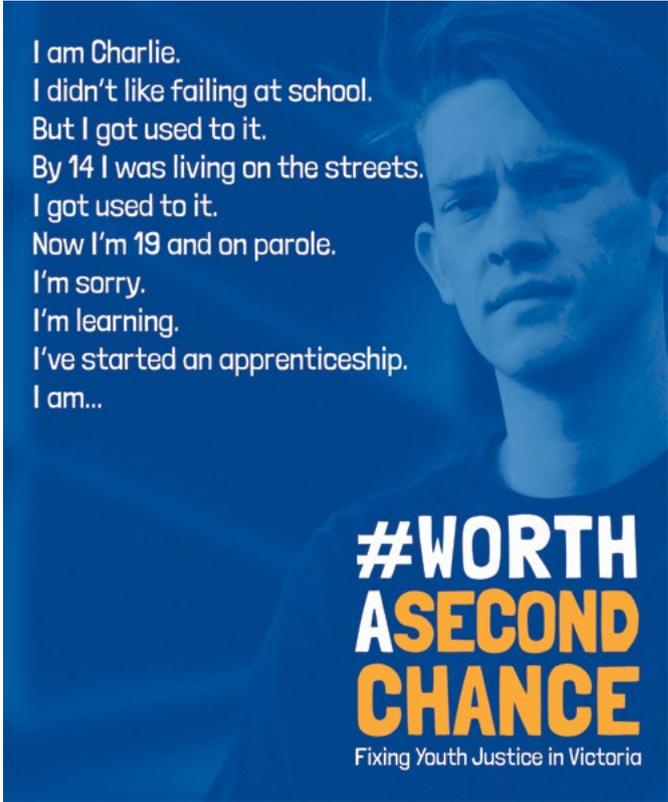
We believe all young people are #WorthASecondChance. We're asking you to join us in our campaign for a more effective youth justice system for all – this is a grass-roots campaign relying on people like you to call for change.

**We're asking you to join us.**

1. Add your name to the #WorthASecondChance campaign petition at [www.worthasecondchance.com.au](http://www.worthasecondchance.com.au) and we'll send you a weekly update on the progress of our campaign.
2. Volunteer to host a Kitchen Table Conversation with your friends, family or neighbours to contribute to a 'people's platform' for youth justice in Victoria. We'll send you through a Kitchen Table Conversation kit, and support you to hold the event. Your ideas matter, and we want to hear from you.

The #WorthASecondChance campaign is driven by the experiences and stories of young people who've been involved with the youth justice system. You can watch their stories on the campaign website: [www.worthasecondchance.com.au/stories](http://www.worthasecondchance.com.au/stories)

You can also contact Andrew Yule, Jesuit Social Services General Manager Strategic Communications & Engagement, on 03 9421 7600 or [andrew.yule@jss.org.au](mailto:andrew.yule@jss.org.au) if you want to volunteer, share your story or contribute to the campaign in other ways.



I am Charlie.  
I didn't like failing at school.  
But I got used to it.  
By 14 I was living on the streets.  
I got used to it.  
Now I'm 19 and on parole.  
I'm sorry.  
I'm learning.  
I've started an apprenticeship.  
I am...

**#WORTH  
ASECOND  
CHANCE**  
Fixing Youth Justice in Victoria

## #WorthASecondChance campaign launched

We were proud to launch our #WorthASecondChance campaign on 24 July with over 120 people in attendance to support our call to fix the Victorian youth justice system and give young people a second chance.

"It's not a battle against one political party or another – it's about what type of society we want", our CEO Julie Edwards told the audience at the launch.

Program participants Sammy and Caution shared their stories of having contact with police and the justice system and then, with help, turning their lives around.

"All my life I struggled at school and the teachers didn't know how to handle it. I've had teachers say instead of going to school, you should drop out," Sammy said.

"If you tell someone they're nothing, they'll live up to that." Sammy has turned his life around and is now studying at TAFE with plans to become a youth worker.

## Partnership delivers results... and groceries

Jesuit Social Services' partnership with the parish of Our Lady of the Way in North Sydney continues to grow as parishioners respond to our appeal for support in Mount Druitt, Western Sydney.

Since 2015, the parish has conducted two appeals per year seeking money, volunteers and groceries to fill the shelves of the Food Store in Emerton – a low cost grocery supermarket providing heavily subsidised items to the community. The parish also regularly donates to our on-site Op Shop.

Dave Hammond, General Manager of our work in Western Sydney, says the support has been overwhelming. "In July each year parishioners donate truckloads of groceries as part of our annual appeal filling The Food Store's shelves to the brim."

Beyond the material and financial assistance, our relationship with the parish provides a great sense of collaboration between the two communities. "Knowing that so many people have such a commitment to the people of Mount Druitt gives our team a wonderful sense of community."

Central to the parish's support is the commitment shown by Parish Priest Fr Andy Bullen, Parish Manager Humphrey Nolan and parish volunteer Trish Martin.

Trish has seen the relationship grow from year to year to ensure the practical needs of the community are met. "Last

week one of our parishioners drove out to Emerton in his truck and took Dave, Rose and Lisa to a Cash and Carry Store where he directed them to start shopping. When the total spending reached \$3,500 he loaded the groceries on his truck and delivered them to the Food Store as a gift!"

Partnerships with community groups and companies provide much needed support so that we can work together to build a just society for all. If you'd like to discuss how your group can support our work, please contact Erin Hunter on 03 9421 7600 or [erin.hunter@jss.org.au](mailto:erin.hunter@jss.org.au)



Rose happily receives items donated from the Our Lady of the Way parish

## Reflections from Mparntwe

An excerpt from a reflection written by Nikki Flook, our Manager of Policy and Advocacy, Northern Territory, after her first few days in Alice Springs.

*"You know this'll be the first time the Aboriginal flag has flown here (at ANZAC Hill), don't you?" says John Adams, our General Manager of Central Australia.*

*No, I didn't.*

*I sat back, stunned, and took in the scene with new eyes. As the weight and expectation of the day sunk in, I was humbled to be there.*

*After the smoking ceremony, under a brilliant blue sky, Councillor Satour stood to address the crowd.*

*With candour and strength, she made it clear that it (the motion to fly the flag) had not been a vote easily won. And with those who voted against the motion standing by the stage, it was clear that fight against racism was still a long game.*

*But for now, as Aboriginal Vietnam Veteran Geoff Shaw raised the flag, the excitement and pride in the crowd was palpable. The flag lifted on the wind, and you could feel people's hearts swell with it.*

You can read Nikki's poignant reflection in full on our website.



The Aboriginal flag flies for the first time at ANZAC Hill in Alice Springs

**Supporting people out of trouble and onto a positive pathway in life means a more safe and just society for everyone.**



**Please make a gift to ensure we can continue to help young people in trouble receive a second chance**

### Want to help Jesuit Social Services?

Together we can build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the wellbeing of disadvantaged people, family and communities.

#### I would like to make a donation of:

**\$75**       **\$150**

**\$500**       **\$1000**

**\$**

Please send me information about leaving a gift in my Will.

#### Contact and payment details

Surname

First name

Address

Telephone

Email

Cheque enclosed    OR     VISA     Mastercard

Card number

Expiry

Signature