



Our Vision for New South Wales

Election and Budget Priorities

March 2019



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Jesuit Social Services: Who we are and what we do

Jesuit Social Services has been working for more than 40 years delivering practical support and advocating for improved policies to achieve strong, cohesive and vibrant communities where every individual can play their role and flourish.

We are a social change organisation working with some of the most marginalised individuals and communities, often experiencing multiple and complex challenges. Jesuit Social Services works where the need is greatest and where we have the capacity, experience and skills to make the most difference.

Our services span Victoria, New South Wales and the Northern Territory where we support more than 57,000 individuals and families annually.

Our service delivery and advocacy focuses on the following key areas:

- **Justice and crime prevention** – people involved with the justice system
- **Mental health and wellbeing** – people with multiple and complex needs including mental illness, trauma, homelessness and complex bereavement
- **Settlement and community building** – recently arrived immigrants and refugees, and disadvantaged communities
- **Education, training and employment** – people with barriers to sustainable employment
- **Gender and culture** – providing leadership on the reduction of violence and other harmful behaviours prevalent among boys and men, and building new approaches to improve their wellbeing and keep families and communities safe.

The promotion of education, lifelong learning and capacity building is fundamental to all our activity. We believe this is the most effective means of helping people to reach their potential and exercise their full citizenship. This, in turn, strengthens the broader community.

Research, advocacy and policy are coordinated across all program and major interest areas of Jesuit Social Services. Our advocacy is grounded in the knowledge, expertise and experiences of program staff and participants, as well as academic research and evidence. We seek to influence policies, practices, legislation and budget investment to positively influence participants' lives and improve approaches to address long term social challenges. We do this by working collaboratively with the community sector to build coalitions and alliances around key issues, and building strong relationships with key decision-makers and the community.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which Jesuit Social Services operates and pay respect to their Elders past and present. We express our gratitude for their love and care of people, community, land and all life.

Our recommendations

Entrenched disadvantage

We call on the elected NSW Government to:

- Develop a whole-of-government, long-term strategic approach to entrenched and localised disadvantage.
- Support The Store on a continuing basis, providing \$120,000 annually (located in Mt Druitt, The Store provides subsidised fresh and healthy food to the local community, and provides work experience to people who are unemployed).
- Invest in public and community transport, setting targets to improve access to public transport in locations of disadvantage. All residences should be within 400 metres of a bus serviced every 30 minutes, and 800 metres of a train station serviced every 15 minutes to ensure that communities are not unduly isolated.
- Invest in social and public housing, and support NCOSS's recommendation to deliver 5000 new social housing dwellings each year until 2026.

Justice and crime prevention

We call on the elected NSW Government to:

- Commit to developing a strategy for a youth justice system that holds young people accountable for their actions while working to rehabilitate and re-socialise them, to ultimately prevent re-offending.
- Invest in youth justice group conferencing to ensure the program can be provided with adequate intensity, supports, and experienced convenors, as demonstrated in other models in Australia.
- Raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years and fund programs that take a restorative and welfare approach to anti-social behaviour in children under the age of 14 years.
- Ban the use of isolation of children and young people in youth justice facilities.
- Invest in a program based on the Barreng Moorop model, to provide a whole-of-family response in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Reduce reoffending rates and the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the justice system:
 - support community-led solutions to break the cycle of offending and build vibrant futures for children and young people

- implement state-level reforms to reduce the prison population and shift spending away from building prisons to building safer, stronger communities.

Training and employment

We call on the elected NSW Government to:

- Partner with Jesuit Social Services to provide dedicated positions to establish targeted employment pathways in Willmot, as well as funding to train and upskill marginalisation individuals to create pathways to real jobs and ongoing employment.
- Provide funding for the Corporate Diversity Partnerships model, in partnership with Jesuit Social Services, to be rolled out to businesses in New South Wales.

Mental health

We call on the elected NSW Government to:

- Invest in community-based mental health services, particularly supporting programs providing services for individuals with multiple and complex needs.
- Ensure that people with disability in the justice system have access to disability support before, during and after imprisonment, to guarantee continuity of care.

Family violence: Gender and culture

We call on the elected NSW Government to:

- Invest in interventions:
 - At the primary level, including legislative and systemic changes that have been proven to improve gender equality, such as parliamentary gender quotas and targets, improving men's access to flexible workplaces enabling more shared parenting and wage equality between men and women.
 - At the secondary level, for children aged over eight, when boys begin to present with social and emotional problems and start falling behind academically and are at risk of disengaging from school, and initiatives that promote gender equality and diversity in areas where there are 'at risk' groups of men and boys in problematic masculine cultures, for example, in male dominated workplaces and sporting clubs.
 - At the tertiary level, working in long-term and trauma-informed ways with children and young people and their carers who have been victims/witnesses of family violence in order to break cycles of family violence throughout their lives.
- Commit to funding restorative responses to adolescents showing violent behaviour in the home.

Introduction

In New South Wales, disadvantage and marginalisation is felt keenly by some. Particular postcodes experience poorer outcomes across health, education, and employment, and experience disproportionate contact with the justice system. For some communities, there is limited or compromised access to basic necessities like transport and early childhood care and education. This disadvantage is concentrated and entrenched, impacting communities across generations.

Jesuit Social Services delivers a range of initiatives in Western Sydney, accompanying communities to break out of cycles of disadvantage by developing local answers to local problems. Our Western Sydney programs also help build relationships within local communities through training and work experience, employment, family support, and leadership activities. Our experience shows us that accompaniment and community development are the key to tackling complex social challenges.

Elections are a time to reflect on the state of our communities and consider our vision for the future. The success of our communities should be measured by the equality of access and opportunity its members enjoy. At this State Election, we call on all sides of politics to commit addressing disadvantage in meaningful ways over the long-term.

We call on the future NSW Government to invest in programs and social infrastructure that supports communities to flourish, across the areas of place-based community development, training and employment, justice and crime prevention, mental health, and family violence prevention.

Entrenched disadvantage

Long-term, place-based responses to entrenched disadvantage

Jesuit Social Services' and Catholic Social Services Australia's research over a number of years has consistently demonstrated that disadvantage is entrenched in certain geographical locations in New South Wales. Outcomes such as intergenerational unemployment, lower levels of educational achievement and higher rates of criminal convictions are endemic to particular postcodes and communities. Our research, *Dropping Off the Edge 2015* (DOTE) found that people living in the three per cent most disadvantaged postcodes in NSW are:

- 3.6 times as likely to have spent time in prison
- more than three times as likely to be experiencing unemployment
- nearly three times more likely to have a low level of education and/or have suffered domestic violence
- twice as likely to have a disability or significant mental health problem.

Without a sustained, collaborative, long-term commitment across the government, community and business sectors, there is a significant risk that some of the state's most severely disadvantaged communities will continue to 'drop off the edge'.

Jesuit Social Services calls on the NSW Government, in partnership with the community, to act immediately to put in place appropriate structures, plans and resources targeted to our most vulnerable communities to effectively break the web of disadvantage. We need a multi-layered, cooperative and coordinated strategy that is owned and driven by the community. It must involve all layers of government and the business and community sectors, reflecting shared responsibility and joint commitment to resolve this entrenched problem. This strategy must take account of the unique characteristics and circumstances of local communities and be sustained over the long term. It should be:

- **Targeted** – concentrated to specific areas of the most severe disadvantage.
- **Tailored** – Meet the community's needs and responding to the unique mix of issues facing the community.
- **Integrated** – Recognising the web of multiple and interconnected causes of disadvantage.
- **Cooperative** – Responses are founded on a strong relationship between government and departmental portfolios, integrated community initiatives and coordination between different levels of government.
- **A long term horizon** – A long-term commitment of 20 years to address complex, entrenched disadvantage.
- **Community owned and driven** – Community leaders drive the agenda, recognizing the strength within communities and work with them to build capacity, generate action, attract external resources and maintain direction and energy.

- **Engaged at the individual, community and national levels** – Recognising the complex interplay of the individual, their family circumstances, their community, and the broader social and economic environment in causing and addressing disadvantage.

We call on the elected NSW Government to develop a whole-of-government, long-term strategic approach to entrenched and localised disadvantage.

Since 2008, Jesuit Social Services has been working in Western Sydney to help communities break out of cycles of disadvantage by developing local answers to local problems. In Western Sydney, Jesuit Social Services is leading the Willmot Community Hub project, working closely with the local community and community leaders to identify what services are needed to improve life outcomes for people in Western Sydney – one of the most disadvantaged areas of New South Wales.

The impact of “food deserts” is well known; too often, the most disadvantaged localities have the least access to fresh, nutritious and affordable food on a reliable basis. New South Wales is no exception - access to nutritious and affordable food varies across the State. In Sydney, just eight per cent of suburbs have a healthy food ratio of 75 per cent or more, meaning residents in these suburbs have better access to healthy food options relative to fast food outlets.¹ In Willmot, Mt Druitt, the local store rarely stocks fresh fruit and vegetable, providing mostly packaged food and alcohol. Our work in Western Sydney includes running The Store in Mt Druitt, providing subsidised fresh and healthy food to the local community.

We call on the elected NSW Government to support The Store on a continuing basis, providing \$120,000 annually (located in Mt Druitt, The Store provides subsidised fresh and healthy food to the local community, and provides work experience to people who are unemployed).

Housing and transport

Communities become isolated when transport is unreliable, inconsistent or costly. A study of NSW liveability found that only 38 per cent of residences and two per cent of Sydney suburbs meet the Integrated Transport and Land Use Guidelines goal for all residences to be within 400 metres of a bus stop serviced every 30 minutes or within 800 metres of a train station serviced every 15 minutes.² Jesuit Social Services’ work in Western Sydney affirms that access to public transport, when private transport is limited, can make the difference of whether an individual can make it to work or a health appointment. Investment in community transport solutions and in more reliable, frequent and direct public transport is critical in the immediate term to mitigate social isolation.

We call on the elected NSW Government to invest in public and community transport, setting targets to improve access to public transport in locations of disadvantage. All residences should be within 400 metres of a bus serviced every 30 minutes, and 800 metres of a train station serviced every 15 minutes to ensure that communities are not unduly isolated.

Additionally, housing stress is experienced by 41 per cent of low-income households in Sydney.³ With 60,000 people on the public housing waiting list and a growing rate of homelessness, Jesuit Social Services supports NCOSS's recommendation for the elected NSW Government to deliver 5000 new social housing dwellings each year until 2026. This must include supported housing for individuals with multiple and complex needs.

We call on the elected NSW Government to invest in social and public housing, and support NCOSS's recommendation to deliver 5000 new social housing dwellings each year until 2026.

Justice and crime prevention

Youth justice

Recent incidents of violence and findings of excessive use of force in NSW Juvenile Justice Centres point to a system in crisis and in need of reform.

Many children and young people who display challenging behaviour have histories of trauma, neglect and contact with child protection. It is well recognised that early experiences of child abuse and neglect have a detrimental impact on a child's brain development. Research has identified how hardship early in life can inhibit the development of oral language,⁴ result in intense and cumulative harm,⁵ and have long term impacts on health and social outcomes.⁶ In these settings, a child's ability to develop important emotional, social and cognitive skills is diminished and may result in them falling behind their peers across a range of competencies.

These risk factors have a further effect on the health and well-being of children and young people. A NSW study looking into the health of young people in custody identified that 83 per cent of young people were found to have at least one psychological disorder, and 63 per cent had two or more psychological disorders.⁷ In this same study it was reported that in the past 12 months, 10 per cent of young people engaged in suicidal acts with intent, and seven per cent of young people engaged in suicidal acts with medical lethality.⁸ These are telling when compared with young people across Australia, with a 2015 study indicating that 14 per cent of children and young people have mental disorders and around three per cent have ever attempted suicide.⁹

There is also a strong connection between school performance, truancy and criminal involvement. A number of studies, including Jesuit Social Services' research, have found that between 60-70 per cent of students skipping school were involved in criminal activity.¹⁰

We continue to fail Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities in the ongoing overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the Juvenile Justice system. Compared to the non-Indigenous population, Aboriginal children in NSW are 18 times more likely to be in detention.¹¹

The children and young people involved in juvenile justice are often the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. Though their complex behaviour can be challenging, it is our responsibility to build a system that protects young people and genuinely sets them on a path to rehabilitation and away from reoffending.

Vision and purpose

An effective youth justice system is one that holds young people accountable for their actions while working to rehabilitate and re-socialise them, to ultimately prevent re-offending.

Jesuit Social Services' #JusticeSolutions study tour looked outside our borders for solutions to youth justice problems in Australia. Senior leaders of our organisation undertook an international tour, taking in parts of Norway, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Successful youth justice systems have a clear vision and well-articulated purpose, with agreement across government, police, and the community and legal sectors. Jesuit Social Services' vision for youth justice systems is to enable young people who offend (or are at risk of offending) to lead healthy, productive and crime-free lives. To achieve this, our purpose must be rehabilitation.

Effective youth justice systems focus on early intervention and diversion, preventing young people from further contact with the justice system, using child-specific approaches and engaging families and communities. They have thorough assessment and planning processes that are supported by strong social infrastructure and well-resourced community alternatives to locking up young people. When prison is necessary, the focus is on education, addressing problem behaviour and underlying needs, and building social and practical skills through programs that prepare young people for reintegration into their community. They use facilities that are small and close to the homes of detainees, with positive cultures and well qualified staff who are trained to build relationships of trust, rather than punish.

All of this is underlined by a deep commitment to take the time to hear the voices of young people, and the voices of their families, to truly understand what is driving their behaviour and ensure that those issues and needs are addressed.

If we imagine the youth justice system as a maze that entraps vulnerable young people – all too easy to enter but so difficult to escape – we must redesign the maze so that the pathways in are narrowed and the pathways out are clear.

To build effective youth justice systems, there must be knowledge sharing on what works across states and jurisdictions. To stand firm against political and populist pressures, practices must be evidence-based. We call on the NSW Government to commit to developing a youth justice system that is based on the evidence of what works.

We call on the elected NSW Government to commit to developing a strategy for a youth justice system that holds young people accountable for their actions while working to rehabilitate and re-socialise them, to ultimately prevent re-offending.

Strengthening diversion and support in the community

Diversion programs in NSW have been shown to effectively keep young people out of custody.¹² Jesuit Social Services acknowledges and welcomes positive diversion initiatives that have already been undertaken in NSW, such as:

- the introduction of the *Young Offenders Act 1997* which created a hierarchy of sanctions designed to divert young offenders, including youth justice conferences, and was found to be successful¹³,
- the Maranguka Justice Reinvestment Project in Bourke, developed to decrease the rate of contact of Aboriginal children and young people with courts and custodial detention in Bourke¹⁴.
- The early intervention program, *Youth on Track*, which identifies and responds to young people at risk of becoming entrenched in the criminal justice system.

Strong diversion and early intervention programs emphasise:

- the importance of restorative justice principles, processes and practice
- a therapeutic approach that responds to the needs of vulnerable children and young people, particularly those in the child protection system who come into contact with the justice system
- an understanding of the particular needs of Aboriginal children and young people who are overrepresented in the youth justice system
- the critical role of education as a protective factor, and the need to ensure vulnerable children's continued engagement in school

Youth Justice Group Conferencing

Undue reliance on detention in criminal justice policy is both ineffective and costly. There is little evidence that tougher sentencing policy improves community safety through deterrence or incapacitation.¹⁵ In fact, several studies have found that imprisonment increases the likelihood of offending behaviour and has the potential to negatively affect prisoners, particularly younger, lower-risk offenders.¹⁶

Restorative practices are more effective in reducing re-offending and making our communities safer. Jesuit Social Services works with young people in the justice system in Victoria and the Northern Territory, using a problem-solving approach to offending that is based on principles of restorative justice.

In Victoria, Jesuit Social Services has delivered the Youth Justice Group Conferencing program since 2003, enabling dialogue between young people who have offended, their victims and the wider community. The program is grounded in principles of restorative justice, which emphasise reparation and restoration,¹⁷ and aims to:

- raise the young person's understanding of the impact of their offending on the victim, their family and/or significant others and the community
- reduce the frequency and seriousness of re-offending by the young person completing the program

- improve the young person's connection to family/significant others and their integration into the community
- negotiate an outcome plan that sets out what the young person will do to make amends for their offending
- increase victim satisfaction with the criminal justice process, and
- divert the young person from a more intensive sentence.¹⁸

Since March 2017, Jesuit Social Services has also delivered a youth justice group conferencing program in the Northern Territory operating under a similar model. The majority of young people referred have been Aboriginal, and cultural safety and ensuring a culturally strengthening process (e.g. by engaging Aboriginal elders in group conferences) has been a paramount consideration in convening group conferences.

Restorative justice group conferencing is effective: a 2010 KPMG independent evaluation of young people who completed a group conference between 2007 and 2009 found that more than 80 per cent of participants had not reoffended two years later – this compared to 57 per cent for the comparison group (i.e. young people who had been placed on Probation or on a Youth Supervision Order).¹⁹ A number of evaluations have also shown that group conferencing achieves very high rates of victim satisfaction.²⁰

Comparing group conferencing across jurisdictions, evaluations seem to indicate that conferencing in NSW has not delivered outcomes as favourable as those in Victoria.²¹ The reason for this is not definitively known, however.

Jesuit Social Services understands that the majority of referrals for group conferences in NSW come from police (as opposed to the Children's Court in Victoria) which would suggest that the seriousness of offending is lower. In our experience, the more serious the offence, the greater the opportunity for restoration through group conferencing because the impact of the offence on all parties involved has generally been greater, and there is more harm to repair. According to the Report on Government Services 2019, in 2017-18, almost five and half times as many group conferences were conducted in NSW compared with Victoria. Victoria spends almost \$10,000 more per conference, meaning that Victoria conducts less conferences with more resources dedicated per conference.²² We would also suggest that given the discrepancy in funding between Victoria and NSW, group conferences in Victoria are almost always convened by people with substantial experience and qualifications, additional supports are able to be provided to victims and offenders, and more than a single conference can be run if required.

Jesuit Social Services believes that restorative approaches such as group conferencing should be expanded throughout criminal justice systems across Australia, based off the successful Victorian model.

Restorative justice is also more cost-effective than keeping a young person in detention. For every \$1 invested on Youth Justice Group Conferencing, for example, the Victorian Government saves at least \$1.21 in the short term, and this saving is likely to increase in the long term.²³

We recommend the elected NSW Government invest in youth justice group conferencing to ensure the program can be provided with adequate intensity, supports, and experienced convenors, as demonstrated in other models in Australia.

Age of criminal responsibility

A small number of vulnerable children enter the criminal justice system at a very young age. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 117 children under 14 years of age were held in youth detention in NSW in 2016/17.²⁴ We know this group is among the most vulnerable in the community and that children first detained between the ages of 10 and 14 are more likely, compared to those first supervised at older ages, to have sustained and frequent contact with the criminal justice system throughout their life²⁵. These findings have been further confirmed by our *Thinking Outside: Alternatives to remand for children* research.

Child offending experts, psychologists and criminologists agree that younger children have rarely developed the social, emotional and intellectual maturity necessary for criminal responsibility before the age of 14 years and also lack the capacity to properly engage in the justice system. Consequently, procedural fairness cannot be assured and criminal justice proceedings fail to guarantee a just response to children’s behaviour. The most effective approach to divert these children’s trajectories into the justice system is to address the issues driving their vulnerability such as family dysfunction, trauma, abuse and neglect.

In line with international standards embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and enacted in many overseas jurisdictions²⁶, we recommend raising the age of criminal responsibility to the age of 14 in NSW. According to an international study of 90 countries, 68 per cent had a minimum criminal age of 12 or higher, with the most common age being 14 years.²⁷

10	Australia
12	Belgium, Canada, Israel, Netherlands, Scotland
14	Austria, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain
15	Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Greece
16	Portugal

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2018). Youth Justice in Australia 2016-17.

We recommend putting in place evidence-based approaches to supporting vulnerable children who are below this age. This should include less punitive methods of holding them to account, such as restorative justice and family centred approaches, as well as preventative measures which target the underlying factors which lead to anti-social behaviour.

We call on the elected NSW Government to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years and fund programs that take a restorative and welfare approach to anti-social behaviour in children under the age of 14 years.

Stopping the use of isolation

The Inspector of Custodial Services' investigation of NSW Juvenile Justice Centres revealed reliance on solitary confinement as punishment, inappropriate routine strip searches, and excessive use of force.²⁸ In light of the health and community safety risks associated with solitary confinement as confirmed by both international research and local experience, Jesuit Social Services considers that the use of isolation in youth justice centres should be banned. Practices must ensure that harm to children and young people is minimised and that their rights are protected.

We recognise and support the findings of the World Health Organisation,¹² which show that:

- the detrimental effects of solitary confinement on health include anxiety, depression, anger, cognitive disturbances, perceptual distortions, paranoia and psychosis
- levels of self-harm and suicide, which are already much higher among prisoners than in the general population, rise even further in segregation units
- prisoners with pre-existing mental illness are particularly vulnerable to the effects of solitary confinement
- children and young adults are still developing physically, mentally and socially, which makes them particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of solitary confinement
- solitary confinement can affect rehabilitation efforts and former prisoners' chances of successful reintegration into society following their release
- international human rights law requires that the use of solitary confinement be kept to a minimum and reserved for the few cases where it is absolutely necessary, and that it be used for as short a time as possible.

Solitary confinement negatively affects an individual's overall level of physical and mental health in custody. Many people describe experiencing physical health impacts such as deterioration in eyesight (e.g. seeing black dots), poor appetite and joint pain. Mental health impacts are more profound and include increased difficulty in regulating emotions (e.g. anger/rage), constant hypervigilance and paranoia, distortions in time, increased suicide/self-harm risk, increased symptoms of anxiety/depression, and describe feeling that they are going 'crazy'. The impacts of solitary confinement are highlighted in Jesuit Social Services' report, *All Alone: Young Adults in the Victorian Justice System*.²⁹

Solitary confinement also creates significant barriers to achieving successful rehabilitation and reintegration. For children, researchers have demonstrated the link between isolation and lasting psychological damage.¹³ Children and young people are particularly vulnerable due to the fact that they are still developing mentally and physically. The traumatic nature of isolation can have a severe consequence on adolescent brain development, making them all the more vulnerable to sustained

contained with the justice system and suicide.¹⁴

Isolation is not conducive to rehabilitation, reintegration or community safety, and increase risk to the community. Its capacity to harm and cause potentially permanent damage to a young person's ability to learn, regulate emotion, and manage their relationships and behavior are well documented.

We call on the elected NSW Government to ban the use of isolation of children and young people in youth justice facilities.

Reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are almost 11 times more likely than non-Indigenous people to be imprisoned in NSW.³⁰ The overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system is the result of structural racism, colonisation, dispossession, trauma, and the social and economic exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The elected NSW Government must commit to reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system by establishing clear, ambitious targets and investing in Aboriginal community-led strategies to achieve them.

The recent Report into the Adequacy of Youth Diversionary Programs in NSW highlighted the ongoing overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and young people in the justice system. The Report found that Aboriginal children are less likely to be diverted away from the Juvenile Justice system in NSW than non-Aboriginal children and that there is a need to for more Aboriginal community control over diversion programs and strategies:

“diversionary options in NSW need to be made more appropriate for Aboriginal young people... the NSW Government [should] promote Aboriginal community control and partnerships with the Aboriginal community in the design and delivery of diversionary programs; that staff of all agencies and organisations that work with juvenile offenders receive thorough cultural awareness training; and that the number of Aboriginal people working in agencies and organisations that have involvement with juvenile offenders be increased.”³¹

Recognising the need to divert vulnerable children away from the youth justice system through our *Thinking Outside: Alternatives to remand for children* research, Jesuit Social Services delivered the Barreng Moorop program in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA). The program is funded by the Commonwealth Government, and in 2017 was transitioned from Jesuit Social Services to VACCA to administer and run the program as lead agency, with VALS and Jesuit Social Services remaining engaged as partners.

Barreng Moorop works with the whole family and community (where appropriate) to provide a wrap-around response, understanding the composition of Aboriginal families, in which the extended family plays an active role. The responsibility of child care and rearing is shared amongst a range of family members with, in many cases, a multi-generational core of kin providing primary care.

In response, Barreng Moorop works with, and provides support to, family members with the focus of using family, community and culture as a protective factor to divert young people away from the criminal justice system in a manner which is sustainable and genuine.

Barreng Moorop uses an intensive case management model, along with trauma-informed practices which acknowledge the trauma Aboriginal people have experienced throughout history due to colonisation, loss of culture and connection to land, and the removal of children from their families. We note that these factors and the impact of intergenerational trauma plays out in the daily life of many of the Aboriginal children and families we work with.

We recommend the elected NSW Government invest in a program based on the Barreng Moorop model, to provide a whole-of-family response in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Justice reinvestment

The broader prison population and imprisonment rate in NSW has been increasing overall for the past years. More than half of the state's prisoners have been sentenced to imprisonment before.³² Jesuit Social Services' and Catholic Social Services' Australia's *Dropping Off the Edge 2015* found that 9.3 per cent of all NSW postcodes accounted for almost half (49.6 per cent) of all prison admissions in NSW.³³

This highlights the often localised nature of crime, as well as the role of disadvantage as an underlying cause of offending. To address the ballooning prison population, the elected NSW Government must develop a comprehensive plan to improve community safety and build flourishing, resilient communities. To this end, the elected NSW Government should invest in place-based, community capacity building approaches to address the root causes of crime and prevent reoffending.

Justice reinvestment simultaneously reduces penal budgets and offending rates.³⁴ It aims to prevent offending, break the cycle of recidivism and increase community safety by working to more effectively rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders.³⁵

Justice reinvestment projects have already been effective in NSW. The Maranguka Justice Reinvestment Project in Bourke has led to:

- an 18 per cent reduction in the number of major offences from 2015 to 2017
- a 34 per cent reduction in the number of non-domestic violence related assaults from 2015 to 2017
- a 39 per cent reduction in the number of domestic violence related assaults from 2015 to 2017
- decreases in youth offending and school suspensions.³⁶

Jesuit Social Services supports calls made by Just Reinvest in their 2019 Election Platform as a means to reduce reoffending rates and the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the justice system:

- support community-led solutions to break the cycle of offending and build vibrant futures for children and young people
- implement state-level reforms to reduce the prison population and shift spending away from building prisons to building safer, stronger communities.

Training and employment

Research by the Productivity Commission notes that employment is the most robust factor for keeping people out of poverty, and that more than 30 per cent of people who are unemployed experience deep social exclusion.³⁷

Jesuit Social Services has a bold yet attainable vision for the future that will see hope, pride and participation return to the communities in Western Sydney in which we work. We want to make real and lasting change, engage the local community and build the capacity of community leaders to drive and sustain this work over the long term.

One of the ways we hope to achieve this vision is through a network of local employers who have expressed a strong desire to setup targeted employment pathways to employ local and disadvantaged people in Mt Druitt, and in particular Willmot.

In Mt Druitt, our relationships with local, long-term unemployed people have grown alongside networks providing employment preparation, training and support. The missing component is a dedicated and skilled person, working in the community, to connect these resources up into an accessible pathway to successful local employment, and work to reduce place-based and entrenched disadvantage.

We recommend the NSW Government partner with Jesuit Social Services to provide dedicated positions to establish targeted employment pathways in Willmot, as well as funding to train and upskill marginalisation individuals to create pathways to real jobs and ongoing employment.

Corporate Diversity Partnerships

Jesuit Social Services also notes the significant barriers to employment faced by newly arrived and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, which can limit their sense of integration into the Australian community. For these groups, employment fosters broader participation in society, provides a sense of purpose, and creates opportunities to become contributing members of the community.

Based on our experiences engaging with migrant communities seeking employment, Jesuit Social Services formed a partnership with the National Australia Bank in 2009 to establish the African Australian Inclusion Program (AAIP).

The AAIP fosters workplace inclusion for unemployed and underemployed qualified individuals of African heritage and addresses existing barriers such as a recruitment landscape which is highly influenced by bias (conscious or unconscious), lack of a local network, or limited understanding of Australian workplace culture and job seeking processes. While the AAIP produces a social good, in broadening the employment prospects of those marginalised, it also provides significant benefits to the private sector in opening up an untapped labour market of talented workers, mirroring those in the community that the business works with, and shifting perceptions in a positive way. The program has been successful because it offers the private sector partner the competitive advantage of bringing experienced, skilled, yet underemployed, job seekers to their attention. It also serves to benefit the private sector through workplace diversification, in boosting staff engagement and in enhancing corporate reputation. By the end of March 2019, 424 participants will have graduated from AAIP across Melbourne and Sydney since its inception. More than half of the alumni are still working at NAB, and in the last eighteen months, this figure has been above 85 per cent at the end of each round.

“The African Australian Inclusion Program is not really about giving me a job – it’s about transforming my life, transforming my household, transforming my extended family and transforming the community I represent.” - Tunde Aibinu, AAIP Participant

“AAIP not only impacted my life it has also impacted people around me. I am in a position to set an example to my children, nephews and niece, that if you work and study hard everything is possible. Today I am proud to say I am professional person as the result of this program and I am in a position to give advice to other Africans who have left study due to the impression that employment is unattainable.” – African-Australian Inclusion Program Participant

“This opportunity means everything to me, my family and my community. To me it is more than just a job, it is a passion, it is a dream that has to be lived, this is my reason for existence, this is my life. To my family it is an opportunity for me to grow and be able to provide for them. To my community this is a chance to give them hope, to show them that it is possible, it may be hard but it is possible and worth it”. - African-Australian Inclusion Program participant

“At NAB we are committed to diversity and inclusion. We value our customers and understand that we will be able to provide better service to them when our workforce is representative of our community. This program brings this to life in a very real way.” - Jo Cushing, Head of Finance Partner, Customer Payments & Processing, Bank & Wealth Transformation , NAB

Building on the highly successful AAIP, we have developed the Corporate Diversity Partnerships program to help companies connect with a diverse talent pool of qualified people who seek an opportunity to obtain the corporate experience and professional networks needed to launch their careers. Our Corporate Diversity Partnerships approach is founded on the following principles:

- **Partnership** – collaborating to arrive at the right approach for each business
- **Proven model** – time-limited, paid work experience with built-in mentoring and support
- **Flexibility** – extensive program or individual internships
- **Support and development** – for both interns and company employees
- **Workforce supply** – the option for companies to offer post-program employment.

With a spirit of collaboration and a shared desire to open up paid internship opportunities to talented people, we can connect the dots for companies to create a partnership that works – for everyone.

Recently, we have partnered with the Australian Taxation Office to deliver their ‘Opening Doors’ initiative to offer professionally qualified individuals of refugee background with Australian Citizenship 12 month entry level work experience roles across a range of business areas. In addition, we have developed the Pathway Program with John Holland one of Australia’s leading engineering, contracting and service providers to the infrastructure, energy, resources and transport sectors offering six-month Junior Engineer roles in Victoria.

We recommend the elected NSW Government provide funding for the Corporate Diversity Partnerships model, in partnership with Jesuit Social Services, to be rolled out to businesses in New South Wales.

Mental Health

Jesuit Social Services supports a holistic approach to mental health and wellbeing that takes account of key drivers like poverty, discrimination, family dysfunction and histories of trauma. Mental health must be understood in tandem with experience of disadvantage and marginalisation. Access to appropriate mental health services, including community-based responses, is particularly critical for the most vulnerable members of our community. Equality of access to appropriate mental health care services is critical to addressing entrenched disadvantage.

Support for community-based services

Following the rollout of the NDIS and recent restructuring of mental health service delivery in NSW, a number of concerns have been raised regarding the availability of vital community supports and of funding for community-based mental health services.

Against the backdrop of the new Activity Based Funding, Local Health Districts (LHDs) and Speciality Health Networks (SHNs) operate with capped budgets, meaning that limited resources can be allocated between hospital and community-based services. In the process of allocating funds, hospital care has often taken precedence over community-based care, despite the ability of community-based services to divert or prevent contact with hospitals by intervening before mental health crises arise. The Mental Health Commission of NSW has raised concerns that ABF favours hospital-based care.

Jesuit Social Services' experience is that community-based programs that provide soft-entry points for people without formal diagnoses are vital mechanisms of support for marginalised and vulnerable members of the community.³⁸

The investment of \$42 million for new community-based mental health services and programs in last state budget is a strong foundation. However, ongoing State Government investment must ensure that service gaps in the wake of the NDIS rollout are addressed.³⁹

We call on the elected NSW Government to invest in community-based mental health services, particularly supporting programs providing services for individuals with multiple and complex needs.

Mental health and justice system

Amongst those in the justice system, the prevalence of disability with other health conditions has been noted by a number of studies in Australia.⁴⁰ NSW researchers found that 69 per cent of a sample of prisoners with cognitive impairment had multiple and complex needs.⁴¹ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this study were more likely to have multiple and complex needs as well as increased interaction with the criminal justice system.⁴²

The rollout of the NDIS has compromised mental health service access for people involved with the justice system. This is in part due to the fact that the Council of Australian Governments has agreed that the NDIS will not fund individuals during their time in prison, but will fund disability-specific needs only once they return to the community. Individualised NDIS packages are stopped when an individual enters custody, leaving people transitioning out of prison without the vital mental health supports they needed. This disjointed program response represents a significant barrier that prevents people with disabilities being able to access continuity of support. It remains unclear how former prisoners with disabilities are expected to access funding, support or even the most basic information about the NDIS once in the community.

Jesuit Social Services has particular concerns about the access to disability support for people with cognitive impairment and complex needs in the criminal justice system including:

- The requirement of people with disability and complex needs to have the computer literacy, interpersonal and self-advocacy skills to gain assistance from the NDIS⁴³
- The difficulty for people in prison to access and register on the NDIS portal due to restrictions and regulations relating to computer and internet access in correctional centres
- The impact of accessibility to the scheme when it is reliant on access to appropriate diagnostic services;⁴⁴ and
- The uncertainty as to whether the presence of a mild cognitive impairment (particularly when co-occurring with mental health problems, substance misuse, and entrenched disadvantage) will meet the eligibility of the NDIS scheme of a 'substantial and ongoing disability need'.⁴⁵

We support the re-introduction of block funding for individuals with psycho-social disability transitioning from prison to the community while comprehensive individualised plans are developed, as advocated by the Disability Council NSW.⁴⁶

We call on the elected NSW Government to ensure that people with disability in the justice system have access to disability support before, during and after imprisonment, to guarantee continuity of care.

Family violence: Gender and culture

Boys and men are in trouble – and they are causing trouble. Not all of them. Not even most. But too many. We see it in high levels of substance abuse, mental health issues, radicalisation and violence.

The impact on women, children, families, communities and society as a whole is profound. As a society we have recently begun to acknowledge one significant aspect of the problem – violence against women. The focus has been, as it should be, on supporting the victims of this violence.

But we need to do much more. Around 95 per cent of victims of violence experience violence from a male perpetrator,⁴⁷ 92 per cent of all prisoners in NSW are male,⁴⁸ and on average, six men suicide each day – three times the rate of women.⁴⁹

We must address the root causes of these injustices by supporting boys and men to live respectful, accountable and fulfilling lives, where they are able to develop loving relationships free from violence and contribute to safe and equal communities.

We need to promote positive change around gender norms and stereotypes and what it means to be a healthy and respectful man in the 21st century. We need to focus on the contributing factors to male violence like mental health problems, substance abuse and social isolation. And we need to collaborate with and build the capacity of others to reduce violent behaviour by boys and men.

There are already some important programs that work with boys and men, particularly in responding to violence. For more than 40 years, Jesuit Social Services has been a prominent provider of these.

But these programs are disparate in nature and spread unevenly across the country. And while some are successful, they generally deal with single-issue behaviours of individual men and boys. A new approach is needed to achieve genuine change – a big picture approach that looks at the root causes of violence and harmful behaviour by boys and men. To this end, Jesuit Social Services established and launched the Men's Project.

Attitudes and behaviours of boys and men

Evidence from research into men's behaviours and attitudes conducted overseas has found that adherence to social pressures to behave like a 'real man' can result in perpetrating acts of violence, and in poorer outcomes for men in a range of areas including mental health and wellbeing, drinking, and risk-taking behaviours.

The Men's Project undertook a similar study, The Man Box, released in October 2018– the first comprehensive study that focuses on the attitudes to manhood and the behaviours of young Australian men aged 18 to 30. The 'Man Box' is a set of beliefs within and across society that place pressure on men to be a certain way – to be tough; not to show any emotions; to be the breadwinner, to always be in control, use violence to solve problems; and to have many sexual partners. Findings show that the Man Box is alive and well in Australia today. The majority of young men agree there are social pressures on them to behave or act a certain way because of their gender.

Living up to the pressures of being a 'real man' causes harm to young men and those around them, particularly women. Young men who most strongly agree with these rules report poorer levels of mental health, engage in risky drinking, are more likely to be in car accidents and to report committing acts of violence, online bullying and sexual harassment.

As well as impacting on women and families, The Man Box shows that highly regulated masculinity causes men and boys to suffer. In light of these findings, investment is needed in new and innovative ways that work with men and boys that address the negative impacts of dominant masculinity on men and boys' health and wellbeing and on their use of violence. Interventions are needed that work with men and boys at all ages and stages of their lives.

We call on the elected NSW Government to invest in interventions:

- **At the primary level, including legislative and systemic changes that have been proven to improve gender equality, such as parliamentary gender quotas and targets, improving men's access to flexible workplaces enabling more shared parenting and wage equality between men and women.**
- **At the secondary level, for children aged over eight, when boys begin to present with social and emotional problems and start falling behind academically and are at risk of disengaging from school, and initiatives that promote gender equality and diversity in areas where there are 'at risk' groups of men and boys in problematic masculine cultures, for example, in male dominated workplaces and sporting clubs.**
- **At the tertiary level, working in long-term and trauma-informed ways with children and young people and their carers who have been victims/witnesses of family violence in order to break cycles of family violence throughout their lives.**

Early intervention

The Starting Over program in Western Sydney works with families where there is a young person who is committing acts of family violence, and focuses on improving safety for family members, restoring family relationships, and supporting young people to end the cycle of violent behaviour.

While this program is currently federally funded for one year, commitment for ongoing and longer term funding is needed. In addition, the current age of eligibility is 10 to 16 years old. Intervention is needed even earlier, to work with children at the first signs of vulnerability to violence.

We call on the elected NSW Government to commit to funding restorative responses to adolescents showing violent behaviour in the home.

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