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Budget investment in community services welcome but more needed for crime prevention: Jesuit Social Services

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the Victorian State Government's 2019/20 budget and its significant investments into vital infrastructure projects, schools and hospitals.

"The State Government has delivered on many of its election commitments including free dental care for Victorian students and the construction of 1,000 new social housing properties. These investments were welcomed by the community services sector during last year's election campaign and will undoubtedly have a positive impact on many Victorians," says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

Ms Edwards also welcomes \$22m funding on diversion, rehabilitation and reintegration programs to support people who have contact with the justice system, and after hours support for young people in trouble, but says these investments pale into insignificance compared to the \$1.6 billion spend on prison infrastructure.

"As a society, we need to do more to help people who get caught up in the criminal justice system and struggle to get their lives back on track when they return to the community. Adding more beds to the prison system will result in more vulnerable people being locked up. Strong investments in health and education are welcome but we know that people in prison have nowhere near the same access to these types of services, and this impacts their ability to make a successful reintegration to the community on release.

"Of course, we must also make sure we are doing everything we can to keep people away from the justice system, and committing crimes, in the first place. This begins with early childhood services and support to stay connected with education, through to ensuring people have access to secure housing and employment opportunities to contribute to the community."

In its [submission to the 2019-20 Victorian State Budget](#), Jesuit Social Services called for a range of investments to prevent people from having contact with the criminal justice system, including raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years, and setting targets to reduce youth offending, incarceration, recidivism and the number of young people on remand.

Ms Edwards says the organisation will continue to advocate for these evidence-based approach to supporting children in trouble.

"This is a Budget that will benefit many, but not all Victorians, and we remain concerned that the most marginalised members of the community continue to miss out."

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