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DISCRIMINATION AGAINST AFRICAN YOUTHS MUST END

Jesuit Social Services is calling for an end to discrimination against young men of African descent and more investment in support services after a report released today said they experienced more difficulty with police than other youths and were less likely to have their rights respected.

Jesuit Social Services Chief Executive Officer, Julie Edwards, said unfairly targeting these youths was unjust and greater support to help them integrate into the community was needed.

“Many of these youths are struggling to adapt and learn the customs of a new society and need to be supported so they can contribute and integrate within the community.

A 12-month study on racial profiling by the Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre found young men of African descent were almost twice as likely as Australian-born youth to be stopped and questioned by police in the past month, with almost half (47.6 per cent) of respondents strongly feeling they had been stopped by police because of their race.

“Jesuit Social Services is calling on the Baillieu Government and Victorian police to put an end to this discrimination and to show more awareness of the difficulties some people may have assimilating into a new community.

“We must work with minority groups and the disadvantaged to address their core problems through a range of programs such as the Australian African Inclusion Program, a joint program between Jesuit Social Services and NAB, which helps unemployed African immigrants get job placements within the banking sector.

“We can assist African youths by making programs available to them which will help them gain the skills, qualifications and opportunities to enter the workforce.

“We call on the Baillieu Government to ensure this discrimination doesn’t continue and to invest in support programs which will give these youths the skills needed to contribute to a society productively,” Ms Edwards said.

Key statistics from the Race of Reason report;

- Young African men were almost twice as likely as Australian-born youth to be stopped and questioned by police in the last month
- Young African men reported feeling scared, angry and targeted and made to feel “small and dumb”.
- Many young African men felt they had been “cruelly treated” by police
- 47.6 per cent strong felt they had been stopped by the police because of their race
- Almost 30 per cent said they were “not at all” able to walk down the street without worrying about being stopped by police when walking alone, compared to just 1.8 per cent of Australian-born youth
- Young women of African descent were significantly likely to feel that police would be tougher on them than Australian-born women.

Jesuit Social Services works with disadvantaged youth and families who are involved in the justice system, the Indigenous in Victoria and Alice Springs, as well as new settlers in the high rise flats in Flemington and Collingwood. Jesuit Social Services, in conjunction with National Australia Bank, runs the Australian African Inclusion Program which aims at getting job placements in the bank for unemployed African immigrants.

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