

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

5th July 212

At a time when NSW has an overburdened prison system and with evidence showing that young people who are locked up often go on to have serious criminal careers, the sudden closure of the NSW Youth Drug and Alcohol Court is a retrograde step.

This program and other drug courts throughout Australia have had a strong track record of success in breaking the cycle of drug dependency, crime and imprisonment. In Victoria, an evaluation of that state's drug court found that it significantly reduced participants' reoffending and drug use.

In NSW, the Drug Court was not a "soft option", with the young offenders having strict requirements imposed on them in the program. It was an option that worked, with people moving away from offending and incarceration in prisons which have been described as "Universities of Crime" by the Attorney General.

Given that 66% of prisoners admit to previous use of illicit drugs and around 45% have drug and alcohol related issues associated with their offence, surely a wise investment would be to address drug and alcohol issues rather than spending up to \$100,000 per year on a young person's incarceration.

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