***MEDIA RELEASE***

**YOUNG PEOPLE ON REMAND IN VICTORIA: BALANCING INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY INTERESTS**

“A cornerstone of our justice system is the presumption of innocence until proven guilty. Yet at a time when crime rates are actually falling, we are seeing increasing numbers of young people being remanded in custody. Clearly our new research report *Young People on Remand in Victoria: Balancing Individual and Community Interests* tell us it’s time to take a look at implementing reform in remand,” said Chief Executive Officer Julie Edwards on the release of Jesuit Social Services’ latest research.

*Young People on Remand in Victoria: Balancing Individual and Community Interests* was launched by Victorian County Court Judge Fran Hogan at Jesuit Social Services’ Brosnan Breakfast on 16 February 2011.

“Of great concern to us is that the majority of these young people in remand have experienced significant disadvantage. Many of them have mental health or drug and alcohol or housing problems, the vast majority have not completed secondary school, and those with an intellectual disability or who are Indigenous are more likely to be remanded,” Ms Edwards said.

“Getting the balance between punishment and rehabilitation for young people is not easy. The community reasonably expects young people who have committed crimes to be punished and stopped from causing further damage. In respect to remand, though, this report shows that 40% of remandees are either found not guilty or sentenced to a period the same as or less than the time they have already served.

“We call on the government to reform remand, especially by resourcing more heavily in support options for these young people outside of prison,” said Ms Edwards.

This comprehensive report, funded by the Legal Services Board, analyses current Australian and international trends in evidence-based prison policy in Australia and overseas. This includes a review of remand and its place within the criminal justice system.

*Young People on Remand in Victoria: Balancing Individual and Community Interests* includes a statistical analysis of more than eleven thousand Victorian remandees incarcerated while awaiting trial between 2008 and 2010, with particular attention to the socio-economic background of remandees by age, gender and Indigenous status. The analysis highlights the accumulated disadvantage of young people involved in the criminal justice system, including high rates of unemployment and low levels of educational attainment.

This landmark report by Jesuit Social Services concludes with recommendations for remand reform that promote social inclusion and community safety, and the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged young people, families and communities.
The report’s Project Consultant and author of *Dropping off the Edge: the distribution of disadvantage in Australia* Professor Tony Vinson said, “With community issues as fraught as crime and punishment, research into adult remand practices usually assume a pessimistic tone. This is not so with the present report. Rather the emphasis is on furthering the rational, humane approach being adopted in Victoria which benefits not only the social justice standards of the state but also its coffers and public investment in positive institutions that give everyone a fair chance in life.”

Jesuit Social Services is a not-for-profit organisation which works to build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged young people, families and communities.

**YOUNG PEOPLE ON REMAND IN VICTORIA: Balancing individual and community interests**
is available to download at Jesuit Social Services’ website - [www.jss.org.au](http://www.jss.org.au)

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