

Thursday 12th April 2012

Letter to the Editor – Herald Sun

Dear Sir/Madam

Yes, young people must be held to account (*'Our kids run wild'* 12.04.12). Sending them to jail, however, is not necessarily the most effective way to achieve this. Indeed, jails are often training a training ground for young offenders. Imprisonment often leads to further involvement in the criminal system, as is made clear by the telling statistic that 60% of young people in jail have been there before.

Children's Court magistrates have a range of options available to make young offenders accountable for their actions. One option is to hold a Youth Justice Group Conference. Through this, victims have the chance to tell their story and the impact of crime on them and their families, and the offender gets to see the impact of what they've done firsthand. In our experience, this can be far more compelling for both the victim and the offender and can lead to a greater sense of remorse and responsibility.

An independent evaluation of Justice Group Conferencing in Victoria found that 91% of victims who took part were satisfied with the process. The same evaluation found that young offenders who took part were much less likely to commit further crimes.

Julie Edwards

CEO, Jesuit Social Services