

**MEDIA RELEASE – 5 December 2013**

**Prison pressure being driven by revolving door justice system**

New data released today on Victoria's prison system shows that the record growth in prison numbers is being driven by a failure to support people in prison when they are released into the community.

Commenting on the release of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' [\*Prisoners in Australia Report\*](#), Jesuit Social Services acting CEO, Sally Parnell said, "These figures make clear how the current problems in Victoria's corrections system are of the government's own making. In one year, there has been a 16% increase in the number of recidivists in our prison system."

"Not enough support is being provided to offenders when they return to the community. We need more investment in support for people on parole and straight release from prison."

The ABS report shows that the 9% growth in Victoria's prison population during 2012/13 was not a result of any crackdown on violent and other serious offending. Instead the increases in prisoner numbers are being driven by people imprisoned for offences against justice procedures, including breach of community and parole orders (increased by 241 or 43%); robbery (49/12%); and unlawful entry (55/11%).

Ms Parnell said, "While we do not doubt that all of these are significant offences, prison should be used as a last resort for the most serious offences. Reforms to sentencing and parole are bringing more people into the prison system, most of them for shorter periods of time. Without sufficient investment to meet their needs including mental health services, drug and alcohol treatment, and education and training community, safety will be undermined."

"This is particularly the case with parole. If the state government continues with its reforms to the parole system, it must heed the recommendations of the Callinan review to properly resource the system to support parolees in avoiding breaches. Clearly this is not the case at present."

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**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.**