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Forthcoming State Budget an opportunity to strengthen community safety

Jesuit Social Services has called on the state government to strengthen its commitment to justice and community safety in the forthcoming state budget by supporting measures that prevent crime, divert people from the justice system, and provide opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

In releasing [Jesuit Social Services' 2012-13 Victorian State Budget submission](#), Jesuit Social Services acting CEO, Sally Parnell said, "We have made the case to the state government that the most cost effective way to meet its commitment to tackling crime is adopt a targeted policy on prison beds that enables rehabilitation and reintegration, to support community based alternatives to keep young people out of prison, and to address the disadvantage that lies at the heart of crime."

"Victoria has safer communities than most other places in Australia with lower rates of crime, fewer prisoners, and less recidivism. These outcomes are not a coincidence but the result of years of cooperation between the courts, police, non government agencies, and the government of the day all of whom have sought to prevent crime and divert people from the justice system."

Ms Parnell explained the evidence that supported Jesuit Social Services' recommendations to halt expansion of the state's prison system. "Recent studies have shown us that increasing the number of people in prison is an ineffective measure in reducing crime. In fact, prisons often lead to increased offending with large numbers of prisoners reoffending upon their release. Clearly, there will be some circumstances where prison is the appropriate option for an offender. However, we believe that instead of building more prisons, the government should be focusing on improving the conditions in existing prisons and supporting initiatives that keep individuals out of prison."

A strong theme in the Jesuit Social Services submission is the provision of adequate funding to community agencies to ensure that services have the scope and intensity required to meet the complex and entrenched needs of the highly disadvantaged people within the criminal justice system. "We are calling on the government to continue its funding to programs that make a difference for vulnerable people, including youth community support, adult transitional support, and the fledgling youth intensive bail support services. Funding security long term is essential for quality service provision."

"We hope the government does not miss the opportunity in this budget to strengthen and build upon Victoria's effective approach to justice and community safety."

Jesuit Social Services' 2012-13 Victorian State Budget Submission can be read in full by clicking [here](#).

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.

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