

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2012

## **Sentencing Children and Young People in Victoria Report welcomed by Jesuit Social Services**

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the release of the Sentencing Advisory Council's report '*Sentencing Children and Young People in Victoria*' which illustrates the overall effectiveness of the approach to youth justice being taken by the Children's Court, Victoria Police, government agencies and the community sector.

Responding to the release of the report, Julie Edwards, CEO of Jesuit Social Services commented, "The report shows that the overall rates of arrest, appearances in court and sentencing of young people have remained relatively steady over time. These rates remain amongst the lowest in Australia and reflect the strengths of Victoria's approach to youth justice which focuses on early intervention, diversion and the reintegration of young people within the community."

"The report highlights some of the excellent work being undertaken by the Children's Court. The Court's focus on diversion and restoration has ensured Victoria's youth detention rate remains the lowest in Australia. Victorian initiatives such as Youth Justice Group Conferencing hold young people to account for offending behaviour and works with young people to help them take responsibility for their actions and commit to dealing with their anti-social behaviours."

The report also highlighted the positive impact of efforts by Victoria Police to divert young people away from the justice system. "It's important that Victoria Police continue to deal with young people by making the utmost effort to minimise the instances in which young people are drawn into the criminal justice system," Ms Edwards commented in light of findings that Victoria has lower rates of young people coming into contact with police compared with most other states and that most young Victorians (76.7%) who come into contact with police only have one formal contact.

Ms Edwards also noted some areas of concern raised in the report. "The increase in the rate of violent offences finalised in the Children's Court is a matter of concern that must be looked at in more detail by practitioners and policymakers within the youth justice system. Research and dialogue into the causes and responses to youth violent crime must be addressed at a national level."

"The Sentencing Advisory Council should be congratulated on a comprehensive piece of work which highlights both the strengths and areas for improvement in Victoria's youth justice system."

**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.**

### **MEDIA ENQUIRIES**

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### **MEDIA COMMENTS**

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