

MEDIA RELEASE

**THE STATE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO REVIEW ITS 'TOUGH ON CRIME'
POLICIES IN LIGHT OF FULHAM PRISON RIOTS
19 Jan 2012**

In light of the disturbing riots at Fulham Prison overnight, Jesuit Social Services' CEO, Julie Edwards, has called on the State Government to rethink its "lock em up" agenda as its preferred strategy to tackling crime.

"With retrograde policies such as the abolition of suspended sentences, the abolition of home detention, and the introduction of statutory minimum sentencing, more and more Victorians are being sent to prisons. Our prisons are full of people with mental illness, drug and alcohol problems and intellectual disabilities.

"All the evidence, as well as our 35 years of experience in the justice system tells us that sending more people to prison does not reduce crime and does not increase community safety. Despite that, this Government is determined to ram through these changes which are cramming up already overcrowded prisons and causing massive problems. If they insist on continuing this, they must ensure that prisoners are cared for humanely in order to get a chance of making a worthwhile life outside of prison."

At the Jesuit Social Services National Justice Symposium late last year, Minister McIntosh was asked about his Government's election commitment to an extra 500 prison beds. The Minister said, "I believe... we should be operating our jails in a humane way. If we are to roll out sufficient programs in relation to rehabilitation ... if you don't have proper facilities to house prisoners, all of that will fall to nought.. indeed all of the education and rehabilitation programs are about providing appropriate accommodation. Without that you will not get the outcomes, and that's why we're rolling out those additional beds". (Taped proceedings, National Justice Symposium, October 2011)

"I call on the Government to commit to dedicating any new prison beds to prisoner rehabilitation - drug and alcohol, mental health services, education and training, so that when someone does have to serve a prison term, they will be released with some chance of rejoining our community" said Julie Edwards.

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.

Jesuit Social Services CEO, Julie Edwards is available for media comment upon request.

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