

Dear Sir/Madam

Your report '*More kids turning violent*' correctly points out that there is often a range of underlying factors which explain juvenile offending. Research conducted by Jesuit Social Services has demonstrated that many of these factors are concentrated in particular neighbourhoods which face interlinked problems including child maltreatment, limited education, low family income, and poor health. Young people from these areas are more likely to be drawn towards criminal behaviour. This is clear from the alarming statistic that 25% of 18-21 year olds on remand in Victorian prisons come from just 2.5% of the state's postcode areas. Concerted action must be taken in these areas to address the many complex factors that underlie entrenched disadvantage and crime.

We must also engage with young people at an early stage to prevent them falling into lives of crime. Research shows that once young people enter the criminal justice system they are at high risk of becoming 'trapped' in a cycle of reoffending. Police and Court programs that look to divert young people away from the system have proven to be successful at moving young people away from a life of crime. Jesuit Social Services' own Youth Justice Group Conferencing program has been successful in diverting young people from the justice system and over 80% of participants in the program do not engage in further offending behaviour.

Julie Edwards

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