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YOUNG REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS NEED OUR HELP TO SETTLE INTO COMMUNITY

Young refugees in Community Detention need help through specific Government-funded programs so they can settle into their new community quickly and effectively, Jesuit Social Services said in their submission to the Senate Inquiry into Australia's Immigration Detention Network on Friday.

Jesuit Social Services Chief Executive Officer, Julie Edwards, said the majority of those in Community Detention are granted Australian Visas so it is in the best interests of the young people and the broader community to offer them support programs from the moment they arrive.

"The sooner we help young refugees and immigrants to settle in the community the better. Positive social connections, life skills and being ready to pursue education or work are all essential for building a new life in a new country and for contributing to the community. It means we all reap the benefits.

"Many of these minors are removed from their social and family connections as well as meaningful activities for a long period of time, which makes the transition to being a productive and fully participating member of the community a very difficult task, particularly in an unfamiliar culture. The shorter we can make that time in detention and the more support we can give them, then the easier the transition.

"We believe it is crucial for 'older' minors to be separated from the very young when being educated and taught in an environment that is conducive to learning just as it is important in normal primary and secondary schools.

"Leaving aside the benefit to the individual, it makes sense financially in the short and longer term for the Government to run programs providing training and life skills.

"These young people need our help to settle into the community and with appropriate Government funding, Jesuit Social Services alongside other non-Government agencies, can implement programs that will make it possible for newly arrived immigrants and recently processed refugees to settle into the community," Ms Edwards said.

Jesuit Social Services works with over 500 young people a year, the majority of whom are high risk young people with complex and multiple problems and needs; such complex needs include mental health problems, disability (including intellectual disability), drug and alcohol misuse, homelessness, and health problems.

Jesuit Social Services, in partnership with MacKillop Family Services and Catholic Care, provide residential care and case management support to young people awaiting assessment of their refugee status in Geelong and the North West Metropolitan region.

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

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