

Friday 27th April 2012

Jesuit Social Services welcomes improvements to youth justice custodial facilities

Jesuit Social Services has welcomed the Victorian government's commitment to improving infrastructure, facilities and services at the state's youth justice facilities.

Responding to Community Services Minister Mary Wooldridge's announcement of \$54.5 million in funding for youth justice custodial facilities, Jesuit Social Services acting CEO, Sally Parnell said, "We welcome this investment in infrastructure and services at youth justice custodial facilities. While Jesuit Social Services believes young people should only be detained as a matter of last resort, where it is necessary there must be adequate facilities and services to provide for the rehabilitation of young people. Today's announcement will go some way towards ensuring this.

"We are pleased to see that the recommendations made in the Ombudsman's and Comrie reviews have been implemented and commend the government's efforts to address systemic issues and improve conditions within Victoria's youth justice custodial facilities. The renewed focus on education in custody is particularly welcome."

Noting that some of this funding would go towards improving capacity within the facilities Ms Parnell noted, "Jesuit Social Services does not believe that creating more beds in custody is an effective way to improve community safety, however we understand the need to avoid overcrowding in youth justice facilities. Should the 45 new beds result in extra capacity at Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre, then we hope that it is used to house 18-21 year olds on remand instead of them being placed in adult prisons."

Ms Parnell noted that today's announcement needed to be considered in the broader context of Victoria's youth justice system. "Victoria has some of the lowest rates of youth crime, imprisonment and reoffending in Australia. This is the result of an approach to youth justice focusing on diversion and rehabilitation which has been implemented by successive governments, the courts, police, and the community sector. Our youth justice custodial facilities are one aspect of this much larger system which also includes services run by Jesuit Social Services such as Youth Justice Group Conferencing and Youth Justice Community Support Services."

"Jesuit Social Services looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with the government to promote justice and community safety."

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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