

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**20 August 2013**

### **Adequately resourced parole reforms will promote community safety**

The Victorian Government must seize the opportunity and act on the Callinan Review's recommendations to properly resource the state's parole system.

Commenting on the release of the report into Victoria's parole system by former High Court Judge Ian Callinan, Julie Edwards, CEO of Jesuit Social Services said, "We all want a safe community, and it is clear from today's report that this safety has at times been jeopardised by a parole system under enormous pressure. Sadly, this has led to some tragic consequences.

"We welcome many of the measures outlined in Justice Callinan's report, particularly the calls for better resources for decision makers, community supervision and information systems. We believe that parole can be an important tool to monitor and assist prisoner transition back into the community. However, without vital resources, the reforms are unlikely to enhance community safety."

In submissions to the Callinan Review, Jesuit Social Services emphasised the need for more to be done to address the underlying causes of offending. Ms Edwards said, "The Review has acknowledged the complex needs of the prison population and the enormous pressures on our justice system. There is a clear need for investment in services to tackle the underlying causes of offending such as drug and alcohol problems, mental illness, homelessness and unemployment. Without these measures, the effectiveness of our parole system and wider justice system will be undermined."

Noting the Review's recommendations for enhancing accountability and transparency in parole decision making, Ms Edwards said, "Reforms to hold serious offenders to account through a more intensive parole review process are welcomed, as are measures to provide the public with more information on the Board's work and parole process. However, we believe that accountability should also extend to decisions made by the Parole Board and that this should include the ability to have negative parole board decisions reviewed.

"We are also concerned that the requirement for prisoners initiate applications for parole may disadvantage prisoners with complex needs, particularly those with intellectual disabilities. Effective support will need to be in place to ensure that these prisoners do not miss out on the opportunity to apply for parole."

"Ultimately, these recommendations will only lead to a more effective system if the Victorian government provides the much needed resources to support it."

**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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