

MEDIA RELEASE

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Crime prevention and diversion needs greater investment

Sally Parnell, Acting CEO of Jesuit Social Services, has commended the NSW State Government for recognising the need to expand prisoner rehabilitation services and reduce reoffending. Responding to yesterday's release of the 2012-13 State Budget, Ms Parnell welcomed \$4.2m of investment in prisoner rehabilitation programs, including \$2m for a new Intensive Drug and Alcohol Treatment program.

"Rehabilitation services make a vital contribution to community safety through reducing the rate at which prisoners reoffend. We know this from experience, with individuals who participated in the NSW Drug Court Completion Program being 37% less likely to be reconvicted during the follow up period."

Ms Parnell warned that more investment is needed in crime prevention, diversion and rehabilitation services across the justice system. "This type of investment is required in order to achieve benefits to the community, such as reduced crime and lower recidivism rates".

"The Government should not limit its efforts to working with individuals who have already been convicted. There needs to be investment in drug and alcohol treatment programs that provide an alternative to prison, so that people have the opportunity to deal with mental health and drug use problems."

In analysing the budget papers, Ms Parnell noted that the \$4.2m investment in rehabilitation services was significantly less than the \$24m allocated to complete the redevelopment of the Cobhan and Riverina Juvenile Justice Centres, and the \$34m for new courthouses.

"Prison numbers are also unusually high in NSW due in part to bail laws that are unfairly imprisoning people at huge expense while abusing the presumption of innocence that is the cornerstone of our justice system", Ms Parnell said. "We know that in 1982, 12.3% of inmates were unconvicted, now more than double that (26.2%) are unconvicted and being exposed to more hardened criminals (NSW Corrective Services Inmate Census 2011). Fixing the bail laws system and the ability of homeless or disadvantaged people to receive bail with better housing support options would be a progressive first step. We look forward to further announcements about Bail reform in NSW."

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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. www.jss.org.au