

MEDIA RELEASE

10th August 2012

Action needed to keep young people out of jail

Research released today emphasises the need for reform to bail services in New South Wales so that young people are not unnecessarily imprisoned.

Responding to the release of Juvenile Justice in Australia 2010-11 by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards said, "New South Wales has one of the highest detention rates for young people in the country. A particular worry is the fact that over half of all young people in detention are unsentenced."

Ms Edwards noted the fact that the detention rate in New South Wales has remained stable over the past year but the rate of remandees has increased. "On an average day, over half of all young people in detention have not been sentenced. We also know that over two thirds of young people under supervision in 2010-11 have been under supervision previously. By refusing young people bail and locking them up, we run the risk of making involvement in the criminal justice system a way of life for them.

"It would be much more cost effective for the state, and better for many of these young people, if they were able to be released into the community on bail with support that steers their lives away from repeat offending rather cementing them there. The Bail Act needs to be reformed and support services provided so that this can become a reality."

Another area of concern in the AIHW report was the overrepresentation of young Aboriginal people in the justice system. Ms Edwards said, "The fact that Aboriginal young people are more likely to enter the justice system at a younger age and are 24 times more likely to end up in detention than non Aboriginal young people is unacceptable. Jesuit Social Services supports the campaign for justice reinvestment to support young Aboriginal people being kept out of prison. We must all work together to ensure that Aboriginal communities have the resources and capacity to support their young people to participate fully in education, training and employment".

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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MEDIA COMMENTS

Julie Edwards, CEO

Key Facts from AIHW Juvenile justice in Australia 2010-11

New South Wales:

- 20% of young people under supervision in detention.
- Increase in the rate of detention and overall rates of supervision 1.9 to 2.6 per 1000 over the past 11 years.
- Over half of all young people in detention are unsentenced.

Nationally:

- 7,265 young people under juvenile justice supervision in Australia, 14% in detention. 0.4 per 1000 young people in detention on an average day.
- 48% of young people in detention in Australia are indigenous. Young indigenous people are 24 times as likely as non indigenous young people to be in detention. This is down from 28 times in 2007-08.
- Indigenous young people tend to enter the system at a younger age, 35% entered supervision when aged 10-13.
- 50% of all young people in detention were unsentenced.
- Young people from remote areas and very remote areas are 4 & 7 times as likely to be under supervision as those from cities.
- Young people from areas of lowest socioeconomic status were almost 5 times as likely to be under supervision. On an average day there were 5.8 young people from lowest socioeconomic areas under supervisions compared with 1.3 from areas of highest socioeconomic status.
- Overall trends steady, slight increase in rate of community based supervision.