

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**New data reveals true extent of the crisis in Victoria's criminal justice system**

"Spending on Victorian prisons has spiralled out of control and our community will be less safe as a result" says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards on the release of the Productivity Commission 2014 Report on Government Services.

The Report shows that prison numbers have grown by 19% over the past five years. This has resulted in prison spending growth of 21% - or an extra \$108 million a year compared to spending in 2009.

Ms Edwards noted, "Prison increases are being driven by sentencing reforms that purport to make the community safer, but the evidence shows that prison exacerbates many of the problems that lead people to offend in the first place."

The Report also reveals that Victoria's overcrowded prisons are increasingly unsafe and dangerous places. "The rate of assaults on prisoners has increased by 46% and assaults on staff have nearly tripled since 2009, there were 13 deaths among the prison population in 2012-13 compared to four in the previous calendar year.

We also know that overcrowding means more pressure on vital prison medical and support services. Now, more than ever, instead of supporting people who offend to deal with the issues they face, including mental illness, and alcohol and drug addiction, we are entrenching them in lives of crime."

"Worryingly, this crisis has also spread to Victoria's court system, with pending matters in the magistrates court increasing by 20% over the past two years after a period of decline. Everybody in the community loses when our justice system does not function effectively."

Increased spending on prisons also diverts resources from essential services that benefit the whole community.

Ms Edwards noted a way forward, "Prisons should only be used in circumstances where community safety and the interests of justice mean there is no other alternative. Instead, we must invest in overcoming the disadvantage that lies at the heart of crime, and providing alternatives to prison, and support services so that people are provided with opportunities to become productive members of the community."

**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.**

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## **Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2014 – Key Victorian Criminal Justice Statistics**

- Average daily Victorian prison population in 2012-13 was 5,120 up from 4,299 in 2008-09
- Imprisonment rate has increased to 115.5 prisoners per 100,000 people up from 103.6 in 2008-09
- Total net operating expenditure and capital costs was \$625,773,000 in 2012-13 up from \$517,559 in 2008-09
- Assault rate per 100 prisoners – prisoner on prisoners 10.94 in 2012-13 up from 7.47 in 2008-09, prisoner on officers 1.56 in 2012-13 up from 0.53 in 2008-09.
- 13 recorded deaths in custody in 2012-13, 4 in 2011-12, 10 in 2010-11, 8 in 2009-10, & 8 in 2008-09