

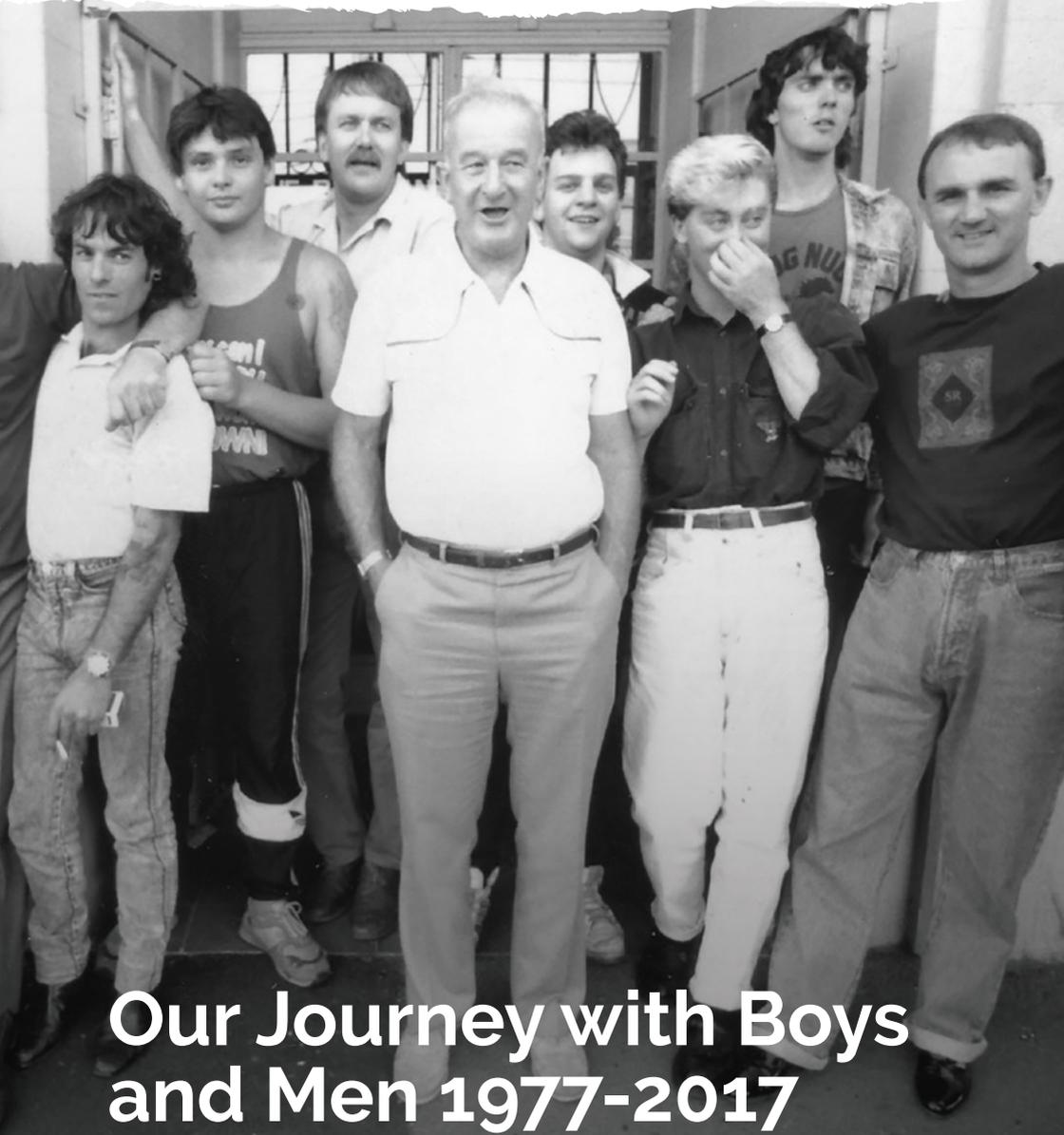
the
men's
project

Jesuit Social Services initiative



Jesuit
Social Services
Building a Just Society

40
years



Our Journey with Boys
and Men 1977-2017

Foreword

In January 1977, the Australian Jesuits began a new venture by opening *Four Flats*, a hostel for young men released from prison. This is where Jesuit Social Services had its beginnings.

For 40 years we have continued this work with young men coming out of prison. We are a social change organisation working to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential.

In response to unmet needs we have expanded our work to focus on mental health and wellbeing, newly arrived migrant communities, Aboriginal Australians, and on education, training and employment.

In 2017, Jesuit Social Services ran over 20 programs working with over 3,000 boys and men.

Importantly, we also work with thousands of girls and women. We recognise the impact of gender inequality and the fact that particular expressions of gender inequality consistently predict higher rates of violence against women. We work to build a society where everybody can realise their hopes and aspirations, regardless of their gender.

In reflecting on our 40 year journey, something we keep returning to is the sense that too many boys and men are in trouble – and that they are causing trouble; that issues we have seen over

the years remain unresolved, or have become worse.

We see it in high levels of substance abuse, mental health problems, radicalisation, violence, and six male suicides every day.

We understand the complex set of social, cultural, economic and individual factors that are associated with these issues, and so we have turned our attention to our society more broadly. There have been many positive changes over the past 40 years for boys and men in Australia. But significant issues remain and too many boys and men are not living respectful, accountable, and fulfilling lives.

On a positive note, Australian men in 2017 live longer, are better educated, and come from a wider range of cultural backgrounds than in the 1970s. The number of boys and men identifying as Aboriginal has quadrupled since 1977.

While there is still a long way to go, there is greater tolerance for diversity in relationships and expressions of masculinity, and there has been progress towards greater recognition and equality for gay men.

However, too many boys and men are not living safe, non-violent, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

Men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of all forms of violence. This includes violence against women and children which has a tragic and

devastating impact – one woman is killed every week by a current or former partner. More broadly, the prison population has exploded from 1977 to 2017 with the incarceration rate quadrupling due to more punitive criminal justice policies. More men than ever before are in prison.

Although some progress has been made towards reducing the degree of alcohol and tobacco consumption and the number of road deaths, men are still twice as likely as women to die from drug overdoses, and three times more likely to die in car accidents.

The rate and number of suicides among Australian boys and men remains persistently high with an average of 5.9 male suicides per day which is a higher rate than in the 1970s.

Attitudes and beliefs about what it means to be a man remain rigid. Prescriptive gender norms and stereotypes contribute to adverse outcomes for everyone, affecting mental health, help-seeking behaviour, risk taking behaviour, bullying and violence towards others.

We need to do more. We need to address the root causes. And we need to support boys and men to be their best selves. That is why in our 40th year we have established The Men's Project.

The Men's Project builds on our 40 years of engagement with boys and men. It will also involve us leading new work to hold men to account and reduce violence, to improve the wellbeing of boys and men, and to keep women, children, families and communities safe.

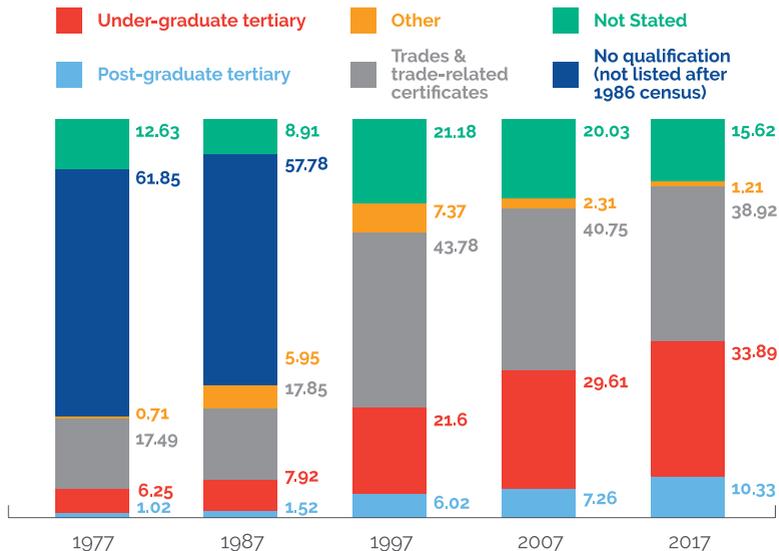
About this paper

This paper explores some of the key trends and issues in our society over the past forty years, their relevance to boys and men, and how Jesuit Social Services has responded, adapted and evolved over that period of time.

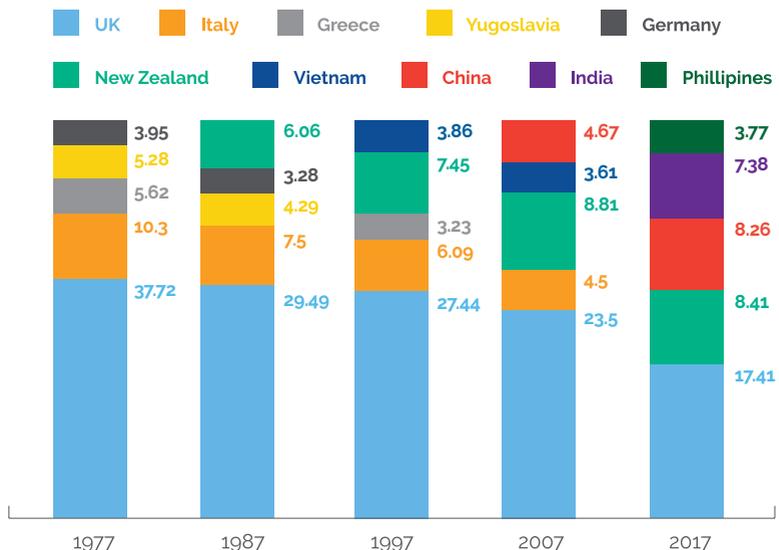
It does not claim to be a comprehensive, in-depth study and is instead a high-level overview, a snapshot to present the context of The Men's Project.

Our Society¹

Highest level of qualification obtained by men in Australia 1977-2017

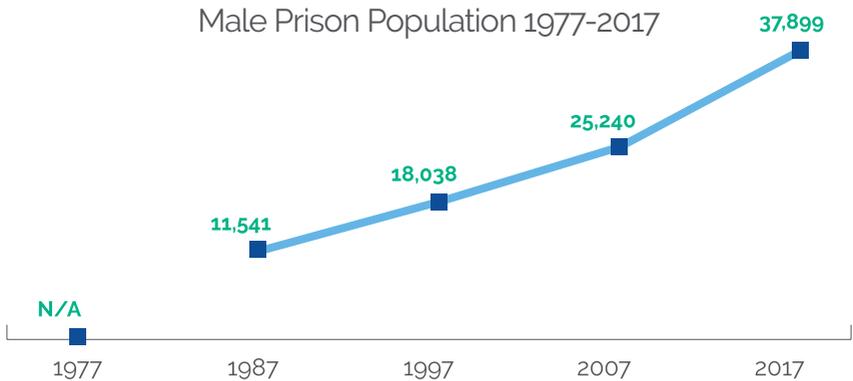


Top 5 overseas countries of birth %

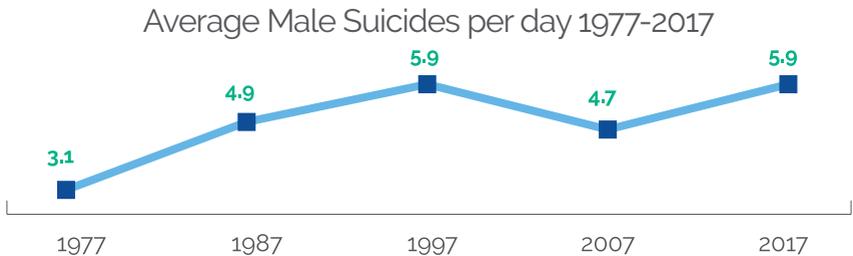


¹ All data in this document, except data explicitly relating to Jesuit Social Services, is taken from the closest available ABS census data to the specified year.

Male Prison Population 1977-2017



Average Male Suicides per day 1977-2017



Our Work

- In 2017, over 20 programs worked with over 3,000 boys and men.
- Of these, more than 2,000 boys and men were engaged in education, employment or resilience-building programs.
- Specialist, targeted programs providing intensive ongoing support worked with approximately 600 boys and men. Characteristics of the boys and men in this group were:
 - Average age: 28 years
 - 18 per cent born overseas; 14 per cent Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander
 - 10 per cent only completed year 12
 - 45 per cent homeless
 - 61 per cent with mental health problems
 - 71 per cent with current or previous criminal justice involvement
 - 47 per cent with known child protection involvement (as child, parent or both)
 - 30 per cent with at least one disability

1970s

Our society

The 1970s was a decade of great social and political change.

The dismantling of the White Australia Policy and the acceptance of refugees – mainly people fleeing from Vietnam – significantly contributed to a more multicultural Australia. In 1971, there were only 717 people of Vietnamese descent in Australia. By 1981, this number had risen to over 52,000.

Feminism brought about significant social, political, and economic changes for women. During the 1970s the principle of equal pay for work of equal value was upheld by the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, maternity leave was granted to female employees in the federal public service, and *The Family Law Act 1975* revolutionised divorce law. At the same time, the first women's refuges were established to respond to women and children affected by family violence.

The Aboriginal land rights movement rose to prominence with people moving to 'outstations', staging protests, and initiating court cases over land rights. In 1976 the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* was passed by the Federal Parliament, providing recognition of Aboriginal land ownership and enabling traditional Aboriginal lands to be granted to the Aboriginal Lands Trust.

The decade saw an increased focus on a number of social issues including alcohol and drug use and road fatalities. Alcohol consumption peaked at 13.1 litres per capita in 1974-75. In 1977 there were 3578 road crash fatalities, 50 per cent of which were estimated to be related to drink-driving. It was clear that reactive approaches to these issues were having only a limited impact, and broader efforts focused on preventing harm were adopted.

Our work

In the 1970s our work focused on helping boys and men in the criminal justice system make a successful transition from custody to the community.

Being young and just released from custody, with no place to call home, no money and no friends, is a terrible place to be. Recognising this need, a hostel for young people released from prison, *Four Flats*, was established in January 1977. The Jesuits provided a house in Hawthorn to begin this bold venture. This is where Jesuit Social Services had its beginnings.

The hostel only had room for eight residents at a time, and the chaos and struggle in their lives made it hard to hold them long enough to help turn their hopes into realities. With many young people released from prison in need of support, four years later we decided to move to Collingwood to provide outreach support as well as supported accommodation to a much greater number of people.

Snapshot of Boys and Men

Average male life expectancy: **69.4 years**

Married males: **64.02%**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males: **1.19%**

Most common school leaving age of males: **15**

Typical highest level of qualification of males: **no qualification**

Male unemployment rate: **4.06%**

Average male suicide rate: **3.1 per day**

Overall prison rate: **57 per 100,000**

1980s

Our society

In the 1980s the Australian economy experienced dramatic change as a result of deregulation, technological innovation and globalisation. Leaps in technology led to many jobs being replaced by automation, particularly in the manufacturing industry.

There was wider awareness of issues affecting the environment, reflected in the Franklin River protests in Tasmania, the Nuclear Disarmament movement, and the establishment of Landcare.

Multiculturalism became widely celebrated – and debated. In 1989 the first significant numbers of refugees from Africa arrived, most of them from Ethiopia.

In 1980 the government of Victoria followed South Australia and the ACT in decriminalising homosexuality, although police harassment of gay people continued beyond this decade.

In 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons marked a critical point for the movement for promoting the rights of people living with disabilities and the reform of services.

Women's participation in the workforce increased during the 1980s, rising from 47 per cent in 1980 to 52 per cent in 1990, and the *Sex Discrimination Act*

1984 introduced important measures for gender equality and protection against sexual harassment and discrimination. Victoria's *Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987* established a system for civil intervention orders.

During the 1980s awareness of wider forms of child abuse as a serious social problem increased. Specialist counselling and advocacy services were created. In Victoria, the state took over the provision of statutory child protection services during the 1980s.

The 1980s also saw the arrival of hard drugs on the streets of Melbourne and many young people overdosed.

Our work

In the 1980s our work with boys and men expanded to focus on connecting them with family, providing a range of accommodation options, and providing opportunities for skills development and employment.

Helping young people reconnect with their families, however difficult those relationships had been, became an important aspect of our work.

To expand service provision, *Brosnan Youth Services*, formerly *Four Flats*, moved to a larger venue in Sydney Road, Brunswick.

We established an accommodation program for young people with an intellectual disability involved with the criminal justice system.

We opened a rooming house in Carlton to provide short-term accommodation to young men upon their release from custody.

A garden project was established on the banks of the Yarra River - young men were employed and provided with opportunities to develop routines and skills, and gain experience that they would not otherwise have had.

Snapshot of Boys and Men

Average male life expectancy: **73.1 years**

Married males: **58.5 %**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males: **1.45 %**

Most common school leaving age of males: **15**

Typical highest level of qualification of males:
no qualification

Male unemployment rate: **6.61 %**

Average male suicide rate: **4.9 per day**

Men in prison: **11,541**

Male prison rate per 100,000: **194.5**

1990s

Our society

In the 1990s manufacturing industries were in decline, and the recession early in the decade saw unemployment reach more than 11 per cent in November 1992 – the highest rate since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Young people were particularly affected, with youth unemployment rates peaking at over 20 per cent.

In the early 1990s increasing numbers of women held significant roles in politics, business and other fields. At the same time initiatives involving women and men working together to address gender inequality arose.

The decade saw a number of landmark developments for Aboriginal Australians including the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the High Court's judgment in the Mabo case, and the publication of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission report *Bringing Them Home* on the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their families.

A number of health, welfare and wellbeing issues were prominent. In Victoria, mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse was introduced and the dual track child protection system discontinued. During the same period, mental health and disability institutions were closed, with critics arguing too few alternative options were provided. Suicide rates were at

a staggering height – more than three per cent of all male deaths were due to suicide, and among males aged 19 to 24 suicide accounted for 27 per cent of deaths – and mental health became a major focus under the *First National Mental Health Plan*. At the same time, tobacco and alcohol consumption steadily declined as a result of concerted public education campaigns.

By the 1990s a turn towards more punitive law and order policies was underway, with mandatory sentencing and bail reforms introduced in many jurisdictions. Following the Port Arthur massacre in 1996, far-reaching gun law reforms were introduced.

The 1990s also saw the introduction of the internet and mobile phones, which would have a significant impact on work, communications and entertainment.

Our work

In the 1990s our work with boys and men focused on developing innovative programs to engage young men and support them to address mental health problems, substance abuse and homelessness.

Deinstitutionalisation of disability and psychiatric services brought the promise of community support services – a promise that was not fulfilled. In 1997 we extended our work with young people with intellectual disabilities involved with the justice system, opening a purpose built facility, *Perry House*, in Reservoir.

Young people experiencing mental illness and substance abuse were falling

through gaps between siloed services, so we established *Connexions*, the first dual diagnosis counselling and outreach service for young people in Victoria.

Exploring innovative and engaging ways of working with vulnerable young people, we established the arts and culture program *Artful Dodgers*. Many of the young people who came to us were homeless; they were often disconnected from families and other support that might have helped them as they slid into mental illness and drug use.

During this decade our work with Vietnamese men leaving prison in

Victoria developed into community development and settlement work with the Vietnamese community and then other newly arrived communities.

In 1998 we started working with young people to prevent domestic violence through the *Domestic Violence Prevention Program*.

That year, we also established a centre in Richmond for research, policy and advocacy around social justice issues. The following year we published *Unequal in Life*, our first research into locational disadvantage.

Snapshot of Boys and Men

Average male life expectancy: **75.9 years**

Married males: **54.29 %**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males: **1.96 %**

Most common school leaving age of males: **15**

Typical highest level of qualification for males: **skilled vocational**

Male unemployment rate: **9.9 %**

Average male suicide rate: **5.9 per day**

Men in prison: **18,038**

Male prison rate per 100,000: **258**

2000s

Our society

The 2000s saw the rapid spread of the internet and new forms of communication, including social media.

A housing boom that began in the 1990s continued through this decade and saw shifts in the nature of housing and home ownership with only 15 per cent of Australians aged 15-34 years being home owners or purchasers in 2001, in comparison to 22 per cent in 1981. These shifts saw a renewed focus on housing and homelessness policies with significant investment in the later half of the decade.

The arrival of thousands of asylum seekers by boat became a major public issue that would dominate politics and public debates throughout the decade and beyond. Many hundreds of people died trying to reach Australia.

The decade saw the 'Northern Territory Intervention' in remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. It comprised a package of changes to welfare provision, law enforcement, land tenure and other restrictive measures. In 2008 the Australian Government apologised to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for the treatment of members of the stolen generations.

During the 2000s public focus on family violence, child abuse and sexual offences increased and led to major reforms across Australia. This included increased

efforts to understand and prevent these crimes and improved systems for reporting and responding to them. One outcome was increased reporting to child protection. In Victoria reports to child protection grew by 49.3 per cent over the period from 2000-01 to 2010-11.

The impacts of climate change and other environmental degradation gained prominence across the country. The decade saw natural disasters of increasing frequency and severity, including the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria, and debates on measures to reduce carbon emissions.

Our work

In the 2000s we developed new ways to work with boys and men in the justice system incorporating a stronger restorative justice focus, worked with them in new places including remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory and New South Wales, and we focused on men's suicide prevention.

In the 2000s we trialled and established various programs focused on boys and men in the criminal justice system. This included Community Justice Group Conferencing; *Men & Family Relationships*, a program working with men in prison and their families to strengthen relationships; the *Correctional Services Employment Program* in Morwell; and *Link Out*, providing support to men pre and post release to men exiting custody.

Support After Suicide was established in 2004 to provide support to people bereaved by suicide, including specific

interventions for men who are bereaved.

As we marked 30 years of Jesuit Social Services in 2007, we expanded our work into New South Wales and the Northern Territory after requests from local communities. This included a strong focus on accompanying Aboriginal peoples as they built their capacity to advocate for their own needs, and to be heard. Our community development work evolved to work with new generations of migrants to Australia including African communities.

This decade also saw a significant increase in knowledge sharing and advocacy by Jesuit Social Services.

An *Education and Professional Services Unit* was established to facilitate the sharing of program and practice knowledge. The *Strong Bonds* initiative led to the development of a website to provide resources for workers and families with young people struggling with mental illness, substance abuse and other complex problems.

In 2004 and 2007 we published further research into locational disadvantage. The 2007 report, undertaken in collaboration with *Catholic Social Services Australia*, was titled *Dropping off the Edge* and shone a light on the complex web of disadvantage across Australia.

Snapshot of Boys and Men

Average male life expectancy: **79.3 years**

Married males: **50.7 %**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males: **2.28 %**

Year 12 completion rate of males: **41.6 %**

Typical highest level of qualification of males: **Certificate**

Male unemployment rate: **5.2 %**

Average male suicide rate: **4.7 per day**

Men in prison: **25,240**

Male prison rate per 100,000: **320**

2017

Our society

The past decade has seen a significant focus on family violence and the gender inequality that lies at its heart. Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence, and other initiatives by federal and state governments, have seen reforms to address the staggering number of incidents in which women and children are victims of violence.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was established in 2013 and has since been examining the history of abuse in educational institutions, religious groups, sporting organisations, state institutions and youth organisations.

Close the Gap initiatives to address the entrenched structural disadvantage that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face have produced mixed results and Aboriginal Australians remain grossly overrepresented in the criminal justice system. The process to enshrine the voice of First Nations in the constitution called for by the First Nations Constitutional Convention was rejected by the Commonwealth Government in 2017.

The affirmative outcome of the 2017 postal survey on amending the *Marriage Act* has seen legislative change to remove another form of systemic discrimination against lesbian and gay Australians.

There have been major changes to the ways we respond to mental illness and support Australians living with a disability. Initiatives to change culture and reduce stigma around mental illness have led to significant public discussion of these issues. The *National Disability Insurance Scheme* was established as a major reform to support people living with a disability.

Punitive responses to law and order remain entrenched in public policy, despite clear evidence about their lack of effectiveness. The shocking treatment of young people in custody in the Northern Territory led to a Royal Commission into the child protection and youth justice systems. More broadly, about 92 per cent of prisoners are male – common offences include acts intended to cause injury, illicit drug offences, and sexual assault.

Our work

In the 2010s our work with boys and men continued to focus on those engaged with the justice system, those experiencing multiple and complex problems, and those living in severe disadvantage or experiencing exclusion as new arrivals. This work will have a new focus through The Men's Project.

In 2011, *Jesuit Community College* was established to provide skills for life, learning and work to the people and communities we work with. Programs focusing on working with employers, including the *African Australian Inclusion Program*, have been an outstanding success.

In 2017, through more than 20 different programs over 5,000 people received support from Jesuit Social Services.

We continue to work with young people and adults in the criminal justice system through programs including *Youth Justice Group Conferencing*, *Youth Justice Community Support Services*, and *Reconnect*. Our advocacy continues to focus on justice issues, we participated in the Northern Territory Royal Commission and held several National Justice Symposiums.

After two years of development and consultation with stakeholders across government, business, academia, the community sector, and Jesuit Social Services staff and program participants, *The Men's Project* has been established.

It aims to provide leadership on the reduction of violence and other harmful behaviours prevalent among boys and men, and build new approaches to improve their wellbeing and keep families and communities safe.

All our work is underpinned by the aim to address structural and systemic determinants of harm and disadvantage. We strive to partner with community and other organisations with specific expertise and to complement existing work in the field to support those in need and to change policies, practices, ideas and values that perpetuate inequality, prejudice and exclusion.

Snapshot of Boys and Men

Average male life expectancy: **80.4 years**

Married males: **49.2 %**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males: **2.79 %**

Year 12 completion rate for males: **52.5 %**

Typical highest level of qualification of males: **Certificate**

Male unemployment rate: **7 %**

Average male suicide rate: **5.9 per day**

Men in prison: **37,899**

Male prison rate per 100,000: **406**



Build a just society with us

- **Donate now** at www.jss.org.au/donate and give hope to someone in need
- **Become a volunteer** and join us in supporting people on the edges of society
- **Make a bequest** to us and help fulfil our vision of building a just society
- **Advocate for justice** by speaking to your friends and family about our work
- **Learn more** about the issues we care about at www.jss.org.au

- 🌐 www.themensproject.org.au
- ✉ jss@jss.org.au
- ☎ 03 9421 7600
- ▶ [/jesuitsocialservices](https://www.youtube.com/jesuitsocialservices)
- ♯ [/jesuitsocialser](https://www.facebook.com/jesuitsocialser)
- 📌 [/jesuitsocialservices](https://www.facebook.com/jesuitsocialservices)

**the
men's
project**

Jesuit Social Services initiative



40
years