

MEDIA RELEASE – JULY 27, 2023

## **Northern Territory must cool Alice Springs Correctional Centre as part of a just transition: Jesuit Social Services**

The Northern Territory Government must immediately commit to air-conditioning Alice Springs Correctional Centre as one part of a just transition to reduce the climate change-induced impacts of incarceration on some of society's most marginalised members, says Jesuit Social Services.

“Jesuit Social Services supports the Northern Territory Ombudsman’s recommendation for the Government to urgently consider installing air-conditioning to ease the impacts of stifling and aggravating heat, which are only worsening with the increasing impacts of climate change, and which disproportionately harm marginalised people,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“The movements of people in prison are highly restricted, and therefore their health, wellbeing and lives are most impacted by global heating and extreme weather conditions. This is at odds with their rehabilitation and ability to lead healthy and positive lives.”

In November last year the WA Government agreed to air-condition all cells at Roebourne Regional Prison, where temperatures can reach 50 degrees, following years of campaigning from human rights advocates and lawyers.

Jesuit Social Services’ discussion paper, [Prisons, climate and a just transition](#), argues prisons should provide adequate facilities to protect people from the impacts of climate change, but more fundamentally, Australia must reduce its reliance on prisons and address the root causes of offending to tackle the overlapping social and ecological harms of its criminal justice systems.

“The urgent need for a just transition away from the reliance on prisons has never been clearer. Our justice systems must focus on reducing prison populations, and investing in community-based alternatives that keep people out of prison in the first place. When prisons do need to be used, we need to adapt to protect people from the worsening effects of global heating – including by providing air-conditioning in temperatures that regularly exceed 40 degrees and implementing consistent temperature standards for prisons nation-wide,” says Ms Edwards.

Senior leaders from Jesuit Social Services previously explored effective criminal justice systems across parts of Europe, the US and New Zealand as part of its #JusticeSolutions tours.

“The strong and effective systems we observed highlighted the need to only ever use detention as a last resort, and in the very limited circumstances where detention is necessary, for prison conditions to resemble life in the community as closely as possible,” said Ms Edwards.

“We must treat people humanly and adequate temperatures give people in prison the best chance possible to rehabilitate, reorient their behaviour and heal. This is the first step in a vital system-wide transition away from harmful and ineffective systems that disproportionately impact the most marginalised members of our community, limiting their ability to lead flourishing lives.”

**Media enquiries** – Kathryn Kernohan, 0409 901 248 or [kathryn.kernohan@jss.org.au](mailto:kathryn.kernohan@jss.org.au)