

MEDIA RELEASE

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Despite tough economic climate, Victorian Budget 2024/25 delivers some positive investments into early interventions: Jesuit Social Services

The Victorian Budget 2024/25, handed down today amid a tight fiscal environment and cost-of-living pressures experienced by many in the community, delivers some positive and responsible investments into early interventions that will support people to lead healthy and positive lives, says Jesuit Social Services.

“We acknowledge that this is a challenging time for many Victorians. At a time like this, the Victorian Government has to make hard choices about the investments it can make into addressing disadvantage and ensuring that all members of the community have the opportunity to flourish,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“The Budget contains some positive investments into early intervention with at-risk groups to address complex needs. This includes \$28 million to connect young people in or at-risk of entering the justice system with education and funding to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to reduce interactions with the justice system and support women and children experiencing family violence.”

Jesuit Social Services welcomes further funding for the Respectful Relationships program, to support young people of all genders to lead safe and healthy lives.

“We know that supporting schools to promote respectful and positive attitudes and behaviours is paramount in creating stronger, safer communities for all genders, and we are pleased to be able to partner with the Victorian Government to deliver this work.

“Sadly, there are also some missed opportunities. Social housing and, in particular public housing, is under represented in this Budget despite demand for social and affordable housing continuing to increase. We supported calls from our sector for this Budget to fund at least 60,000 safe, sustainable and supported public and community homes by 2032, but this has not been met.

“We are also concerned at the \$34m investment to trial electronic monitoring of some young offenders on bail. There is little evidence that electronic monitoring works to reduce re-offending, and we call the Government to instead invest more into evidence-based interventions. We need support services that work with at-risk young people to prevent crime from occurring”

“We would have liked to have seen more spent on suicide prevention interventions, particularly given Victoria experienced its highest number of suicides on record in 2023.”

Ms Edwards says Jesuit Social Services welcomes \$112m to support alcohol and drug courts, \$6.8m to extend the Yoorrook Justice Commission and \$4.4m to provide medical care to refugees and people seeking asylum who are not eligible for Medicare or other supports, among other initiatives.

Media enquiries – Kathryn Kernohan, 0409 901 248 or kathryn.kernohan@jss.org.au