

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Latest crime statistics highlight need for early intervention to prevent youth crime, gender-based violence: Jesuit Social Services**

The latest release from the Victorian Crime Statistics Agency shows the number of young people committing offences has dropped over the past year, but that the number of crimes each young person is committing has increased.

Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards says the statistics demonstrate that intensive support to intervene early with a small group of repeat offenders will significantly drive down crime and reduce harm to the community while supporting young people to change the trajectory of their lives.

“We all want to live in strong and cohesive communities, with less crime and fewer victims. To do this, we need to keep children connected with school, family and the community, and give them every opportunity to lead positive and fulfilling lives,” says Ms Edwards.

“These statistics show that while the number of crimes committed by children aged 10 to 17 has increased, which is concerning, overall there are some positive trends. The number of children committing crimes has decreased, as has the number of first-time offenders.

“There is a clear opportunity for more to be done to support young people committing multiple offences, and this should be done in the community whenever possible, to avoid the harms of the detention system which we know often results in young people exiting the system worse off than when they entered. We would like to see more of an emphasis on restorative justice approaches for children, which support them to take responsibility for their actions and make amends for harm caused to victims and the community.”

Ms Edwards says that the reduction in the number of children committing crimes is an indication that more children are safe and supported in the community, and that efforts to prevent anti-social behaviour from occurring are having an impact.

“Another way the Victorian Government can give children opportunities to lead healthy and productive lives is by re-committing to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 12 to 14, as previously promised. The evidence is clear: keeping marginalised children connected with support services to help them thrive will benefit the broader community far more than exposing children to detention.”

“The links between youth justice involvement and family violence are clear, with many children in the youth justice system themselves victims of family violence. According to the Youth Parole Board, more than 60 per cent of children in detention have been victims of abuse, neglect or trauma.

“Through our most recent *Man Box 2024* research, we know that men who most strongly agree with the ‘Man Box rules’ about what it means to be ‘a real man’ were 17 times more likely to have hit their partner, and significantly more likely to experience poorer health and life outcomes themselves.

The annual crime statistics also show that the number of family violence incidents in Victoria has increased to its highest ever level. Through programs, workshops, early interventions and research, Jesuit Social Services’ The Men’s Project is committed to supporting boys and men to lead respectful and accountable lives free from violence and other harmful behaviours.



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“We need to support boys and men to dismantle the Man Box rules. This includes more research to better understand the pathways to perpetration of gender-based violence. There’s also a need for sustainable funding to develop, implement and evaluate early intervention efforts.

“Supporting boys and men to lead lives free from violence and other harmful behaviours will ultimately keep women, children and the broader community safe.”

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