

Federal Pre-budget Submission 2025-26 Executive Summary



Jesuit Social Services: Who we are and what we do

Jesuit Social Services is a social change organisation working to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential. For 48 years we have been working with some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised members of our communities, who often experience multiple and complex challenges. Our work has a national focus and we deliver services across Victoria, New South Wales and the Northern Territory.

We are committed to research, advocacy and policy work, which is coordinated across program and major interest areas, seeking to seek to influence policies, practices, legislation and budget investment to positively influence people's lives.

Jesuit Social Services' programs and advocacy focus on:

- Justice and crime prevention
- Education, training and employment
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Gender Justice
- Settlement and community building
- Climate Justice
- Place-based approaches



Introduction

Children are at the heart of our society's wellbeing. They represent our shared future across every domain that matters, from economic prosperity and public health to social cohesion and the sustainability of our planet. An investment in children's future is an investment in the future of all Australians.

Too many children in Australia are being let down by the adults and systems meant to protect them. Children are being overlooked and harmed in our justice and child protection systems, they are being exposed to harm and trauma through violence and abuse, and the ever-increasing impacts of climate change. We know that children experiencing disadvantage are far more vulnerable to these harms, with Aboriginal children disproportionately affected.

By addressing these underlying problems through prevention and early intervention, we can transform individual lives, break cycles of disadvantage and abuse, and create lasting social and economic benefits for all Australians. This cycle-breaking approach, which lies at the heart of Jesuit Social Services' work, reduces the need for costly crisis and tertiary services, while building stronger, more resilient communities.

This submission, provided in advance of the 2025-26 Federal Budget, highlights opportunities for Government to target spending and policy-making, prioritising research, strategies and programs that support children, young people and their families to live safe and healthy lives.

Elevating the rights and wellbeing of children as a Cabinet priority

Service systems that are meant to support children's rights and wellbeing are failing the most vulnerable, with fragmentation across health, education, and social services. Children are falling through gaps between portfolios and jurisdictions.

Recommendation 1:

Appoint a Cabinet Minister for Children with responsibility for the human rights and wellbeing of children in Australia.

Safe and respectful youth justice systems

The treatment of children in the justice system remains one of Australia's most urgent human rights issues, with Aboriginal children particularly impacted.

Recommendation 2:

Implement in full, and resource through Commonwealth Government spending, the recommendations of the National Children's Commissioner's 2024 report '[Help way earlier! – transforming child justice](#)', including driving a national approach to child criminal justice reform that provides flexibility for place-based and local solutions.

Place-based approaches to build thriving and resilient communities

Complex and entrenched disadvantage is persistent across specific locations across Australia, compounded by increasing climate-related challenges affecting young people's educational, financial, and mental health outcomes.

Recommendation 3:

Fund further research to build the knowledge base regarding locational disadvantage, such as the research undertaken in Jesuit Social Service's [Dropping off the Edge](#) report, that can inform decision-making and program delivery, including through the Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children (IDAC) and Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment (PLACE).

Recommendation 4:

Expand the Disaster Ready Fund with increased investment and a dedicated stream for the community sector to strengthen disaster resilience in vulnerable communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination

Aboriginal children face disproportionate disadvantage, with poverty rates increasing in some regions. Solutions must be First Nations-led and enable Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to deliver tailored services.

Recommendation 5:

Establish a First Nations Self-determination and Strengthening Fund for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

Recommendation 6:

Ensure an ongoing commitment to long-term funding for community-led Justice Reinvestment sites, as part of the National Justice Reinvestment Program.

Pathways to education, training and employment

Young people face significant barriers to accessing education and employment, particularly those from disadvantaged areas who are more than twice as likely to be disconnected from education and training.

Recommendation 7:

Establish a stewardship model led by the Commonwealth, in partnership with State and Territory Governments, to effectively support increased access to employment for people who encounter significant barriers to employment.

Engaging men and boys to prevent violence against women and child sexual abuse

The prevalence of violence against women and children in Australia – including domestic, family and sexual violence; and child sexual abuse – is a national crisis that is persisting across generations. Greater opportunities for early intervention should be harnessed, particularly through online platforms.

Recommendation 8:

Building on data collected as part of Jesuit Social Services' ['Man Box 2024'](#) research as well as our work with the UNSW to understand [child sexual abuse perpetration](#), invest in the collection of more and better data on the extent of perpetration of family violence and child sexual abuse, as well as its dynamics and drivers.

Recommendation 9:

Greater investment in targeted early intervention programs enabled by outcomes-based funding for adolescents who are at risk of using violence, including those who are victims of violence and those who have used violence in the home.

Recommendation 10:

Investment in trials of innovative programs that focus on the strengths and resilience of women and children and enable recovery and healing for children who are victim-survivors of family violence, such as the CEDAR model established in Canada and adapted and delivered across Scotland.

Recommendation 11:

Legislate requirements for technology companies to ensure children's safety online, including requirements to prevent and disrupt child sexual abuse on their platforms, and to enforce age limits on pornography websites (noting the age assurance trials currently underway).

Recommendation 12:

Through the Second National Action Plan to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse, provide additional funding for the development and implementation of online interventions that prevent child sexual abuse, including pop-up warnings in online spaces that may enable child abuse perpetration or victimisation (e.g. pornography, gaming or dating sites); and early intervention services for people (including children and young people) concerned about their use of pornography and/or sexual thoughts and behaviours towards children (such as Jesuit Social Services' ['Worried About Sex and Pornography Project'](#) and ['Stop It Now!'](#)).

Ensuring fundamental supports for children and young people with complex needs

Children and young people with complex needs, including those settling in Australia and those with disability, are struggling to access fundamental supports like housing and disability services.

Recommendation 13:

Increase funding to state and territory governments for targeted, specialised and holistic programs of housing and support for people whose multiple and complex needs are not met through social housing systems and support programs.

Recommendation 14:

Increase funding for Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Program (SETS) and expand eligibility to include people who have arrived on humanitarian visas and become Australian Citizens.

Recommendation 15:

Ensure National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) reforms provide for the system to reset to ensure equitable outcomes for all participants.