



## The Justice Project

### **Introducing Jesuit Social Services' Justice Project**

For nearly 50 years, Jesuit Social Services has worked to build a just society where all people can thrive.

A key focus has been supporting adults and young people caught up in the justice system.

We've supported thousands of people through programs addressing some of the underlying challenges that contribute to offending, keeping participants out of prison and helping them get their lives back on track.

Our evidence-based programs in Victoria, New South Wales and the Northern Territory provide participants with hands-on support, while our advocacy fights for improved policies, legislation and resources to address long term social challenges and achieve strong, cohesive and vibrant communities.

Over many years we have promoted restorative justice approaches, which enable victims to be heard and provide participants with insights into their offending that can change attitudes and behaviours.

Our advocacy on raising the age of criminal responsibility reflects our deep understanding of effective measures to reduce crime over the longer term.

We launched the Ignatius Learning Centre, our school for boys aged 15-17 in contact with the justice system, and our housing and employment programs bring tailored supports to change the cycle of offending, recognising the transformative impact of having a job and a place to live.

**But the times call for more.**





**There is an urgent need to invest in systemic change. Harsh sentencing measures and over-use of imprisonment are making our communities less safe, rather than more.**

Across Australia, governments are committing to reforms that result in more people being locked up. In some places, things are going backwards.<sup>1</sup>

Australia's spending on prisons is now close to \$7 billion per year, more than double what it was a decade ago.



**“Our Justice Project aims to break the cycle of crime and harm, and build a system that works for the entire community.”**

**– Julie Edwards, CEO**

Australia has one of the highest reimprisonment rates internationally, with 60 per cent of the prison population having previously spent time in custody.

And 38 per cent of people currently in prison were imprisoned for low-risk, non-violent offences, missing an opportunity for more effective,

community-based programs that have a much better chance of reducing offending in the future.

Of deep concern is the overrepresentation of First Nations children and adults in the justice system. The rate of imprisonment of First Nations adults is nearly 13 times higher than the general adult population; and across Australia, around three in every five children in youth detention are First Nations young people. This overrepresentation must be addressed, yet existing policies only tend to entrench offending.

**Our current system is failing, causing harm to those caught up in it, as well as to victims and the community more broadly. And it's costing us all.**

The average cost to the taxpayer for each adult in prison is nearly \$120,000 per year, and the average cost of holding a young person in youth justice custody more than \$1.2 million per year.

**Imagine what those funds could achieve if invested in prevention, early intervention, jobs programs, and addressing homelessness and other underlying problems that can lead to offending; let alone diverting those funds to addressing housing affordability and improving our schools and hospitals.**

We need to create a conversation about justice in Australia that transcends state and territory borders.

**We are excited to share the next step in our journey – our Justice Project.**

<sup>1</sup> Statistics cited in this document are sourced from Australian Bureau of Statistics; Productivity Commission; Institute of Public Affairs; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – full references available on request



## Changing the conversation

The Justice Project will consolidate Jesuit Social Services' programs, research and advocacy around criminal justice, and seek new opportunities to improve individual and community outcomes.

We will combine the evidence of what works with the practice wisdom of our staff and the lived experience of our program participants, giving us a unique understanding of effective ways to reduce crime and harm on the community.

**We will elevate that expertise and our advocacy on a national level. We will bring fresh eyes to what works – and doesn't – in every jurisdiction around Australia. Bringing our justice programs, policy and stakeholder engagement even closer together, with expanded horizons, will strengthen our advocacy.**



**“Australia spends over \$6 billion each year on the construction and operation of prisons - imagine what this could achieve in community programs addressing the underlying causes of offending”**

**– Julie Edwards, CEO**

Many people involved in the criminal justice system have a disability, mental illness, addictions, are homeless, have experienced family violence or child abuse, or have been in child protection or out-of-home care. **We need to do more in Australia to address the drivers of crime, and ensure our systems and structures are designed to keep people safe and prevent offending.**

Funding for community-based and early intervention efforts is currently inadequately and inconsistently applied across all jurisdictions. **There is an opportunity to break down siloed thinking and highlight examples of effective practice across Australia.**

The Justice Project will have both a local and a national perspective, exploring contemporary research and examining innovative approaches in all parts of Australia. It will also build upon our international relationships to understand effective policy in other jurisdictions.

**In particular, our Justice Project will develop and trial solutions, and lobby for reform, in areas such as:**

- overuse of incarceration and remand
- increased use of restorative justice
- the overrepresentation of vulnerable groups in the criminal justice system, including First Nations people
- the pipeline from out-of-home care into the justice system

- better addressing the impact of trauma, abuse and neglect, to prevent experiences leading to use of violence and other offending
- limited resources and support for those being released from custody
- inconsistent or poor health care for people in prison
- the use of isolation, which might allow someone just an hour a day outside their cell and no access to supports to address what's driving their behaviour.

By presenting governments and the community with evidence-based solutions, we can change the conversation around our justice system.

**It's time to break the cycle of offending and build a system that works for the entire community.**  
*Join us.*

## Will you back our Justice Project?

Social change takes investment, and when that investment isn't prioritised by government, we rely on the generosity of others committed to positive change.



To make a gift tonight, or become a Community Partner with a monthly gift that supports all that we do, simply scan this QR code.

Or contact our Fundraising Manager on  
M: 0467 268 379 E: [fundraising@jss.org.au](mailto:fundraising@jss.org.au)