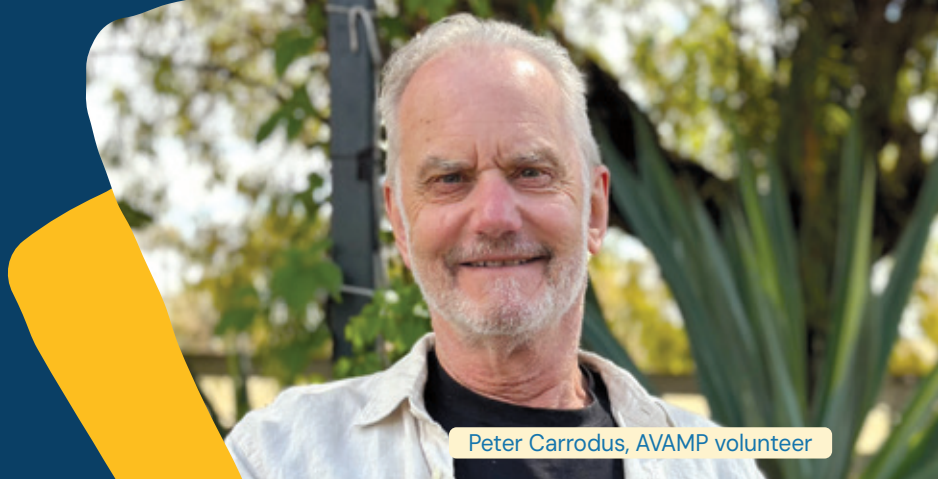


Autumn News

March 2025



Peter Carrodus, AVAMP volunteer

AFRICAN VISITATION AND MENTORING PROGRAM (AVAMP)

Breaking the cycle through connection

Peter Carrodus won't forget how confronting his first visit to a prison was.

"The regimentation, the social isolation, the guards...it was all really quite shocking," he recalls.

That was more than a decade ago, when Peter first volunteered with Jesuit Social Services' African Visitation and Mentoring Program (AVAMP). Seeing his mentees grow has kept him coming back all these years.

"Once I sat down with my mentee, I just realised that the most important thing was to never be judgmental. I was there to listen, to share a bit about my background, and to give them a space to share their own histories too."

AVAMP matches people of African background who are in prison with a mentor to support them through their sentence and after release. Through one-on-one sessions, mentors offer ongoing practical support. They also help participants reconnect with positive relationships and services that help them in their transition out of the justice system.

Peter was initially drawn to AVAMP as a way to give back to the community and to hear stories of experiences that went beyond his own growing up in Australia. His first mentee was from the Congo, his second from Sudan. Both had incredibly difficult pasts.

His first mentee, whom he visits three to four times a year, has faced immense challenges and arrived in Australia without knowing any English.

"Now we talk about what books and poetry he's reading. We talk about everything—his life before coming here, his experiences in prison, his relationship with his family...he looks forward to our talks, and I do as well."

Peter, AVAMP Volunteer Mentor

Many people in the justice system experience deep social isolation. As Fr John Brosnan, former Victorian prison chaplain for nearly 30 years, once said, "Three things I have noted are needed by someone leaving prison: a place to live that is decent, a job they can handle, and lastly, and most important of all, friendship."

That's where AVAMP steps in. It ensures participants have someone to talk to, someone to encourage them, and someone who sees them as more than their past.

Having this connection with someone out in the community, who has chosen to spend time with them, can make reintegration into the community that little bit easier.

Crime needs evidence-based responses



I hope you'll enjoy reading about some of our programs making a positive difference to the lives of people who have contact with the justice system in this shorter format Autumn newsletter. It's one of a few

changes that you'll see in our communications with supporters as we respond to feedback from our donor survey last year.

I am grateful for the generous support we received in response to our summer fundraising appeal, which featured a mother who found a lifeline through our Support After Suicide program. In this newsletter, you can read about how Support After Suicide is also helping children who have lost a loved one to suicide.

I am also inspired by schools, like St Columba's College, who you will see are engaging young people in supporting our work as a demonstration of faith in action.

Finally, I'm proud to introduce our Justice Project, which will consolidate our program delivery, advocacy and research and highlight evidence-based solutions to prevent and address crime.

At the moment, there is significant media and political attention on youth crime, and debate about how to manage young people who commit offences.

We must re-focus on the type of society we want – cohesive communities, less crime and fewer victims – and look at the evidence of what works in achieving it.

Together, we can build a just society.

Julie M. Edwards

Julie Edwards
CEO, Jesuit Social Services

PERRY HOUSE

A place to call home leads young people away from crime

Home should be a place where you feel safe and secure. While many of us might take that for granted, not all young people moving into Jesuit Social Services' Perry House have had that experience.



The program provides supportive housing for young people who are involved with the justice system and at risk of homelessness.

Lucas*, who has an intellectual disability, spent more than a year living in Perry House. He says his life turned around once he had a stable place to live and started receiving good support.

Leanne Acreman, General Manager of Housing and Complex Needs programs, said that the recently redeveloped Perry House gives residents control over their own lives. This helps them to feel respected. They have a key to their room that other people don't have access to and their own private bathroom – these things make them feel safe.

"We really think that within that environment, we hope we can help them repair and recover from some of the trauma they've experienced in their lives," she said.

"They want to make their own decisions, have a sense of privacy, and efficacy in how they lead their lives...we think it's a really important part of helping young people develop their skills, look at training and job opportunities and look for safe, affordable, long-term housing, a place that they can thrive."

Leanne Acreman, General Manager
of Housing & Complex Needs

The combination of a safe home, trusted relationships and self-determination provides a pathway away from crime for young people like Lucas.

*This participant's name has been changed for privacy reasons.

SERIOUS FUN

Serious fun helping kids connect after loss

It's a Wednesday morning in the school holidays. Some children are playing together in a school hall. It could be any regular school holiday program. Yet something more, something serious, brings these children together. They have all lost a parent to suicide. This is Support After Suicide's program tailored to children: Serious Fun.

"It's an opportunity for children who have experienced loss by suicide to come together with other children who have had a similar experience", explains Colin Charles, a counsellor with Support After Suicide and facilitator of Serious Fun. "It is all about giving the kids the sense that they're not alone."

This passion for connection drives the Serious Fun Program, the only program for kids that specifically focuses on the loss of a parent to suicide.

"My child can often feel left out at school and feels a real sense of loneliness after the loss of his dad", one parent describes. "But when he walks out of Serious Fun, he's always happy and says, 'there's people just like me'."

And it's not only the children who connect. While the kids are having fun, their parents meet over a coffee.

"It's hard to balance my grief with parenting, it's helpful to connect with others experiencing similar challenges. My child looks forward to Serious Fun, and so do I!"

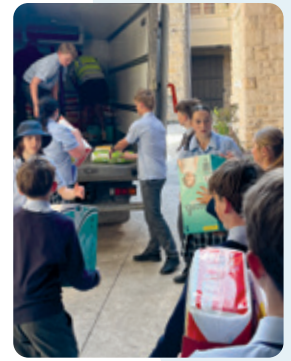
Serious Fun parent and participant



Children painting and playing games at Serious Fun

Embedding faith in action

'Act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God'. This is the mission of St Columba's Catholic College in Springwood NSW, a school community that makes faith in action come alive for their students.



St Columba's Catholic College students loading a truck with donations

For over five years, the school has run a food drive each August to respond to people's needs. It encourages students in each year level to donate different types of food. All the food donated goes to our Ignite Food Store in Mount Druitt.

"The St Columba's food drive comes at such an important time of year for Ignite", says Claire Thomas, Director Identity and Ethos – School and Community Engagement at Jesuit Social Services.

"At the end of winter, our stock levels are quite low so it means we can continue supporting our local community."

More recently, under the leadership of principal Phillip Scollard, the school community has raised funds for our Western Sydney programs through its annual St Columba's Feast Day. The day is an opportunity for reflection, to have fun, and for the school community to engage in social justice issues.

"Our feast day is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate all that is good about our beautiful community, the gifts we each have and the way we share them with one another. **The opportunity to share some of these gifts with Jesuit Social Services is a reminder to each of us – staff, students and our families – that we are part of a much bigger community** and that our call to act justly is the call for each of us to build God's kingdom little by little. We are delighted to have the opportunity to work with and support Jesuit Social Services."


The Justice Project - building a justice system that works for the entire community

Jesuit Social Services has worked to build a just society for nearly 50 years. A key focus of this work has been supporting children and adults who have contact with the criminal justice system.

While this work has supported individuals, families and communities to flourish, there is an urgent need to do more to bring about systemic change across the country. Too often, we see a failure to effectively prevent crime from occurring and, when it does, over-reliance on imprisonment. This is an ineffective and expensive response.

At our Annual Dinner on 28 February, which featured a powerful Frank Costigan QC Address by National Children's Commissioner Anne Hollonds, Julie Edwards announced the establishment of Jesuit Social Services' Justice Project.

The Justice Project will harness the best of our experience in programs, research and



Anne Hollonds,
National Children's Commissioner
with our CEO, Julie Edwards

advocacy to design and deliver new solutions that lead to better outcomes for the whole community.

Combining our practice wisdom, advocacy and policy expertise with the unique perspective of those with a lived experience of the justice system, we will advocate for transformative policies to ensure governments use evidence about what works to make informed decisions about how best to respond to people caught up in the justice system.

Through your support, you can be part of this too.

Want to help Jesuit Social Services?

Together we can build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the wellbeing of disadvantaged people, family and communities.

I would like to make an ongoing monthly gift of:

\$ _____ (Please specify amount)

I would like to make a one-off donation of:

\$75 **\$150**
 \$500 **\$** _____ (Other amount)

You can also donate over the phone by calling 03 9421 7600 or donate online by scanning the QR Code



Contact and payment details:

Surname _____

First name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Cheque enclosed OR

Visa Mastercard Amex

Card number _____

Expiry _____

Signature _____

Please send me information about leaving a gift in my Will.