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Victoria’s Budget misses the mark on fairness, prevention and early intervention

Jesuit Social Services

The Victorian Government’s 2026 State Budget includes some positive measures to address current cost-of-living challenges but is ultimately a missed opportunity to invest more into prevention and early intervention in relation to crime and to support stronger communities, says Jesuit Social Services.

“This Budget includes measures that will benefit the wider community including free public transport, free kinder and TAFE, more social housing and disability support. However, with nearly half a billion announced for prisons and law enforcement, once again money is being wasted at the wrong end of the system.” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“Victoria has had the largest police force in Australia since 2017-18 but it remains the lowest funder of public school education in the country. If we want to build stronger communities then we need fewer jail cells, and more mental health support, more housing, and better primary schools in our most disadvantaged communities.”

While there are some welcome announcements in the justice system – including funding the Maribyrnong Community Residential Facility for two more years and some new initiatives through the Violence Reduction Unit – the 2026 Budget fails to seriously address key drivers of crime.

“We note the funding for an independent review of the Sentencing Act and hope this will be used as an opportunity to expand evidence-based restorative and diversionary approaches, not just an opportunity to lock more children up. The sentencing measures the government has recently enacted like mandatory sentencing and trying children as young as 14 as adults are regressive and harmful.”

Jesuit Social Services has learnt from our work with men and boys over nearly 50 years including through the Men’s Project that prevention and early intervention work is pivotal in addressing gender-based violence. This Budget does not do enough to support the early intervention work that can address the behaviours that lead to family violence.

“The Government’s cost-of-living relief – while welcome – is not targeted at our most marginalised people and the communities who need the most support. This Budget is a missed opportunity to do much more to allow all Victorians, particularly marginalised people and communities most in need of support, to flourish.”

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