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## **Sorry Day must be catalyst to act on Indigenous overrepresentation in justice system: Jesuit Social Services**

The re-elected Federal Government must make it a priority to act on the continued overrepresentation of First Nations people in the criminal justice system, says Jesuit Social Services.

“This Sorry Day and beyond, we stand in solidarity with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters. We call for concerted effort and evidence-based policies to reduce the shocking over-representation of Indigenous people in our criminal justice systems and targeted investments to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can thrive,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

Jesuit Social Services is calling for the Federal Government to commit to the inclusion of justice targets in refreshed Closing the Gap framework, for all states and territories to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years and for the adoption of justice reinvestment models to make sure prison is only ever used as a last resort.

“An Indigenous man is 15 times more likely to be imprisoned than a non-Indigenous man and an Indigenous woman is 21 times more likely to be in custody than a non-Indigenous woman.

“A recent report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare showed that young Indigenous people are 17 times more likely than non-Indigenous young people to be under youth justice supervision. We are failing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at every step of their journey.

“When children between the ages of 10 to 14 have contact with detention, they are more likely to have sustained and frequent justice involvement throughout their lives. Extensive research has also evidenced that young children have not developed the social, emotional and intellectual maturity necessary for criminal responsibility,” says Ms Edwards.

“When a child aged 13 years or younger has contact with the justice system, we must ask ourselves what has gone wrong in their lives to get to that point, and connect them with family, culture, education and community, instead of imprisoning them.”

Jesuit Social Services also calls on the Federal Government to progress the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people articulated in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, such as a constitutionally enshrined First Nations voice to Parliament.

“Australia must give our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the best opportunities to flourish – in communities, by reform of our criminal justice systems, and by ensuring cultural leaders have every opportunity to shape the policy and legislation that impacts them.”

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