

MEDIA STATEMENT

13 October 2020

## CRA Against the Revolving Door of Youth Injustice

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) is opposed to the imprisonment of children whose risk could be managed in the community and whose exposure to detention will irreversibly harm their futures, as stated in a new report from the Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council, published 29 September 2020.

The report, *Children Held on Remand in Victoria: A Report on Sentencing Outcomes*, has found that, of 442 cases of children held on remand in Victoria over 2017-18, two-thirds (66%) of children did not ultimately receive a custodial sentence, unnecessarily exposing children to a detention setting.

CRA President, Peter Carroll FMS said, “An episode in custody can be devastating for the future of a child, and remand should not be used in circumstances where a child can be effectively managed outside of a detention setting. We should be improving diversionary measures, whereby children are supported by appropriate bail, supervision and accommodation services, so that they can be rehabilitated within the community.”

The remand experience for children who receive non-custodial outcomes can negatively impact their housing arrangements, social support structures, employment and education, and can lead to further criminal activity. The report finds that each contact with the justice system increases the likelihood of further contact. Only 6 per cent of remanded children in the report had not previously been on remand, held a prior sentence or had other ongoing proceedings when first remanded, indicating a revolving door of youth injustice, that is triggered by the first episode of remand.

Some groups of children are more vulnerable to Victoria’s remand system, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth who comprise 15 percent of children on remand, yet only 1 per cent of Victoria’s total population. The report also showed that remanded children living in rural and regional areas are more likely to receive a custodial outcome than those in suburban courts.

Br Peter said CRA supports the report’s recommendations that strategies for reducing the risk of children entering remand is paramount, and that the inclusion of a fully resourced, 24-hour, Australia-wide bail system specifically for children will reduce the adverse relationship between remand and sentencing.

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### MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

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