

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Expanding prison capacity is money spent at wrong end of the system: Jesuit Social Services**

A \$727 million expansion of Victoria's prison capacity, announced ahead of the 2025/26 State Budget, is money spent at the wrong end of the system and won't do anything to prevent crime in the long run, says Jesuit Social Services.

The expansion, announced today, will result in nearly 1,000 new beds in the adult prison and add 88 new beds to the state's youth detention system.

"We're really concerned by the news that the Victorian Government is committing well over half a billion dollars of new funding to a costly, ineffective prison system which is at odds with all of the evidence about how to create stronger, more cohesive communities with less crime and fewer victims," says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

"We know that around 40 per cent of people who exit prison in Victoria return to prison in the next two years. This demonstrates that prison is not conducive to rehabilitation, and isn't ensuring people return to the community better off than when they entered.

"Expanding the state's prison capacity is a direct outcome of recent changes to bail laws, which we highlighted at the time would drive up prisoner numbers while doing nothing to address the underlying drivers of crime. These changes will also result in more people being held in prison on remand, yet to be convicted of a crime.

"These policies won't do anything to prevent crime from occurring while diverting valuable funding away from vital community services that help people to lead productive and fulfilling lives where they don't offend and don't use violence," says Ms Edwards.

In its submission to the Victorian State Budget, Jesuit Social Services called for a range of evidence-based investments to address and prevent crime, including replicating the successful Maribyrbong Community Residential Facility model to prevent people from exiting prison into homelessness, and providing new funding for early intervention, diversion and restorative work to hold children and young people accountable for their actions while helping them to turn their lives around.

"If we are serious about preventing crime we must be supporting more people who have justice system involvement into employment. Through our programs, we've seen that adults with justice system involvement who are supported into jobs for more than six months are significantly less likely to re-offend. This is exactly the type of program governments should be investing in.

"We urge the Victorian Government to focus on the evidence of what works, instead of continuing to spend on a costly and ineffective prison system."

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