

MEDIA RELEASE – JUNE 15, 2022

Tasmania takes positive step to keep young children out of detention, but all states and territories should go further

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the Tasmanian Government's commitment to ensure no child under 14 is held in youth detention, while reiterating that this is just one step toward the ultimate goal to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14.

"The Tasmanian Government's move to keep young children out of youth detention is a positive step. But it doesn't go far enough to change the trajectory of children coming into contact with the justice system," says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

"To do that, we must stop criminalising the behaviour of children under 14. We can hold children to account while also working to understand what's driving their behaviour and support them get their lives back on track without using a justice response.

"Exposing children to the harms of detention means they are more, not less, likely to commit further offences. Instead, we must support children in the community wherever possible. We need trauma-informed approaches that seek to understand the drivers of anti-social behaviour and we need to connect children with family, community, culture and educations to help them flourish."

"Jesuit Social Services has worked with children in contact with the justice system for 45 years. Many of these children have experienced marginalisation, trauma, and mental illness and need support to turn their lives around and reach their potential," says Ms Edwards.

While there is progress in some states and territories to raise the age of criminal responsibility, there is yet to be legislative changes to achieve this outcome.

"The ACT has a process underway to raise the age and the Northern Territory Government has accepted a recommendation from the Royal Commission to raise the age but is yet to act. Tasmania has an opportunity to take the lead on this. We also welcome comments by Indigenous Affairs Minister Linda Burney about the Federal Government being committed to working with states and territories to achieve this goal," says Ms Edwards.

Jesuit Social Services' discussion paper [Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility: There is a better way](#) outlines a range of practical ways in which children can be held accountable for their actions in ways that prevent further anti-social behaviour and better protect the entire community.

"We all want children to lead healthy, safe and positive lives free from contact with the justice system. We call on our political leaders to act on the advice of legal and medical experts, as well as community organisations like Jesuit Social Services who support vulnerable children every day, and commit to raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years as an urgent priority."

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