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Legislative Council

Legislative Council petition #701 | presented 2 December 2025

Petition Sponsor: David Limbrick

Portfolio: Attorney-General

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council to the persistent and escalating failure of the Government's existing legislation to protect the community from criminal activity. As a direct consequence of these failures, the judiciary, including the courts and Victoria Police, has been placed at a significant disadvantage in its ability to uphold public safety. Judges are forced to operate within laws and programs that do not meet community expectations or deliver intended outcomes, and police efforts are continually undermined when offenders face little or no consequence. These shortcomings are evidenced by record levels of crime in Victoria and repeated instances of serious harm, including theft, assault, abductions and preventable deaths.

Despite attempted reforms, the state's bail laws, anti-recidivism initiatives and youth justice intervention programs continue to underperform. These frameworks are failing in practice, leaving offenders to cycle repeatedly through the system while protections for the public remain ineffective. Without a formal evaluation and prompt rectification, public safety and confidence in the justice system will remain severely compromised. Without immediate intervention and reform, further harm will inevitably occur, and community safety must be prioritised.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council refer to the Legal and Social Issues Committee an inquiry to urgently review all Victorian anti-recidivism initiatives and youth justice intervention programs which should identify the points at which the frameworks are failing, determine why intended outcomes are not being delivered, and recommend immediate corrective measures.

Reply:

The Victorian Government recognises that rehabilitation and reintegration programs are critical to reducing reoffending and enhancing community safety. Many individuals in custody have complex needs that if not addressed increase the likelihood of reoffending. For this reason, the Victorian Government has made significant investments in continuing and developing essential intervention programs and anti-recidivism initiatives that address these underlying drivers of offending behaviour to reduce recidivism rates and ultimately strengthen community safety.

Adult corrections system

Corrections Victoria offer a wide range of programs and services in prisons to support the rehabilitation and reintegration needs of people in custody, to reduce reoffending. These include:

- Programs to support family engagement and parenting, cultural strengthening and support, healing, family violence prevention and programs specifically tailored to address the individual needs of women and men in custody.

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- Education and training services to develop employment pathways and on the job skills training opportunities via prison industries. This gives people in prison the skills they need to gain and maintain employment upon release to the community, as successfully gaining employment is a key factor in reducing reoffending.
- Pre-and-post release reintegration support programs for remand and sentenced people in prison that are responsive to individual transitional needs.
- Offence-specific, evidence-based programs and services to reduce reoffending risk, delivered by forensic clinicians. Primarily targeting violent and/or sexual offending, the services are developed using a trauma-informed lens to address offending behaviour. Alcohol and other drug criminogenic programs are also offered to people in prison, who have an identified link between alcohol and other drug use and their offending.

The 2025-26 State Budget invested \$19.4 million over two years in the Corrections portfolio to support the operation of the corrections system, reduce recidivism and enhance prisoners' reintegration in the community. One of the programs funded included the Maribyrnong Community Residential Facility, that provides accommodation for men leaving prison who are at risk of homelessness. A longitudinal evaluation completed in 2024 found people leaving prison supported by the Maribyrnong Community Residential Facility are 30% less likely to re-offend when compared to those without similar housing and wrap around supports.

The recent bail reforms have resulted in an increase in the number of people in prison on remand. The changing profile of people in prison has increased the demand for programs and activities as well as complexities, as it is recognised that short prison stays may limit opportunities to engage in meaningful programs that provide sustained change and reconnection. To address this, the Community Safety Package funded through the 2025-26 State Budget delivered a significant investment in evidence-based support programs and services to assist in adapting and meeting this growing demand and changing profile. This includes increased prison-based programs staff as well as expansion to post release support programs and prison education services.

Corrections Victoria continually review, evaluate and where required adjust its rehabilitation and reintegration services and programs to align with best practice. The employment pathways evaluation undertaken by La Trobe University found that approximately 10% of people who had been placed into employment post release had returned to prison, that is significantly lower than the 2024-25 Department Performance Statement average rate of return of 36.8%. More broadly, the 2025 Report on Government Services shows the rate of people returning to prison in Victoria within 2 years has been consistently below the national average.

Youth justice system

The *Justice Legislation Amendment (Community Safety) Act 2025*, which recently passed Parliament, will seek to address rising levels of crime in Victoria and respond to increasing community concern about serious, violent offending, particularly by children. As part of a suite of community safety reforms that the Victorian Government has progressed, these new laws will elevate, or 'uplift', trials and sentencing for serious violent offending from the Children's Court into the adult jurisdiction of the County Court. These reforms acknowledge that such offences are very serious and cause significant harm to victims and the community, even if committed by children.

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It is critical that approaches to community safety include a focus on prevention and early intervention to effectively address the underlying drivers of crime. That is why, under the *Serious Consequences, Early Interventions* plan, the Victorian Government has announced a \$19.8 million funding package to establish a new Violence Reduction Unit. This unit is based directly on models in Glasgow and London, which successfully reduced violent crime over time by targeting the problems early. Reporting directly to the Premier, the Violence Reduction Unit has already commenced operation and will work across government to disrupt crime through a range of early intervention initiatives, including in education, health, mental health, victim support, housing, police, the community sector, and the justice system. The Violence Reduction Unit will develop and deliver new programs to address gaps and emerging crime trends – with the first program to focus on connecting at-risk young people with mentors who are former youth offenders now living positive lives.

In addition, the 2025-26 State Budget funded through the Community Safety Package, almost \$35 million in rehabilitation and support services across the youth justice system. This included expanding the Statewide Rehabilitation Service, an in-house service delivered by Youth Justice clinicians that provides comprehensive interventions and programs targeted at high harm and violent offending, sexual offending, family violence related offending, substance use-related and motor-vehicle related offending. Funding was also allocated to programs aimed at reducing justice system involvement of Aboriginal children and young people.

These initiatives will operate alongside the new *Youth Justice Act 2024*, which commences in full on 30 September 2026 and will provide a nation-leading legislative framework with a full spectrum of responses. This will include early intervention and diversion initiatives that provide opportunities for children and young people to turn their lives around and keep families together. Recent changes, which have already commenced, allow treatment and rehabilitation programs to be offered to young people on remand, not just when sentenced. Intervening in this way is crucial to addressing the underlying drivers of offending behaviour, reducing youth crime, and making communities safer.


These new initiatives are in addition to a suite of long-standing government funded programs and initiatives that are designed to reduce reoffending by addressing the complex and intersecting needs of children and young people under youth justice supervision. Key programs include:

- **Youth Support Service and Aboriginal Youth Support Service** – a voluntary, short-term, community-based early intervention program for young people at risk of becoming involved in the justice system. The Aboriginal Youth Support Service program works to address the needs of at-risk Aboriginal children and young people by tackling the underlying reasons for their offending behaviour.
- **Children's Court Youth Diversion Service** – young people appearing before the Children's Court can be placed on diversion, to receive support and complete a diversion plan with activities to reduce reoffending. In 2024-25, there were 1,153 diversions with 98% of diversion plans successfully completed. An evaluation showed the service reduced recidivism with participants reoffending less often and less seriously than young people with similar offending history and characteristics who received an alternative court outcome.

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- **The Youth Crime Prevention Program** – a suite of initiatives that address offending and reoffending among young people through case management, coaching, mentoring and prosocial activities that build protective factors against offending. An evaluation showed that participants in this program had a 29% reduction in offending and a 24% reduction in severity of offending.

Youth Justice continuously evaluates the effectiveness of its program offerings through a range of evaluation and review processes to ensure they are fit for purpose, follow best practice, and respond to emerging youth offending trends. As part of Youth Justice's ongoing commitment to continual service improvement, KPMG has been engaged to undertake a review of the suite of funded Youth Justice Community Support Programs and Aboriginal Youth Justice Programs. The review will inform any future steps to ensure that services are contemporary, evidence-aligned and cost effective.



**The Hon. Sonya Kilkenny MP
Attorney-General**

26/1/2026