



AASW

Australian Association
of Social Workers

LC LSIC
INQUIRY INTO VICTORIA'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM
SUBMISSION 122
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Parliament of Victoria
Legislative Council, Legal and Social Issues Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Committee Chair,

Re: Inquiry into Victoria's criminal justice system

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) welcomes the opportunity to provide our response to the Inquiry into Victoria's Criminal Justice system.

The AASW is the professional body representing more than 12,000 social workers throughout Australia, including more than 3,300 in Victoria. The AASW sets the benchmark for professional education and practice in social work, and we advocate on matters of human rights, discrimination, and issues that influence people's quality of life.

Social workers undertake a wide range of roles within Victoria's criminal justice system, including Alcohol and Other Drug counselling and program development roles in state prisons, case management and intermediary positions in magistrate courts, as well as behavioural change and victim support programs across communities. We work with offenders to identify and address the underlying causes of offending behaviours to address recidivism and provide case management and counselling support for victim-survivors.

The AASW strongly advocates for a human rights-based approach which acknowledges existing harm and abuse which may have contributed to the harmful behaviours. Rather than criminalising those behaviours, we support the development and implementation of programs which address the underlying causes of offending and promote recovery. Hence, we share the same vision with the Victorian Council of Social Services that further changes to the Victoria's criminal justice system should be underpinned by the following principles:

- Strengthening communities and eliminating social exclusion: poverty reduction, access to safe and stable housing, education, employment and recreation, place based community development;
- Early intervention: strong health and social services that support people to address the issues that increase the likelihood of engaging in criminal behaviours and reduce harm arising from criminal justice system involvement;
- Criminal justice system reform: changing the laws and processes that entrench people in the system, including, but is not limited to, raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14, and reforming the *Bail Act 1977* (Vic).



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reforms in the criminal justice system. If you would like to discuss any matters raised in our submission, please contact [REDACTED] (Social Policy and Advocacy Manager) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Melissa Brown
Branch President
AASW Victoria Branch