



PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA
Legal and Social Issues Committee

MEDIA RELEASE

More action recommended to fix youth justice centres

A parliamentary committee report tabled in the Victorian Parliament today has recommended a range of measures to address problems with youth justice centres in Victoria.

The Legal and Social Issues Committee has made 33 findings and 39 recommendations after a comprehensive inquiry.

“Victoria’s youth justice system was well regarded for a long time, but it has faced major difficulties in recent years and those problems need to be addressed,” said Committee Chair, Margaret Fitzherbert MLC.

The report identifies significant failings in youth justice centres, including:

- High staff turnover and absenteeism
- A breakdown in professional relationships between youth justice staff and young people
- Excessive and improper use of isolation and lockdown, often due to staff shortages, as well as highly deficient recordkeeping by the Department of Health and Human Services
- Vastly inadequate mental health services for young offenders
- Insufficient detox services for young offenders, limiting the options available to magistrates when sentencing young offenders with drug misuse problems.

The recommendations focus on a number of areas, including:

- Stabilising staffing and reducing reliance on agency staff within youth justice centres
- Broadening assessment procedures for young people entering youth justice centres, to include additional factors such as developmental age and cognitive development
- Sufficient ongoing funding for Victoria Police Youth Resource Officers to continue their work
- The Children’s Court review its group conferencing program to determine whether it can occur prior to sentencing
- Providing more effective post-release services to young people who have spent time in a youth justice centre to help reduce the risk of reoffending.

The report noted that young people with a history of disengagement from education are over-represented in the youth justice system. The Committee commended the work of Parkville College and called on the Department of Education and Training to consider whether successful methods at Parkville College can be adapted to support at-risk students in mainstream schools.

“There is much work to be done in fixing the problems that were identified to us during the course of this inquiry,” Ms Fitzherbert said.

“Our report outlines the actions that should be taken to restore confidence in our youth justice system.”

The report is available from the Committee's [website](#).

Issued: 6 March 2018