

**Submission 1 – Student from Barnett Unit, Parkville Youth Justice Precinct (YJP)**

The adjectives I would use to describe Parkville Youth Justice Precinct are terrible, crap, boring, scary, loud, outdated, unhealthy, no freedom.

When I first came in to Parkville I was 11. It was 2015. I was so scared I thought I was going to get raped. I have spent most of my life inside.

Most young offenders have been through a lot and are supporting their habits by doing crime.

The hardest things about being locked is no good food, no proper mates, not healthy.

The only good things about being locked up are that you learn your lesson, a bed to sleep in, you get 3 meals a day. School on the inside is good I personally like it better than school on the outside.

Coming here has helped because I honestly am never coming back, this place is disgusting.

Young people are framed as bad people in the newspaper.

My experiences of the lawyers and the courts have been disgusting. The courts don't do their jobs properly. I understand my charges very well, my charges are pretty serious but I try not to think about what I've done in the past. I have never had a visit with my lawyer. I never have contact with him til court.

I get involved, when I go for parole my plan is set for my release.

I think we should have more of a say in court so that we can tell the judge why we did it. It would be helpful to have a legal aid lawyer on site at Parkville or Malmsbury to talk about our crimes and give advice to us.

It would be better if you could go to normal school, go on leave every day. I think they should give us more chances at the Parole Board.

**Submission 2 – Student from Cullity unit, Parkville YJP**

I think there is racism in the media about young people who commit crimes. There is also overreaction. It makes things worse than they are.

My experiences of lawyers and the courts have been bad. They haven't collected evidence from CCTV. The judge in court puts me down and makes me sound like a bad person. My lawyer hasn't visited me once this time. I haven't spoken to her on the phone either.

I don't wish I could talk more in court. My judge just asks me questions and I answer it, and if I want to say something I just say it. It probably would be helpful to have a lawyer on site at Parkville.

I first came to Parkville when I was 12. I am 15 now. I don't remember what my first impressions were but T\*\*\*\* (DHHS) was working so I felt pretty good.

I think Parkville has made me ten times worse: when I was younger I didn't have serious charges, but now they are much worse.

**Submission 3 – Student from Cullity Unit, Parkville YJP**

I personally feel like the media label us as terrifying and bad people and that people should fear for their lives. I would like people in the community to know that I made a mistake and before the crime I committed, I had no criminal record. I got sentenced 3 years, and when I leave I am going for my learners, getting a house and I have a job. So am I really a bad person?

My lawyer was amazing, he fought for me for 6 months to get me the best outcome possible. I understand my charges well enough, my charge was very high and had to be handled in the supreme court.

I don't see my lawyer very often as I have been sentenced.

Yes being in Parkville has helped. Being in the resi I was in was causing my behaviours, now that I am in Parkville, I'm going into lead tenant, it's better for me.

The hardest things about being locked up is limited visit from my family, no privacy, limited contact from the outside, can't escape bad models, bullying and being transgender in a female's unit.

NO!!! NO!!! There are no good things about being locked up. Nothing is good, I rather live normally or at least get treated normally as I am not the one causing problems.

It took me 9 months to finally get involved in my careteams.

School on the inside is great, my first time in 3 years, I finally get an education, I can't wait to continue school on the outside.

Yes I wish I could talk more in court. Hearing what the cops and the prosecutor say about me and how they talk about my crime makes me sound a lot worse than it is. It wouldn't really be helpful for me to have a legal aid lawyer on site, but maybe for remand clients.

I was 15 years old when I first got sent to Parkville and it was 9 months ago.

When I first got here it was good, I like it. TV in the rooms, it would keep me calm watching TV and watching the news would keep me updated on the outside world.

My time at Parkville has made me grow up, seeing the immaturity in here has made me realise I am better than this. I am improving my behaviour so much.

If I could design the perfect youth justice system I think bigger premises and more units would be helpful. More staffing so we are not locked in our cells all the time. No staff = no school. Staff all communicated to one another about the rules so when one shift leaves and the other is on, they are telling us the right things and the same things the other shift tells us. Better clothing, more option clothing, singlets and headbands. 24/7 medical team.

**Submission 4 – Student from Barnett Unit, Parkville YJP**

The first two weeks here were scary but I got to know people and got along with everyone. Then I had to stay in the isolation room for a couple of weeks, I got used to it. Easy.

**Submission 5 – Student from Cullity Unit, Parkville YJP**

Young people who commit crimes are put in stereotypes in the media – we sound worse than we really are. They make it over dramatic. They stereotype black people, Aboriginal people.

I'd like people in the community to know:

- That we're innocent until proven guilty
- Lawyers use the sympathy card and the age of clients to persuade the courts to let them out.
- We get treated unfairly by the police
- Police department in Bendigo should get investigated for mistreating and discriminating clients

My experiences of lawyers and the courts has been bad, because I'm Aboriginal, feel like they discriminate me.

I understand my charges very well.

I don't have contact with my lawyer. My lawyer doesn't answer his phone. He only visits when I'm in the cells in Bendigo.

I wish I could talk more in court but I seem to get a bit verbal when I talk.

I was 14 when I first came to Parkville, now I'm 17. When I first got here I liked it, it was good.

My time at Parkville hasn't affected me, however its made things worse because I keep coming back.

My time at Parkville hasn't helped because I keep getting in trouble. The hardest thing about being locked up is not being able to talk to my friends from the outside. Education is all right in here.

No I don't get involved in planning for my release.

School on the inside is all right. I get education in here. I don't get any on the outside.

**Submission 6 – Student from Barnett, Parkville YJP**

The adjectives I would use to describe Parkville Youth Justice Precinct are depressing, boring, happy, mean, cool, violent, sad.

The media makes us people look bad out in the community.

I would like people in the community not to judge us by what the media says.

My experiences of lawyers and the courts have been fear with decisions and fear with the way they run stuff. I understand my charges half half.

I've had contact with my lawyer a few times but they're trying their best to get me out. Yeah I wish I could talk more in court. It would be helpful to have a legal aid lawyer at Parkville – they can help me out.

I was 12 when I first came to Parkville. When I first got here I thought that I was at camp for a bit til I got to know Parkville.

Parkville has been a bit of both (had a positive and negative affect on me) because there will be codes and stuff but other than that it's been good with staff.

Parkville has made me think about the stuff I have done. And I have learned my lesson. I have witnessed a lot of violence in here and this made me think more violently.

The hardest things about being locked up is being away from family and friends.

The good things about being locked up are school – PE, PT and the pools. And it gives you opportunity to think about stuff you wanna do when you get out. I get visits with YJ's, DHHS – drug and health psychologists.

I feel like there are really good supports for when I get out but I think there should be more motivation for me to use them. They should let kids be informed about all their meetings and all the stuff that they have to do for their court.

#### **Student 7 – Student from Barnett Unit, Parkville YJP**

The adjectives I would use to describe what its like at Parkville Youth Justice Precinct are unhealthy, scary, crap, boring, hard, terrible, dirty, no freedom.

Young people are framed as bad people in the news and newspaper.

I would like people in the community to know that young offenders have been through a lot and are supporting their habits by doing crime.

My experiences of lawyers and courts are that they're shit, they don't do their jobs properly, they don't keep in contact when you're locked up. I don't understand my charges that well because I got a drug habit. My lawyer never calls me, I'm always calling him.

I wish I could talk more in court to tell them why I did the crime at the time.

No it wouldn't be helpful to have a legal aid lawyer at Parkville because they won't rep you in court.

I was 12 years old in 2015 when I first came to Parkville. I was scared. My time here has affected me because I have spent more time in Parkville than outside. Parkville makes it worse because you like it in here.

The hardest thing about being locked up is that you don't get to wear your personal clothes or shoes. You get food on the inside, kids don't get food on the outside.

I have never been to a care team meeting.

They should let us wear our own shoes and clothes. Less time spent here – more time to get out.

**Submission 8 – Student from Grevillea Unit, Barwon Prison**

The media represents us as bad people that are out of control.

I would like people in the community to know that:

You don't know me so don't judge us and do you really believe everything the media tell you?

My experiences of lawyers and the courts are being treated like rubbish and that's it.

Yes, I understand my charges, I guess I just got used to it. Yes, I have regular contact with my lawyer and before every court date. Yes, I wish I could answer some of the questions they ask. It would be helpful to have a lawyer on site at Parkville so they could help get ready for court.

I was first sent to Parkville at 12 years old, nearly 2 years ago. My first impression to be honest, it was better than I expected. My time there effected me positively because teachers/school and makes me want to.

Yes, Parkville has helped me overcome some things that were getting me in trouble on the outside, I now want to go live with my mum and do school.

The hardest thing about being locked up is being with the same people every day and the same thing every week.

I guess being able to detox off drugs and think about things that are more important, is a good about being locked up.

I haven't been to a care team. I didn't know I could go to them.

School on the inside helps quite a lot to get back to school on the outside.

If I could design a perfect youth justice system; I would change more staff so they're more organised for getting up on the right time. There should be less lockdowns. I think there should be more comfortable spots to sit in court cells.

**Submission 9 - Student from Grevillea Unit, Barwon Prison****Lawyers:**

When you're at court I get good support from lawyers but not when I'm in custody. I'd like my lawyer to contact me once a week so I know what's going on with court. When I try to call my lawyer I usually don't hear back from them.

**Being at Grevillea:**

I think that its worst at Grevillea. I've been to Parkville for two months and at Grevillea for a month and a bit. The way we get treated at Grevillea is worse. Much worse than how we are treated at Parkville. I get no visits here. I feel like I get picked on by the staff to be honest. I feel as if some of the staff here are racist because of the stuff they say and because of how I get treated. I feel as if I'm in adult prison right now. I don't feel I'm in Youth Justice.

The food here is not enough and it's not nice. I always wake up feeling hungry and the breakfast that I get is not enough. It's just a plastic bag with a juice box and a little box of rice bubbles the size of my palm. I can't get any visits here because it's too far away from my family.

I always feel sad here. I feel like I'm losing my family every day I'm in here – like I'm disconnecting from them while I'm here. I feel lonely.

### **Submission 10 – Student from Grevillea Unit, Barwon Prison**

The way the media represents us, half the time its bullshit and half of the time its for entertainment

No I don't feel my voice is heard, but I don't care.

My experiences with lawyers, in my opinion, is they are full of it. I don't trust them. They are on the police side because the lawyers for the police get more money than the legal aide lawyers.

Being on remand is all good but sometimes its shit because you don't know whats happening with your case.

I don't speak to my lawyer much. Last time I spoke to them was a month ago. I had court but it wasn't with my lawyer. They have never come to visit me. She says its too far to drive, but it's her job.

My YJ is good but she doesn't come in because I don't talk to her. I don't like talking to them because I have to talk to them. I don't like lawyer or YJ's. I like the custodial YJ's – it's more kicked back.

My time at Parkville, Malmsbury and Grevillea probably hasn't helped.

### **Submission 11 – Student from Grevillea Unit, Barwon Prison**

The hardest thing about being locked up is:

- being handcuffed.
- being treated like an animal.
- being sent to Grevillea
- told what to do, when to sleep, everything

The good things about being locked up:

- It keeps you away from drugs on the outside
- Helps keep you fit, because you are away from illegal stuff

If I could design the perfect youth justice system I would change:

- The food. Its the same food everyday and some people wont even eat it. It would be good to make our own food and cook it how we like it
- Lockdowns. I would have no lockdowns during the day. I'd have everyone up until 9-9:30pm. Because, when I go to my room its boring. Theres nothing to do but sleep and watch TV. It's better for us to be outside getting fresh air and playing sport. I get stressed out in my room because I think too much and its too much down time.

**Submission 12 - Student from Grevillea Unit, Barwon Prison**

Everyone says were all bad people. We're not we just do silly things when were out.

I don't feel my voice is being heard really, no one really cares. That I'm nice but I just do silly things when I'm out.

My experiences of lawyers and the courts is that my lawyer is pretty good but the courts are dogs. They just keep remanding me for like times at a time. Being on remand is alright is your doing the right thing but if your f\*\*\*\*\* up it just makes time go slow. I don't really have contact with my lawyer. I only call when they want me to sign a waver and shes never come in.

Nah I don't' want to talk more in court, my lawyer says wat I have to say.

No it wouldn't be helpful to have legal aid on site, cos they don't know ur case and they will tell you stuff that's no true/get your hope up for no reason

Some YJ's (Youth Justice Workers) are good but mines not. Shes only been in twice in 3 and a half months and she doesnt tell me anything.

My experiences of being inside- Ive never had any trouble while being locked up and its been good. My time at Parkville and Barwon, it's not about how it affected you. You do the crime you do the time and you will only change if you really want to.

The hardest thing about being locked up is being away from you familys and your girlfriend if you have one. Yes and no, there are some good things about being locked up, yes to help you get clean from drugs.

No, I do not see counsellors or a psychologist.

You should be involved in planning for your release but I havnt yet.

School inside is good if you actually wanna learn cos the classes are smaller than the outside an on the inside your around people that are more like you.

Yes you can learn the skills I need to be successful when you get out, cos the teachers hear actually wanna help you.

### Submission 13 - Student from Grevillea Unit, Barwon Prison

For me I was put out as an Apex gang member because I had African appearance.

Obviously I do not think my voice is being heard because I am labelled as a criminal. Who would want to listen to what a criminal has to say? Even if I did, non-important humans never get heard out.

My experiences of lawyers and courts have been good. But I don't feel like another person can judge some-one else for doing wrong. Being on remand is terrible because I'm in Grevillea. They make it so bad for us here and its so unfair.

No, I don't have regular contact with my lawyer because my lawyer is from Shepparton.

YJ's are helpful. They mostly just give good news, I don't mind them.

Parkville, I have been in before and it wasn't to bad. But then they forced me to move to Barwon Grevillea.

My time at Parkville was alright and I could think about what Ive did wrong. But here in Grevillea theirs so much things that are bothering me that I can't think about whats right.

The hardest things about being locked up are:

- Being at Grevillea
- They lock us down at 5pm
- Being given disgusting food
- Being lied to a lot and they are very unfair. Like I wasn't even part of the riot and they put me on lock down

The good things about being locked up:

- nothing when you are at Grevillea
- Maybe at Parkville yeah, we should be able to choose where we want to be.

No I don't see a counsellor or psychologist and they are not really helpful.

No, I don't get involved in planning for my release. I'm not going to be let out anytime soon.

School inside is not to bad, it's alright. But we can't learn because we're not allowed to eat before we go to school.

Yeah, I think I can learn the skills inside to help me when I'm out, but at the same time I don't think about how I want to be on the outside. Because theres too many things here, bothering me stressing me out that I can't plan for my future. In here it's the hardest because everyones trying to be; the hardest, the toughest. They system and the staff should help us learn that that's not the way to think. I want to learn how to discipline my mind so that I can say no to things that I know are wrong. I know, otherwise, sooner or later I will probably say yes to something I know is wrong. People don't teach you that stuff or give you a chance to practice it, they just lock you up and expect you to magically learn.

If I could design the perfect Youth Justice system:

We would make sure that the staff listen to what clients are saying and to give clients what they need. Say if, a client is stressing give them what they need but not just what they want. I feel like coming in here is good for me because I'll never learn on the outers but the way they expect kids to live while they're in here isn't right. A lot of kids just want to have good reputation and make other people feel low. I was like that on the outside, I think we need to learn what it's like to think that way and how bad it feels for the other person.

#### **Submission 14 - Student from Grevillea Unit, Barwon Prison**

The media representation is full of s\*\*\*. They are trying to make it harsh for us.

My experiences with lawyers and the courts are Legal Aide are irresponsible. Firstly, my lawyer never rocked up to one of my court cases which made me get adjourned a bunch of times. I've been on remand for 3 months and I should be sentenced by now.

I reckon being on remand is better than being sentenced because time just flies and you're not waiting for a particular date.

No I don't have regular contact with my lawyer. My lawyer has videolinked me I think 3 times. When I call I usually leave a message and someone calls me back before court. I used to have a private lawyer who would give me advice but still listened to me and let me decide. So I felt like he represented me in court. I don't feel like that with my legal aide lawyer.

I don't like my YJ I don't believe what they say.

#### **Submission 15 – Student from Ulabara Unit, Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre (YJC)**

Critical incidents could be avoided by workers using verbal communication when deescalating.

The safety and security of staff and young people at Parkville and Malmsbury can be maintained by changing the strict rules, more DHHS across the centre more. More Cert, rules.

When young people spend so long on remand it is making them feel unsure, frustrated and stressed. Especially people who have kids and family because they don't know what their future looks like.

The impact of incarcerating young people with mental health, alcohol and drugs issues, is good and bad. Because some young people have been doing drugs for years and getting locked up they learn from their mistakes. But being away from their families or kids can make everything hard or worse for them.

Some options for keeping young people out of youth justice centres are:

- more support in the outers
- jobs, sports, housing, family, friends
- more programs with Mission Aus
- needs information centres to guide young people when they need help

*Youth Justice the media and the community:*

The media presented young people untruthful, the media makes us look like bad people out in the community – they should be helping these young people.

No, I don't feel like they (they community and media) have heard my voice. I want them to know I am a good father, hard worker, good citizen that got caught up with the wrong people and that I have truly feel remorseful and learn my lesson and that my visa has been cancelled.

*My experiences on the inside:*

I first got sent to Malmsbury on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2015. I was actually alright because I knew a few boys, I saw this opportunity as a rehabilitation chance. It was very hard being away from my family because it was my first time.

I reckon when a unit works well, is when clients, workers and teachers get along. Education programs can help to get employment and personal development skills. Getting workers more involved with the clients like playing sports, playing cards, playing games, helping out with education.

To be honest my time here at Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre has help a lot with me, maturity, Education and personal development skills to be successful citizen and father.

The hardest thing about being locked up, is not being able to see and be with my family, especially not seeing my daughter grow up.

I reckon the best thing about being locked up is the Education program and working with the role models.

*Support on the Inside:*

I see a counsellor every week, I believe it is helpful because they understand and it helps to talk to them about your issue. And they also taught me how to control my emotions and mental health.

Because of my visa cancellation I've only planned a parole plan.

School is the only thing I look forward to everyday, I'm completing my senior VCAL at the moment school has help me with a lot of stuff like my communicating skills.

Yes, I am really happy I got locked up because I wouldn't have learned everything I have.

**Submission 16 – Student from Ulabara Unit, Malmsbury YJC**

Critical incidents could be avoided by the situation and talking to the clients without force or being aggressive towards them

The safety and security of staff and young people at Parkville and Malmsbury can be maintained if they come to agreement where you both agree on rules so you know where each other are at and how they can be maintained on a daily basis.

When young people spend so long on remand it effects of having them to see their parents and professionals/visits. Spending long time on remand is so clients can learn from what they have done when they are not being sentenced or being sentenced, you get a bit more freedom at places like Malmsbury.

When people that smoke drugs or drink alcohol to express themselves are incarcerated it could make them get crazy but also it can make you become clean and live a healthy life.

Some options that would help keep young people out of youth justice centres are: staying away from people who are under the influence of drugs and alcohol and find a job and its up to ourselves to stick to it on a daily basis.

*Youth Justice and the Media and the Community:*

I think the media make us seem like we are bad but really they lock us up and throw away the keys.

Sometimes I do feel like my voice has been heard by the managers and directors, but they don't do anything we say, to make clients and staff all get along with each other.

*Legal Aid and The Courts:*

My experiences at Court have been annoying, because it take for ages to get there and it can be a long wait.

Being on remand sort of the same as being Sentenced but being on remand is strict and being sentenced you get a little freedom you get to walk yourselves to programs and you get to stay outside till 8:00.

I understand my charges. The charges that we get caught for are very serious and it happens on a daily basis such as offends like assault, violence, burglary, aggravated burglaries, high-jacking, theft and reckless driving etc.

I sometimes speak with my lawyer but sometimes he doesn't even answer his or her phone so I can't even keep in contact with them much I can only talk to them when I got to the magistrates Court.

My lawyer doesn't really come in to see me and it me very frustrated and annoyed because I don't know whats going on when I go to court its like and I getting out or getting remanded for couple more weeks.

I wish I could talk more in Court, but they wont take the time out of their day to listen to what me have to say and it could be important or not important, but still.

Having a legal aid at Parkville and Malmsbury could be beneficial for ourselves as well as others but when I think about when a legal aid comes in and talks about problems I thought they fix it just like that.

YJ's are helpful for the stuff we need like court dates, jobs, housing and all the other utensils we need on a daily basis.

I get support I need for housing. AS well as sometimes getting compensation inside or outside Malmsbury or Parkville.

I was first moved to Parkville around July, the night I got caught in a bit of trouble and got remanded at Parkville. Was there for about 7 months, then I got sentenced but I only have about 5 months left here at Malmsbury.

Being on remand for 7 months was boring but it made me benefit myself and has also made me become a better person learn about how it is to be in the same situation of the people I offended. It also gave me a bit of head start of what I wanna do in life and in the future past and present.

I think my time in Parkville and Malmsbury has affected my family because it stops your family connection for a bit and could turn your whole life the wrong way but on the other hand it can make you become a better and healthy person.

Being locked up has helped me realise that theres more than drugs and alcohol and crime. me growing up as a teenager I was never getting in trouble I guess its becomes the people I was surrounded by at the time to cause the serious offences that I did while I was on the outside.

The hardest thing about being locked up is family separation. Following weird rules and having lockdowns because one person mucked up so we all go down for it. Having to think every second 'am I going to get jumped?' or "can they me my real friends?" or will I just make the same stupid decision and be gullible and listen to everybody else under the moon.

The best things about being locked up are:

- doing chores every week
- or get to buy something in personal buys such as hats, socks and other merchandise or even if your good as an individual the staff can sometimes chop you out for being client of the week.
- Making new friends is good. Including other clients, staff members as well as teachers and contractors.

Yes I see a psychologist and I believe they help with self-confidence and how to make you help yourself as well as others. The psychologists come every week to see you and there there to talk to you when your in need or need someone to talk to.

School on the inside brings a new challenge everyday and it gets exciting and makes you wanna learn about things you have never learnt before. Even sitting with mates on the inside know a lot and their just throwing their lives away like myself.

I sometimes get involved in my planning for my release. I have always had in my head that I wanna become a Personal Trainer or become a professional designer but the thing I always have in my head is becoming a hip hop instructor or a professional art/graffiti creator. I also reckon a good thing to become is a youth worker because It could benefit myself as well as others because I know what it is like to grow up living with parents and getting hit on a daily basis. These are the things I'm going to take advantage of and consider, to make a good life for myself.

Yes, I reckon when I get I am going to use all the skills that I have learned inside, and make a big impact on my life. I'm going to strive to face big challenges and courses that others would never think of and would also influence clients on the inside to become better on the outside. To start making their life like a living pleasing one. All my skills that I have can drive me to do my best and keep my head up.

**Submission 17 – Student from Ulabara Unit, Malmsbury YJC**

A thing that could be done to avoid critical incidents is that I think the cigarettes should be allowed on the unit, as I believe smoking would relieve stress, and it would result in less friction.

The safety and security of staff and young people at Parkville and Malmsbury could be maintained through programmes that are more interesting and that are more fun, to keep clients occupied and satisfied.

The effect of having young people spend so long on remand are that it is more stressful, thoughts of self-harming, relationship breakdowns

The process of incarceration needs to be different from start to finish, because depending on drugs and alcohol, rehabilitation need to be gradual, to allow, withdrawals to be gradual

To stop young people from re-entering the youth justice system, more opportunities for study and work to be provided to give them incentive to work, study or earn money

### **Submission 18 – Student from Ulabara Unit, Malmsbury YJC**

This is a client from Malmsbury youth justice centre speaking on behalf of all clients in Malmsbury youth justice centre that don't have a voice.

Codes happen when two or more individuals don't agree with one another or how they do things. Lately codes have been happening more and more because rules have been enforced on all clients in Malmsbury Youth Justice centre. Codes are called for as little as tagging on a wall. Codes are called when two or more individuals don't agree. In this case a couple of things can be done.

- a. The two or more individuals can do mediation and sort it out.
- b. A staff member can stop in and make an agreement between the individuals.

But instead a staff tells the individuals to go to their cell which does not sort the problem at all or a staff member calls a code which escalates the situation and that makes the two or more individuals furious.

Another reason code happen is when a unit is short staffed we go on one hour rotations and makes clients very unhappy and clients refuse to go back to their cells which can potentially lead from a code black (assault or staff assault) to a code white (riot). What can be done to avoid this is hire more staff. Rotations has been happening more and more often recently.

There needs to be mutual respect by staff and clients for each other. Clients need to ensure they don't verbally or physically abuse staff. Staff members and management need to set clear guidelines and boundaries for clients. Also more bonds should be formed between staff and clients while in custody.

From experience being on remand for so long takes its toll on you. It leads to stress, over thinking and all other things. This sort of pressure not be good for any persons character. The reason why there are so many remand clients is due to hold ups to the court system.

More people are committing crimes then often it leads to courts overflowing and leaves people on remand for long periods of time.

Being incarcerated would have a negative impact on young people's mental health because for 24 hours everyday you're in a limited area with other people who have suffered trauma mental health.

### **Submission 19 – Student from Ulabara Unit, Malmsbury YJC**

I am a client at the Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre and have been here for 3 months

The following outlines some things that I'd like to see changed at Malmsbury.

I think there should be less people in each unit, and clients in units should all be of the same age. There also needs to be more DHHS staff on each unit.

In school I think there should be a greater variety of trade course available, such as bricklaying, and less of a focus on English and Maths.

I'd also like to see a greater focus on rehabilitation, including more frequent visits from councillors, YJ workers and disability workers.

When family cannot visit due to living too far away, it would be good to at least be able speak with them via video chat.

### **Submission 20 – Student from Monash Unit, Malmsbury YJC**

To whom it may concern,

I am a young person currently being held in The Malmsbury Youth Justice centre, and I would like to give you my perspective on the issues being examined from my firsthand experience of the Victorian Youth Justice System.

I was only 14 when I was sent to Parkville. While I was on my way too this Youth Justice Precinct I thought that it was going to be exactly the same as the American movies but it turned out the opposite. I actually sort of enjoyed being in there because the workers made it easy for me to settle in. The only way it was affecting me was that I didn't get to see my family every day, but in a way it's kept me away from the liquor which is most of the reason why I committed these offences because I was drunk and I had no self-control. Another reason is because my family split up when I was young.

I honestly think that people who commit crimes are not being represented properly because people keep telling the media false information; they should try hearing it from a client's perspective. It would be good if the community knew that the information on the media is not correct. Therefore I am writing to you to publically voice my perspective as a current client.

The hardest things about being locked up are not being able to see your family and also being locked because DHHS are short staffed.

Being on remand isn't the best. It's bad not knowing when you are getting out because it's never 100% because you have to keep coming back an forth from court, the good thing about it is when you get sentenced you have time served which means it shortens the amount of time that you

have to do. That is why I always just plead guilty to all of my charges so I know exactly when I'm getting out.

It would be great if we could talk more in the courts because we are only allowed to speak when we are told to speak by the judge. Reasons why I think we should be able to talk in court is because our lawyers only say what they are told to say, where as if the judge was to ask our lawyer something and they don't know what to reply, we know exactly what to say in relation to personal things.

I have had lots of different lawyers and barristers represent my cases. They are very supportive but I think you need to have one so they know what's best for you because they have been representing you since you first start getting into trouble. When I go to court I am always strip searched and then put into a freezing cold cell waiting hours just for my case to be heard and get fed microwaved food that is out of date. Not all of us deserve to be treated like this because some of us are in here for things we shouldn't be in here for because they have no evidence.

I get regular contact with my lawyer but it's via the phone. I haven't seen her while I've been in custody but my Youth justice worker comes to see me whenever she can. Considering how far she has to travel to get here.

Having a Youth Justice worker is very helpful in relation to getting things in place for you to try and stay out of trouble. Also keeping you up to date with what's happening at court and putting things into simpler terms because sometimes I don't understand what the courts are saying.

I don't see any counsellors but they are there if I feel like I need to speak to them.

There are a lot of good things about being inside such as schooling. Because we are not forced to do anything we are able to do things that we are comfortable with which doesn't happen at mainstream schools. Also having a personal trainer beside you while you are training in the gym. We are even able to learn how to record and produce music and also make beats.

Having school on the inside is very helpful because you are able to get things completed such as VCAL, VCE and they also have programs such as, Music, Hip hop dance, Hospitality, Art, Personal Training, Physical Education and also engineering.

We are able to do a lot more things than you would be able to do in any detention centre overseas.

I think that the skills that we are taught will help, if you are willing to learn things that not many people know about. Also they do teach us things that will be helpful on the outside because if you get really good at something that you are doing on the inside then you are going to want to do these things when you get out because you enjoy doing it. The only reason why I get involved with planning what I'm going to do when I get out is so I know what I have to do when I do get out.

If I were to design a Youth Justice system, I would allow more leaves home for trusted clients so they are able to spend more time with their family. I would create more activities for clients to do on the unit because half of the reason why us clients tag and yell at staff is because we are bored and have nothing else to do. I would also make sure there is enough furniture for both clients and staff. Also if there were riots, I would take the kids out that caused them and I would put them in

a unit with nothing, no matter what culture they are, I would make sure everyone is treated fairly because if there are clients being treated better than others, they will take advantage of it and think they can get their way all the time. I would also try and get someone on the precinct so that we clients can complain to them.

Instead via the phone and when there are meetings for at least one client to be involved in the meeting so that, that client can inform the other clients. This way no one is lying.

Us clients in youth detention feel like we have no say in anything so there is boys in here that cause riots and disrespect staff because that is the only way they think they are getting their point across, for example you cannot lock us in our rooms for several hours of the day and expect nothing to happen when we are allowed out of our rooms. I am sure that most parents would hate to only be able to hear their kid's voice once a day over the phone because they are locked down for the rest of the day.

I am here to do my time and get out I am not here to cause trouble in here but when I get punished for what other clients are doing it makes me want to act the same because what is the point in being good when you are just going to get punished if someone else does the wrong thing. By being punished I mean not being able to attend schooling or not being able to have things that we were allowed to have in the past.

I hope that you will take my perspective into consideration as part of your inquiry. Making changes like I have described will help improve Youth Justice for all people and help young people learn how to do well in the community.

### **Submission 21 – Student from Ulabara Unit, Malmsbury YJC**

I'm 18 years old..

I'm from \*\*\*\*\*. I have come to Australia in 2013 by boat as refugees.

I came to Australia with a lot of trauma on me.

I have seen and experience lots of horrible things in my life. When I got to Christmas Island My self and my family was put in immigration detention centre which was so bad environment to live. It was so stressful. The food wasn't good. We didn't get treated well. At that time my mum was pregnant and they took her to Darwin to go to the hospital leaving me and my rest of my family which was also stressful for me. I started to have flash back and panic attacks and seizures my mental health was really not good. After 1 month my mum came back and we stayed for another 3 months and then they took all of us to Adelaide detention centre. We stayed there for another 10 months. My mental health got more worse and worse. After 10 months they took us to Darwin detention centre because they wanted to shut down Adelaide detention. We stayed in Darwin for 3 months and then they told us that the government decided to get us out and put us into the community we got happy but we found out that we are getting community detention visa which was lot of condition on it. Condition one was we not allowed to work. 2 was we not allowed to go school excursions which made me feel so different from other students. 3 no one allowed stay over.

Long story short I was so struggling in the community and I and no one was there to help and support me. I asked for help but I couldn't find anyone to help me all I found is headspace and I didn't find it helpful. I ended up here in Parkville. I've been in Parkville for 10 months. This is my first time in Parkville and it's really bad environment for young people to be. When I first got here I was in my room for nearly 1 month didn't even get out of my room I was so scared and I didn't know where I was. It's really bad experience. My trauma and my flashback got worse and worse here because a lot of bad things happened to me it really affected me and my mental health. After a month I started going to school to keep myself busy start knowing people. Also started seeing a psychologist and started getting treatment. Slowly I felt that I'm getting better I started seeing my psychologist twice a week I started to learn more good things to help me with my anger and trauma.

I have a really good and supportive family I'm very close with my family I have 2 brothers and 2 sisters and mum and dad and they come visit me everyday.

I really have had been through a lot since I've been here in Parkville I have had people bullying me and hitting me and sexual assault me which put more pressure and trauma on me. I really hate fighting and I hate violence. In late October or early November there was a big riot in Parkville I was in Southbank unit it was 2 o'clock in the morning I was asleep and all of sudden I heard a very loud bang I thought I was dreaming I opened my eyes I saw a big hole in my room I looked up I saw the young people calling my name and asking me to come with them I did refuse first but when I refused they brought me a big boy and he was saying if you don't come up I'll come down and get you by force I got scared and I felt like I had no choice. As soon I came up I couldn't see anything it was dark. And then I heard someone saying "take him as a hostage quick the cops about to come in" and then 2 boys came with weapons and took me outside holding me from the neck and they put me on the grass in front of the cops they had hammers and hand saws and they were threatening to kill me if the cops come in. I was so scared and it reminded me of what happened to me in Syria it gave me a flashback. After that the cops put the white light on us and they told the boys to leave me and that they not going to come in. The boys took me back to the program centre and they went to the roof again and as soon as I saw them in the roof I ran to the cops screaming that I need help I was in tears and then they took me to the isolation and early in the morning they took me to Malmsbury youth justice. I was in my room 23 hours I was only allowed out for 1 hour. I was so sick I had many many panic attacks and seizures. I went to the hospital 3 times a week. They didn't allow me to see my family. After 1 week and half they took me back to Parkville. I felt a bit better and I started seeing my family. And now I'm in Parkview unit. Started seeing my psychologist again and started going to school again.

Thank you for reading my story.

### **Submission 22 – Student from Remand North, Parkville YJC**

The bad part of being locked up in custody is not being able to feed yourself when you are hungry and waiting for staff to do their job of listening. They lock us down in our rooms and when we ask for the simplest things such as water or a piece of fruit we have to wait several minutes just

waiting for them to come. When we call again they say ok or were coming and after waiting for a long period of time we call up again and they say the same thing.

There is mostly a lack of staff which makes us stay in our rooms for most of the day and we come out on rotations for a max of 3 hours in the unit. They take us away of the only bit of freedom we have and not once have I been or anyone on my unit been to the facilities on the outside of our unit such as the basketball court, the pool and the gym. When we question them they bring up the riots that happened months ago. Most mornings we wake up late which make us miss our classes and breakfast in your room which is ugly. We wake up 8 and wait until 10 + to get out of our rooms.

It's mostly unorganised here and when my lawyer calls the staff to make me call them don't pass the information to me which makes me not organised for court. Most staff are lazy and only look forward for their break but at the same time there are some great and hardworking staff which makes your time here fun and easier. There are too many kids in our unit and there is over 20 kids and there is only 14 beds in our unit so do the math.

You can help us clients by getting more staff you can help us clients by getting more staff and making sure they do their jobs properly in the unit. Tell the courts that putting us with criminals like ourselves doesn't help but makes us more worse and haven't you heard that saying you are what you hang around with.

### **Submission 23 – Class Group, Lauriston Unit, Malmsbury YJC**

To the Victorian Parliament,

We are a Parkville College English class of young men aged 18-20 at The Malmsbury Youth Justice Facility. We are writing this letter together with our teacher and student teacher.

We are unfairly disrespected in the media. It's never the senior site of Malmsbury who are in these incidents. We understand that we are a part of the whole facility but we are always given a bad reputation.

The media discriminate against us. They are also racist. If you are of a certain appearance you get harassed by the media and by police. Family and friends see what is written in the media and they cut you off. They are disgusted by what they read. The news is inaccurate.

We feel like our voices are never heard. Some of us have had troubled upbringing and the choices we have made doesn't reflect who we are as people.

Sometimes we are put on remand for no reason for a long time. It's difficult to do time if you don't know your sentence and release date. We are also not involved in our release sometimes and care team meeting.

Our time at Malmsbury has affected us in a positive way. Being in custody teaches us that we never want to come back. We don't get to choose when we eat, when we sleep, anything. However, the structure has been good for us. Some of us have never had structure in our lives and Malmsbury has taught us how to have structure.

Some of us get to detox in here so we don't go back to drugs when we get out. We get to reflect on our crimes so we won't commit them again.

Our psychologists help us so much. When they are banned from the centre because of the riot we didn't see them for weeks and weeks and it was the worst.

We have got lots of certificates and school in here. It shows us that we have the skills to be in the community with jobs like everyone else. We are getting ourselves on track. School helps pass the time.

Why do we not have computers to do school work on? Other students break them and then we are without laptops. We should have individual ones to do our school on.

Thank you for your time.

### **Submission 24 – Parkville Youth Leadership Council, Parkville YJC**

This is a submission by the Parkville Youth Leadership Council which was completed during a forum with the President of the Children's Court of Victoria, Judge Amanda Chambers, in which she sought perspectives of incarcerated young people on youth offending and the youth justice system and which relates directly to the terms of reference of this inquiry.

*What are the things that cause young people to offend in the first place?*

#### Anger and no hope

- You feel angry at yourself and at the world and you have no hope so you just do things that hurt other people and yourself
- You have family problems and other stuff and then you go to school and get in trouble for stuff that doesn't matter, just about everyone at Parkville has been kicked out of school, it feels like no-one wants you and you don't belong there so you leave
- Police talk to you like shit, your name becomes 'red-hot' because of something you did a long time ago or because of your family and you can never get away, they harass you and show you no respect
- You earn money and you get used to it, at the time it feels better than being treated like shit by adults who don't understand you

#### Growing up - family and friends

- If you grow up in a family or community where crime is normal and violence is normal, you grow up thinking that's what life is meant to be like, by the time you realise it's not, you're kind of already in that world and you're doing things that are really hard to stop doing
- Just growing up and seeing unsafe environments and no money and stuff

- Sometimes you know you're never going to have anything, because you've got no job, no hope and so sometimes you just take things
- The way that you grow up, you live in a bad environment, there's drugs everywhere and money troubles
- Parents not caring about their children's wellbeing or their actions
- You want to fit in, to belong and if that's what all of your friends are doing, you do it too... things start small and it gets really hectic really quick
- You start hanging around with the wrong people
- There's a thrill in doing this stuff, we're teenagers and we don't always think, we just go along with stuff and if you haven't really had anyone to show you the right way, you do things the wrong way

### Drugs

- When you are on drugs and everyone around you is on drugs, you can become a different person
- Drugs make you do things that you would never normally do
- You use drugs and then you need money to get more so you do awful shit that you shouldn't and then you feel ashamed of what you've done and so you think it doesn't matter any more so you do more of the bad shit that makes you feel shame and then you end up in here

*What can people in the community (community groups, schools, police, DHHS etc) do to help reduce crime among young people?*

### Most adults want to help but they don't know how:

- They talk to us like we're 3 years old, I hate that so much
- Less judgements, be more open minded
- Don't just look at us as criminals, we're humans too
- It took 3 workers until I found one that I liked, he was straight-up with me and didn't treat me like I was an idiot
- Adults say they will do stuff but they often don't
- We need good role models, people that get us
- We need people who know how to talk to young people, who know how to help us
- Try to stop judging young people for what they have done and help them to learn other ways to do it

More support and programs

- Provide more engaging programs that kids like attending
- That give people (like the police) the opportunity to see that we're not just bad kids or criminals
- We need things that we can take responsibility for – we can do more than you think
- It isn't always easy to help us or get to know us, learn from the adults who know how to do it, we know they give a shit and that makes all the difference
- Places we can go to keep our minds busy
- Our families need your support too
- YSAS workers in Dandy are good, most of them anyway
- Sporting programs and fitness
- Music programs that we actually want to do

School

- Expulsion should be banned
- Unless you do something really bad like burn down a school, you shouldn't get expelled
- Kids who get into fights or act crazy in school need help from the adults but instead they get kicked out and then there's nothing for them
- Just about every kid at Parkville has been kicked out of school, they don't want us, so they get rid of us when we need their support
- Try to help us feel comfortable at school, like we belong there
- Help us to finish year 12, it isn't easy

*Why is it so hard not to re-offend when you get out of Parkville?*

- It's the same answers as the first question, all the exact same people and situations are still there, nothing has really changed
- When you decide while you're at Parkville that you're not to get caught up in all that shit again and then you try when you get out but you fail; that is the worst feeling, you feel like nothing and then you don't care anymore, you just give up

- Maybe we need to know that its ok if you fail a bit when you first get out, changing is hard and when we don't do it straight away we feel like a failure, we need to be able to learn from our mistakes
- Your friends that are bad influences
- When you have family problems and you turn to drugs again, you usually re-offend
- There is a thrill that some people get from doing crimes
- Some workers don't contribute; they don't give you a fair chance- they set you up to fail
- You go to your appointments or your school and you feel judged so you don't want to be there and if you don't go they put you back in here
- When I'm on drugs, I don't want to go to my appointments because I feel rude, I feel like its wrong, so I don't go and then it gets worse and I'm in trouble again
- Because you're already in that routine and you want to have money like you did before you got locked up
- Sometimes with the stress of trying to live a normal life in the community and peer pressure

*What things should be happening at Parkville to help more kids succeed when they get out of here?*

- An organisation that teaches kids a trade and support workers that actually get you a job so you've got something to go back to
- More community leaves for everyday things so that you can prepare yourself for leaving
- Do things together on the unit, like you do in the real world, cook dinner together, talk about shit that's going on, have people around you who believe in you
- Regular meetings with your family and other important people so that you can make a real plan for when you get out – sometimes they don't even involve us or our families in organising that stuff
- Support with housing
- Chances to take on leadership, to have good experiences
- Going to work programs, getting certificates and other things that you can actually do on the outside
- More useful training

- Programs that match what you want to do on the outside

### **Submission 25 – Student from Ulabara Unit, Malmsbury YJC**

The kinds of things that can be done to avoid critical incident on the unit or stop a code from escalating when it does happen is for staff or SERT members to stop threatening kids when they do something wrong and figure out a solution for them to handle incidents better. Because when other clients see another client getting hurt they will just jump in and start a riot.

The safety and security of staff and young people can be maintained by treating everyone fair no matter what nationality they are and by having enough staff members to get clients up everyday because most riots happen because of lockdown.

Young people on remand for so long get frustrated and they start thinking about what would happen to them at court every day.

Young people in custody who have had significant exposure to trauma, alcohol, drugs and involvement in child protection and or/ mental health issues should be treated in a medical environment instead of being incarcerated in a juvenile.

Separating young people from their families and communities has a huge impact on them with their friends in the community and lose contact with their role models which would make them reoffend more. Culture is very important and being in custody doesn't help them learn about their culture.

Some options that would help to keep young people out of youth justice centres is to get guidance from ex-criminals and people who have been through the system and more programs that would help them get out of trouble and support in the community.

All YJ workers are different, some workers actually do their best to help you and some workers set you up to fail which is not good for young people in custody who are trying to make change in their lives. Young people need more supportive workers.

### **Submission 26 – Student from Remand North, Parkville YJP**

To avoid codes there should be harsher consequences in the Parkville and Malmsbury precincts. Clients who get in codes should get segregated which means that you will be by yourself for a couple of days but is reviewed every day for improvement. If you fail to improve you might stay segregated for longer. Staff should look for little things like for emotions and behaviour etc.

If you get involved in a code during two 1 day periods you will be in segregation for longer. You will have no canteen and less time to spend outside. So when you go back to the segregation unit your time spent outside will be hard. Thirty minutes is the max and if its serious like code white, aqua etc time might be added to your sentence and time in remand.

Workers need to know when a code might happen. Things like listening to conversation and warning clients before a code might happen and the consequences they will receive. Clients should get a harsher outcome if they incite violence. Other clients should help staff to stop codes, clients

**Submission 27 – Student from Remand North, Parkville YJP**

More focus on medical attention + medication to calm people down

SESG pisses me off, I feel like they target specific people here and that's unfair. Anybody can take advantage in their job, but its more serious because they have weapons. What gives them rights to treat us violently if they feel like it?

If you don't like kids you should get a different job and not be working in a youth detention centre. Everyone who works here should have at least a cert 2 in youth work.

People that don't have education in youth work (experience), feel as though it's an easy job and do not take the actions and behaviours of the clients seriously. This can be extremely frustrating because each client has different needs and requires unique attention I feel as though the number of experienced staff has receded in the past few years. Being a client that has spent some year in the precinct I have noticed.

Make sure no conflict of interest between staff and clients.

Over the years I have noticed staff use personal information against clients which has worried me. Personal information should be personal or at least restricted to certain people, when personal information has been used on me before I have felt vulnerable and unsettled.

Every worker should have a camera on them to protect the clients and staff.