



Ministerial Statement

A BALANCED APPROACH TO JUVENILE JUSTICE IN VICTORIA

Hon Christine Campbell MP
Minister for Community Services

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MINISTER'S FOREWORD



It is with pleasure that I make this Ministerial Statement, indicating the importance that both I, as Minister for Community Services, and the Bracks Labor Government place in Juvenile Justice.

A balanced approach to Juvenile Justice is vital if there is to be community confidence in our Juvenile Justice system.

Successive governments have made important contributions to the development of the Victorian Juvenile Justice system. Unfortunately, this bipartisan approach was discarded by the Kennett Government with its intention to introduce privatised custodial care into the system.

My Statement represents a return to partnership with key stakeholders who, through consultation, have contributed to the re-affirmation of key principles and future directions. The Statement provides the basis for preserving the positive developments to date as well as revitalising the system through a number of new initiatives.

This system reform will strengthen Juvenile Justice as a continuum of prevention, early intervention and graduated sanctions that aim to develop the life skills of young people, support their rehabilitation and link them into their communities.

I believe the Victorian community can feel confident that the Juvenile Justice system will continue to contribute to public safety by supporting vulnerable youth, strengthening families and building stronger communities.

Christine Campbell

The Hon Christine Campbell MP
Minister for Community Services

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GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S REHABILITATION AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

A BALANCED APPROACH TO JUVENILE JUSTICE IN VICTORIA

1 INTRODUCTION

A new strategy for
Juvenile Justice
reform

As Minister for Community Services, I am honoured to present to Members of the House, this Government's reform strategy for the diversion from, and rehabilitation of, young people in custodial care. While it is pleasing that Victoria's Juvenile Justice system leads the nation in providing a wide range of highly effective rehabilitation strategies for young offenders, juvenile crime continues to have a high public profile throughout Australia.

The profile of young offenders is changing and there are many challenges facing government and the community as we move into the future. The social context of juvenile crime is changing as is the nature of offences. Young offenders have more complex behaviours and issues to be addressed. I will outline how existing policies no longer keep pace and why I believe a new and comprehensive strategy of reform is required.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

A whole-of-
government
approach to crime
prevention

The primary focus of the Bracks Labor Government in the area of Juvenile Justice will be crime prevention. A whole-of-government approach will be taken to reduce the rates of crime in the community. The *Juvenile Justice Reform Strategy* is part of this approach. This Strategy aims to prevent low risk young people from entering the Juvenile Justice system, to rehabilitate more serious young offenders, and to support young offenders after release from custodial care to establish a non-offending lifestyle.

Our commitment to young people and the community is to offer an effective Juvenile Justice system with the goal of ensuring community safety.

Community-based
services to help
young offenders

We recognise that the most socially responsible and cost effective response to young offenders is to establish community-based services where most young offenders are dealt with in their own communities. Detention for young offenders should only occur as a last resort (*Community Services Policy 1999*).

Victoria will only remain Australia’s pacesetter in Juvenile Justice if it continues to develop innovative and progressive responses to juvenile crime. The previous Government’s response to the increase in numbers of young offenders sentenced to custody was to plan to build a new private Juvenile Justice facility.

Instead of going down the ‘get tough’ path of increased incarceration, we will be working to reform the system.

I believe the complex issues associated with the rapidly rising numbers of 17–21 year-old young people sentenced to custody require changes to current legislation, new policy and improved initiatives.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The current legislative framework of the *Children and Young Persons Act 1989* provides a range of options in the sentencing of young offenders. Sentencing young people to secure Juvenile Justice facilities has been accepted as a last resort for the most serious and persistent offenders. The vast majority of young offenders appearing in the Children’s Court have committed low-level crimes and receive non-custodial sentences.

Victoria has a unique ‘dual track’ custodial sentencing option for young people aged 17 at the time of offending, but aged less than 21 at the time of sentencing. It provides an option for the adult courts to sentence a young person to a Juvenile Justice Centre rather than an adult prison. Courts can order 17–20 year-olds to serve their sentence in a Youth Training Centre where *“there are considered reasonable prospects for the rehabilitation of the young offender”* and *“the young offender is particularly impressionable, immature or likely to be subjected to undesirable influences in an adult prison”* (*Sentencing Act 1991*).

The Government clearly has a non-delegatable duty of care to young offenders in custody including responsibility for the operation of custodial services. This position has been strongly supported in all my discussions with the united coalition of churches, and legal, academic and interest groups. Government will continue to work with non-government services in the delivery of quality programs.

Mandatory sentencing, as practised in some parts of Australia, and the previous Government’s attempt to privatise Juvenile Justice facilities are not in the interests of the community. These go against the very nature of a fair, effective and just criminal justice system.

JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM STRATEGY

The Bracks Labor Government's *Juvenile Justice Reform Strategy* comprises a progressive and exemplary set of measures of legislative amendments, enhancement of the 'dual track' system, a three-pronged approach to the expansion of services and new funding and program initiatives. Most importantly, it builds on the features of the current system that contribute to crime prevention and rehabilitation of young offenders with complex behaviours. It tackles the challenge of growth in the number of young offenders by improving the continuum of services.

Juvenile crime is not just a legal problem, it is also a social problem with social causes and effects. Socio-economic disadvantage, poor educational attainment, family breakdown, sexual abuse and violence, family drug abuse, unemployment and a history of failures — their own, their family's and their support systems — all increase the likelihood of young people offending.

The Government's commitment is unequivocal — ***"to adopt a balanced approach to Juvenile Justice which responds to the individual young person and that person's needs and circumstances, the victims of crime and the interests of the community"*** (*Community Services Policy 1999*). To this end, I have sought advice from my Department, interest groups, the judiciary and academics.

The Government will initiate the *Juvenile Justice Reform Strategy* based on a three-pronged approach to tackle these challenges by:

- **Diverting young offenders** from entering the Juvenile Justice system, or from progressing further into a life of crime;
- Providing **better rehabilitation** of high risk young offenders; and
- **Expanding pre-release, transition and post-release support programs** for custodial clients to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

A major shift will be to strengthen community-based options to respond better to the many complex problems of young people in the Juvenile Justice system.

Initiatives will be implemented progressively over a two-year timeframe which commenced in July 2000.

Reform is needed
in several areas

We face significant challenges in the Juvenile Justice system as we do in the criminal justice system more broadly. The profile of young offenders indicates reform is needed to address:

- The growth in numbers of young offenders aged 17–21 years who are in custody;
- The increase in drug abuse and drug-related offences;
- The increase in young women offenders; and
- The over representation of young Aboriginal and young Vietnamese people.

PROFILE OF YOUNG OFFENDERS

Juvenile crime is a
social problem

The profile of young offenders has changed markedly over the past five years reflecting the social problems faced by all Victorians — including the very real drug problem.

A snapshot of young people in detention in a Senior Youth Training Centre shows:

- More than 65 per cent are serving their first custodial sentence;
- About 20 per cent were previously, or still are, under the responsibility of the child and adolescent protection services of the Department of Human Services due to abuse or neglect;
- Young people with intellectual and/or psychiatric disabilities are relatively common with nearly 10 per cent under close monitoring due to the risk of suicide or self-harm;
- More than 20 per cent are from a non English-speaking background and about 9 per cent are young Aboriginal people;
- 80 per cent have been sentenced for drug or alcohol-related offences;
- Many have been excluded from school at an early age or have a history of school or work failure; and
- Many have been victims of crime themselves.

As clearly stated by Justice Fogarty in opening the Roundtable on Privatising Youth Detention last year: *“These statistics speak much about disadvantage, despair and desperation. These older teenagers, now in custody, are as much about the legacies of policy and resource choices made in the past as they are reflections of the present.”*

GROWTH IN NUMBERS

There is an increase in offenders in custody aged 17–21

A major challenge for the Juvenile Justice system is the growth in the number of 17–21 year-old young people in custody in a Senior Youth Training Centre. In the past four years, the number of 17–21 year-old males in custody has nearly doubled — from 69 in mid-1996 to a peak of 132 in 1999/2000. At the end of June 2000, this figure was 124.

Increase most dramatic in young women offenders in custody

Even more dramatic has been the rise in the number of young women in custody. Numbers at Parkville Youth Residential Centre rose from six in mid-1998 to a peak of 35 in May this year. At the end of June 2000, this figure was 24, almost all of whom were sentenced by an adult court.

There has been no such increase in the number of 10–16 year-old juvenile offenders sentenced by the Children’s Court. This can be explained in part by the sentencing approach of the *Children and Young Persons Act 1989* which establishes a sentencing hierarchy. This provides a wide range of sentencing options to the Court.

Why is it that the number of young people in our Senior Youth Training Centres has increased so dramatically in the past few years? Does it mean that crime rates are spiralling out of control?

Thankfully, the answer is no.

In comparison with other states, Victoria has a low youth crime rate and lower number per capita of young offenders held in custody. It is, therefore, disturbing that there is this growth in the number of 17–21 year-old offenders undergoing custodial sentences.

Drug-related crime is growing

This growth relates to the increased proportion of offending linked to substance abuse and drug-related crime, and an associated increase in the length of custodial sentences.

In its most recent Annual Report, the Youth Parole Board noted that: *“From 1996/97 to 1998/99 the number of drug offences resulting in a custodial order has increased by 79 per cent. This trend has been most pronounced for the 17–20 year-olds for drug use/possession and trafficking offences.”*

The Government aims for a preventative approach

Support for young people is essential

A 'harm-minimisation' focus on substance abuse

Privatisation

The former Government's response to the increased demand on custodial beds for young offenders was simply to expand secure facilities — a bricks and mortar approach — and they planned for the private sector to build, own and operate a new youth detention facility.

I am concerned that young people are still accommodated in sub-standard and totally unacceptable conditions in part of the old Turana complex due to this policy.

The *Juvenile Justice Reform Strategy* aims to limit the numbers in custody and finally allow the eventual closure of the old Turana facility.

COMPLEX NEEDS OF YOUNG OFFENDERS

The Juvenile Justice system must provide an adequate response to young people's complex behaviours and needs. Many young offenders act impulsively, have chaotic, substance-abusing lifestyles and all too often their family relationships and community links have been fractured. The support of these young people by significant others, including extended family, mentors and community service networks is essential for their rehabilitation.

The most critical needs and issues to address are:

Substance Abuse

Abstinence in the short term is difficult to achieve for many in the Juvenile Justice system. A 'harm-minimisation' focus will be further adopted, encouraging these young people to seek counselling, treatment or other assistance to reduce or manage their drug use safely.

Young people with substance abuse problems and complex behaviours are often excluded from accommodation services and can become, or remain, homeless. More appropriate accommodation options will be available in the community. Initiatives to support young offenders with substance abuse issues will be consistent with the directions of the Drug Policy Expert Committee.

Minority groups to be addressed

Aboriginal Justice Agreement sets new directions

Particular issues for young women

Young Offenders from Vietnamese and Cambodian Backgrounds

Young people from Vietnamese and Cambodian backgrounds (particularly Vietnamese young people) have often progressed through the criminal justice system far more quickly and without the supports offered to other young offenders. Development of culturally-appropriate programs and diversion strategies will occur.

Young Aboriginal Offenders

Young Aboriginal people remain an unacceptable 15 times more likely to end up in custody.

This Government has acknowledged that past policies of separating Indigenous children from their families continue to have a profound and lasting effect on the economic, social and cultural outcomes of Indigenous peoples in Victoria.

Considerable work has begun with local Aboriginal communities and co-operatives in trying to reduce the number of young Aboriginal people entering the Juvenile Justice system and other parts of the criminal justice system. This work will be further developed. *The Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement* will reinforce the Government's commitment to the implementation of the recommendations of the *Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody* and comprises a range of initiatives. This Agreement will provide a framework for Government's further joint work with Aboriginal communities to assist young Aboriginal offenders and those at risk.

Similar to the *Koori Services Improvement Strategy* within the Department of Human Services, the Agreement emphasises the need for Koori community involvement in the development and delivery of policy and programs.

Young Female Offenders

Most young women aged 17–21 in Parkville Youth Residential Centre have been convicted for a drug-related offence or present with a significant heroin dependency. The transition from custody to community is also very difficult for most young women. Enhancement of accommodation and community transition supports and links to drug treatment services will occur to improve young women's self esteem and life skills, minimise the likelihood of sexual exploitation by others and reduce the risk of reoffending.

New initiatives
for reform

The *Juvenile Justice Reform Strategy* is a major Government commitment of progressive measures that both builds on the unique features of the existing system and provides innovative initiatives in response to the challenges I have outlined.

BIPARTISAN ISSUE

A robust system is essential to respond to the diverse needs of young offenders. The *Juvenile Justice Reform Strategy* will promote:

- Services which are responsive to young people's family and culture and which are gender and age-appropriate;
- Development of best practice in early intervention, diversion and community-based services;
- Joint initiatives between the Departments of Human Services and Justice, and other agencies; and
- Strategies to support the victims of crime.

I wish to put on the record that Juvenile Justice in Victoria has benefited from successive Labor and Coalition Governments supporting the 'dual track' system for 17–21 year-olds which is unique to Victoria.

WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH

A whole-of-government approach for the *Juvenile Justice Reform Strategy* will mean responsibility will be shared across government. The co-ordination of policy, planning and new initiatives in the broader criminal justice system will be achieved by a special sub-committee of Cabinet. The Review of Community Correctional Services, the Review of Post-Compulsory Education and the work of the Drug Policy Expert Committee will inform this sub-committee.

I will work with the Minister for Corrections and Police and Emergency Services, the Attorney General, Minister for Youth, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Health, Minister for Aged Care and Housing, Minister for Education and the Minister for Post-Compulsory Education, Training and Employment to achieve the Government's commitments.

Working together
for reform

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The *Children and Young Persons Act 1989* currently only applies to young offenders up to the age of 17 at the time of committing an offence. The Attorney-General and I are working to bring Victoria into line with most other states in recognising that the criminal jurisdiction of the Children's Court should be extended from 17 to 18 years of age. This will ensure a wider range of options for this group and will better complement the 'dual track' system.

The Government's commitment to reform in this area was recently indicated by the decision to elevate the status of the Children's Court.

The Act acknowledges the immaturity and vulnerability of young people and requires the Children's Court to sentence a young person to the least restrictive form of punishment. It is only as a last resort — when alternative community sentences have been fully considered, attempted and failed — that a sentence of detention is ordered. This has been effective in diverting many offenders away from the criminal justice system.

DUAL TRACK SYSTEM

As mentioned earlier, Victoria has a unique 'dual track' custodial sentencing option for young people aged 17 at the time of offending but less than 21 at the time of sentencing.

The Juvenile Justice Senior Youth Training Centre system operates within the broader justice system. Young people who offend over the age of 17 appear before adult courts. The primary provider of correctional services — both for custodial services and for the supervision of community-based orders — is the adult correctional system managed through the Department of Justice.

All young people aged greater than 17 at the time of offending and who are on community-based orders are supervised within the adult correctional system by the Department of Justice.

We recognise the benefits of a Senior Youth Training Centre sentence as a specialist service response by virtue of its vulnerability criteria, its developmental and rehabilitative focus, its emphasis on sound release planning, links to family and community, and a generally low security setting. Every effort is made to ensure that entry criteria, court advice and internal client management processes operate accordingly.

I wish to highlight the principles applied by the Court of Appeal case, *R v Mills 1998*, which summarises how a young offender should be sentenced through three general principles:

- i. "Youth of an offender, particularly a first offender, should be a primary consideration for a sentencing court where that matter properly arises.*
- ii. In the case of a youthful offender, rehabilitation is usually far more important than general deterrence. This is because punishment may in fact lead to further offending. Thus, for example, individualised treatment focusing on rehabilitation is to be preferred. (Rehabilitation benefits the community as well as the offender).*
- iii. A youthful offender is not to be sent to an adult prison if such a disposition can be avoided, especially if he is beginning to appreciate the effect of his past criminality. The benchmark of what is serious as justifying adult imprisonment may be quite high in the case of a youthful offender; and, where the offender has not previously been incarcerated, a shorter period of imprisonment may be justified."*

Such propositions are useful guides to the Government's directions for Juvenile Justice.

SENTENCING

Unlike the Federal Government's totally unjustifiable response to the mandatory sentencing issue in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, the Victorian Government takes a systemic approach to dealing with youth crime based on a whole-of-government and multi-agency partnership approach.

Government has a responsibility to provide the most protective and safe response for young people and the community. The legislative mandate establishes the onus of statutory responsibility for Juvenile Justice services with the Department of Human Services.

Mandatory sentencing can have a devastating effect on the lives of young people, their families and communities, particularly and disproportionately on young Aboriginal people. It is not a cheap and effective solution to dealing with crime but a mechanism resulting in the most marginalised young people becoming entrapped by this law. Mandatory sentencing is unjust, racist and immoral and an affront to judicial independence.

While custody is an appropriate option for a small group of serious and persistent young offenders, legislation in this State affirms the principle that custody should be the sentence of last resort for young people (as it does for adults). Magistrates and Judges must be permitted to use their discretion and exercise their judicial independence so as to ensure all relevant factors are taken into consideration in sentencing.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

To date, the Juvenile Justice program has not paid sufficient attention to victim issues. As a first step, I have directed that victim issues are to be given prominence in the rehabilitative programs for young people and that training programs for staff should include an awareness of victim issues.

Group conferencing has been established on a limited basis in Victoria and is well placed as a pre-sentence, Children's Court-based option targeting young people found guilty of offences. This successful program brings together the victim, the young offender, their families and community supports to address the concerns and issues relevant to each.

YOUTH PAROLE BOARD

A crucial feature of the Victorian Juvenile Justice system is the Youth Parole Board, which is legislatively empowered to consider parole for all young people sentenced to a period of detention. Parole permits young offenders to serve part of their sentence in the community under the guidance and supervision of their parole officer. The Board has to balance the rehabilitation needs of the young person with community safety.

POLICE CAUTIONING

Very few young people become persistent offenders. The Juvenile Justice system must differentiate its responses between the more common but less serious offenders, and the serious and persistent offenders.

One of the reasons for the successful approach to Juvenile Justice is the work of the Victoria Police. The Victoria Police cautioning system leads those of other states. Cautioning is an effective way of reducing the number of first-time offenders appearing before the courts and will be expanded.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

The *Juvenile Justice Reform Strategy* will provide resources to address the recognised lack of local research data and analysis of the trends in recidivism of young offenders, the impact of programs on offending behaviours and examination of client service data of complex needs.

Earlier this year I released the findings of Victoria's first comprehensive research survey of 9,000 students from Years 7, 9 and 11 titled *Improving the Lives of Young Victorians in Our Community*. It informs us about adverse social conditions that can lead to young people offending and strategies for the prevention of youth crime.

Funding injection
for Juvenile Justice
reform

The next two years will be an exciting time for Juvenile Justice in achieving the ambitious goals I have outlined for meeting the Government's commitment to young people, victims and community safety. The Bracks Labor Government has provided \$34.2 million over four years (along with \$5.4 million reallocated from the previous Government's privatisation bid) to implement the strategy of the three-pronged approach to Juvenile Justice. An additional \$2.2 million has been allocated for capital projects.

Diversion

DIVERSION INITIATIVES

- The Department of Human Services specialist Juvenile Justice Court Advice Program will be extended from the existing pilot service at Melbourne, Frankston, Dandenong and Sunshine Magistrates' Courts, to cover other key courts in metropolitan Melbourne and rural centres. This program, a joint initiative with the Chief Magistrate, will provide Magistrates and Judges with specialised advice on sentencing options and supports for young people.
- A Bail and Court Support Service for 17–20 year-olds will be trialled with workers employed to support the Court Advice Program to reduce the number of young offenders remanded to prison.
- Diversionary support programs providing culturally-appropriate services will be enhanced and expanded for young Aboriginal people, young Vietnamese/Cambodian people and young women.
- Projects are also being developed with the Department of Justice to pilot alternate approaches to working with young people on adult community correctional orders.
- We will work with Victoria Police to examine ways to expand the extensive program of police cautioning of young people involved in less serious crimes.

Rehabilitation

REHABILITATION INITIATIVES

- Koori support workers, and Vietnamese/Cambodian program support and community liaison workers, will be employed at all three Juvenile Justice Centres — Parkville Youth Residential Centre, Malmsbury Juvenile Justice Centre and Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre.

- Existing programs will be expanded to better address offending behaviour and substance abuse issues, and to enhance the prospects of young offenders' reintegration back into the community.
- Rehabilitation programs in Senior Youth Training Centres will be strengthened to provide more effective life skills training, education and counselling programs.
- Juvenile Justice Centre training programs, provided with TAFEs (Technical and Further Education), will be extended to improve employment prospects of young offenders.
- Health services including counselling, drug withdrawal services, dental services and family support work, will be further extended.
- Innovative, residential drug treatment programs on site at Juvenile Justice Centres, such as *The Edge* pilot program at Malmsbury Juvenile Justice Centre, will be expanded.

TRANSITION AND POST-RELEASE INITIATIVES

To ensure that wherever possible there is continuity of care for the young person on their return to the community:

- The Department of Human Services' community support and community house program that has been successfully trialled for the past two years for young women in custody will be extended to male young offenders prior to their release from custody.
- A new mentoring program to ensure that young offenders are supported by a significant adult will offer guidance and assistance in their transition to living in the community.
- Existing post-release agencies will be funded to work with additional young people leaving custody on remissions and also for a specialist drug and alcohol outreach support worker.
- The range of post-release agencies will be expanded.
- Specialist post-release support responses will be scoped and resourced for young Vietnamese/Cambodian offenders, young Aboriginal offenders and young women offenders.

- Resources will be increased for parole supervision — including intensive supervision immediately post-release and access to brokerage funds to tailor services to the individual needs of young offenders. New departmental senior parole workers will be recruited in each region.
- The pre-release program will be reshaped to enable Juvenile Justice Centre staff and community-based staff to pursue more effectively all avenues of employment and training, and ensure suitable supported accommodation and other support services are available for young people.
- Supported education and vocational training opportunities will be developed in conjunction with the Department of Education, Employment and Training.

EVALUATION, TRAINING AND SUPPORT

To ensure the above initiatives are effectively implemented the following will occur:

- An evaluation by external evaluators will be undertaken.
- Indicators for each initiative will be developed to measure achievement of the strategy.
- A PhD student research fellowship in Juvenile Justice studies will be funded.
- Funds will be made available to assist Vietnamese and Aboriginal students undertake welfare/youth work studies.
- An extensive staff training program will complement the initiatives.
- A new recruitment strategy will be developed to encourage Aboriginal, Vietnamese and female employment in Juvenile Justice programs.
- Improved data systems will be developed within the Juvenile Justice program and across other justice agencies.

The Juvenile Justice Reform Strategy needs to be a co-operative effort

COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIPS

The *Juvenile Justice Reform Strategy* will build on the strong partnership and multi-agency approach that already exists between the Government and the non-government sector in the delivery of Juvenile Justice services.

I will continue to meet with the judiciary and the Youth Parole Board, and I will continue to host Roundtable forums with non-government agencies, academics and Juvenile Justice staff. These forums have assisted with setting the new initiatives for the Strategy.

I would particularly like to acknowledge the contribution of key academics and stakeholders who attended the first Juvenile Justice Roundtable including the Criminal Bar Association, the Law Institute, the Defence for Children International, the Catholic Commission for Justice, Development and Peace, Jesuit Social Services, Catholic Social Services, Care and Communication Concern, Youth for Christ and the Youth Substance Abuse Service in developing this Strategy.

Finally, I wish to talk about our dedicated staff and the young people themselves.

SKILLED PERSONNEL

Juvenile Justice staff bring specialist skills to deal with these often difficult and troubled young people. They play an active and vital role in contributing to the rehabilitation of these young people and their reintegration into the community.

TRAINING

Skilled staff are essential and I will do all I can to promote services which facilitate the continual upgrading of skills. Victoria is the only state requiring its Juvenile Justice workforce to have mandatory qualifications.

YOUNG PEOPLES' VIEWS

The views of young offenders themselves provide a perspective that cannot be gained from other sources. My own discussions with young people, the case studies provided by the *Coalition Against Privatising Juvenile Justice (1999)*, and the comments from young people to the *Catholic Commission for Justice, Development and Peace (2000)*, keep me focused on why we need to change.

The pathways of youth offending must continue to be critically examined to ensure Government resources are expended on initiatives that meet the age-appropriate and developmental needs of young offenders.

Staff play a central role

We listen to young people

Prevention and
positive intervention
is the key

Implementation of these new initiatives, which underpin this Government's policy commitment for Juvenile Justice, will contribute to:

- An increased diversion of 17–20 year-old young offenders away from the criminal justice system;
- An overall reduction in the number held in custody;
- A system which responds in a manner conducive to the rehabilitation of young offenders by providing youth-focused, gender and culturally-specific case management of young offenders;
- A positive response to the drug issue affecting young offenders; and
- The decommissioning of sub-standard facilities used as interim accommodation at Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre (Turana).

I will report back to this Parliament and to the citizens of this State on the achievements in delivering this Government's Juvenile Justice policy. This will include its impact on community safety and on the transition and integration of young offenders back in the community after custody.

The goals of the *Juvenile Justice Reform Strategy* are:

- **Diversion and early intervention** — to prevent a “career of offending”; and
- **Timely rehabilitation** efforts coupled with **strengthened pre- and post-release programs** to ensure positive outcomes for young offenders.

This Strategy gives all those interested in Victoria's commitment to these vulnerable and marginalised young people and to the safety of the community an assurance of a positive way ahead.

Hon Christine Campbell MP

Minister for Community Services

August 2000