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NT can lead the nation in reform for children and families

The Northern Territory Government's \$229.6 million investment into reforming its child protection and youth justice systems gives it an opportunity to lead the nation in evidence-based reform, says Jesuit Social Services.

"While the atrocities within the Territory's child protection and youth justice systems that sparked the Royal Commission will never be forgotten, it is positive to see that these failings have led to a whole-of-government approach to drive reform," says Andrew Yule, Jesuit Social Services' General Manager, Strategic Communications and Engagement.

"All of the evidence from Australia and around the world shows us that the best way to deliver safer communities is to create a youth justice system that holds young people to account for their actions and also supports them to address the issues behind their offending and steers them towards positive pathways.

"The Government's five year implementation plan *Safe, Thriving and Connected: Generational Change for Children and Families* outlines how it will work towards this in light of the 227 recommendations made by the final report of the Royal Commission late last year."

Mr Yule says the organisation particularly welcomes the commitment to raising the age of criminal responsibility, which Jesuit Social Services has long called for, as well as the \$9.9 million commitment over four years to divert young people from crime and prevent future offending.

Jesuit Social Services delivers Youth Justice Group Conferencing throughout Darwin, Palmerston and Katherine. This problem-solving approach brings young people who have committed offences together with those who have been impacted, such as victims of crime and family, to help them take responsibility for their actions and make amends.

"A program like this, based on a model we have delivered in Victoria for more than a decade, has been proven to reduce re-offending compared to young people who exit detention. We welcome the Government's acknowledgement that programs like this have the ability to transform lives and ultimately make our communities safer," says Mr Yule.

The NT Government has also allocated \$71.4 million to replace Don Dale and Alice Springs Youth Detention Centres, and has previously announced that the new facility in Darwin will be a secure cottage-style facility to accommodate 30 young people.

Mr Yule says that the transition away from youth detention centres to youth justice training facilities is in line with local and international evidence about the best way to rehabilitate young people.

"Today's significant announcement will create better futures for all Territorians."

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