

Youthlaw Policy Platform 2015

We call on Government to:

Service system & support

1. Implement a cross portfolio and integrated Government policy and service response to the needs of vulnerable young people in Victoria (e.g. Vulnerable Youth Framework 2010).
2. A significant increase in trauma informed & professional therapeutic services to young people with a childhood history of abuse and maltreatment (provided through settings including early intervention and diversion programs, juvenile detention, secure welfare and child protection).
3. Significantly increase the provision of mental health, substance abuse and homeless support services for vulnerable and marginalised young people.
4. Restore and increase investment in education pathways, programs and supports for young people at risk of or disengaging with mainstream education (eg. secondary school VCAL programs, alternative schools, TAFE, other training providers and youth support services such as Youth Connect). The removal of financial and regulation disincentives and a focus on provision to regional and rural Victoria.
5. Significantly increase funding of services and programs to respond to family violence and sexual abuse.

Early intervention and Diversion from the criminal justice system

6. Continue to provide and expand early intervention programs (e.g. the state wide Youth Support Service that targets at risk young people between 10 and 17 years).
7. Amend the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 to legislate diversion options in the Children's Court.
8. Invest in state-wide youth diversion programs that are flexible, trauma-informed, culturally relevant and available to all young people.
9. Invest substantially in Koori specific initiatives to address the high proportion of Koori young people in the criminal justice system.
10. Take a well-being and restorative approach to young people in child protection residential and out of home care including practices that reduce police involvement in response to challenging behaviours of young people in care.
11. Restore the number of youth justice workers employed by the Department of Human Services to at least 2012 levels.
12. Establishment of a spent convictions scheme to reduce the stigma attached to criminal records

Fines System

13. Facilitate the early exit from the infringements system of young people with special circumstances and without capacity to pay.
14. The Victorian infringements system for children (CAYPINS) should avoid unnecessarily bringing children into contact with the court or criminal justice systems.

Detention & Prison

15. Reduce the high number of young people on remand by reviewing bail and remand practices and funding more bail support services.
16. Legislate to prevent the transfer of young people under 18 years from youth detention into the adult prison system.
17. Ban the solitary confinement of young people in detention.

Justice Reinvestment

18. Adopt and implement a justice reinvestment approach to reduce crime and incarceration and pilot Justice Reinvestment in Victoria, targeting children and young people.

Police Accountability

19. Independent monitoring and evaluation of police training in regard to critical and life-threatening confrontations with vulnerable people including young people.
20. Establish and adequately fund an effective independent investigatory body for misconduct complaints against police including mistreatment, excessive use of force and police shootings. (eg. Resource and expand the Independent Broad –based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) to independently investigate complaints against police and have the power to charge and prosecute their misconduct).
21. Require the Crime Statistics Agency to produce publically available accessible analysis of police data and crime statistics that explains the nature and extent of youth offending (including infringements).