

TRANSCRIPT

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Inquiry into youth justice centres in Victoria

Melbourne — 19 April 2017

Members

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Ms Nina Springle — Deputy Chair

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Ms Colleen Hartland

Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips

Witnesses

Ms Julie Edwards, CEO,

Mr Daniel Clements, General Manager, Justice Programs, Jesuit Social Services.

The CHAIR — If everyone is ready, I will open the hearing and welcome everybody present, including those in the gallery. The committee is hearing evidence today in relation to the inquiry into youth justice centres in Victoria, and the evidence is being recorded. To the witnesses who have come this morning, thank you. Welcome to this public hearing. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege; therefore you are protected against any action for what you say here today, but if you go outside and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege.

I invite you to address the committee. I understand you have a presentation. We are asking everybody to go for about 5 to 10 minutes, and then we will open it up to questions.

Ms EDWARDS — Thank you. Julie Edwards, CEO of Jesuit Social Services, and my colleague Daniel Clements, who is general manager of all of our justice programs. I begin just by making one or two comments. Obviously, first of all we are gathering on the land of the Wurundjeri people, and we have ourselves learned a lot from our engagement with Aboriginal people, particularly in terms of care of family and community and land, so we recognise that as our starting point.

Jesuit Social Services is 40 years this year, so we are pretty pleased about that — about surviving and also just the fact that that means 40 years of engagement with young people and adults in the criminal justice system, so it is from that base that we speak. Over the years we have worked not only with that group, but, because we say they are a bit like the canary down the mine and we learn from them where the broader service system has failed them, we maintain our commitment and connection to them because we have learned a lot about the trajectory into custody and also what works in terms of the trajectory out.

Visual presentation.

Ms EDWARDS — On that basis I will start with this first slide. What we became aware of over many years was that the same postcodes kept turning up and in fact the same families ally, and because of that we undertook research into locational disadvantage and engaged Professor Tony Vinson to lead that research. We have done that over 15 years. The first report was called *Unequal in Life* in 1999. We then did it again in 2004. Those first two occasions were for Victoria and New South Wales, and then in 2007 and 2015 we did it again across the country in partnership with CSSA and mapped postcodes according to approximately 22 risk indicators.

What we found over those 15 years is that there was very little change in the postcodes where disadvantage is entrenched, that it is very hard to get movement in those postcodes and that we need a different response if we actually want to shift disadvantage and poverty — but, of particular interest to this inquiry, if we want to shift the rate of offending and entrapment in the criminal justice system. Pretty consistently some postcodes might move up or down a category, but they stayed pretty much the same over those 15 years. What we found is that — and it varies between 5 and 6 per cent — the last time it was 6 per cent of postcodes accounted for 50 per cent of the adult prison population, and in other research that we did into remand for young people in 2010 we found that 2.1 per cent of postcodes accounted for 25 per cent of the 10 to 14-year-olds who were on remand.

What we get from that is a picture of a web of disadvantage that people are caught in, and if we want to do something around that, we need to intervene early. We need to intervene in a very comprehensive, targeted, tailored way which brings together not only various government departments — and that is what most people tend to think of when we talk of place-based — but brings the community with us. Our view is, in terms of a good spend of the Australian dollar, the Victorian taxpayers dollar, we should be intervening in those areas that produce half the prison population. If we are serious about addressing crime, we should go to the causes of crime and not just blame individuals but do something about the causes of crime. So that would be our starting point.

I would also like to begin in my opening comments to say that we think that what the youth justice system in Victoria — and in fact any good youth justice system — needs is a clear vision about what it exists for, a clear purpose, and that purpose should be about the rehabilitation of young people and the safety of the community. To that end, once that is really clear, then and only then can a clear operational model be developed. That clear operational model would include what staffing profiles you want; the culture that you are trying to adopt in, for example, a detention facility; and the nature of all the interventions, including the physical environment. I will come back to that later. We are very concerned about the proposal for a large prison or detention facility for young people in Werribee.

Just about the offender rate picture that we have got up there, we all know — and the data is very clear — that for the last five years at least the offending rate, the recidivism rate, of young people has been going down in Victoria. That is the larger picture. We also know that last year there was a blip in that but even where we ended up last year was still lower than we were five years ago. What we have, we believe — and the data shows this — is not a huge crime wave, but we do have a relatively small group of young people who are committing repeat and serious offences. Jesuit Social Services takes that very seriously, and we believe we should be intervening more strongly and intensively with that group. It does not mean that we need to lift the bar and try and bring more people into the criminal justice system. That would be very counterproductive, but we do need to intervene strongly with that small group of young people.

That is a mistake, sorry; it should say ‘on remand’: ‘Too many children and young people on remand’. It is the opposite of what we are saying. We know that the number of unsentenced people has risen such that it appears to be — and we are just getting this from data from the youth justice system and anecdotally — that about 80 per cent of young people are unsentenced, on remand. That is pretty much the opposite of what it used to be in terms of 20 per cent, with 80 per cent being sentenced. In the adult criminal justice system, for example, right now, I have been to meetings at Corrections Victoria where they are concerned about it having risen to 30 per cent of people on remand. In the youth justice system we have 80. It is pretty much unheard of.

What that means when you have that number of young people on remand, with the uncertainty et cetera that goes with that, is that you have a crowded system, and you have not a clear vision and purpose, an operating model, and you have staff then who are not equipped, qualified, appropriately monitored and supported to work in that sort of system. You have them under incredible duress. So we have a sense of responsibility at Jesuit Social Services for those staff as well, who are therefore put in an environment that is not conducive to an effective outcome for the young people or for them to be able to work well.

Then what you have are things like arbitrary lockdowns. The staff at the moment, from what we are hearing anecdotally, are around 40 per cent agency staff, and we have heard at times that can even get up to 80 per cent. That is just anecdotally what we have heard. So what you have are staff not able to manage the situation and because of that doing arbitrary lockdowns and because of that young people who then feel more resentful about the fact that, one, they are unsentenced and, two, now they are being arbitrarily locked down, which means they have less access to visitors, including legal support, family and organisations like Jesuit Social Services. So we think that what got created was a perfect storm, in fact, in terms of numbers of young people in there on remand, the capacity of the staff to deal with that and the lack of a clear model and purpose about what we are trying to do, which then leads to arbitrary and unhelpful practices.

Again, we believe that what is important is that we address the underlying causes of crime — I spoke to that briefly and am happy to come back to that — and that we invest in prevention/early intervention, particularly early childhood. Again our research in 2010 into remand showed us that those postcodes that had that group of 10 to 14-year-olds were the same postcodes that performed worse on the AEDI — Australian Early Development Index — and they were the postcodes that also had the greatest number of people missing their eight-month child and maternal health check-up. So again I just point to that because the disadvantage and the trajectory into incarceration start very, very early in life.

In terms of principles for a strong youth justice system, obviously we believe there needs to be a strong network of support and accountability. We believe that it needs to be trauma informed because we know that, in the main, of the young people who end up in the system up to 66 per cent have either current or prior engagement with child protection, for example, and about 63 per cent have been excluded from school. These are Youth Parole Board figures. The figures also show the level of substance abuse and mental health problems, so we have a severely disadvantaged group of young people. If we want to turn their lives around, we need to have a healing approach, a therapeutic and trauma-informed approach, and for all staff, their physical environment and everything, needs to be geared to produce that outcome, as it is in various places around the world, producing very good outcomes.

I have spoken about remand being overused. We believe that while there may be a role for detention, it should be a last resort. I was here with Vincent Schiraldi when he presented, so I thought I would bring this slide in, which is from their work, which is about ‘reduce, reform, replace and reinvest’ — so obviously reduce the pipeline into youth detention and reform the culture that wrongly assumes that locking up kids makes us safer. We think we do have a problem in Victoria around that. It is not just the youth justice system but the broader

service system and the broader community at the moment that are taking the view that the way to keep the community safe is by locking up more and more people, and it is actually counter to the evidence about what works. I think we are all responsible for that, and we need to think about what we are doing in relation to that. We know that the youth detention centres that work best are the ones that are the least institutionalised and are more home-like facilities where young people have to keep taking responsibility for the basics of their life in terms of contributing to washing up, making a meal and doing other things that provide opportunities to learn living skills. We can reinvest those savings in a range of community services, supports and opportunities.

I would just like to conclude our presentation by repeating what I said earlier on about our concern about the new youth prison that has been announced. We saw no due process or consultation occurring into that. We understand that a decision has been made to build this facility and that consultation will occur in relation to the design. Our concern would be that, as we have said, one large facility on the edge of Melbourne is not the best way to go. Again, we believe that small, home-like facilities are the best way to produce the outcomes we want. We also think this is going to happen at significant cost to the Victorian community, and once we build that we will fill it. We just think that we are not following what is world's best practice in relation to that.

The non-negotiables for us that we believe are under threat are about 'no child in an adult prison'. We are seeing that right now, so we are very concerned about that. We believe detention should be used as a last resort only and that we need to have child and youth-specific responses, not treating children as mini adults. We believe we have a window of opportunity while children and young people are young. We know that the latest research would say that the brain continues to develop to 25, and 28 even, and we believe that is an opportunity to reset someone's life. That opportunity should be taken rather than entrenching them further in the criminal justice system and surrounding them with people who are in more trouble than themselves.

We think it is very important that the dual-track system is maintained. I always get muddled up as to which way it is — whether it is 40 per cent or 60 per cent — but approximately 50 per cent of young people now would end up in an adult facility and 50 per cent would end up in a youth justice facility. It is being used well, we would say, by the judiciary who are making those determinations about where a young person is best placed, taking into account their particular vulnerability or perhaps their likelihood of rehabilitation et cetera. We believe that is really important. Of course we believe very strongly in judicial discretion. We are disturbed by the way that the press and political leaders are talking about our judiciary. We think it undermines confidence in the system, and we abhor it. That is enough from me. Thank you.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much. I will open it up to questions.

Mr MULINO — One of the statistics that you cited is that overall rates of offending are dropping but there is a small cohort committing an increasing number of serious crimes. I just wonder if you can expand on what you think are some of the more successful approaches for that cohort, especially given your experience in the services you have provided.

Ms EDWARDS — Yes. We have talked to people interstate and also internationally, and we know there are some programs that will zero in on the most troublesome offenders, with perhaps two staff people working with one young person or one on one — so really intensive, not case loads of 8 or 12 or anything else, but working around the clock with people for a short period of time. We have designed some models like that and offered them to the Department of Health and Human Services, which had responsibility, and we think it is possible, but you have to work with the young person plus their family and you have to be available around the clock. That is just one suggestion.

Ms SPRINGLE — Thank you for your presentation. I am interested in what you said about how we have arrived at the position that we find ourselves in now, that it has sort of been the product of a perfect storm in terms of the remand levels and staffing issues. But also I was interested in what you said about the lack of a clear model of what we are trying to do. What do you mean by that?

Ms EDWARDS — I think what becomes obvious is there are some pockets of good practice in the youth justice system, but I think what we have lost sight of is everyone being aligned to what is a vision and purpose of what we are trying to achieve. So, for example, if we are saying that it is the rehabilitation of young people and the safety of the Victorian community, which I think is a pretty good place to start, then they become the testing points against which anything you want to introduce is measured: is that particular environment going to

lead to the rehabilitation of young people; are there staff who are unqualified, who perhaps do not know the names of the children and young people; all those basic sorts of things.

Once you have a very clear vision about what you are going to do, then that starts filtering out into all your operating procedures. It filters out into the staff you are trying to recruit, how you induct them, how you train them, how you support them and what level of qualifications they would have. It filters out into the model. So, for example, instead of a punitive model inside, you use a model that would incentivise — I hate that word, but incentivise — good behaviour. There is a minimum standard which everyone gets. These are just practical ways of doing it whereby you are not taking away. There is a minimum. You are not punishing by saying, you know, ‘You’re not going to have your chocolate biscuit’, or whatever, but those sorts of things are being used at the moment or have been used often as bribes. There is a basic level that everyone gets, and then you incentivise good behaviour.

We believe things like the leave system that got scrapped some years ago were very important too. You are promoting positive behaviour for particular rewards. You are also giving young people, for example, a chance to practise being outside. They might muck it up; they come back, and you talk about what happened. It is a very short-sighted approach, we believe, that has been taken because of risk and avoiding risk at all costs. We are not talking about serious offenders necessarily, but just abandoning leave programs, for example, we believe was a kneejerk reaction compared with saying, ‘How are we going to get the long-term outcome we want and do we have to bear sometimes people mucking up in order for us to get that outcome?’.

Ms SPRINGLE — Would it be fair to say then that this lack of a clear model is a new thing? Do you think we ever had that sort of longer term approach within the youth justice system? Is this a new trend within operations?

Ms EDWARDS — Victoria was known — there is always room for improvement — for having the best youth justice system in the country and was the envy of many other countries. So for many years — and I am not exactly sure when it went awry, but sometime in the mid-2000s perhaps and up to 2010 — it was renowned for that. What we did have then was clear leadership. I think we have lost that clear leadership, and with all due respect I would say — —

Ms SPRINGLE — Sorry to interrupt. When you say leadership, are you talking about political leadership or departmental leadership or facility leadership? What do you mean by that?

Ms EDWARDS — I think there was a combination. I have often spoken about what I call an informal compact. There was a period of time when I believe there was an informal compact between politicians and political parties of all persuasions, the police, the judiciary, the community sector and the department to focus on. This goes right back. We have been looking at this right back to 1960 and Judge Barry and Arthur Rylah and trying to develop a particular approach, which was the development of the social welfare department, and I think it bears looking at what they were trying to do.

I think gradually there was a movement there to make the system stronger, to divert people from the criminal justice system wherever possible — because when you are hooked in, it is harder to get out — and to focus on rehabilitation. Again there was always room for improvement, but what that meant was that, without Victoria having even legislated, Victoria Police had strong diversion practices. They have often led the way in some of the reforms that Victoria has had in the youth justice system. So there was more alignment.

It is really perplexing to me exactly when and how it happened, but we had a couple of high-profile things — for example, the escapes that led to the 2010 Ombudsman’s report. We would say our own experience was that prior to that there was a falling away perhaps of the leadership and standards of practice that we were wanting to see in youth justice, which then led to these events. When you talk to people in other jurisdictions, asking, ‘How do you manage the assaults?’, they do not know what you are talking about. They go, ‘We don’t have the assaults’, because of the culture of respect and rehabilitation that is being fostered in those environments.

Then what you have is something like the escapes that led to the 2010 review. You get former policemen, which is who we usually engage, to do those inquiries into what happened, and you are going to get, on the whole, a security response. So if you had a social worker going to look at what is wrong, you might get a model of operation with therapeutic relationships. They might say there is not enough education or the model of education is just not strong.

So what happened then is we saw in 2010 a ramping up of the security. Daniel might want to speak to this. We personally know that it was harder to get in to see young people — there were more lockdowns et cetera — so it is a spiral effect. I would say we need clear leadership, clear vision and purpose, and people being aligned. And, are we going to be strong enough to resist the temptation to use this as a political issue, and also are we going to be strong enough to stand up to the media that also want to do that? I think it is all up to us. What sort of Victoria do we want to have? What sort of future do we want to give these young people, and what level of safety do we want? Because the way we are going, in our view, will not produce a safer Victoria.

Ms SPRINGLE — I just have one short follow-on question from that, and that would be a range of reflections of the decision to move youth justice from DHHS into Corrections.

Ms EDWARDS — You are wanting to know our response? We believe that youth justice sits best philosophically with the Department of Health and Human Services. When you talk about the overlap, many young people are on dual orders, both child protection orders and youth justice orders. We believe philosophically that that is where it sits. We also believe that the situation had got so run down — it had been neglected for so many years — that it led to the crisis that we actually have. While we would like it to stay in DHHS, we accept now that it is in the Department of Justice and Regulation. Our view is — and I am glad to see that this is the way it is going to go — that it remains a separate department with its own deputy secretary, and our hope would be that in shoring that up, it may in the future be able to return to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Speaking personally, I am confident about the current leadership that is in place around youth justice where it is. Senior people in the roles at the moment at the Department of Justice and Regulation have previously been involved in the youth justice system when it was in the Department of Health and Human Services, so that gives us some level of confidence for the moment. But we think that that needs to be watched.

Ms SPRINGLE — Have you been given any indication that that would be a long-term prospect — taking it back into the Department of Health and Human Services?

Ms EDWARDS — We have not been given any indication.

The CHAIR — I just have a couple of questions. You referred earlier to — I am probably paraphrasing here — a failure of leadership or a change in leadership style which led to cultural change within youth justice and that this goes back a number of years. In your view, when did this start and what caused it?

Ms EDWARDS — I have thought a lot about this and I am not exactly sure when, but a number of people in our sector tend to point to the 2010 Ombudsman's report and what followed then in terms of a stronger focus on security, we would say, to the detriment of a relationship, therapeutic-based approach. But then again the 2010 report did not come from nowhere, I often think, so therefore perhaps it predated that.

Recently Jesuit Social Services held a small stakeholder forum with senior leaders from the past around youth justice in the youth justice system, so people like David Green, Lloyd Owen, Bev Vines, Fran McCabe — people who had led the system in the 80s, 90s, et cetera — to try and understand from their point of view what was going wrong. At the heart of it sits the purpose of the model and being really clear about why we are doing this. When we take away young people's liberty if they have done something wrong, we need to be pretty clear about why we are doing that and what we are wanting to get out of it. There is an opportunity. We are not talking about hardened criminals here; we are talking about people who have done some pretty bad things maybe, or some pretty silly things, but they are children. We maintain that under 18 they are children and young people if they are over 18 — 18 or over — but do we have that opportunity to do something about it, and we think we have lost sight of that. It is about appearing to be tough on crime, whereas it is not being tough on crime at all, actually. We believe it is taking us down a path to create more crime.

The CHAIR — Just one additional question before I move on, and that is: we have legislation which is quite clear on the issue of use of force against children and minors in youth justice. Given the interaction that you have with our youth justice centre at the moment and the changing practices in terms of lockdown and injuries and so on that we have seen, do you think the law is being observed in our centres?

Ms EDWARDS — I might get Daniel to comment more specifically on that, but what I will say is that again when you talk to people who are working in healthy cultures these issues either never arise or hardly ever arise.

Jesuit Social Services ourselves runs a number of residential facilities for young people in the criminal justice system. Now admittedly they are not secure — they are houses in the community — but they are people who have transitioned out of custody. We do not have these events. I know it is a different environment, but we do not have those events. We know how to form relationships with people. We know how to hold them accountable. We know how to monitor and supervise them in a way that is strength based and expects the best from them and fosters the best out of them, and we know how to de-escalate situations. We think that that quality of practice is not operationalised at the moment.

Mr CLEMENTS — The very brief comment I would make on that is that over the last five or six years, as Julie has indicated, there has been less of a presence by our staff in the actual centres. We generally go in and visit. So we do not actually have opportunities to do some of that relational work that might have happened previously where you can observe and get a better sense of how young people are actually being treated in a custodial setting. One thing we are very clear of is that if you create a prison-like setting, you will get prison-like behaviours, and I think Julie has said enough on that. But I would refer to the Office of the Child Commissioner's report — Liana Buchanan's and Andrew Jackomos's report. I think that gives a clear indication that over the last few years we have seen evidence of practice that perhaps is not as good as it could have been.

Ms CROZIER — Thank you both very much for your presentations and time this morning — most helpful. If I could go back to the opening statement that you made, Julie, in relation to the very well regarded *Dropping off the Edge* report, 2015, you spoke about the 6 per cent of postcodes where there is entrenched disadvantage that led, I think you said, to 50 per cent of inmates in the adult corrections system. Many of those are also in the youth justice system too, I would presume. I want to understand from you if you or anyone else has done an audit of the programs and services in that 6 per cent of postcodes around these particular disadvantaged groups of Victorians.

Ms EDWARDS — We have not done a systematic audit of services there, but again I will speak anecdotally. In some of the areas where we are working, including, for example, Mount Druitt in Western Sydney, just to give an example of another well-known disadvantaged area, what we find often is there are a plethora of services in fact. It is not that they are under-serviced, but what is lacking often is a clear vision — again you might notice I am big on having a clear vision and purpose about things — and purpose about what people are trying to achieve there. So what happens is often there are a whole lot of disparate services that are not coordinated in a way to produce the larger, bigger, long-term effects that we want. One model of working in an effective way is collective impact, for example, and it does not have to be that particular model, but it is where the community names, with other sectors — government and the non-government sector — what the high-level outcomes are that we would like to achieve. It could be greater literacy, less family violence, less offending.

Ms CROZIER — We want all those aims. What I am trying to understand is: what are the services and programs? And could I also clarify: 6 per cent of postcodes — is that Australia or Victoria?

Ms EDWARDS — That is Victoria.

Ms CROZIER — That is what I thought. Thank you. Sorry to have interrupted you.

Ms EDWARDS — What I was trying to get at is that you can have a whole lot of services there — a mental health service, whether it be library, whether it be after-school programs — which are disjointed. The point, I suppose, is it is not just about the number of services; it is about the extent to which they work together. In order for them to work together they have to have a clear vision or purpose about what they are trying to achieve. So a mental health service will still be responding to the mental health needs of the community, but if, for example, there is a focus on more community integration, then the way that they maybe use volunteers or the way that they maybe open up community resources, so that people with mental illness can be welcomed and absorbed and have a place to participate and belong, will shift.

Professor Tony Vinson often used to say that when we say, for example, 'community mental health' or 'community justice program', we just slap the word 'community' in front of it and think somehow that produces a community response, and often what you are getting is a more simple, single-focused intervention, like a mental health program, without looking at how that could be linked with other programs to perhaps produce the higher level outcome of participation and belonging that you are trying to achieve.

Ms CROZIER — Thank you. I know we are short of time, so I will leave it there.

Ms PATTEN — Thank you very much for the presentation and your submission. Just quickly following on a little bit from Ms Crozier, looking at those postcodes where we have most disadvantage, how close is the proposed site to those postcodes?

Ms EDWARDS — The Werribee site?

Ms PATTEN — Yes.

Ms EDWARDS — I could take that on notice and come back to you about where that fits in terms of those postcodes.

Ms PATTEN — It would be interesting to see. Thank you. There were a couple of things. You mentioned in your submission that you felt that we needed basically 24-hour intensive support services within the courts. You also say that only 11 per cent of the arrests are done in those out-of-hours times, or 3.00 a.m. till 10.00 a.m. Are those 11 per cent particularly concerning to you that you felt there needed to be — —

Ms EDWARDS — Investment, yes.

Ms PATTEN — Because that would be a significant increase in intensive services, wouldn't it?

Ms EDWARDS — I have not looked into the model per se and what that would mean, but again if we are trying to divert young people from the criminal justice system — and they have hours where 11 per cent, which is still a significant number, are operating — probably a cost-benefit analysis would have to be done to see if we thought it was 'worth it', knowing that locking up someone not only is bad socially for them but is financially very costly.

Ms PATTEN — Given the very high level of remand that we are facing at the moment, certainly this might be one way, but it does not look like even when we have got those intensive services they seem to be diverting people from remand. We obviously need another solution.

Ms EDWARDS — Yes. Personally I am still a bit perplexed. I understand why the numbers grew. We had in place the law at the time such that if there were justice breaches, for example, then it was an offence and young people got locked up. We have changed that, and we have not seen the numbers drop in the way that we thought we would. So I am a bit perplexed actually about that. I am wondering if over time we will.

What we have got, though, are various points along the system where there are problems. We have also got clogging up of courts at the moment. So it might have been that a young person ends up coming into the court and the magistrate or whoever stands it down again because the work has not been done, the lawyer has not properly been briefed et cetera, so they are back in remand rather than having it heard at that time. So there are a few things that need to be done. We need to have more swift, I suppose, resolution of justice matters so that people are not churning in and out of remand. That is an important part of it too. We need to look at the whole system across the whole spectrum. Daniel, did you want to say anything about that?

Mr CLEMENTS — Look, the only other thing I would probably add to that is that there are some really good elements in our youth justice system, but they are not as well coordinated as they could be. So, for example, when a young person comes into custody there are a range of assessments that take place, including health assessments and looking at the immediate needs of the young person, but they are not actually coordinated with what is happening on the outside or planning in a way that actually brings together all the different elements so that we can support that young person to make a successful transition back into the community.

Many of those young people on remand are still, in the majority, spending short remands, so a 40, 50-day sort of thing. Sorry, that is not a short period of time, but it is a period of time where you could actually do some very purposeful, intentional planning around what you are going to do to (a) address the offending and (b) make sure that there is purposeful, intentional activity when they are released back in the community, whether that be education, whether that be training. What is some of the work you might want to do while you are actually working with somebody in that custodial setting to prepare them for that?

For our sense one of the things that we use all the time is restorative practice. It is the most effective way, proven way, of supporting a young person to get an insight into the impact of their offending. Unfortunately we do not use it enough. It is a very simple, effective way of helping a young person understand the impact of their crime on others — individuals, families and communities.

Ms PATTEN — Presumably you cannot use that, and whilst someone is still in remand their case has not been heard, so there has been no plea.

Mr CLEMENTS — We are now. With the legislative changes last year we held 22 group conferences in Parkville and Malmsbury. We are now increasingly doing that. It is something that magistrates recognise as an effective way of actually supporting the young person prepare for release back into the community and understand what actually happened.

The CHAIR — Thank you. We are out of time, so unfortunately we are going to have to cut it short there. Thank you very much for coming along today. Your contribution is very welcome. You will receive a copy of the transcript within a few weeks for proofreading.

Ms EDWARDS — All the best. Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.