

Government Response to the Parliament of Victoria Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee's final report on its Inquiry into Strategies to Prevent High Volume Offending and Recidivism by Young People

The Government welcomes the Parliament of Victoria Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee's (the Committee) final report on its Inquiry into Strategies to Prevent High Volume Offending and Recidivism by Young People (the Report).

Background

On 1 March 2007, the Legislative Assembly gave the Committee terms of reference to inquire into and report on justice and crime strategies in high volume crimes, such as theft and property-related offences, which often involve young people, and to provide recommendations on:

- causal factors that may influence patterns of high volume crime, with particular emphasis on repeat offences committed by young people
- strategies that may be effective in addressing the underlying causal factors or recidivist patterns of offending.

The Committee used a variety of processes and methodologies in conducting the inquiry including: a literature review; background briefings; site visits; forums with young people; meetings with key local, interstate and New Zealand agencies and organisations; a discussion paper that generated 34 written submissions; and public hearings that received evidence from 82 witnesses.

On 28 July 2009, the Committee tabled its Report in the Parliament.

The Committee's recommendations

In its Report, the Committee focuses on repeat youth offenders. It has tried to develop strategies to stop these young people from getting into the justice system and, if this is unsuccessful, to outline strategies that will reduce or eliminate further offences.

The Report contains 41 recommendations on strategies to prevent high volume offending and recidivism by young people, the majority of which are referable to young people aged 18 and under. The Committee defines *high volume crime* as those crime types with the highest overall recorded frequency, and *recidivism* as the act of repetitious offending among young offenders.

The recommendations in the Report cover a range of areas, many of which reflect the factors the Committee considered crucial to understanding youth offending and re-offending:

- coordination and implementation of youth crime prevention strategies
- child development, parenting and welfare
- education, employment and training
- community capacity building
- diversionary approaches
- police, courts and the youth justice system

- young people with special needs (i.e. Indigenous young people, culturally and linguistically diverse youth, young people with disabilities, homeless and vulnerable youth, and young people with substance abuse problems)
- data, evaluation and evidence-based research.

The following principles underlie and support the Committee's recommendations:

- *Young people make an important contribution to the well-being of the community. Only a small minority of young people get involved in criminal or antisocial behaviour at the expense of the wider community.*
- *Most young people deal successfully and responsibly with the challenges of adolescence and the transition to adult life without experiencing serious or lasting difficulties. Conversely, a small minority of young people due to a variety of factors are at risk of engaging in criminal or antisocial conduct. These factors must be understood and addressed in an effort to tackle the range and complexity of problems faced by the minority at risk.*
- *There is no one cause or single factor contributing to juvenile offending. Criminal and antisocial behaviour by young people, as with adults, is a complex phenomenon that is attributable to a range of intersecting and overlapping factors.*
- *Strategies developed to address youth offending and its causes should be grounded in a rights based framework that places the needs of the child as paramount. At the same time these strategies should address the need for young people to respect others within the community.*
- *Policy and program interventions to address youth offending must be based on best evidence. An essential part of any policy development is the ability to rely and draw upon comprehensive and up-to-date data.*
- *Strategies and program interventions are not of themselves enough. It is essential that any project developed to address youth offending and antisocial behaviour be subject to ongoing monitoring and evaluation.*
- *Prevention and early intervention programs and approaches that address the needs of all young people are an essential component of any strategy to prevent or reduce youth offending.*
- *Incarceration for young people should only be used as a last resort. For most young people alternative strategies such as diversionary programs have proven to be more successful.*
- *Engaging young people in education, training, constructive leisure activities and/or meaningful employment empowers young people and assists in preventing youth offending.*
- *There is a need for an 'all of community' approach by which the responsibility for preventing youth offending is shared by all levels of government, the private sector, parents, carers and the community at large. As part of such an approach*

a coordinated and appropriately funded strategy to reduce youth offending is essential.

- *A range of interventions, methods and approaches is necessary to address youth offending – a 'one size fits all' response is insufficient to tackle the complexities of the problem. Targeted approaches will need to be tailored to different groups of young people at risk in addition to more generalist methods that apply equally to all young people in the community.¹*

Government response

The Government is committed to ensuring Victoria's young people achieve their full potential. This commitment is shown by the significant investment across portfolios in programs, services and strategies aimed at addressing the needs of young Victorians. The Government welcomes the Committee's positive comments and support for several of these programs, services and strategies.

The Government's *Growing Victoria Together* and *A Fairer Victoria* set the longer-term overarching strategic goals to be achieved for all Victorians, including young people. Flowing from these is the Government's overarching youth policy, *Future Directions: An Action Agenda for Young People*. *Future Directions* reflects and drives a broad range of activity across government to improve life outcomes for all young Victorians, including community participation, education, information, health and safety. These underpin a range of other strategies, actions plans, programs and services aimed at addressing the needs of Victoria's young people, either specifically or more generally.

As noted by the Committee, most young Victorians are participating and contributing in a positive way to their communities. However, a small but significant number experience issues and challenges that require active interventions and support to enable them to reach their full potential. The whole of government work towards developing a framework for vulnerable youth is an important step in this area. Once finalised, this policy framework will strengthen action across state and local governments and communities to respond to the needs of young people who are experiencing difficulty and are at risk of disengaging from school and community activities. It focuses on responding to vulnerability early on, preventing escalation and increasing the likelihood of young people reaching their potential.

The Government recognises that youth offending is not just a legal problem. It is also a social problem with social causes and effects. As the Committee notes, a variety of intersecting and overlapping factors contribute to the complex issue of youth offending. The Government's policies reflect that there is no one quick fix, and that a range of different approaches are required to address youth offending. For example, the Government is continuing to invest in quality maternal and child health services to support families and give children the very best start in life. In particular, the Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Service provides vital support to parents who are disadvantaged, socially isolated, or have babies with significant health problems and need extra assistance. The Government is also working on a range of fronts to ensure that young people are engaged in education, training or employment. At a more targeted level, initiatives like the Koori Youth Justice program works to prevent particular

¹ Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, Parliament of Victoria, *Inquiry into strategies to prevent high volume offending and recidivism by young people: final report* (2009) v-vi.

groups of young people at risk of offending from entering the system by providing the young person with access to key social needs such as housing, education and recreation.

Prevention and early intervention are a key part of the Government's approach to preventing or reducing youth offending. As stated in *A Balanced Approach to Juvenile Justice in Victoria*, the Government's primary focus in the area of youth justice is crime prevention. The aim is to prevent low risk young people from entering the youth justice system, to rehabilitate more serious offenders, and to support young offenders after release from custodial care to establish a non-offending lifestyle. That said, the Government's approach to juvenile justice is a balanced one, responding to the individual needs and circumstances of the young person, victims of crime, and the interests of the community.

Major recent reforms focussing on prevention and early intervention include: *Because mental health matters – Victorian Mental Health Reform Strategy 2009-2019*; the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*; and *A New Blueprint for Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services 2009-2013*.

Because mental health matters represents a commitment by the Government to ensure all Victorians have the opportunities they need to maintain good mental health while also supporting those with a mental illness to access high quality, timely care and live successfully in the community. *Because mental health matters* is based on four core elements: prevention; early intervention; recovery; and social inclusion. It includes a focus on early identification and intervention for children and young people as well as a focus on the mental health care needs of vulnerable young people.

The *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* outlines the Government's vision that every young Victorian thrives, learns and grows to enjoy a productive, rewarding and fulfilling life, while contributing to their local and global communities. A key priority to achieve this vision is to improve outcomes for disadvantaged young Victorians.

A New Blueprint for Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services outlines a five-year framework for the future development of alcohol and other drug services in Victoria. Key elements of the Blueprint's vision for the alcohol and other drug treatment system include: improved responses to reduce the impact of parental alcohol and other drug use on children; a greater focus on engaging families in the treatment of adolescents; and earlier intervention with at-risk young people to prevent and reduce long-term harms from alcohol and other drug use.

Diversion is another key part of the Government's approach to preventing or reducing youth offending. Sometimes this will mean diversion from entering the formal criminal justice system. As gatekeepers of the criminal justice system, Victoria Police play an important role in this approach. One of the focuses of Victoria Police's *Child and Youth Strategy 2009-2013* is on increasing effective diversion.

Once in the formal criminal justice system, the framework for youth justice policy acknowledges the vulnerability of young people and recognises that custody should only be applied as a last resort. A diversionary option is offered through the Youth Justice Group Conferencing program, which makes young offenders accountable for their offending by bringing them together with their victims to apologise and repair the harm caused by the offence.

A recent innovative diversion related project the Government is undertaking is examining the development of Youth Peer Panels in Victoria. The project is exploring how to provide opportunities for young people and adults to work together to develop local solutions to address youth crime and divert young people from the mainstream criminal justice system. Key stakeholders, community groups and young people are being consulted regarding this project.

The Government is committed to working towards a coordinated system that works together to better support vulnerable young Victorians. An example of this commitment is the Youth Justice Community Support Service, which is an integrated approach to the provision of intensive support and services to young people in the youth justice system. It addresses the underlying social factors to youth offending such as accommodation, education, employment, health and counselling for young offenders with complex needs in the youth justice system.

The Government aims to base its approach to preventing and reducing youth offending upon a sound evidence base. The Government recognises the importance to sound policy development of comprehensive data, evaluation of initiatives and research, and strives to strengthen and continuously improve capacity in these areas.

The Government's approach to preventing and reducing offending by young people accords with the 11 principles that underlie and support the Committee's recommendations. As such, the Government is pleased to be able to support the majority of the Committee's recommendations, accepting to varying degrees 33 of the 41 recommendations. Of the remaining eight recommendations, four have been noted and four are not supported.

A range of strategies have been implemented or are being implemented that address many of the Committee's recommendations. The Government will continue this work. The Government will implement or give further consideration to the other supported recommendations, noting that implementation of some will be subject to government budgetary considerations. In accordance with the requirements of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, regard is had to human rights when developing any policies and laws, including those relating to young people.

The Government's response to each of the recommendations is set out in detail in the attached table.

Conclusion

The Government acknowledges the important contribution made by the many individuals and organisations who participated in the Committee's inquiry. The Committee is to be commended for its valuable work in undertaking these terms of reference, and for producing a comprehensive final report on strategies to prevent high volume offending and recidivism by young people.

The Government is committed to continuing its support for Victoria's young people, and to taking steps to address the issue of youth offending. The Government believes that its commitment in this area benefits not only our young people but the community as a whole.

**Parliament of Victoria Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee's final report on its
Inquiry into Strategies to Prevent High Volume Offending and Recidivism by Young People**

Government response to recommendations

Recommendation	Government response
The Extent of High-Volume and Repeat Youth Offending in Victoria (Chapter 2)	
<p>1. The Committee recommends that Victoria Police should produce annual statistics on the number and characteristics of high volume and repeat youth offenders.</p>	<p>Supported in principle The Government supports the need for high-quality data to inform evidence-based policy making. Victoria Police currently produces annual statistical data on crime and provides further analysis as requested. The production of annual statistics on the number and characteristics of high volume and repeat youth offenders would require further clarification and agreement as to the definition of what constitutes 'high volume' offending in a policing context and consideration of the time and resource impost in the reporting of this data regularly.</p>
<p>2. The Committee recommends that in undertaking this task Victoria Police should provide ongoing analysis of birth group data, including the monitoring of the longitudinal and adulthood outcomes of the 1984 and 1994 age groups (presented in this report) as well as comparative analysis of new birth groups as they enter the criminal justice system.</p>	<p>Not supported While the Government supports the need for high-quality data to inform evidence-based policy making, ongoing comparative analysis and longitudinal studies of birth groups requires consideration of the associated time, resource and privacy imposts involved in such analysis. Care must be taken with regard to ethics and the requirements of the Commissioner for Law Enforcement Data Security. Longitudinal studies may be best managed and conducted by independent academic institutions.</p>

Recommendation	Government response
Coordinating and Implementing Youth Crime Prevention Strategies (Chapter 6)	
<p>3. The Committee recommends the implementation of youth offending teams similar to those operating under the New Zealand Youth Offending Strategy in order to coordinate service delivery when dealing with young offenders. Such teams should comprise representatives of Victoria Police, the Department of Justice, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and the Department of Human Services Youth Justice Branch, in addition to input from community agencies and representatives involved in the areas of youth welfare and youth justice. The Department of Human Services Youth Justice Branch should act as the central lead agency responsible for coordinating all aspects of service delivery to young offenders or young people 'at risk'.</p>	<p>Not Supported</p> <p>The Government considers that collaboration and coordination between key organisations and departments is already occurring through a variety of existing regular forums. This includes the Youth Justice Community Support Service, which involves coordination between key partners to discuss issues related to service delivery to clients.</p> <p>The Department of Human Service (DHS) is also leading a whole of government project investigating avenues to improve integration and collaboration across organisations involved in youth justice.</p>
<p>4. The Committee believes that service delivery and programs aimed at supporting young people, particularly those who have been in youth detention, should not cease simply by reason only of that person reaching the age of 18. Where appropriate, transitional supports should remain in place and the young person should continue to be supported whilst it is necessary. Recent moves towards such policies of rationalisation by the Department of Human Services/Department of Justice are to be encouraged.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Many government statutory programs continue to provide support to young people after their eighteenth birthday.</p> <p>Current supervision arrangements in both the Youth Justice and Child Protection programs include transitional arrangements to assist young people to receive services after the completion of their statutory order.</p>

Recommendation	Government response
<p>Child Development, Parenting and Welfare (Chapter 7)</p> <p>5. The Committee identified the need for more comprehensive prevention and early intervention strategies addressed at youth offending. The Committee calls for the implementation of the social action plan 'A Fairer Victoria 2009: Standing Together Through Tough Times' as soon as possible.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>A wide range of prevention and early intervention initiatives were supported through <i>A Fairer Victoria 2009</i>. Many of these are already being implemented, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>Victoriaworks for jobseekers with employment challenges</i> (formerly New Workforce Partnerships or NWP) (\$15.2m over three years commencing in 2008-09), which aims to help meet the labour and skills needs of Victorian industry, and increase the sustainable employment of people facing significant barriers to employment. To date, 30 <i>Victoriaworks for jobseekers with employment challenges</i> projects have been funded and of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - eight target young people specifically - two target youth justice clients (Whitelion's 'In2Work Program' and the YMCA's 'The Bridge Project') - a number include youth, amongst other target groups. • The Better Youth Services Pilots, which have been established in Frankston, Greater Bendigo and Wyndham, with cross-sector partnerships developed that extend existing coordination mechanisms between local services that support young people needing assistance, including youth justice services. Three additional pilots have been supported in Swan Hill, Greater Geelong and Yarra Ranges. • The Neighbourhood Justice Centre in Collingwood, which was established to trial new approaches that address the underlying causes of offending. It brings together a court with on-site support services for defendants, victims, witnesses and residents, including mediation and crime prevention. One

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<p>6. The Committee recommends that the Department of Human Services expands existing infant welfare services to deliver outreach programs for disadvantaged new parents that provide regular and ongoing support from the pre-natal period through to the first year of life. This service should be based on delivery models, such as the Nurse-Family Partnership, that have been evaluated and demonstrated to be effective.</p>	<p>innovation is the Youth Restorative Justice Group Conference program for young adults between 18 and 25, which seeks to help to heal the harm caused by offending.</p> <p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The Maternal and Child Health Service (previously known as Infant Welfare) is the responsibility of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD).</p> <p>The Maternal and Child Health Service provides a universal primary health service for families with children aged from birth to school entry. The service is provided in partnership with local government and State Government.</p> <p>The Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Service responds to the needs of children and families at risk of poor outcomes, in particular where there are multiple risk factors. This service is provided in addition to the suite of services offered through the universal Maternal and Child Health Service. It provides a more intensive level of support, including short-term case management. Support may be provided in a variety of settings, such as the family's home, a maternal and child health centre or other locations within the community. The capacity of the Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Service was expanded in 2008-09 so that 7,015 families with young children are now assisted each year with 15 hours of additional support.</p> <p>DHS funds a range of Early Parenting Services including day stay, residential and home-based services and the Parenting Assessment and Skill Development Service. These services aim to provide a range of intensive supports to vulnerable families to enhance their parenting skills and capacity in order to promote the safety, stability, health and development of their infants and toddlers.</p> <p>DHS is considering further strategies aimed at guiding Early Parenting Services</p>

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<p>7. The Committee recommends that the Department of Human Service evaluate the pilot therapeutic residential unit program after 12 months, and if it proves successful extend the program.</p>	<p>in the provision of state-wide, efficient, high-quality and evidence-based early parenting support services.</p> <p>DHS has established Child Family Information, Referral and Support Teams (Child FIRST), which support referral pathways to be clearly defined and accessible for vulnerable children, young people and families and those professionals who refer. Changes to the <i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005</i> include provision for professionals to report concerns about the safety and wellbeing of an unborn child to Child Protection or Child FIRST.</p> <p>The establishment of Child and Family Services Alliances (Family Services, Child FIRST, Child Protection, DHS partnerships staff and Aboriginal Controlled family services) will support the effective operation of child and family services at a local level.</p> <p>Best Start, funded through DEECD, is a Victorian Government early years initiative. It supports families, caregivers and communities to provide the best possible environment, experiences and care for young children in the important years from pregnancy to school. Best Start aims to improve the health, development, learning and wellbeing of all Victorian children 0–8 years.</p> <p>Supported in principle</p> <p>An extensive two-year review of therapeutic residential care pilots has commenced, with the aim of identifying best practices that can be applied to all residential care services to improve quality and outcomes. This includes consideration of models which may best meet the needs of Aboriginal young people involved in out of home care.</p> <p>Expansion of the program, should the program prove successful, will be subject to government budget considerations.</p>

Recommendation	Government response
<p>8. The Committee recommends that strategies and programs to enhance parenting and family support should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider the broader risk and protective factors that impact upon child and family development; • focus on the developmental and behavioural needs of children; • focus on building on the protective factors operating for a young person and reducing the risk factors they are experiencing through their life transitions; • be early and non-stigmatic and as far as possible, kept out of the justice system; • promote a sense of connectedness; • be long-term and holistic and cut across multiple domains in a young person's life (eg families, schools, communities). 	<p>Supported</p> <p>The Government considers that this recommendation is consistent with the existing strategic framework for Family Services and the intent of current policy and legislation, which aim to improve outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and families. It is also consistent with the Government's investments in education programs for parents and young people around appropriate parenting and the prevention of family violence.</p> <p>Plans are also underway to improved coordination, integration and flexibility of service system responses to families experiencing an increasingly complex social environment.</p>
<p>Education, Employment and Training (Chapter 8)</p> <p>9. The Committee recommends that the State Government expedite the implementation of the recently released Student Engagement Policy Guidelines. This would require supporting schools to provide a range of prevention and early intervention strategies to support engagement and improved educational outcomes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • programs to support parental involvement with schools, including effective parenting programs; • transition support programs for children moving from primary to secondary school, and for students nearing the compulsory school leaving age; • strategies for identifying at-risk students (including those in out-of-home care) and linking them to appropriate specialist support services (for example, youth workers or counsellors); 	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The <i>Student Engagement Policy Guidelines</i> were released in March 2009. Schools are required to have a Student Engagement Policy consistent with the Guidelines in place by the start of the 2010 school year. DEECD regional staff are conducting workshops and briefings to support schools to develop appropriate policies consistent with this policy.</p> <p>DEECD will consider an appropriate timeframe for an evaluation of the <i>Student Engagement Policy Guidelines</i>.</p> <p>The <i>Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development</i> includes a key strategy to build partnerships with parents and communities. DEECD has developed the <i>Families as Partners in Learning Resource Kit</i> as part of this strategy. The resource kit is designed to support schools to engage and build</p>

<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Government response</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the introduction of restorative justice practices in schools; • training for teachers in the delivery of emotional well-being curriculum materials, and in strategies for working with vulnerable and ‘difficult’ students. <p>The Committee recommends that an evaluation of this policy be undertaken after 12 months.</p>	<p>positive relationships with parents in supporting student learning. The <i>Student Engagement Policy Guidelines</i> include advice about engaging proactively with parents and carers.</p> <p>Improved transition is another action area of the <i>Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development</i>. New Transition Plans for kindergarten children beginning school will be developed as a key way to better integrate early childhood education and care services with school services. It recognises that children’s achievement at school is linked to their early experiences of school and early childhood education and care. <i>Transition: A Positive Start to School – a guide for families, early childhood services, outside school hours care services and schools</i> (2009) has recently been released, to further support schools in delivering transition programs.</p> <p>Primary and secondary schools run transition programs each year that are supported by a designated position within the school and are the culmination of planning and communication between the schools involved. Secondary schools are required to develop a Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) plan for all students to support transition from secondary school. Increasingly schools are starting these plans at earlier year levels to maximise support to individual students and their families. Through the <i>On Track</i> survey, Victoria monitors and supports early school leavers. <i>On Track</i> builds on the MIPs program and ensures that Year 10-12 students are contacted after leaving school and assisted with further advice if they are not studying or in full-time employment.</p> <p>DEECD has made available to all schools a Student Mapping Tool that allows schools to bring together information for an individual student from a range of sources to build a profile as a basis for identifying those most at risk. Schools have a range of structures in place to support individual students and ensure that their needs are identified and supported. This includes pastoral care, home-room arrangements and student managers. DEECD funds Student Welfare</p>

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	<p>Coordinators in secondary schools. Primary Welfare Officers in high-needs primary schools are available to support students who are vulnerable or have additional wellbeing needs. Primary and Secondary School Nurses provide advice to reduce risks to young people and promote better health in the school community. Students may also be referred to student support services, including psychologists, guidance officers, social workers and other allied health professionals equipped to provide additional support to students and schools. Schools also facilitate referrals to specialist mental health services, School Focused Youth Services and other agencies where required.</p> <p>Victorian Government schools have a level of autonomy that allows them to select approaches that best meet the needs of individual students and the local community. Restorative practices have been adopted by many schools across Victoria. Some regions have made the implementation of restorative practices a priority and provided training and support. The <i>Student Engagement Policy Guidelines</i> also identify Restorative Practices along with Kids Matter and Positive Behaviour Support as being appropriate whole-of-school approaches as part of a preventative staged approach. DHS would support the introduction and implementation of restorative justice approaches more broadly into schools.</p> <p>DEECD provides access to professional learning for all teachers and is disseminating an instructional model to support effective teaching practices in classrooms. The Victorian Essential Learning Standards provide for social, physical and emotional health to be taught to all students up to the end of Year 10. DEECD is also developing, in partnership with the Department of Health, a <i>Mental Health Promoting Schools and Early Childhood Settings Framework</i> that will help schools, and early childhood settings to identify the key components of mental health promotion in order for teachers to better deliver mental health and wellbeing programs and services according to individual school needs. The framework will link with other health programs, such as healthy eating and</p>

Recommendation	Government response
<p>10. The Committee recommends that sufficient additional resources should be provided to schools and related community based support services to ensure that the positive 'Actions for change' relating to school retention and re-engagement arising from the Victorian Government's Vulnerable Youth Framework can be fully implemented as a matter of urgency.</p>	<p>physical activity.</p> <p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The <i>Vulnerable Youth Framework discussion paper</i>, which has been released for consultation, contains the basis for the development of a framework for vulnerable young people. The discussion paper received a positive response from stakeholders, particularly the importance of education, training and employment.</p> <p>The Government is already investing in improvements to supports or services in ways consistent with the broad directions of the <i>Vulnerable Youth Framework discussion paper</i>, in particular through implementing initiatives such as the <i>Because mental health matters – Victorian Mental Health Reform Strategy 2009-2019</i> and the <i>Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development</i>.</p> <p>The Government provides funding to a number of Alternative Education Programs across Victoria to support compulsory school-aged children and young people who are at risk of disengaging from education. Alternative Education Programs aim to re-engage vulnerable young people in education through intensive support. These programs cater for students who are experiencing significant difficulties in attending mainstream schools due to learning difficulties or behavioural issues which cause major disruption to the learning of other students. These young people are at high risk of disengagement or have already disengaged from learning, have high levels of school refusal, and absenteeism.</p> <p>DEECD is further considering approaches to education provision for children and young people at risk of disengaging, or disengaged, from school.</p> <p>The National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transition will be implemented from 1 January 2010. The National Partnership aims to increase educational attainment and the engagement of young people aged 15-24 with education, training and employment.</p>

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<p>11. The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development introduce a state-wide enrolment database with school reporting requirements whereby if a child is away from school for two weeks without parental or school authority the Department is notified. This would allow student enrolments to be tracked across the state and ensure that absent students are followed up and provided with appropriate support services to re-engage them with the education system.</p>	<p>DEECD will examine what further steps are needed to build school retention and re-engagement in light of the national commitment to raising the school leaving age and finalisation of the <i>Vulnerable Youth Framework</i>.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>The Government notes the intent of this recommendation but has existing systems in place to achieve the outcomes without using the method outlined in the recommendation. The reporting of student attendance monitoring by schools is already a requirement for schools through the DEECD School Compliance Checklist.</p> <p>DEECD implemented the Victorian Student Number (VSN) by the end of 2009. Implementation to non-government schools will be completed in February 2010. The VSN will be a unique identifier for all Victorian students.</p> <p>The Ultranet will be deployed into all Victorian Government schools by quarter three, 2010. The Ultranet will enable daily tracking of attendance, which will be viewable by schools, parents and students. It will also enable up-to-date monitoring of approved and unapproved absences.</p> <p>The Ultranet will enable students to be flagged if they are away from school for identified periods of time and enable schools to follow up promptly and ensure that these students are provided with appropriate support to re-engage them with education.</p>
<p>12. The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development consider introducing a truancy service, with the specific task of following up students identified through the tracking provided by a state-wide enrolment database. An example of this is the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service (NETS) that operates in New Zealand.</p>	<p>Not supported</p> <p>It is the responsibility of schools to follow up absences as this is considered most effective when done at the local level.</p> <p>The <i>Student Engagement Policy Guidelines</i> require schools to closely monitor and actively intervene when students are not at school. The <i>It's Not OK To Be Away</i> student attendance support kit provides schools with strategies and</p>

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	<p>approaches to improve school attendance. Several Victorian Government schools now have electronic marking systems that are marked several times a day. This allows schools to respond to absences almost immediately and many schools have attendance officers who follow up absences. The introduction of the Ultranet will bring further opportunities for schools to strengthen their attendance, monitoring and tracking (see comments on recommendation 11).</p> <p>The Government has committed significant funding to provide a range of student wellbeing professionals in Victorian Government schools. These DEECD staff work with other welfare professionals and agencies to address the wellbeing needs of students.</p> <p>Student welfare coordinators in secondary schools and primary welfare officers in high-needs primary schools are available to support students who are vulnerable or have additional wellbeing needs. The Government provides \$12m annually to fund student welfare coordinators in secondary schools and \$80m over four years from 2007-08 to fund 256 primary welfare officers across 450 high needs primary schools.</p> <p>Students may also be referred to student support services, including psychologists, guidance officers, social workers and other allied health professionals equipped to provide additional support to students and schools. Schools may also facilitate referrals to specialist mental health services, where required.</p>
<p>13. The Committee identified that where employment is provided as a strategy to reduce reoffending it needs to be combined with support programs that focus on the continued growth and development of the young person involved. As such the Committee recommends that the government support an extension of specialist education, training, mentoring and employment programs for young offenders, such as the models provided by Whitelion and the Bridge Project. This would include support for work with employers to encourage employment of</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>This recommendation is consistent with the program guidelines for <i>Victoriaworks for jobseekers with employment challenges</i> (formerly New Workforce Partnerships or NWP). This program (\$15.2m over three years commencing in 2008-09) funds the Whitelion and the Bridge projects. Whilst the program does not exclusively target youth or young offenders, priority is given</p>

<p>Recommendation</p> <p>young offenders.</p>	<p>Government response</p> <p>to support specific client groups, including clients of youth justice and alcohol and drug services.</p> <p>Through programs funded under the <i>Victoriaworks for jobseekers with employment challenges</i>, jobseekers with significant barriers to employment are matched to employers who have difficulty filling positions. This includes providing jobseekers with help in employability skills, specific vocational skills, work experience and personal support. Projects tailor assistance to the specific needs of jobseekers as well as employers. For example, preparation and placement of young offenders into apprenticeships that are integrated with diversionary programs and family support and providing support to clients of drug or alcohol services.</p>
<p>Community Capacity Building (Chapter 9)</p>	
<p>14. The Committee recommends that the Children, Youth and Families Division of the Department of Human Services works together with local government to provide training for youth workers to enhance their capacity to contribute to young people living successfully in their communities through capacity building, early detection and youth development, and to provide a strong link to a range of other more intensive support services for young people.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>There are a number of existing Government initiatives that develop the skills and practice of youth workers in State and local government and community based services. These include the youth participation practice network and the regional youth worker development forums run through the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria.</p> <p>The Government is also exploring new models to provide integrated intensive support services to young people through the Better Youth Service Pilot projects which are being piloted in six locations across Victoria.</p>
<p>15. The Committee recommends that the Department of Human Services promote and fund mentoring programs through the Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance, to support stronger links between leaders and role models in the community and young people in custody.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The Government continues to strongly promote and support high quality mentoring for vulnerable young people across Victoria. Evidence shows that mentoring is an effective intervention early in a young person's cycle of deviance.</p>

Recommendation	Government response
	<p>The Government funds a number of agencies to provide mentoring programs to young people at risk of, or already involved with statutory services, in addition to investments made through the Mentoring and Capacity Building Initiative.</p> <p>The Government is also working in partnership with the Helen McPherson Trust to fund the Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance to provide leadership for youth mentoring practice in Victoria.</p>
<p>Diversions Approaches, Strategies and Support Programs to Prevent or Reduce Youth Offending (Chapter 10)</p>	
<p>16. The Committee recommends that the Departments of Human Services and Justice expand their range of Youth Justice related diversionary programs to ensure that a suitable program is available in all instances where a sentencing magistrate believes it would be appropriate for a young person.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The Government is supportive of diversionary programs to ensure that suitable young people are not further drawn into the criminal justice system.</p> <p>To support the development of further diversionary programs, DHS, the Department of Health and the Department of Justice are collaborating to undertake a review of the diversionary programs available for young people at risk of entering the youth justice system. However, any expansion of services will require additional investment that will be subject to government budget considerations.</p>
<p>17. The Committee recommends the comprehensive evaluation of any diversion programs instituted by the Department of Human Services Youth Justice Branch. The impact of diversion programs, in the long term, on youth offending needs to be further researched and evaluated.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>The Government considers monitoring and evaluation as a core element of evidence-based practice. A number of evaluations of the youth justice program have been funded, including the Victorian Juvenile Justice Rehabilitation Review which has led to numerous service improvements for young people.</p>
<p>18. The Committee recommends that the rules, procedures, guidelines and administration of police cautioning in Victoria be incorporated into legislation so that all apprehended young people may benefit from this diversionary strategy.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>In its <i>Child and Youth Strategy 2009-2013</i>, Victoria Police committed to thoroughly re-evaluating its existing Cautioning and Diversion Program, and implementing the changes necessary to establish an effective model. Victoria Police will consider the Committee's recommendation on police cautioning</p>

Recommendation	Government response
<p>19. The Committee recommends that the Youth Justice Group Conferencing programs should be expanded to all areas of the state.</p>	<p>when undertaking the re-evaluation.</p> <p>Supported The Group Conferencing program was expanded state-wide in October 2006, following an evaluation in 2005, which found that the program achieved excellent results. An evaluation of the state-wide program has recently commenced, the final report is expected in May 2010.</p>
<p>Police, Courts and the Youth Justice System (Chapter 11)</p> <p>20. The Committee recommends that the Department of Justice identify the issues pertaining to a young person being granted bail in the Children's Court. In particular, matters relating to accommodation and material support and the establishment of a formal bail support program should be considered with the express aim that no child or young person should be held in remanded custody unnecessarily.</p>	<p>Supported in principle The Government supports the principle that no child or young person should be remanded in custody unnecessarily. The Government recognises that the establishment of a formal bail support program may have an impact on the number of young people placed on remand. The Government is considering the Victorian Law Reform Commission's recommendations regarding bail and children, including the possible establishment of a child-specific bail support program in the Children's Court. However, investment in this type of support will be subject to a number of considerations, including budget priorities.</p>
<p>21. Recognising that it is imperative that young people have their Children's Court cases and associated matters dealt with as quickly as possible, the Committee recommends that in those cases where young people have been formally processed for a first offence they have their matter heard for first mention within two weeks of charges being laid.</p>	<p>Supported in principle The Government recognises the benefit to young people of the Children's Court hearing matters as expeditiously as possible. However, the Government does not agree that the timeframe of two weeks proposed by the Committee is practicable. Two weeks does not allow the defendant, police, or the Children's Court sufficient time to prepare for the case. The Government has introduced changes to criminal procedure designed to ensure that children are dealt with as quickly as possible. In particular, the <i>Criminal Procedure Act 2009</i> inserts new Part 5.1A into the <i>Children, Youth and</i></p>

Recommendation	Government response
	<p><i>Families Act 2005</i>. Upon commencement, the Part shortens the time limit for filing charges for summary offences in the Children’s Court from 12 months to six months, subject to two exceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where the court extends the time • where the child, after receiving legal advice, gives written consent, and a member of the police force of the rank of or above sergeant consents to proceedings being commenced after the expiry of six months. <p>Additionally, Victoria Police has recently commenced the Brief Integration Project. The project will introduce new processes and roles that will significantly improve and streamline the management of investigations, reducing the time spent preparing briefs and progressing cases through the courts. The process applies to any incident reported to police whether crime, traffic, family violence or public order, and whether indictable offences triable summarily or summary offences.</p>
<p>22. Given the amount of time and expense taken up with processing public transport infringements such as fare evasion by young people, the Committee recommends that the Department of Transport undertake a feasibility and cost-effectiveness study assessing the viability of young people under 18 years of age accessing free public transport within Victoria.</p>	<p>Not supported</p> <p>The provision of free public transport to all young people under 18 is not considered appropriate.</p> <p>Fare evasion is committed by a minority of young people. Most young people comply with their legal obligations to travel with a valid ticket. Where young people do commit fare evasion, other options are available for improving the administration of the infringement regime as it relates to young people and avoiding young people becoming entrenched in the formal justice system. These include diversionary education programs, which the Department of Transport has introduced and is expanding, and special treatment (both at the administrative stage and court stage) for those in special circumstances, including young homeless people.</p> <p>The Government is currently reviewing the level of public transport infringement</p>

Recommendation	Government response
<p>23. The Committee recommends programs be established by the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to provide effective and improved training to young people during their period of incarceration to ensure that the programs are genuinely preparing the young people for life beyond the term of their sentence. Greater emphasis needs to be given to literacy and numeracy skills, together with basic life skills such as working in a team, communication, managing money, conflict management and self-esteem building.</p>	<p>notice fines for minors, with recommendations expected shortly. The review is likely to result in a major restructuring of current penalties, particularly in relation to minors. Any changes will be consistent with the reforms made by the Government to the youth justice system, and with the <i>Infringements Act 2006</i> and the <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i>.</p> <p>Supported in principle</p> <p>Young people in custody currently participate in a range of education and vocational programs to assist them to develop skills in literacy and numeracy. This includes the Baltara School, which provides education for young people in youth justice custody up to school leaving age.</p> <p>The school plans individual programs to cater for students' immediate needs; encouraging and supporting students to participate in education programs and linking students (wherever possible) with continuing, community educational resources for post Baltara participation.</p> <p>Youth Justice also has TAFE program providers in operation at its three centres to provide vocational education programs to assist young people to develop useful work skills.</p> <p>In 2009, custodial TAFE providers commenced using the Corrections Victoria Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) toolkit, which was released in 2008. The LLN assessment toolkit is aligned to the Australian Core Skills Framework. Thus providing a consistent national approach to the identification of five core skills of learning, reading, writing, oral communication and numeracy required to participate in personal, community work and training contexts.</p> <p>Any additional investment into literacy and numeracy will be subject to government budget considerations.</p>

Recommendation	Government response
<p align="center">Targeting the Strategies to Special Needs (Chapter 12)</p>	
<p>Indigenous young people</p>	
<p>24. The Committee recommends that the Victorian Government work with Indigenous communities to develop strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in Victoria. Such strategies should include cultural heritage and community renewal programs in a variety of settings including school and higher education settings, juvenile justice detention, community and while in State Care.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>The overarching goal of the Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework (VIAF) is to improve life expectancy and quality of life for Indigenous Victorians. The VIAF seeks to break the cycle of inter-generational disadvantage through a human development approach which takes a strategic focus on early child health and development. This is reflected in the VIAF's first three strategic areas for action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. improved maternal health and early childhood health and development 2. improved numeracy and literacy 3. improved year 12 completion or equivalent qualification and development pathways to employment. <p>The Government is providing support to Indigenous communities through initiatives to strengthen culture and cultural heritage and community renewal programs in a range of settings. For example:</p> <p><i>School and Higher Education Settings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wannik Strategy (DEECD) includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 109 Koorie Education Support Officers and nine Koorie Education Coordinators responsible for facilitating and managing the delivery of programs from early childhood through to school completion - Four Koorie Pathways Schools in Mildura, Glenroy, Morwell and Swan Hill designed to provide individualised assistance and support to Koorie students aged 12-16 who are not engaged in their mainstream school or who are at risk of disengagement

Recommendation	Government response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three Koorie Youth Transition Support Officers provide disengaged Koorie young people with tailored assistance to access support services and to re-engage in sustainable education, training or employment options - 15 new Koorie Literacy Coaches have been employed to offer intensive professional development to teachers with significant numbers of Koorie students. <p><i>Vocational Education and Training Settings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Koorie Liaison Officers (DIIRD) - Skills Victoria employs 23 Koorie liaison officers at Victorian TAFEs. • Engagement and Transition Program Development (DIIRD), which includes a range of study, mentoring and cultural supports for Indigenous students undertaking vocational education and training. <p><i>Youth Justice</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Justice Initiatives (DHS) aimed at preventing offending and recidivism by young Aboriginals including: the Yannabil Visitors Program; Koorie Pre and Post Release Program; Koorie Intensive Bail Support; Koorie Youth Justice Program; and the Koorie Early School Leavers and Youth Employment Program. These programs engage families and communities in the rehabilitation process. • Youth Justice Custodial Services (DHS), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indigenous Language and Cultural Program - Didgeridoo/Cultural Engagement Program - Yannabil Community Visitors Program - links the Koorie community to youth justice clients to ensure the health, well being and safety of young Aboriginals in custody.

Recommendation	Government response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Support Workers (DHS) - three Aboriginal Support Workers in Youth Justice Custodial Services provide support to young Aboriginals entering, or in custody to maintain, or reconnect with family and community and to develop culturally appropriate rehabilitation programs. • Frontline Youth Initiatives Program (Department of Justice) aims to engage Koorie children and youth at risk of contact with the criminal justice system in socially and physically healthy alternatives to offending. <p><i>Family Support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Family Preservation AFP and Aboriginal Family Restoration AFR (DHS) provide intensive short-term intervention, focused on protective concerns within families with the aim of either preventing children going to out of home care or facilitating their return. AFR services offer a residential component whereas AFP services work with families in their own home. • Cultural Support Plans (DHS) assist Child Protection workers to ensure children remain connected to their family, country and community. • Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework (DHS) describes the Aboriginal cultural context for the child and family services system in Victoria. The Framework includes eight registration standards which support mainstream community service organisations to better engage and work with Aboriginal children, families, and communities. <p><i>Culture</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat is developing a whole of government framework to lift the cultural competency of government departments and agencies. It will increase the inclusion and participation of Indigenous Victorians in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of public policy and programs.

Recommendation	Government response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV) is developing an approach to strengthening culture to support Indigenous communities in strengthening the transmission of Aboriginal culture, particularly to young Indigenous people. Development of the approach will consider the relationship between culture, self and identity, and the important role of family, local Aboriginal communities and schools in the transmission of culture. • <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> provides for the protection and management of Aboriginal heritage with streamlined processes linked to Victoria's planning system. • A Certificate IV in Cultural Heritage Management has been created to educate more Indigenous Victorians in the management and protection of cultural heritage. <p><i>Community Renewal (Strengthening)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New community engagement and representative arrangements (AAV) for Indigenous Victorians allows Government to work more effectively with Aboriginal communities at the local and regional levels. Thirty-eight Local Indigenous Networks (LINs) have been established which will, from mid-2010, report to eight Regional Indigenous Councils in their work to strengthen local Indigenous communities. Youth LINs have been established in some communities to address youth issues as a key priority in their community planning. • The Capacity Building Program (AAV) is providing targeted education and governance training to build capacity of Indigenous communities and community organisations across the State.
<p>25. The Committee recommends that the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service 'Police Cautioning and Youth Diversion Program' be supported and expanded.</p>	<p>Supported in principle Following the success of the pilot Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Police Cautioning and Youth Diversion Program in Mildura and La Trobe, in July</p>

Recommendation	Government response
	<p>2007-08 additional funds were allocated to support the expansion of the program to Swan Hill, Shepparton, Warrnambool and Bairnsdale. There are plans to expand the program to three additional locations.</p> <p>Any further expansion of the program will be considered in the context of developing the <i>Victorian Aboriginal Justice Statement: Phase 3</i> and Victoria Police's re-evaluation of its existing Cautioning and Diversion Program. However, the continuation of current services and any further expansion will be subject to government budget considerations.</p>
<p>Culturally and linguistically diverse youth</p> <p>26. The Committee recommends that the Victorian Multicultural Commission develop culturally and linguistically appropriate programs and resources to assist young people in culturally diverse communities in understanding the law as well as their rights and responsibilities.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The Government recognises the importance of ensuring that young people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities understand the law as well as their rights and responsibilities. A range of work is already going on in this area. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria Police Multicultural, Youth, Aboriginal and New and Emerging Community Liaison Officers, assist and provide a variety of education programs and opportunities to the community, including young people, on a range of policing issues • The Department of Justice, through the Justice for Refugees Program, is currently developing programs and materials for young people from refugee communities. <p>The Department of Justice, in cooperation with the Victorian Multicultural Commission, will give consideration to whether the programs and materials being developed under the Justice for Refugee Program could be expanded to non-refugee young people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. However, additional investment will be subject to government</p>

Recommendation	Government response
<p>27. The Committee recommends that Victoria Police programs are supported and expanded to train all operational police in interacting with young people from diverse cultural backgrounds.</p>	<p>budget considerations.</p> <p>Supported in principle Victoria Police have recently introduced an introductory module for all Victoria Police recruits that includes cultural competency training (including training on children and youth issues) and additional training is provided at later foundational courses. Additional training is provided to Police Service Areas through Youth Liaison Officers, Multicultural Liaison Officers and New and Emerging Community Liaison Officers on an as needs basis. Any expansion of training programs to capture all operational members would require consideration of wider operational demands, training needs and available resource and time constraints.</p>
<p>Young people with disabilities</p> <p>28. The Committee recommends that the range of accommodation support services for young people with a disability involved with the juvenile justice system be expanded in all regions of Victoria.</p>	<p>Supported in principle The Government continues to explore a wide range of support services and accommodation options for young people with a disability in the youth justice system. For example, in mid-2009 a protocol between the disability services and youth justice areas of DHS was signed off, thereby providing a formal mechanism for improving liaison between these two areas of the department in delivering client services. Both areas now jointly sign parole plans for young people being released from custody ensuring this group are prioritised for services such as accommodation. Additional investment in specific accommodation initiatives will be subject to government budget considerations.</p>

<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Government response</p>
<p>29. Given the evidence relating to the disproportionately large numbers of young people with psychiatric or intellectual disabilities detained or otherwise involved in the youth justice system, the Committee recommends that a review of Youth Justice clients with disabilities, including acquired brain injury and learning/language difficulties, be undertaken with the aim of improving service delivery, including accommodation options.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The Government is considering the findings of recently commissioned research into <i>What works with young offenders with a disability</i>. Implementation of some findings from this research are likely to be subject to government budget considerations.</p> <p>However, action is already underway on other findings, such as the development of joint learning and development for staff working with clients of both service systems and nominated staff being identified as key contacts in regions.</p> <p>The Government has also recently established a Youth Justice Disability Service Adviser, who will strengthen staff capability in supporting young people with a disability in a custodial setting.</p>
<p>30. The Committee recommends that the Department of Human Services in partnership with relevant service providers develop and implement a new residential forensic mental health treatment centre or contained therapeutic facility for juvenile offenders.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>The Government recognises the importance of ensuring access to a range of appropriate services, including mental health and drug and alcohol services, for vulnerable young people, including those involved with youth justice.</p> <p>The Government's Mental Health Reform Strategy <i>Because Mental Health Matters</i> has prioritised the needs of children, young people and families, and in particular through the development of a new 0-25 service response aimed at promoting timely access to quality age appropriate services. Goal 2.3 of <i>Reform Area 2 Early in life</i> commits to delivering targeted mental health support to particular groups of highly vulnerable young people including those involved with the Children's Court and youth justice. Early implementation of the Mental Health Reform Strategy has already seen allocation of \$2.9m in the 2009-10 State budget over the next four years for the establishment of six dedicated positions that will promote service access for young people involved with youth justice services, providing clinical treatment and care coordination support including those transitioning between custodial settings and the community.</p>

Recommendation	Government response
	<p>DHS and the Departments of Justice and Health will work together to strengthen services for vulnerable young people, including youth justice clients. In doing so, consideration will be given to a range of community and residential care options, including intensive community based services and the development of secure acute care beds. Any additional investment will be subject to government budget considerations.</p>
<p>Homeless and vulnerable youth</p> <p>31. The Committee recommends the Victorian government provide additional Transitional Housing places for young people involved with the Youth Justice system, and other forms of suitable long-term accommodation to assist young people leaving transitional housing, complementary to the initiatives arising from the 'Youth Homelessness Action Plan'.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The Government has been active in addressing youth homelessness. A range of youth homelessness initiatives have been established through the <i>Victorian Homelessness Strategy</i> and the <i>Youth Homelessness Action Plan</i>.</p> <p>The first stage of the plan included investment in the Transitional Housing Manager for Youth Justice program as a joined up initiative to improve housing access for young people in the Youth Justice program who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The primary target group is young people aged 17 and over who are leaving Youth Justice custodial centres on parole. Other young people in the youth justice system may also be eligible depending on vacancies.</p> <p>Any additional investment will be subject to government budget considerations.</p>
<p>32. The Committee recommends that the Department of Transport in conjunction with public transport operators develop targeted outreach assistance for homeless or otherwise vulnerable young persons found on public transport or associated property. It is envisaged this could take the form of a formalised agreement between Victoria Police, the Department of Transport, and public transport operators. It is recommended that issuing officers who observe homeless or vulnerable youth on public transport or in public areas such as train stations contact an appropriate outreach service who can provide support such as</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>It is noted that public transport operators need to be involved in determining the roles of Authorised Officers. It is proposed that Authorised Officers will link with established referral networks and systems where they are available to ensure consistency of support for young people.</p> <p>Victoria Police has a range of referral mechanisms and programs in place that operate to provide opportunities for intervention and engagement with service providers for at risk youth that police encounter. Further assessment and</p>

Recommendation	Government response
<p>food and accommodation to that young person.</p>	<p>consideration is required to determine the nature of the possible partnership and service provision with the Department of Transport and public transport operators. Additional investment will be subject to government budget considerations.</p>
<p>33. The Committee recommends that police and/or transit officers be trained in the effective utilisation of the program outlined in Recommendation 32. In particular, transit officers will need to be trained and monitored on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the services available to youth, homeless, mentally ill and people in crisis and should be trained on when to call these services in rather than engaging directly; • how to engage with the homeless, mentally ill, young people and people in crisis. 	<p>Supported in principle The Department of Transport will raise these issues with the new operators and facilitate the exploration of these recommendations with the listed stakeholders. Victoria Police is aware of the need for improved education on child and youth related issues, particularly given the high level of contact encountered with young people on the transit system. The Victoria Police Youth Affairs Office will seek to assist in the development of appropriate training opportunities as part of its <i>Child and Youth Strategy 2009-2013</i>. Additionally, through its Mental Health Strategy, Victoria Police is providing members with increased opportunities to undertake Mental Health First Aid training. These recommendations will also be considered in a wider context during the development of a <i>Youth Access and Mobility Policy</i> by the Department of Transport in 2010.</p>
<p>Alcohol and other drug use</p>	
<p>34. The Committee recommends that youth Alcohol and Other Drug outreach options be supported and strengthened.</p>	<p>Supported This recommendation is consistent with the Government's <i>A new blueprint for alcohol and other drug treatment services 2009-2013</i>, which will guide reform priorities and investment decisions for alcohol and other drug treatment services over the next five years. Included in the Blueprint is a specific action relating to the continued commitment to youth alcohol and other drug outreach. Specifically, it commits to "collocate and co-deliver youth outreach and other youth alcohol and other drug treatment services with related youth, health and</p>

Recommendation	Government response
	<p>support services to promote integrated delivery and earlier intervention” . This will be supported through another Blueprint action, a commitment to “develop a stronger therapeutic framework for all aspects of youth alcohol and other drug treatment service delivery to help young people cease or reduce their substance use and better support longer term behaviour change”. This will be achieved through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instituting a therapeutic framework for youth outreach • establishing transition protocols between youth and adult services • researching longer term outcomes for young people in treatment. <p>This is an extension of existing practice within the sector and reflects a desire to ensure that therapeutic outcomes remain a focus for alcohol and other drug interventions with young people.</p>
Setting the Research Agenda: The Call for Data, Evaluation and Evidence based Research (Chapter 13)	
<p>35. The Committee recommends that key justice agencies continue to work on integrating and connecting the disparate data collection systems of the police, courts and Department of Human Services so that whole-of-system analyses can be conducted.</p>	<p>Supported in principle The Government recognises the value of linking data collection systems across justice agencies to improve outcomes. Key justice agencies will continue their work in this area. For example, the current implementation of a Business Intelligence solution in the Department of Justice will enable storage and management of corporate data (e.g. crime data) from across disparate and diverse systems and repositories.</p>
<p>36. The Committee recommends that the following research issues highlighted in this Report be prioritised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the effect of early child development and prevention programs on youth offending (or its reduction); • research into the effectiveness of services and programs for vulnerable young 	<p>Supported in principle The Government considers this recommendation to be consistent with its current approach to policy and program development. The Government utilises academics and well known public bodies to undertake research that supports the introduction of evidence-based policy and programs. However, the Government</p>

Recommendation	Government response
<p>people;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more qualitative research into youth offending in Victoria be encouraged and undertaken; • research into offending by young people in rural and regional/outer suburban Victoria; • research into links between youth offending, disability and mental health issues; • research into the extent and causes of violent offending by young women; and • research into the extent and causes of violent offending by young people towards their parents and siblings. 	<p>also recognises the need to continuously identify areas requiring further research and exploration of issues as they emerge.</p>
<p>37. The Committee supports recommendation 7.2 in the Victorian Auditor-General's <i>Services to Young Offenders</i> report, that:</p> <p><i>... DHS in conjunction with other State Government departments and agencies involved in the delivery of youth justice services should develop a whole-of-government approach to data collection and analysis to support shared planning and service development. This should be complemented by arrangements to support effective information sharing within and across agencies.</i> (Victorian Auditor-General's Report 2008, <i>Services to Young Offenders</i>.)</p> <p>Such an approach should include a data collection framework that whilst centralised and coordinated is also disaggregated at state, rural and regional and local levels. Data on youth offending, recidivism and youth justice services data should include that drawn from police, ambulance, hospital, juvenile justice and research agencies and community agencies.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The Government supports in principle the recommendations of the Auditor-General's inquiry into services for young offenders (July 2008) and implementation is underway.</p> <p>There are a number of whole of government projects that include a focus on improving the sharing of data and information between government bodies and other interested parties.</p> <p>During this process data sharing has been occurring where required to support departmental projects.</p> <p>Additional investment will be subject to government budget considerations.</p>
<p>38. The Committee recommends that data on youth offending should be made available and accessible to all tiers of government and appropriate research and community agencies subject to legitimate need and appropriate privacy safeguards. This is essential for any ongoing capacity by local governments in</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>The Government currently provides data on youth offending to relevant organisations through the Productivity Commission and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report. Additionally, Victoria Police provides a range of</p>

Recommendation	Government response
<p>particular to address youth offending.</p>	<p>data that is reported in the <i>State of Victoria's Children Report</i>. There are also a number of whole of government projects that include a focus on improving the sharing of data and information between government bodies and other interested parties.</p> <p>This work will complement the existing Early Childhood Community Profiles and the Adolescent Community Profiles which are in the process of development, to enable tailored localised service responses.</p>
<p>39. The Committee recommends that in evaluating the success of an intervention a measurable outcome should be not just desistance from offending but also reductions in frequency and severity of offending.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>The Government is currently developing a set of measures beyond recidivism to gauge the impact of its services to young offenders. This will enable measurements of the reduction in seriousness and frequency of offending to be incorporated into program evaluations in the future.</p> <p>This Outcomes project is currently undertaking stakeholder consultations regarding their plans to measure the impact of youth justice interventions across a range of domains such as family, health, education, employment and training and others.</p>
<p>Concluding Remarks. Addressing Youth Offending: No Simple Answers (Chapter 14)</p>	
<p>40. The Committee recommends a thorough cost benefit analysis be undertaken with regard to any program intended to specifically address youth offending and associated child welfare issues. It is imperative that such an analysis should consider the long-term benefits of social, preventive, developmental and diversionary programs compared to the costs of incarceration and processing through the criminal justice system.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The Government is supportive of cost benefit analysis and supports its use in program evaluations. However, due to the complexity of measurement and causation involved, this analysis is not always possible.</p>

Recommendation	Government response
<p>41. The Committee recommends that funding continue to be provided on a triennial basis wherever possible for appropriate community projects and programs.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>The Government has substantially moved to funding service providers on a triennial basis, where appropriate. This allows service providers and their staff to plan for the future with some security as well as allowing for clients to access a service with consistency.</p> <p>Both the Government's Youth Justice Community Support Service, which provides support services to young people in the youth justice system, and the Youth Participation and Access Program, which strengthens the skills, confidence and opportunities for young people who face additional barriers or disadvantage, are funded on a three yearly basis. This allows consistency of service to youth justice clients and enables the organisations to develop significant experience in working with a complex client group.</p>