



VICTORIAN
ASSOCIATION
FOR THE CARE &
RESETTLEMENT
OF OFFENDERS
LIFE CHANGING

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Donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal & Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



28 February 2013

To the Secretary

Re: Value of a justice reinvestment approach to criminal justice in Australia

VACRO is a small Victorian Not for Profit organisation working solely in the area of support and advocacy around the adult Criminal Justice System. Our mission is to work within the criminal justice system to create a fair and safe community, to respect and support individual and family dignity, and to reduce harm done by crime. We achieve this, as leaders and in partnerships, through the development and delivery of programs that empower people impacted by the criminal justice system, supported by research, education and advocacy.

We fully support the notion that justice reinvestment provides an alternative approach to current responses within the field of criminal justice. As a small organisation we are currently unable to provide a full response to the questions posed by this Senate Committee, however we would like to draw your attention to our most recent publication; *Next Generation: Better outcomes for vulnerable families in contact with Australian criminal justice systems (2011)*.

We believe that the ordinary functioning of the criminal justice system can have unintended adverse effects on families and children of offenders. Through no fault of their own, these children are already exposed to higher than usual levels of parental drug and alcohol use, family violence, mental illness, poverty, housing instability, child abuse and social isolation. Risks to children's safety and well being can then increase with parental contact with criminal justice systems.

In this document, VACRO proposes a coordinated framework for work by many stakeholders that will improve responses to the needs of children and families of offenders. The ultimate aim is to protect children and at the same time produce outcomes that will benefit the whole community by reducing the individual and social burden of crime.

Next Generation consolidates the results of work by many research and service organisations across Australia and incorporates VACRO's experience in providing services and support to the families and children of offenders in Victoria for many years. It also provides a blueprint for potential areas of work that could be integrated within a justice reinvestment approach.



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We share your commitment to working to find solutions to the complex issues faced by the criminal justice system and look forward to the outcomes of this committee.

Yours Sincerely

Carol Nikakis
CEO

Next Generation on the Outside is available for download from VACRO's website:

<http://www.vacro.org.au>

Hard copies are available on request. Please contact VACRO Reception (+61 3 9605 1900) or email info@vacro.org.au