

## Press Release

### Legal Centre Encourages Smart Justice



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Community  
since 1977*



There has been much recent discussion in the media and other public forums about crime and sentencing. Peninsula Community Legal Centre encourages the community to inform themselves on key issues relating to the criminal justice system, rather than be influenced by political statements and media hype.

“Smart Justice” is a campaign supported by a coalition of community organisations with a vast array of experience working with offenders, victims and others involved in the criminal justice system.

The aim of the campaign is to promote understanding of criminal justice policies that are effective, evidence based and human rights compliant, thereby enhancing the safety of all Victorians.

Research demonstrates that public opinion about sentencing is largely built on widely held misconceptions about crime and sentencing. “Tough on crime” law and order approaches do not reduce crime, as they do not address its causes. The most effective way to reduce crime is through early intervention and therapeutic approaches which substantially reduce offending compared to strictly punitive measures.

Research shows that the more information people have about crime and sentencing the less likely they are to support harsh penalties. Community members armed with all the information that would be available to Judges or Magistrates would generally impose similar or more lenient sentences.

Mandatory minimum penalties of imprisonment for certain offences are currently being looked into by the State Government, including for children. Such penalties remove decision makers’ ability to take individuals’ circumstances into account, leading to potential injustice. They also carry a significant economic cost, with no corresponding benefit.

To find out more about the “Smart Justice” campaign, please visit [www.smartjustice.org.au](http://www.smartjustice.org.au).

Peninsula Community Legal Centre has been providing free legal services in Frankston for over thirty years. For more information about free legal services, please call 9783 3600 or visit [www.pclc.org.au](http://www.pclc.org.au).

END.  
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