

Media Release

Youth Crime: Debunking the Myths



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Peninsula Community Legal Centre has welcomed a recent report by the Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council about the sentencing of young people in Victoria.

Principal Lawyer, Victoria Mullings, says:

“We are aware of a community perception, often heightened by negative media coverage, that young people are trouble-makers and pose a risk to public safety. Time and again we find that perception to be exaggerated or unfounded.”

The Sentencing Advisory Council's Report, 'Sentencing Children and Young People in Victoria', found that most criminal matters in the Children's Court are non-violent and relatively minor – more than a third relating to low-level public transport matters, such as ticketing or having feet on seats. Sanctions imposed on young offenders were relatively low level, principally undertakings, bonds or fines.

We hope that these findings will encourage community members to rethink their perceptions about young people and the criminal justice system.

Criminalising young people in this manner would appear to be an inefficient use of the limited resources of the justice system. These resources may be better used educating and engaging with young people at risk, many of whom come from backgrounds of abuse and disadvantage.

Peninsula Community Legal Centre supports the *Smart Justice* campaign which aims to debunk myths about crime and sentencing, as well as promote understanding of criminal justice policies that are effective, evidence-based and human rights compliant. We encourage community members to find out more about the *Smart Justice* campaign by visiting www.smartjustice.org.au .”

Peninsula Community Legal Centre provides free legal services across Melbourne's outer south east, with offices in Frankston, Bentleigh, Cranbourne, Frankston North and Rosebud, as well as visiting services to Chelsea and Hastings. For more information about free legal services, please call (03) 9783 3600 or visit www.pclc.org.au .

END.

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