

## **Prisons costly and ineffective**

TED Baillieu's latest "tough on crime" announcement ("Lock them away", November 23) means that Victoria is on the verge of a massive prison expansion program should the Liberals win on Saturday.

Prisons are the least effective and most costly policy solution for community safety.

Even in the US, the home of tough-on-crime politics, politicians are starting to look beyond prisons as a way to deal with crime.

Overwhelmingly, Victorian prisoners have drug, alcohol and mental health problems and few of them emerge from jail as

better citizens, given that 60 per cent reoffend after release.

Only 6 per cent of male Victorian prisoners have a secondary or tertiary education qualification and most crime is generated in our poorest suburbs.

Given this, if Ted Baillieu were fair dinkum about community safety in the long term, he would be directing the money he intends to spend on new jails into kindergartens and schools in disadvantaged communities.

**Julie Edwards, CEO,  
Jesuit Social Services**