

Smart Justice

"community safety the smart way"

Media Release

Justice coalition criticises prison expansion plans

25 November 2010

Smart Justice, a coalition of leading legal and community groups, criticised the Coalition promise to build 500 new prison beds at a cost of \$268 million as "a waste of taxpayers' money."

Smart Justice spokesperson Hugh de Kretser said, "There are almost 40,000 households on the waiting list for public housing in Victoria, yet the Coalition is spending \$260 million on 500 prison beds, a construction cost of half a million dollars per prison bed, leaving aside the \$90,000 per year average cost of housing a prisoner. Instead of 500 prison beds, this money could provide accommodation for over 1,000 families at risk of homelessness."

"Putting someone in prison is a blunt, harmful and extremely expensive way to try and control crime. Studies suggest that very substantial increases in imprisonment will produce only a modest reduction in crime. Worse, there is evidence that prison increases the likelihood of people reoffending after release."

"Increasing the number of people in prison diverts resources from social infrastructure and cost effective initiatives which have been shown to address the underlying causes of crime. Research indicates that reducing disadvantage and increasing income equality will reduce crime. Reducing child neglect will reduce crime. Stable housing and employment opportunities will reduce reoffending. Instead of spending more money on prisons, we need to be tackling the causes of crime."

A fact sheet explaining why prisons are not the answer to reducing crime is available on the Smart Justice website www.smartjustice.org.au.

Further information:

Hugh de Kretser 0403 965 340 Kerry O'Shea 0401 107 103