

FACT SHEET

SOCIAL JUSTICE UNIT



UNITINGCARE BURNSIDE CENTENARY CAMPAIGN – FACT SHEET #2

Juvenile Justice

- In the five years to 2008-09 the average daily population of young people (aged 10 to 17 years) in juvenile detention in NSW increased by 73%.ⁱ
- In 2009-10, an average of 434 young people (10-17 years) in NSW were in custody each day. Of these 226 were serving custodial sentences while 208 were remanded in custody awaiting the finalisation of court proceedings.ⁱⁱ
- In 2009-10 only 19.2% of young people held on remand in NSW received a custodial sentence within 12 months.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Indigenous juveniles and young adults are more likely to be incarcerated today than at any other time since the release of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* report in 1991.^{iv}
- In 2007, the detention rate for Indigenous juveniles was 28 times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous juveniles and Indigenous juveniles accounted for 59% of the total juvenile detention population.^v
- In 2010, NSW had the highest rate of juvenile justice clients (10-17 years) in detention centres at 17.4% compared to a national average of 11.4%.^{vi}
- A NSW Juvenile Justice Survey of the health status of young people in custody in 2009 showed a troubling pattern of social disadvantage, poor mental health, previous offending behaviour, and alcohol and substance misuse.^{vii}
- Offending behaviour of young people in custody in NSW in 2009:
 - 79% reported previous time in custody
 - The average age of first time in custody was 14.3 years
 - On average, young people had 5 previous episodes in custody.^{viii}
- Social disadvantage of young people in custody in NSW in 2009:
 - 27% of young people had been placed in care before the age of 16 years
 - 45% have had a parent in prison
 - 38% were attending school prior to custody.
 - 6% of young people (and 18% of young women) reported being unsettled or having no fixed place of abode (6 months prior to custody)
 - 27% had moved two or more times in the six months prior to custody rising to 32% for Aboriginal young people.^{ix}
- Mental health of young people in custody in NSW in 2009:
 - 60% had a history of child abuse or trauma
 - 14% had a possible intellectual disability and 32% scored in the borderline intellectual disability range
 - 87% were found to have a psychological disorder
 - 16% had thought about suicide and 10% had attempted suicide in their lifetime
 - 21% had thought about self-harm and 16% had self-harmed during their lifetime.^x

- Alcohol and drug use of young people in custody in NSW in 2009:
 - 66% reported being drunk at least weekly in the year prior to custody
 - 61% of young people identified that their alcohol consumption had caused them problems in the past year (with school, friends, health, police, parents)
 - 78% were found to be risky drinkers
 - 89% had tried illicit drugs and 65% had used an illicit drug at least weekly in the year prior to custody
 - 65% reported committing crime to obtain alcohol or drugs
 - 69% were intoxicated (on alcohol, drugs or both) at the time of their offence.^{xi}

Prepared by Sally Cowling - Research Manager

Contact Person:

Karen Bevan - Director, Social Justice
 Social Justice Unit
 UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families
 PO Box W244, Parramatta NSW 2150
 Phone: 02 9407 3201 Mobile: 0400 379 656
 Email: kbevan@burnside.org.au

ⁱ Productivity Commission (2011) *Report on Government Services 2011*, Canberra: Table 15A.170 and author's calculations.

ⁱⁱ NSW Department of Human Services (2010) *Annual Report 2009-10*, NSW Government, Sydney: p.194.

ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid.*, p.197.

^{iv} House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (2011) *Doing Time - Time for Doing: Indigenous Youth in the Criminal Justice System*, Parliament of Australia, Canberra: p.7.

^v *ibid.*, p.8.

^{vi} Productivity Commission, *op. cit.*, Table 15A.169.

^{vii} Indig, D., Vecchiato, C., Haysom, L., Beilby, R., Carter, J., Champion, U., Gaskin, C., Heller, E., Kumar, S., Mamone, N., Muir, P., van den Dolder, P. & Whitton, G. (2011) *2009 NSW Young People in Custody Health Survey: Full Report*, Justice Health and Juvenile Justice, Sydney: p. 12.

^{viii} *ibid.*, p.12

^{ix} *ibid.*, p.12

^x *ibid.*, p.15

^{xi} *ibid.*, pp.14-15