



Federation of
Community Legal Centres
VICTORIA

Manager, Children and Young People

Strategic Policy and Legislation
Department of Justice
GPO Box 4356
Melbourne 3001

4 October 2012

By email: legalpolicysubmissions@justice.vic.gov.au

Improving diversion for young people by entrenching diversion in the youth justice system in Victoria

Dear Sir/Madam

The Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) welcomes this opportunity to respond to issues raised in the discussion paper to improve diversion for young people in Victoria.

About the Federation

The Federation is the peak body for 49 community legal centres (CLCs) across Victoria. The Federation leads and supports CLCs in pursuing social equity and access to justice.

The Federation:

- provides information and referrals to people seeking legal assistance;
- works for law reform to develop a fairer legal system that better responds to the needs of the disadvantaged;
- works to build a stronger and more effective community legal sector;
- provides services and support to CLCs; and
- represents CLCs' priorities and interests.

CLCs are independent community organisations that work daily with communities interacting with our criminal justice system. They draw on the work of volunteers to provide free legal services to the public. CLCs provide free legal advice, information and representation to more than 100,000 Victorians each year.

About Smart Justice for Young People

Smart Justice for Young People is a coalition of youth advocates from community legal centres, youth services, peak bodies, and other community organisations interested in the legal and justice issues of young people. Smart Justice for Young People is engaging with Government about a range of youth justice issues including the need for a coordinated and comprehensive approach to diversion for young people under 18 years.

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Endorsement of Smart Justice for Young People submission

The Federation is a partner organisation in the Smart Justice for Young People coalition and was part of the working group which drafted a joint response to the discussion paper. A copy of the submission is attached to this letter.

We endorse this submission. The submission emphasises that the most critical overall improvement required is the introduction of a state-wide legislated diversion framework for the diversion of young offenders from court proceedings wherever possible. The framework should have a focus on rehabilitation with capacity to refer children and young people to appropriate support services that are run by non-government organisations with dedicated funding.

Conclusion

We hope that you will consider this submission when you are making recommendations in relation to this reference. Please do not hesitate to contact me on 03 9652 1507 or michelle.mcdonnell@fclc.org.au if you wish to clarify any points in this letter.

Sincerely



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