

Media Release

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP

Minister for Crime Prevention

Minister for Corrections

Minister for Youth Justice

Minister for Victim Support



Thursday, 12 May 2022

TARGETED SUPPORT FOR AT-RISK SOUTH SUDANESE YOUTH

Young South Sudanese Victorians at risk of coming into contact with the justice system will be supported and empowered through a tailored working group made up of community leaders and stakeholders.

Minister for Youth Justice Natalie Hutchins today opened an Expression of Interest for the Chair and general members of Victoria's first South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice Expert Working Group, which will work in partnership with the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).

The working group's purpose is to ensure young South Sudanese Victorians who may have complex histories of trauma and disadvantage have access to the best opportunities to lead successful and fulfilling lives.

An Advisory Group including prominent South Sudanese Australian community members will advise the South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice Expert Working Group on how to engage and support young people who have been in touch with, or who are at risk of entering the youth justice system.

Evidence shows that the most effective supports for multicultural young people are those that are responsive to their unique experiences, strengths, and networks – led by their own community.

Backed by an investment of \$5 million the Expert Working Group will empower South Sudanese Australian leaders and community organisations to run programs, interventions, and support services for young people to help prevent their involvement in the youth justice system.

This will be informed by a number of current programs which have been established to address the over representation of Young South Sudanese people including programs with Afri-Aus Care and a mentoring program with Paramount Chief Kuol Adol Incorporated.

Following the appointment of the Chair, stakeholders will be consulted to inform the finalisation of the Expert Working Group's terms of reference.

Drawing on the experience of the Koori Youth Justice Taskforce, this work will focus on community-led initiatives and align with existing multicultural youth support initiatives such as the Anti-Racism Taskforce, Youth Justice South Sudanese Community Support Groups and the Putting Families First Program.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Youth Justice Natalie Hutchins

"The South Sudanese community know best how to support young people who are at risk of entering the youth justice system to turn their lives around - that's why we're ensuring they have the support to do just that."

"Children and young people in the youth justice system often have complex histories and experiences of trauma and disadvantage."

"This working group will aim to address these issues, reduce risks and promote opportunities for rehabilitation."