

What is Restorative Justice:

A restorative justice conference is an exchange of information between an offender and a victim, most commonly, a face to face meeting.

The purpose of restorative justice in the ACT is to:

- provide a victim with an opportunity to talk about how an offence has affected them and others close to them,
- provide a young person with an opportunity to accept responsibility for their actions,
- provide a young person with an opportunity to repair the harm done, and
- provide a victim, a young person and their supporters an opportunity to meet, to discuss the harm and what may be done to repair that harm.¹

Outcomes of restorative justice include improved recovery for the victim through a sense of control, inclusive family practices ensure strong support networks for both victim and young person, for the young person it can mean avoiding going to court, a reduced sentence, positive social connection and a reduced likelihood of re-offence.

Restorative justice is a tool that allows schools to move away from more traditional punitive approaches and towards engaging young people in a process that challenges and discourages harmful behaviour in a supportive and respectful environment.

Restorative Justice in the ACT:

Restorative Justice principles can be applied within the judicial system as well as in settings such as schools in the ACT. However, schools require both adequate training and a commitment from all staff to the process, not simply a few dedicated individuals.

The Youth Coalition is concerned about lack of resources for schools to implement restorative justice principles as this impacts upon their ability to implement principles comprehensively and holistically. The Youth Coalition believes that evaluation is imperative to this process and that this should be adequately resourced.

In order to be successful, restorative justice principles must be implemented holistically in schools, and not rely upon a few key personnel. Training is absolutely crucial to effective facilitation, and should be subsidised (including through the provision of funding for relief hours) in order to encourage schools to send their staff.

The implementation of restorative justice principles will be most successful in schools which use the opportunity to look holistically at how they are operating as a community, revisit principles of democracy and justice and commit to teaching young people valuable life skills.²

¹ ACT Policing (2006) *Restorative Justice Conferencing* http://www.afp.gov.au/act/community/restorative_justice_conferencing [Accessed 10 November 2006]

² Youth Coalition of the ACT (2005) *Submission to the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Young People: Inquiry into Restorative Justice in the ACT* p6

The Youth Coalition sees the youth sector as a key player to the success of the restorative justice program. The support that the sector provides, particularly to young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, is essential in reducing the occurrence of re-offending.

The Youth Coalition is committed to:

- ◆ Advocating for the continued use of Restorative Justice in ACT justice and school settings.
- ◆ Advocating for all restorative justice processes to be adequately funded in order to be implemented holistically and to be properly evaluated.
- ◆ Advocating for a standardised framework of selection criteria for young people to be involved in restorative justice processes in ACT schools.
- ◆ Advocating for the youth sector to be adequately trained in restorative justice processes.