

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CONFERENCING

INFORMATION FOR TERRITORIANS



Restorative Justice Conferencing is based on restorative justice principles and uses a problem solving approach to respond to youth offending. It aims to balance the needs of victims, young people and the community by encouraging dialogue between those who have offended, their victims and others affected by crime.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN THE NT

Pre-Court Restorative Justice Conferencing

Under the Youth Justice Act, Police may consider diversion for any youth offender between the ages of 10-17 years. Offences that may be considered for referral include home or business break-ins, vandalism and theft, among others. These conferences are facilitated by a Police Officer and aim to encourage the victim and the young person to share their story about the incident and discuss who has been affected and how. The discussion works towards repairing the harm, minimising further harm and establishing some social behaviours and supports to demonstrate the young person's commitment to behaviour change.

Pre-Sentence Restorative Justice Conferencing

A court can adjourn sentencing for youth aged 10-17 years so that a Youth Justice Conference can be held and a report prepared for the court. The court may do so if the young person has entered a plea of guilty and voluntarily agrees to the process. This conference is facilitated by a trained convener and is a structured process that brings together the victim(s) and their support person(s) and the offender and their support person(s) to discuss the harm done and provide the young person with the opportunity to make amends. An outcome plan is agreed upon at the conference outlining activities for the young person to complete in conjunction with their sentence.

BENEFITS OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

For Victims

- Active participation in the justice process
- Safe and structured space to have their voice heard
- Opportunity to address their hurt and fear as a result of the crime
- Opportunity to hear the young person's explanation
- Designated Victim Support Officer

For Young Offenders

- Encourages offenders to take responsibility for their actions
- Promotes understanding of the impact offending has on the victim, their family and the community
- Interrupts negative behaviour patterns
- Opportunity for remorse and facilitation of change
- Inhibits re-offending

VICTIM SUPPORT SERVICES

Victims of Crime NT (VoCNT) supports victims throughout the process of restorative justice conferencing. Participation in the process is voluntary. A Victim Support Officer will be allocated to assist you through the whole process from the preparation meeting to the post de-briefing session. They will respond to all concerns and queries and provide ongoing information and emotional support.

Victim Support Officers can also provide:

- crisis counselling
- referrals to additional services
- applications for financial assistance, where applicable
- assistance with preparation of documentation such as victim impact statements

THINGS TO NOTE

Participating in Restorative Justice Conferencing is not an easy option for the young person.

Many young people find it more confronting to face their victim directly than to face court. Participating in a conference requires the young person to come to terms with the true impact of their offending behaviour and take practical steps to repair the harm they have caused.

Restorative Justice Conferencing does not replace the court process in some instances. Conferencing provides a restorative intervention that can enhance the effectiveness of the normal judicial process. The young person's participation in the conference and the progress towards their outcome plan will be considered by the Judge when determining an appropriate sentence.

The effectiveness of Restorative Justice Conferencing in reducing re-offending is evidenced by: KPMG (2010) Review of the Youth Justice Conferencing Program, and Australian Institute of Criminology (2017) Impact of Restorative Justice.

For more information on Restorative Justice Conferencing:

Victims of Crime NT

Freecall: 1800 672 242
www.victimsofcrime.org.au

Community Justice Centre

1800 000 473
cjc@nt.ov.au
www.cjc.nt.gov.au

Jesuit Social Services

08 8941 5235
jss@jss.org.au
www.jss.org.au

For more information about pre-court conferencing available through the NT Police Youth Diversion Program, please contact:

youthdiversionunitdarwin@nt.gov.au
08 8936 4854

youthdiversionunitalicesprings@nt.gov.au
08 8951 1734