



Victims of Crime NT

Youth Justice Conferencing

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

Restorative Conferencing provides an intervention that can enhance the effectiveness of the judicial process. Participating in Youth Justice Conferencing is not an easy option for the young person.

Under the Youth Justice Act, Police may consider diversion for any youth offender between the ages of 12-17 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 a plan to support the young person to change their offending behaviour. This kind of Conferencing is called Diversion. It diverts the young person away from court proceedings.

Another type of conferencing occurs when the court is sentencing a young person for offences that they have accepted responsibility for. This kind of conferencing is run by an impartial facilitator called a Convenor. This Convenor is trained, and the process is structured bringing together the victim and their support person and the offender and their support person to discuss the harm done by the offending and provide the young person with the opportunity to make amends.

The Convenor then prepares a report to the Court outlining how the young person participated, their level of remorse and how they plan to make amends for the crime they committed. This kind of conferencing is called a Pre-Sentence conference. The young person's participation in the conference and their progress towards their outcome plan, will be considered by the judge when determining an appropriate sentence.

Victims of Crime NT (VoCNT) supports victims throughout these processes. Victim participation is completely voluntary. A Victim Support Officer will support you through the whole process from your preparation meetings with the Convenor to post conference de-briefing and support.



Victims of Crime NT

Victim Support Officers can also provide:

- Crisis counselling
- Referrals to additional services
- Application for financial assistance, where applicable
- Assistance with preparation of documentation such as Victim Impact Statements

The effectiveness of Youth 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.

Benefits of a Youth Justice Conference for the Victim:

- Active participation in the justice process
- Safe and structures space to have their voice heard.
- Opportunity to address their hurt and fear because of the crime.
- Opportunity to hear the young person's explanation.
- Designated Victim Support Officer.
- Encourages offenders to take responsibility for their actions.
- Promotes understanding of the impact offending has on the victim, their family and the community.

The conference convenor will ensure that the conference is conducted in a safe and impartial manner. You will arrive after and leave before the offender.

Participating in a conference is often a personally beneficial experience as a victim. However, coming face-to-face with the offender and talking about your experience can be confronting. If you would like to nominate someone you trust to attend the conference on your behalf, you can.

For more information about the support available to victims please contact:

Level 2, 71 Smith St, NAB building,
Darwin NT 0800
GPO Box 1258 – Darwin NT 0801

T: 08 8941 0995
Free call: 1800 672 242
W: victimsofcrime.org.au

4/15 Leichardt Tce
Alice Springs 0871
GPO Box 1571

T: 08 8952 4466
Free call: 1800 672 242
W: victimsofcrime.org.au