

Introducing Restorative Conferencing

a whole of community, early intervention
approach to youth anti-social behaviour

First interim evaluation report



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SERVICES



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Isabelle Bartkowiak-Théron

July 2011

Summary

This document is the first interim evaluation report put together by the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies for YES Youth & Family Services. This report looks at the early developments of the *Introducing Restorative Conferencing: a whole of community, early intervention approach to youth antisocial behaviour* scheme. The purpose of this initial document is to raise and address, when appropriate and/or possible the preliminary issues faced by key partners, participating agencies and newly trained conference facilitators. It introduces the methodological outline of the full project evaluation, and introduces the key performance indicators that have been developed by the research team to benchmark the progress of the initiative against its aims and objectives.

Further to this documentation, the research team has committed to other regular reporting activities throughout the initiative. The second report, due in January-February 2012, will 'locate' the Introducing Restorative Conferencing within local and regional policies and practices, document progress to date and analyse the first implementation stages of the initiative. In order to fully picture the bedding in of restorative practices in school policies and procedures, a discussion paper will be distributed to all stakeholders in October 2011. It will also be made available online. Answers to this discussion paper will be compiled and analysed in the aforementioned second report. The third and final report will look at impact indicators for the scheme and at its sustainability. Each step of the way, the research team will feature recommendations conceptualised from field data analysis and literature.

The first chapter of this report outlines the background and purpose of the implementation of the Introducing Restorative Conferencing initiative. Whilst it does dig into historical data, it also provides a brief situational picture of the Albury Local Government Area prior to the scheme commencing. Further data and analysis will be the point of our second and third reports on the initiative.

Chapter two consists of a short literature review of restorative justice initiatives and evaluations worldwide. It describes the documented impact of restorative justice initiatives practiced worldwide, highlights the processes that are at stake in restorative justice practices, particularly in the case of group conferencing and the logistics of conference facilitations. This broad review of practices will

allow us to identify the Introducing Restorative Conferencing scheme amongst an extensive number of programs worldwide.

Chapter three unveils in detail the particulars of the evaluation, as agreed upon by the research team and funding partners. It describes the various tools that will be used to gauge the impact of the initiatives, and presents dissemination protocols for evaluation results.

Chapter four introduces the first observations of the research team, at the time the restorative justice accredited training closed. By then, the research team was able to garner an indication of expectations of, concerns about and attitudes towards the scheme, by engaging in the first part of the evaluation fieldwork.

Chapter five reflects on these findings and puts forward early recommendation or suggestions for the further implementation and sustainability of the initiative, short and long term. It also summarises how the initiatives is meeting its agreed milestones and how it progresses according to aims and objectives.

Chapter 1 – Background

1. Young People, offending and anti-social behaviour in Albury

The Albury Community

Albury is a regional city located in Southern New South Wales, on the border of the Murray River. Recent census data indicate that as at June 2009, the Albury Local Government Area (Fig. 1) had a population of 50,522, an increase of 1.0% compared to the previous year (Albury City Council, 2011), and that Indigenous persons accounted for 2.3% of the overall Albury population (ABS, 2006). However, census data provided by Albury agencies tend to put forward a figure of 3% to represent Albury individuals of Indigenous descent, taking into account the transient nature of the community. With the decline in infrastructure and the economic status of regional communities, there have been increasing concerns amongst community members about young people and issues such as unemployment, disengagement from schools, domestic violence, health, alcohol abuse, self image, and self confidence. It has been acknowledged that young people in the Albury and wider community are faced with a variety of social issues and have to face a pronounced lack of opportunities, which the Introducing Restorative Conferencing project hopes to partly address (YES, 2011).

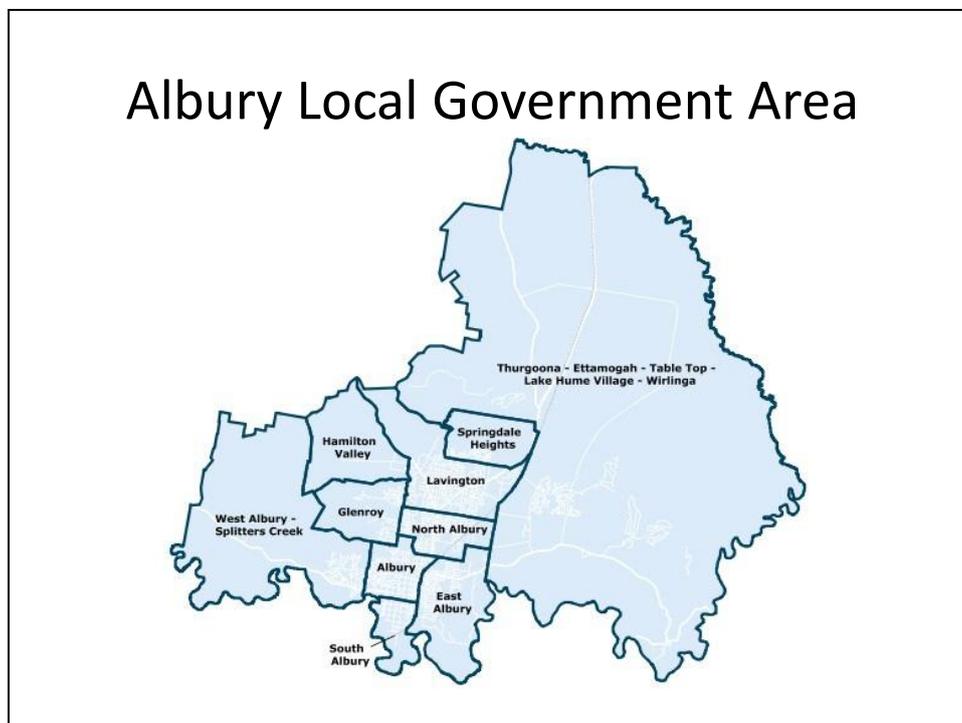


Fig. 1 - Albury Local Government Area (Source: Albury City Council)

These preoccupations are central to the Introducing Restorative Conferencing initiative, considering the large number of young people that make up the Albury social fabric. Census data from 2006 (Fig. 2) indicate that young people constitute just under 30% of the population, with young people aged between 5 and 19 representing 22% of the overall population. That same year, there were 7409 students enrolled in State Primary Schools and 3715 students enrolled in Private Primary Schools (total of 11066). Students enrolled in State Secondary institutions amounted to 5810, for 2991 in Private Secondary schools (total of 8700). Riverina TAFE accounted for 6235 vocational enrolments (*ibid.*).

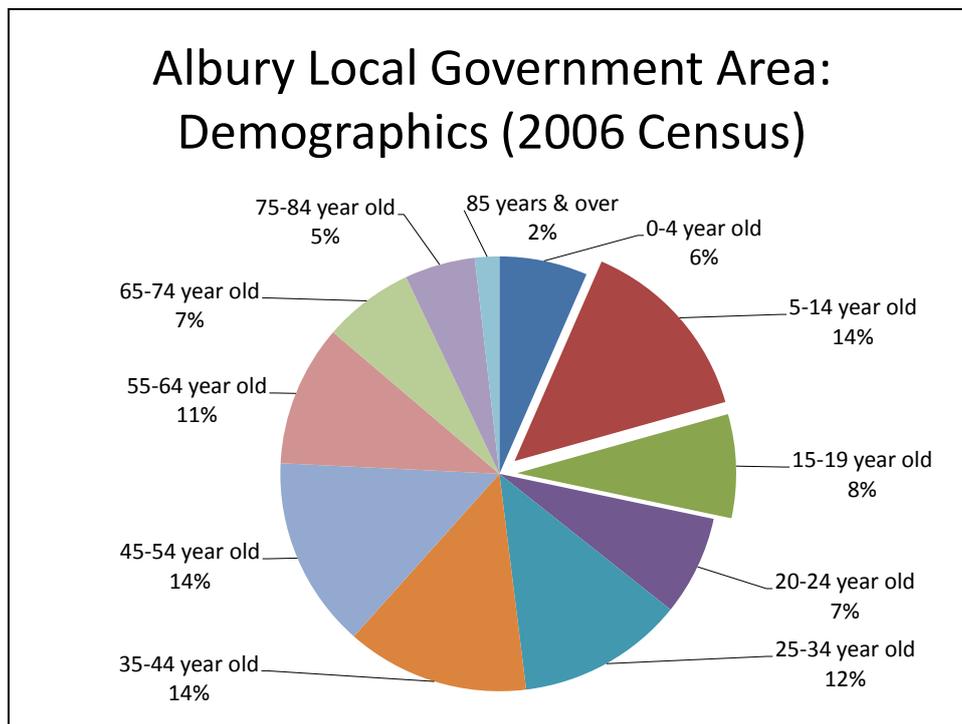


Fig. 2 - Albury Local Government Area - 2006 Census Data

Concerns for Albury's Youth: initial project set up overview

Since 2007, the Albury Aboriginal Community has been engaged in designing and setting up a youth-based initiative, based on their concerns for young people in Albury. Along with the over representation of young Indigenous people engaged in anti social activities and who were advancing onto more serious crimes, Aboriginal elders were distressed by their observation of young people in the street during school hours, of their perception of alarming truancy and suspension rates among school aged-youth, regardless of their background (see Figs. 3 and 4)¹. To their concerns was added

¹ Source: historical data garnered via consultation of the CI with Aboriginal Elders, 2007-2008

the perception by the community that the hands of Police were tied when it came to dealing with juvenile crime, which was perceived by the community to be out of control.

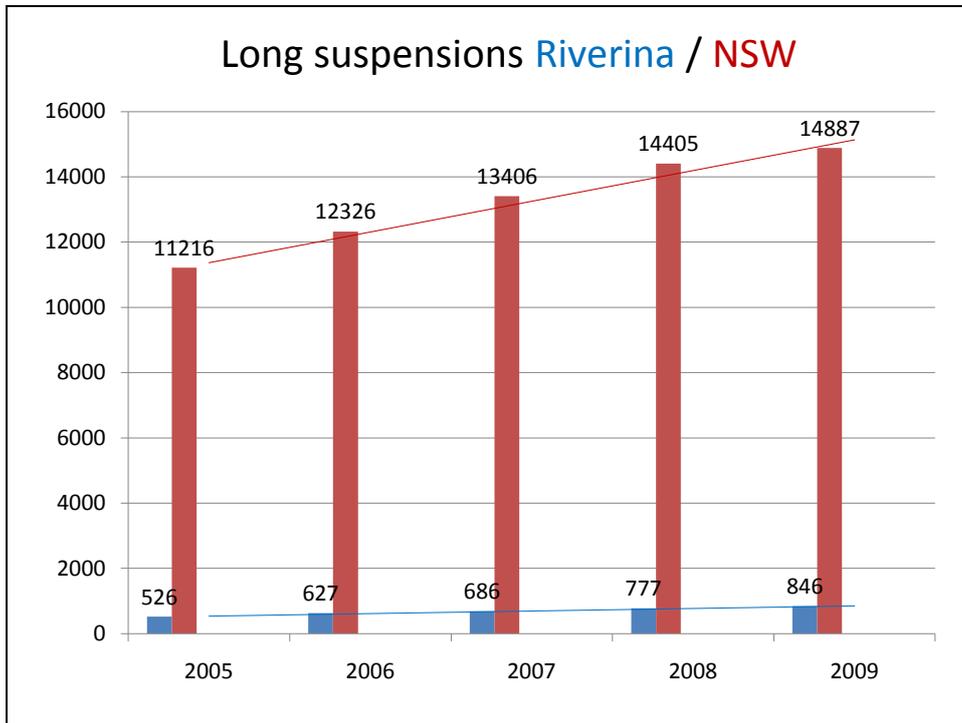


Fig. 3 - Number of long suspensions in the Riverina and NSW (source: NSW Government, Education and Training)

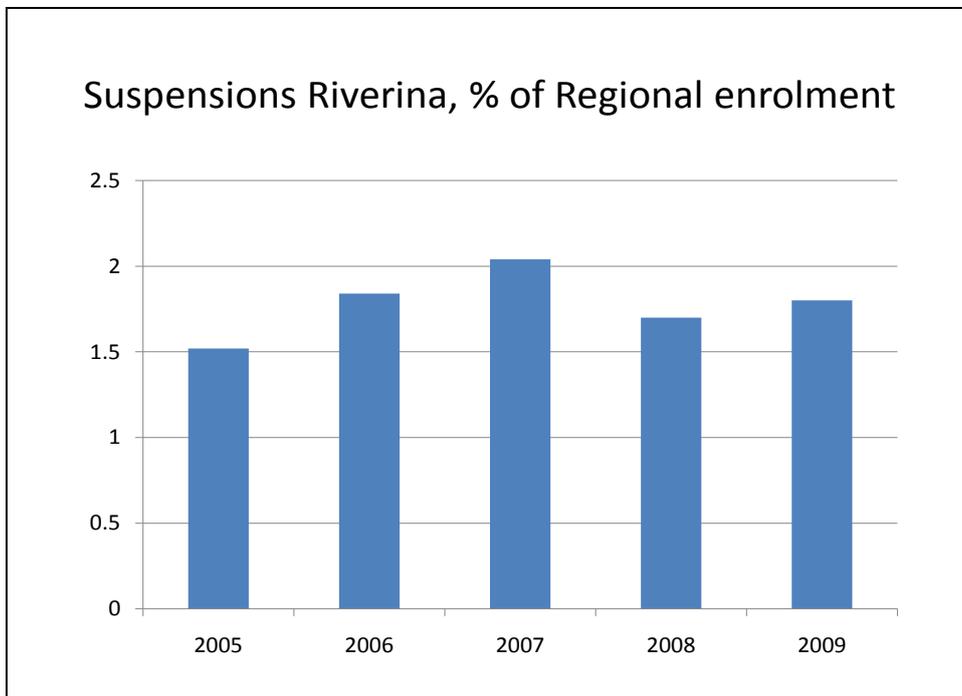


Fig. 4 - Suspended students, as a percentage of regional enrolment, Riverina (source: NSW Government, Education and Training)

A successful Youth Forum coordinated by Albury City Council in 2008 unveiled concerns amongst young people about their well being and opportunities. Data from the aforementioned forum suggested that there was a lack of programs available for young indigenous people within the Albury area. During the consultation conducted to develop Albury City Council's Strategic Plan, the community and service providers insisted on a need for alternative education programs to engage young people at risk of leaving school early and who may not be able to cope with traditional education programs (YES, 2011).

Some of the main issues that were identified in the community plan for Indigenous young people were:

- low recreation participation,
- poor school retention rates, and
- access to affordable transport options (*ibid.*).

A key recommendation in the Albury Wodonga Indigenous Community Social Action Plan 2006 included that:

“The community, government and relevant local agencies collaborate to streamline and further develop creative and responsive services to address juvenile justice, domestic violence and victim support services”.

Since then, the Albury Wodonga Community Working Party (AWCWP) and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs have been looking at enhancing local priorities along those lines. Many stakeholders and academics subsequently met with members of the AWCWP to present restorative practice ideas, which had been thought of interest by Aboriginal elders, and to seek their input in the design of a possible initiative for the region. Three representatives from the AWCWP nominated to work with the steering committee on the project and many aboriginal people at the AWCWP spoke of the need for aboriginal families to be able to access early intervention services and close the cycle of disadvantage that currently exists. As a consequence of this process, a series of awareness workshops were conducted under the banner of Albury City Council and YES Youth & Family Services, to gauge agency and community interest in setting up an initiative revolving around early intervention and restorative practice principles. These workshops were conducted by academics and practitioners throughout 2009, and concluded in an agreement that YES Youth & Family Services (YES) would take the lead in applying for strategic funding, and put together a community early-intervention initiative targeting young people who have not yet offended, but display significant misbehaviour and anti-social behaviour in school to be of concern for agencies, parents and school

staff. The underlying principles of such an initiative were to follow good practice models in the area of restorative justice, follow whole of government approaches to social and community problem solving, and be inclusive of strong evaluation components. The underpinnings of the project were to act as early as possible to divert young people from the juvenile justice system, and to involve community members as much as possible in the restorative, problem-solving process. In December 2009, the initiative became known as: *Introducing Restorative Conferencing: a whole of community, early intervention approach to youth anti-social behaviour* (“Introducing Restorative Conferencing” for short and reduced to the “IRC” acronym).

2. The diversion of young offenders from the criminal justice system

Further to this consultation with the Albury Aboriginal community, the NSW Police Albury Local Area Command indicated, in a subsequent meeting with all IRC stakeholders, that their resources are such that when they pick up young children below the age of 12 years who may be, for example, participating in a binge drinking session that degenerates into offensive language or damage to property, their protocol consists of returning the children to their parents. There was therefore interest from the Police in implementing a system and procedure which would allow for follow up with the parents and the young person within 24-48 hours following an incident, and to organise a restorative conference to stop the issues escalating into more serious matters (YES, 2010).

For some years, the Albury Local Area Command have noticed an increase in young people engaging in criminal activities such as stealing cars, assault, break and enter and stealing offences with half of these offences being committed by juveniles. The overall juvenile crime rate for 2010 in the Albury area, for the seven major crime categories is shown in Fig. 5 (BOCSAR, 2011).

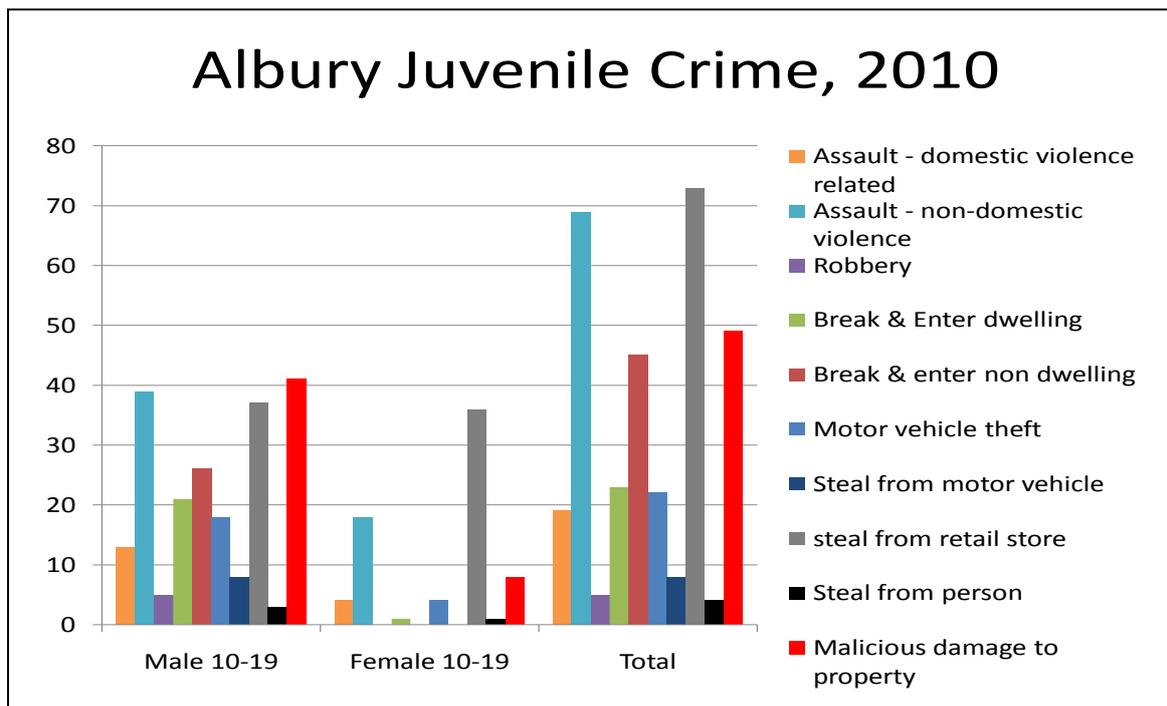


Fig. 5 - Albury Juvenile Crime 2010 (BOCSAR, 2011, n)

In 2008, Local Area Command data indicated that “70.8% of all car stealing offences were committed by young people, with 43.2% of indigenous young people convicted [of these offences]” (YES, 2010). Furthermore, according to Police and the local elders, ‘the young people involved are persistent offenders with the following characteristics:

- Half are under the age of 21 years,
- 75% started offending between the ages of 12 and 15,
- More than 33% were in care as children, and
- 50% have no qualifications and nearly all have been excluded from school’ (YES, 2010).

During initial consultations, it was noted that both the Albury Local Area Command and elders of the Wiradjuri country anecdotally observed younger siblings being coerced into committing crimes, and that offences of break and enter were becoming more violent with young people carrying weapons and entering premises that are occupied at the time of the offence. A similar trend was noted in the high levels of young people, particularly indigenous young people stealing motor vehicles (*ibid.*).

Meetings held with Wiradjuri elders highlighted their concerns around young children living within local social housing estates not attending school and exhibiting anti social behaviour, and with alcohol related dependence issues. They felt that families were falling through the cracks in support services and that there was a lack of early intervention programs. Ultimately, they felt that young people and their families were being let down by local services (*ibid.*).

The interest of all, stemming from Aboriginal tradition and consultation with area specialists, leaned towards setting up an early-intervention initiative along the principles of restorative justice, specifically restorative conferencing practices. The underlying purpose of such an initiative would be to curb anti-social behaviour and tackle behavioural issues before they escalate and the young people become known to the police and court authorities. To do this, all stakeholders felt it was important to keep young people occupied, preferably at school, and to make them understand the importance of being responsible for their own actions. Observations and practice documented in international literature on youth also suggest that when young people are engaged in positive programs then they are less likely to engage in criminal activity.

3. Introducing Restorative Conferencing: project description

From the onset, the *Introducing Restorative Conferencing* initiative fully aligned with the first three priority areas for funding outlined in the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* (POCA) Guidelines for Funding Non-Government Organisation (December 2009):

1. Diversion and prevention programs, including those focussing on indigenous persons
2. Youth crime, including diversion and prevention programs
3. Early intervention projects with families, children and schools.

Therefore, funding applications to the several POCA funding scheme rounds were put together to help set up an 18 month pilot program. In November 2010, YES Youth & Family Services were successful in obtaining full funding, respectively from New South Wales Correctional Services for the delivery of accredited training on restorative practices (specifically on restorative group conferencing), and from the Attorney General's Office for the set up of an 18 month problem-solving, restorative justice-based initiative, that will focus on a cohort of young aged 8 to 18 years.

As per the consultation described above, Albury stakeholders had identified the need for the early intervention program to be developed and adopted into schools, organisations and community centres targeting young people aged 8 to 18 years. Soon after the grant submission process, a steering committee specifically designed for the set up of this initiative had a series of meetings, and decided to initiate a project that stemmed from these wide-ranging consultations held with the Aboriginal community, the NSW Police Force (Albury Local Area Command), the Department of Education and Training and community services. The first step in addressing the concerns expressed

by community members, was the design of a restorative approach for victim/s, wrong-doer/s² and families to jointly work towards solutions to anti social behaviour, and to deter further escalating criminal or anti social acts by young people. It was also decided that the initiative would be evaluated on an ongoing basis by an independent body and that, to ensure good practice, accredited training would be provided to prospective facilitators involved in the restorative justice program. The project's goal, purpose and objectives, as they were eventually put together for the initiative are featured in Fig. 6 (YES, 2011).

In addition to the above mentioned objectives, the initiative now runs in line with a set of expected deliverables. These deliverables are phrased in the form of 'expected benefits' that the initiative can produce, in the mid to long term timeframe. These are featured in Appendix 2 of this report (source: Expression of Interest sent to the Attorney General's Office – 2010).

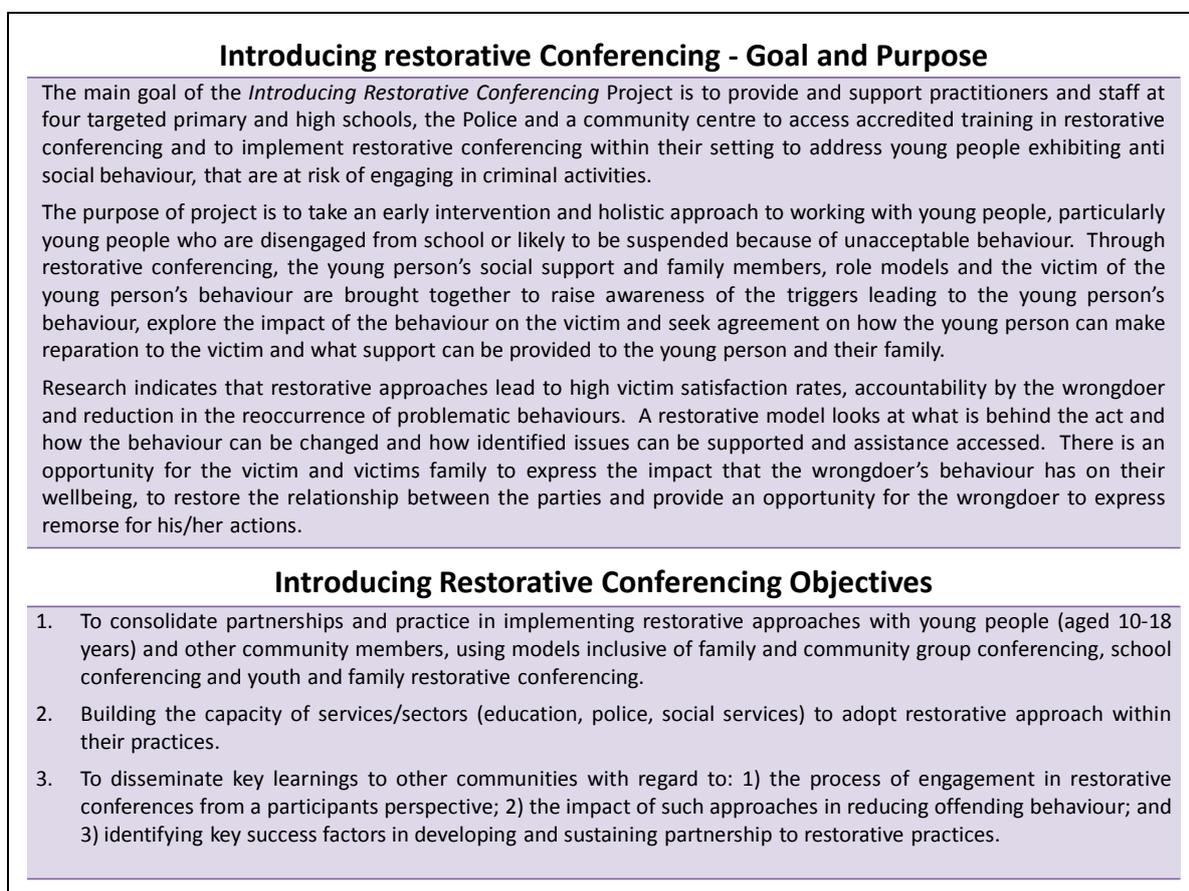


Fig. 6 - Introducing Restorative Conferencing: goals, purpose and objectives

² As per early conversations with the team that set up the initiative, 'wrongdoers' has been used instead of 'perpetrator' or 'offender' throughout the initiative, as this consists of an early intervention program, prior to courts and police being actively engaged with a young person. This term is used herewith to describe the person who is displaying antisocial behaviour, as technically, no offence has been committed for eligibility under the scheme.

The IRC aims to set an example in collaborative work across a range of social and educational providers and the Police to provide restorative programs that can work with young people and their families, and which acknowledge that the wellbeing of the whole family impacts on the young person. Along the lines of best practice in whole of government approaches, the project aims to address the problem of anti-social behaviour amongst youth by identifying the root cause of the problem, and providing a seamless service system that supports families in accessing services that are appropriate to their needs (YES, 2011).

On the day the training closed, the initiative was targeting four Albury schools (both primary school and secondary schools) and one community centre. Whilst training and the logistics of the initiative were initially designed with these specific targets in mind, the IRC is not limited to these, and a number of community-based issues (non-school related) can be referred to facilitators, as long as they are inclusive of youth issues or youth-related problems.

4. Introducing Restorative Conferencing: process description

The IRC functions along the lines of a problem-solving process that is based on the multiple principles of restorative justice and early intervention. In essence, people involved in the IRC are in a position to identify young people who, through their behaviour (either labelled as ‘misbehaviour’ or ‘antisocial behaviour’), are at risk of disengaging with schools. Upon identification of incidents involving those young people, anyone based within the schools or the community centre (but not limited by these targets) may refer the incident to the school’s IRC champion, or by default to YES Youth & Family Services. Upon determining whether the young person is eligible for a restorative conference, the IRC project worker will allocate a conference facilitator to the case, and a restorative conference, involving all parties and their support person(s) will be organised. This conference is meant to be a safe place that will allow all participants to:

- address and repair the harm that has been caused during the incident or when the young person misbehaved, via a negotiated agreement,
- see the young person take responsibility for his/her actions (all parties need to accept to be part of the conference and, as much as possible, no young person can be forced to attend a conference),
- negotiate specific outcomes for all parties, and
- draft a specific ‘plan of action’ so that agreements and restoration are met in due course.

The conference facilitator or a delegated person is in charge of monitoring that agreements are met. Other roles are relatively straightforward, in that participants agree to come to the conference and

express their views and feelings about the incident or the young person's behaviour. A flowchart of this process can be found in Appendix 3.

At this juncture, it is important to note that the conferencing process may happen in *parallel*, or in *addition to* current school disciplinary processes. Because of State guidelines, disciplinary procedures cannot be shortcut. It is expected, however, that conferencing will impact, at some level on suspension and detention rates.

It is expected that conference discussions may unveil some possible and otherwise untraceable hardship young people or their families are facing. The safe space that conferences occur in may occasionally allow identification of needs that would have gone undetected previously (such as health, housing, etc). YES have established, through their usual core business and additional IRC networking efforts, a number of sustainable partnerships with specialised agencies, to which cases may be referred on a needs basis. The proper allocation of services to young people and their families will part of the conference agreement monitoring process, and documented with YES's Youth Connection Program (YCP).

Chapter 2 – Literature review: theory and practice for restorative conferencing and early intervention programs for young people

This literature review has, as a purpose, to briefly situate the IRC initiative within broader restorative justice literature. Considering the significant amount of literature on restorative justice and practices, the wide number of restorative justice practices (mediation, victim-offender mediation, police-facilitated practices, court-referred or mandated conferences, etc) which would have led us on a tangential path or far afield practice considerations, we decided to tailor our literature review to the needs of this particular initiative and to what the reader would need to fully understand the aims and purposes of IRC scheme. Therefore, this chapter specifically looks at the very themes that have underpinned the IRC since inception: restorative practices³, restorative conferencing, early intervention and what can be the expected impact evaluation of such practices.

1. Restorative Justice: what is it?

Restorative justice is not a new phenomenon, although its documentation has seen a surge in recent years. In the midst of criticism about the criminal justice system, particularly along the lines of victims feeling alienated and not being given sufficient opportunity to express themselves in traditional justice settings, restorative justice stands out as a different way to understand and address the commission of a crime and its consequences on involved parties. It emphasises human rights, parties' needs, cultural relativity and sensitivity (Gallaway & Hudson, 1996; Morris & Maxwell, 2004).

Definitions of restorative justice are legion, and much debate has focused on whether to define restorative justice as per outcomes or processes. Or whether it should be defined as what it is not. For example, Braithwaite (1999) insists on the fact that restorative justice is not contemporary formal justice; it is not about the offender; it is not retribution. The purpose of restorative justice also has nothing to do with issues of innocence and guilt (Morris and Maxwell, 2004). Howard Zehr, one of the key scholars in restorative justice, indicated that there were three major questions to ask, when undertaking restorative justice projects: 1. What is the nature of the harm resulting from the crime? 2. What needs to be done to 'make it right'? and 3. Who is responsible for this repair? For him, restorative justice is about considering an offence through a different 'lens', a different way of thinking (Gallaway & Hudson, 1996; Presser & Van Voorhis, 2002; Braithwaite, 1999). What is important is not the fact that an offence was committed, according to the law. This can be agreed

³ The implementation of restorative justice in schools is the focus of UTAS's second report to YES, and of the related discussion paper.

upon by social normative standards. What is important is that, in the commission of the offence, harm was done. Someone was hurt, and something needs to be done about this. Restorative justice gives 'primacy to the interests of those most affected – victims, offenders and their communities of care. The State no longer has a monopoly over decision-making; rather the principal decision makers are the parties themselves' (Morris & Maxwell, 2004).

Nowadays, most scholars and advocates of restorative justice tend to opt for the 'Marshall definition', which is as follows:

'Restorative Justice is defined as a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its complications for the future.' (Marshall, 1996; see also in Strang, 2001; or Strang et al, 2006; or in Richards, 2010)

Restorative justice has mostly been implemented in juvenile settings, and for some, restorative justice is 'a framework for juvenile justice reform that seeks to engage victims, offenders and their families, other citizens and community groups both as clients of juvenile justice services and as resources in an effective response to youth crime' (Bazemore & Umbreit, 2001). Restorative justice initiatives allow for relationship re-building mechanisms, and a resurgence of informal social controls (Presser & Van Voorhis, 2002).

Restorative justice, in the past 15 years, has ceased to be seen as a soft approach to delinquency and offending. Rather, Daly (1999, 2) observes restorative justice as a 'flexible incorporation of retributive and rehabilitative justice', with new vernacular ('repairing harm', 'making amends'), and that the issue of punishment within restorative justice is not completely out of the question. On the contrary, in her study of young people's perceptions and understanding of the restorative process, some components of the process are seen as forms of punishment by wrong-doers. In her case, 33 to 45% of young people interviewed thought that going to a restorative conference, facing the victim or saying what they did was a form of punishment; 66% also said that 'having to do the agreement' was another form of punishment (Daly, 1999, 2000). Along more complex forms of debate, Jaccoud & Walgrave (1999) discuss how restorative justice 'fits' with traditional forms of justice, and bring views about a 'minimalist' understanding of restorative justice (which runs in parallel to the criminal justice system, and may act as a diversionary form of process), versus a 'maximalist' understanding, where restorative justice becomes the main way to do 'justice business'.

2. Restorative conferencing

Restorative justice initiatives take many forms. Practices often referred to are those of victim-offender mediation, sentencing circles, and family or community-group conferencing. We focus on the latter here.

Many make reference to the first institutionalised form of restorative conferencing as an initiative run in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Australia, which was, at the time an initiative led by New South Wales Police, in 1991 (Palk et al, 1998; Richards, 2010)⁴. However, earlier documentation of practices lead us to New Zealand, where types of family conferences were embedded in legislation as early as 1989 (Strang, 2001), with family group conferencing included in the *Children, Young Persons and their Families Act, 1989*. The Act aimed to abide by elements of Maori culture, and the involvement of offenders, victims and their families in the resolution of the offence and the harm it caused⁵.

For Daly (1999, 10), a restorative conference is seen by participants as: helping the young person and the victim; punishing the young person; and stopping them from reoffending. However, contemporary understanding of the purpose of conferencing, in academic literature, revolves around holding offenders accountable for their actions, their articulation of responsibility for their behaviour, and their agreement to repair the harm they have caused. Restorative conferences offer an opportunity for victims to fully grasp the circumstances that led to the offence, exchange views with wrong-doers and express how the wrongdoer's action(s) affected them (Strang et al, 2006).

As a general rule, the conferencing process starts with a facilitator convening a meeting, by contacting all the parties at stake and members of their support network. This 'invitation' stage can be fairly lengthy, in that the facilitator has to fully grasp the extent of the problem and identify a number of relevant stakeholders in the process. His/her role also includes the explication of the conference process to all persons involved, setting an agenda (time, place) and organising the logistics of getting everyone to the meeting.

Once all parties have agreed to participate in the meeting, they are (according to mainstream practice) seated in an arrangement pictured in Fig. 7. Participants are placed in a circle, and support

⁴ At this juncture of the literature review, it is important to indicate that forms of restorative conferences are currently embedded in youth legislation in New South Wales. The New South Wales *Young Offenders Act 1997* allows for police to deal with young offenders via three options: by way of warnings, cautions, or youth conferences. However, these conferences are administered by authorised police officers (usually a Youth Liaison Officer) and practices significantly differ to those under scrutiny in this evaluation. They therefore neither fall within the remit of our evaluation, nor within the IRC scheme.

⁵ According to a number of restorative justice scholars, restorative justice practices actually go back millennia amongst indigenous people in New Zealand, Canada and Australia.

persons surround the wrongdoer or the person harmed. It is advised to sit in an empty space (with no table in the middle). From then on, the facilitator's role is to guide the conversation about how to address the harm that was done, and to document the agreement that will hopefully be reached at the end of the conference.

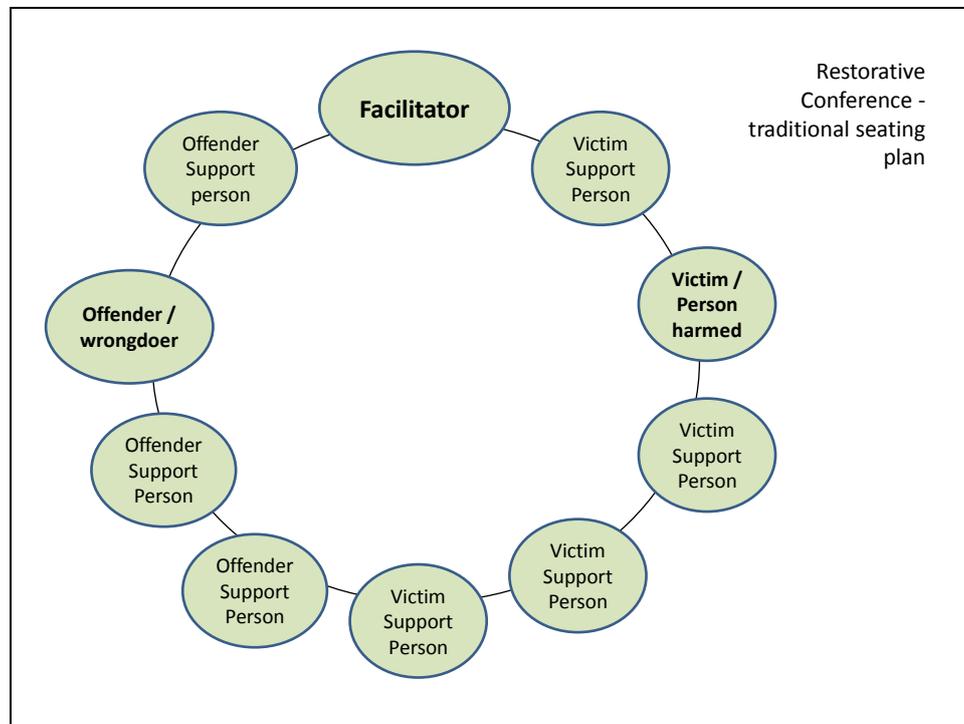


Fig. 7 - Restorative conference seating plan

Throughout the conference, the facilitator ensures that all are allowed to speak calmly and respectfully, using a variety of facilitation techniques he/she would have learned during training and honed through practice. Facilitators are also responsible for harnessing the emotions that can be expressed during the conference. At the end of the process, the facilitator or a person delegated to do so is in charge of making sure that the agreement is complied with.

3. The evaluation of restorative practices

There have been few comprehensive evaluations of restorative justice to date, as many scholars agree (see, for example: Bazemore & Umbreit, 2001; Presser & Van Voorhis, 2002). This is due to the myriad of restorative justice initiatives that have been implemented to date, and to their diversity in terms of logistical models, processes, aims and objectives. The fact that many of these have multiple objectives add to their complexity and to analysis problems. However, many of these evaluations try to focus on processes as well as outcomes.

One of the key questions in relation to restorative justice, as we hinted at above, is how much of an impact restorative justice has on recidivism and offences committed post intervention. Evaluations

in those areas seem to indicate that individuals who go through a restorative process (we are making reference here to an experiment in Leeds which looked at mediation practices – Palk et al, 1998), over time, tend to reoffend less quickly than those who do not. Overall, the effect on reoffending patterns and on future offending remains the least understood element of restorative justice (*ibid.*).

Most evaluations of restorative justice initiatives prefer to focus on demonstrated forms of impact that are directly linked to the underpinnings of restorative justice itself, such as restoration, fairness, fear of crime, feelings of safety, to name a few. In such areas, evaluations of initiatives indicate quite high satisfaction rates. Daly, in 1999, showed that 86% of young people going through restorative conferencing thought the process and agreement was ‘fair’, and that very few thought restoration agreements were too harsh (only up to 10% in her studies). Palk et al, in their study, reached similar conclusions, with 98.5% of their sample reporting on conference processes being ‘fair’ and 98.5% being satisfied with conference agreements (Palk et al, 1998; see also Strang et al, 2006, for similar figures). Bradshaw and Roseborough (2005) find similar results in their studies, which focused on the impact of mediation and conferencing on juvenile recidivism. They found that 80 to 90% of participants to victim-offender mediation were satisfied with the process, and that 90% of meetings concluded in agreements, 80 to 90% of which were complied with.

Demonstrated impact for restorative justice initiatives are often indicative of very high satisfaction rates, high offender compliance rates with agreements, decrease in fear levels amongst victims, high satisfaction with what is deemed a ‘speedy process’, heightened community skills in conflict resolution and participatory decision-making (Bazemore & Umbreit, 2001). However, until 2000, there was little empirical basis to gauge whether initiatives have reached their objectives, due to the holistic nature of such projects (*ibid.*). Nonetheless, stemming from such observations and lessons from the past, researchers now tend to carefully design research tools to be able to measure the impact of restorative justice in a number of pre-determined areas. Many contemporary evaluations, such as ours, define ‘issues tests’ and aim to avoid ‘one off’ evaluations. Rather, the point is to measure changes in areas defined by the characteristics of one initiative. Such ‘issues tests’ include, but are not limited to, aforementioned elements such as fear of crime, satisfaction rates or fairness in process. They are inclusive of a number of other variables, such as self-reported behaviour, perceptions of impact by conference participants or collaboration of agencies to the conflict resolution process.

To establish solutions to evaluation problems, assessment processes go through four specific stages:

- 1- An identification of program activities

- 2- A clear definition of restorative justice and how the program 'fits' in the midst of other similar initiatives
- 3- A process evaluation, which is inclusive of documentation of dialogue (socio-metrics, by way of interviews and observation and/or conference or mediation exit surveys), an analysis of relationships and networks (by way of document analysis, for example) and key stakeholders roles in project maintenance or conference facilitation
- 4- An outcome evaluation, which focuses on restoration and reparation 'agreements' (these can usually be tracked through monitoring and analysis of case files, and can be done from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives), compliance rates and closing gestures⁶, satisfaction rates on a number of elements, fairness, program features, changes in participants' world views, with offender behaviour changes acknowledged as a valid indicator of impact (Palk et al, 1998)⁷.

These evaluations are often limited to the length of the initiative under scrutiny, which is an important limitation to take into account. Such limitations usually prevent longitudinal studies, or studies which do not form a full, long term picture of the effect of the initiative on participants and organising agencies. However, Strang (2001) indicates a need to sustain evaluation efforts, in order to establish the effectiveness of restorative justice initiatives and their adoption in settings such as welfare or schools. She insists on consultation with cooperation agencies and vulnerable groups in society, 'who feel the most marginalised in their dealings with governments'.

4. Restorative Justice, crime prevention and early intervention

As the IRC's aims and objectives are inclusive of crime prevention and early intervention elements, it is pertinent that we make mention of those here. It has been decades since juvenile delinquency rates, in the western world, started being perceived as following a 'steady and alarming increase' (Hawkins & Weis, 1985), and as a persistent social problem. Moral panics about youth (Brown, 1998) throughout the world have focused on categories of young people seen to be detached from their immediate environment, and have often been associated to teenagers in low socio-economic areas, characterised by their clothing, behaviour and absenteeism from school. Whilst many of these perceptions are strongly embedded in stereotypes and marginalisation of small groups of individuals, many commentators have reflected on a pronounced loss in formal and informal ties to the family 'nucleus' since the 1980s. Strong critics of the juvenile justice system of the 1980s said that the system actually further stigmatised young offenders and denounced the traditional criminal

⁶ Some restorative justice initiatives see the closing of mediation and conference sessions with prayers, songs or informal get-togethers around refreshments.

⁷ Some evaluations go as far as having 'Child Behaviour Cheklists' (Bradshaw & Roseborough, 2005).

justice 'snapshot way' (Bartkowiak-Théron & Jaccoud, 2008) of dealing with crime. Such calls contributed to the consideration of more comprehensive, preventative and early intervention measures for the most vulnerable in society.

Prevention and early intervention are two areas of advocacy, in relation to young people and anti-social behaviour:

Prevention can be differentiated [...] into two broad categories: early intervention and primary prevention. Early intervention seeks to identify pre-delinquents or youths who are at risk for delinquency and to correct their behavioural tendencies or criminogenic circumstances before delinquency results. (Hawkins & Weis, op.cit., 74)

To do so, informal socialisation units, such as local communities, educational institutions, families and friends are meant to be appropriate vehicles to succeed in preventing crime. What is meant by this, according to control theory, is that forms of attachments to such units allow for informal forms of social control, and contribute to strengthening collective bonds for young people, thus contributing to preventing anti-social or offending behaviour. Taking into account that young people give importance to peer relationships (and that peers can have a negative influence on young people), it is important to locate such informal relationships in positive and safe environments (according to social development model) in order to see positive impacts on young people's behaviour. Strong ties to community-wide understandings of norms and normative behaviours generally contribute to setting common goals and norms against crime and delinquency. Such links or 'bonds' to these reference units are deemed important in the first years of socialisation of young people.

'Interventions which seek to increase the likelihood of social bonding to the family are appropriate in early childhood through early adolescence. Interventions which seek to increase the likelihood of social bonding to school are appropriate throughout the years of school attendance.' (Hawkins & Weis, op.cit., 81)

It is important for these interventions to allow for the maximum participation of a number of specialised stakeholders (such as health, housing, etc) in order to abide by whole of government approaches to crime prevention, and for such interventions to facilitate school retention rates, as:

'Research has linked failure, as measured by grades and achievement test scores to delinquent behaviour [...]. A second school factor related to delinquency is commitment to academic or educational pursuits. When students are not committed to educational pursuits, they are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviour, [...] and students who do not like school are more likely to engage in delinquent acts than those who do.' (ibid, 84)

However, crime prevention, although an important aim of restorative justice, has been labelled by some advocates of restorative justice as an 'impoverished goal' of restorative justice in general (Braithwaite, 1999, 2). Rather, restorative principles focus on a number of life issues, such as reassurance, sense of safety, self, etc. Many scholars instead, indicate that 'reducing recidivism is only one goal of many, and least likely to show benefits because of the limited capacity of the justice system to affect causative factors' (Palk et al., 1998). However, it has been demonstrated that 'the positive achievement experienced by young people through restitution appears to be a critical factor in reducing reoffending' (*ibid.*).

Chapter 3 – The evaluation of the initiative: methodology, process and dissemination of results

1. Introduction to the research

The purpose of this research is to independently evaluate the *Introducing Restorative Conferencing: a whole of community, early intervention approach to youth anti-social behaviour* project in Albury (NSW), an initiative run by YES Youth & Family Services (YES). This evaluation research was embedded in the 2009 application for funding to the Federal Attorney General under the POCA funding scheme. As such, this evaluation is mandatory, according to funding application guidelines. It is inclusive of an identification of stakeholders' and communities' needs and attitudes to anti-social behaviour by young people, and intends to produce valuable (enhancing) change for all stakeholders, young people who go through the restorative process in the Albury area, and eventually to all people interested in such initiatives throughout Australia. This study will also contextualise the particulars of the 'Introducing Restorative Conferencing' initiative with broader state and local policies, such as the NSW State Plan 2007-2011 and the Albury LAC NSWPF Business Priorities, and will produce valuable and much needed impact data relating to process, participants and the broader community.

The aims of the evaluation are:

- To track the initial stages of the scheme (bedding-in)
- To evaluate the process of implementing the scheme, including provision of training & rapport building with all stakeholders (schools, agencies, young people, the community, families, victims, etc)
- To observe five randomly selected restorative conferences and assess their effectiveness against identified objectives, and from all parties' perspectives (wrongdoers, victims, families or significant others, agencies and facilitators)
- To measure the overall impact of the scheme and the extent to which it meets its objectives (qualitatively and quantitatively)
- To document the scheme in order to identify the emergence of a possible flexible model, able to be transferred to other situations, cultures and areas throughout Australia and potentially internationally
- To disseminate research results so that areas in Australia interested in this model may refer to it as a stepping stone or inspiration for their own projects.

In addition to gauging the impact of the initiative according to field observation, document analysis and consultation with stakeholders, this research sets to embed the initiative and its evaluation within the vast academic literature on the topic of restorative justice / conferencing. Such literature especially focuses and questions the effectiveness of restorative justice in relation to a number of issues, such as reoffending patterns or victims' satisfaction with the process. As demonstrated at a seminar organised by TILES mid-April 2011, research highlights:

'In recent years (...) a surge of sound empirical research in restorative justice. We now know with a substantial degree of certainty how wrongdoers and victims perceive restorative justice processes. We also know, perhaps with less confidence, how restorative justice processes affect wrongdoers' post-intervention behaviour. One of the interesting and persistent (but perhaps disappointing) findings to emerge in recent restorative justice research is that a sizable minority of restorative justice encounters can be described as anything but restorative'.

http://www.utas.edu.au/tiles/events/events_coming_up/h_hayes_seminar.html'.

Such points of concern or interest, which clearly highlight the importance of new impact evaluations for restorative justice initiatives, are important to take into account. The IRC evaluation therefore includes that the scheme:

- be validated by the Office of the Attorney General, as per the funding agreement,
- is tracked from the onset, in order to dynamically engage in its sustainability and collaborate in the creation of good practice in the field
- be under rigorous scrutiny in terms of its impact on stakeholders and participants, by someone who is not involved in its daily functioning and can approach the scheme in an unbiased way
- achieve credibility for all stakeholders and possibly become a stepping stone for continuation in Albury and for other regional areas to access and implement, all processes, procedures and outcomes need to be documented and analysed, before being properly disseminated into community and academic channels.

Many problems relating to youth anti-social behaviour have been documented in prior research internationally and in local, national and international media. However, many community members still seek solutions to emerging 'wicked' youth issues (see page 64) and often turn to restorative practices as a 'one size fits all', 'miraculous' solution to all problems. This evaluation will establish parameters for good practices, and should this initiative go further, this evaluation (which will be made public) will allow community members to rely on evidence with confidence that the 'Introducing Restorative Conferencing' initiative has been instigated along lines of quality assurance

and careful monitoring by an external evaluator. The problem-solving processes documented and evaluated in this research have, as a purpose, to index these issues and processes and allow problem-solving tools and examples to be used by all.

2. Research Design: research tools and dissemination of results

This research intends to independently evaluate the Introducing Restorative Conferencing initiative, and to confidently gauge its impact on young people, agencies and the broader Albury community. This research was designed in line with careful consideration of the initiative's process and in order to guarantee a dynamic exchange of research results and field observations between the research team and the initiative's steering committee. This ongoing dissemination of evaluation results is meant to be interactive, and help contribute to the sustainability of the initiative, rather than the research team passively observing the unfolding of the scheme and making no comment on possible, foreseeable organisational obstacles or process hindrances. To do so, the research team is using several tools.

Research Tools: Literature Review

It is important to contextualise any initiative, in order to situate its implementation within already known data, restorative initiatives (local, national and international) and existing organisation protocols. The synthesis of documented past experiences provides a practical platform to identify, early on, avenues for progress along with possible implementation issues. Literature on restorative justice (particularly conferencing) and young people already documents many issues relevant to this evaluation and the initiative itself (length and quality of processes, commitment of participants, impact on victims, families, wrongdoers and on reoffending rates, etc). A clear review of such issues can highlight the importance and applied relevance of tools used and perspectives explored to properly evaluate this initiative and to build on successes of the past to improve the scheme further. It will also help identify in advance important obstacles or impediments to be taken into account early on in the bedding-in of the initiative.

Research tools: Background and Exit Interviews

This evaluation consists firstly of a series of interviews. All members of the steering committee (n = 11), or as many as possible considering participants' availability constraints, will be interviewed at the beginning of the initiative and at the end of our evaluation, as well as key informants who are part of the network of agencies supporting the scheme.

Our selection of interviewees will involve the purposive sampling of participants from the steering committee and members of relevant agencies involved in administering or sponsoring the

'Introducing Restorative Conferencing' initiative. Therefore, besides YES, Albury City Council and the Department of Education and Training, interviewees may include professional participants from key agencies such as: the New South Wales Police Force, Child Protection Agencies, Department of Community Services, or the NSW Police Child Wellbeing Unit. Such agencies/individuals will be identified by way of snowball sampling (where other valuable sources are uncovered), during the unfolding of the initiative. The research team will be guided by the initiative documentation and by prior interviewees in this identification of relevant agencies for the region, so as to achieve proper targeted sampling of participants.

The targeted selection of participants stems from the need to 'locate "excellent" participants to obtain [rich] data and our sampling technique must be targeted and efficient' (Charmaz, quoted in Flick 2009). This allows for the exploration and documentation of expected outcomes for the scheme, concerns about processes and tools used by agencies during the problem-solving process. As the first stage, interviews will be conducted early in the set up of the initiative, and will allow the research team to document possible or foreseeable problems (identified by stakeholders themselves) and successes/solutions that are designed from the ground up by all.

The semi-structured interviews will provide an opportunity to garner thoughts on the IRC, gauge agency relationships and networking processes, and elaborate on the holistic objectives of service provision. They will document expectations relating to the overall delivery of the restorative conferencing training and expectations about the initiative itself. Considering the current numbers of people sitting on the initiative's steering committee (as of July 10th 2011), it is expected that a maximum of 22 interviews (11 'background interviews' at the beginning and 11 'exit interviews' at the end of the initiative), of about 45 min to 1 hour in length (according to social research norms) will be undertaken. All interviews will be digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. Analysis will be done via text analysis software, such as NVivo. Participation in interviews will be voluntary. Any identifying data/information provided by agency managers and CEOs will also occur on a voluntary basis. An information sheet about the project and a consent form will be provided to all interviewees.

There are expected benefits associated with the interview process embedded in this research. The professional practice of the participants will benefit from the exercise in reflexivity that will occur during the interview, but also by perusing the results of the research in the reports that will be released regularly to the steering committee throughout the research (see 'Dissemination' subsection, below). The enhanced awareness of problems and their solutions raised during the research process will enable additional problem-solving processes and added awareness of relationships or

educational gaps to be identified by all (initiative stakeholders and other partners alike). Participants will be able to draw on such knowledge when administering future conferences, or when interacting with each other. The evaluation itself might also lend a further degree of ‘seriousness’ and ‘strength’ to the initiative, in the eyes of individuals participating in conferences. This might positively impact on their levels of engagement with initiative stakeholders, as well as during conferences.

Research Tools: Observation and post-analysis of Training

It has been agreed that the chief investigator (CI) will observe the total delivery of the accredited training. This observation of the training was deemed necessary to contextualise any subsequent comments that trainees may make in the post-training survey, and to quickly identify concerns and problems raised during conversations with the training facilitator. The CI will also check that YES can ‘tick’ some mandatory requirements of the initiative’s agreement, such as the overview of restorative practices, along with the cultural awareness of forthcoming practices.

Research Tools: Observation of conferences

It has been agreed that the CI will observe 5 conferences (randomly chosen by the YES CEO and the project officer), to picture the unfolding of the processes at stake in the restorative process. For these observations, the number of participants is dependent on each conference and the number of people attending. However, we do not expect numbers to exceed 10 per conference. (As documented in restorative justice literature, the number of people attending conferences may vary depending on the kind of support needed by the parties. As it is quite difficult to manage large numbers of attendees, and numbers tend to be limited as much as possible).

An average count is as follows:

1 facilitator +
1 wrongdoer +2 support persons +
1 victim + 2 support persons +
1 school staff member + 1 representative of 1 agency + 1 representative of another agency).

Therefore, expected overall numbers for this aspect of our field work should be $n = 50 \pm 10\%$. However, victims might call for more than 2 support persons to attend, or the complexity of the problem might call for more than 2 agencies to attend. All individuals attending the conference will be fully informed of the research and their consent for observation will be sought.

The selection of participants in relation to observations is purely random and coincidental to the conference. This is the only part of the research where young people will be involved (as wrongdoers and/or victims). Young people participating to the *Introducing Restorative Conferencing* scheme evaluation will be aged between 12 and 18⁸.

Ethical guidelines for conducting research with vulnerable people are very strict, and the research team set up very strict protocols in relation to the observation of the conferences. In addition to seeking consent from young people (they will have a specific information sheet), the research team will seek consent from parents/guardians. All research documentation makes it clear that the CI does not intend to discuss anything with the child, and that she is attending the conference to observe the process only. The child himself/herself is not the purpose of this evaluation. Parents/Guardians, in addition to signing off on their child's consent form, will also receive a full information sheet (the 'adult' version). If they participate in the conference, they will also have to sign a consent form themselves.

Information sheets and consent forms will be sent to all parties by the project officer, and the details of the CI and research assistant will be provided to all. This part of our field work consists of an observation of restorative processes and dynamics, as opposed to an observation of specific individuals. The researcher will sit away from the conference circle to not hinder the restorative process and will remain as inconspicuous as possible, at all times⁹. While contemporaneous notes will discretely be taken, the conferences will not be recorded in any way or form by the researcher.

Although this research presents many benefits for all stakeholders, the possible sensitive nature of the topic (anti social behaviour and the reparation of consequential harm) for some participants needs to be taken into account. Particularly, parties participating in an observed conference may feel discomfort when expressing their feelings or describing their relationships with other parties. Social research on restorative justice often documents the difficulty some people may have in expressing their feelings during a conference, and the conference convenor will facilitate if such a difficulty arises.

⁸ These young people fit under the 'c' criterion listed in section 4.02 of the National Statement (NS) on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2007) which takes into account their capacity to understand. Our evaluation uses a specific information sheet and consent form which has been designed for them: it uses shorter sentences and a more accessible vocabulary.

⁹ This is strictly non-participant observation and we acknowledge the usual caveat of the presence of the research having a small impact on processes, as per anthropological research principles, which are well documented in methodological literature.

Should this discomfort be identified as directly linked to the research¹⁰, the researcher will take measures to contain risks to research participants during observations. Should any participant express discomfort at the presence of the researcher in the room during the conference (and at any point of the conference), then the researcher will immediately depart and another conference will be sought for observation. The necessity for this should be mitigated by the fully informed consent of all parties being obtained prior to the conference being organised (information and consent forms).

Research Tools: Desktop Analysis

A desktop analysis of all initiative internal documentation is embedded in this evaluation. The researcher will be provided with all conference exit surveys run internally by the initiative project officer, and all internal process documentation (minutes of steering committee, initiative terms of reference, 'case files', etc). NB: all internal documents provided to the researcher will be de-identified by the project officer prior to delivery to the researcher. This part of the evaluation will allow us to evaluate completion rates, the monitoring of restorations, satisfaction rates and attitudes towards the scheme, and are directly linked to the KPIs developed for this research (see Appendix 4).

Anonymity of research participants

As per good research practice, all data will be anonymous. No names will be used in written form and all audio files and verbatim transcripts of interviews will be stored in secure password protected computers files and locked filing cabinets in the office of the CI. Transcripts will be deidentified before analysis. Participants' names will not be mentioned when drafting reports. The only identifying data may possible be place or organisation names (for example NSWPF, YES, etc). However, there is enough crosspollination of processes throughout agencies (which are all concerned with youth wellbeing and/or education) for the anonymity of commentators to be protected. Furthermore, no specific court case or particular personal interaction between police officers, principals, social worker and young people past or present will be discussed in detail.

¹⁰ While we acknowledge all the above, it is important to consider that discomfort towards the conference itself might be an integral part of the initiative and the restorative process, with the notion and dynamic of 'restorative or reintegrative shaming' being attached to restorative practices (see the work of John Braithwaite or Mylène Jaccoud in relation to this). The above is expressly concerned with discomfort being linked to the research and takes into account that discomfort (at having to apologise to a victim, etc) might be coincidental to the observation but not directly linked to the observation. 'Reintegrative shaming' posits that the best way to control crime is to induce a sense of shame in [offenders] for their actions while maintaining respect for them as people (as to condemn them as bad people might push them towards deviant identities, commitments or sub-cultures)'. (Young & Hoyle, in von Hirsch et al, 2003, 277)

Anecdotes related will not mention names and all matters of court cases will strictly be discussed in generic terms.

Should there be a reason to do so, commentators may be named in subsequent reports and papers at their request, if for example, they expressly wish to be identified as the instigator of a data collection process or initiative. Everyone will remain anonymous, unless at one point in time, they express they want to be quoted on specific statements. Consent to be potentially identified as a commentator is specified on the consent form.

External Data

Fundamentally, documenting service provision using only the initiative's *repertoire* will be counterproductive and somewhat complacent. This evaluation will therefore contextualise implementation processes more broadly by using (regionally relevant) data publicly available and collected from external local and national agencies and with the help of the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR), the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and other stakeholders identified in the early stages of the research.

Research Monitoring

Specific deadlines for monitoring and reporting have already been submitted to the Office of the Attorney General during the grant application process. The CI directly reports, organisationally to the Director of TILES. Furthermore, the CI is in fortnightly contact with the CEO of YES, and as such, is in a position to provide regular briefings about the status of the research when needed.

As per the NS 5.5 (NHMRC, 2007), responsibility for ensuring that the research is reliably monitored lies with the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies, UTAS and YES. Monitoring mechanisms, for the purpose of this project consist of: reports to TILES director and the YES CEO (and steering committee) about status of research, immediate contact between TILES director and researchers when observation of adverse or unexpected outcomes occur. Should unexpected risks need to be dealt with, contact with the Chair of the UTAS HREC will be initiated by phone and then email (to ensure documentation process). Should the project be discontinued, all key agencies will be contacted by email and in writing to let them know of the discontinuation of the project and associated reasons (welfare, ethical matters, withdrawal of ethics approval, suspension). Should the research design be modified for any reason, all stakeholders will officially be made aware of this in the same manner as above. Subsequent to any contact with stakeholders relating to changes or interruption of the project, researchers will be available to answer stakeholders' questions.

Benchmarking Results

Part of this evaluation process is to gauge the impact of the initiative in relation to its aims and objectives. However, as the aims and objectives of the IRC initiative are quite broad and sophisticated, due to the complexities of policy, vision and documentation, the research team went through a process of isolating aims and objectives into individual components, and developed a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), against which the progress of the initiative can be benchmarked. The list of KPIs, which have been approved by the CEO of YES, are to be found in Appendix 5 of this first interim report. They are accompanied by several cautionary statements on the part of the research team.

Dissemination of results

As per section 1.5 of the 2007 National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, research outcomes will be made accessible to research stakeholders and research participants in a way that is timely and clear. Our evaluation process allows for regular reporting throughout the scheme to the initiative's steering committee, via attendance at steering committee meetings, which are held on the last Monday of every month. Evaluation results will also be made public, when this project comes to completion. Further to this, all participating agencies will receive a hard copy of the executive summary of the final report, which will indicate where to access the public report on the Internet.

The documenting of this initiative holds significant potential for further academic publications, as well as direct possibilities for further implementation Australia wide. The aforementioned research reports will be followed by a series of academic papers in the areas of restorative justice, evaluation methodology, impact evaluation and the documentation of the scheme itself.

3. The research team

Dr. Isabelle Bartkowiak-Théron – Chief Investigator

Isabelle is a senior researcher with the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies, and an associate researcher with the ARC Centre for Excellence in Policing and Security. YES Youth & Family Services (YES) approached her for this research on the grounds of her involvement, in the past six years, with a number of stakeholders involved in this initiative (the Aboriginal Community, the New South Wales Police Force, Albury City Council and the Department of Education). Particularly, she was part of the initial consultation process with the Albury Aboriginal community and with the subsequent awareness workshops organised by Albury City Council. Thorough local and organisational knowledge of these groups or institutions and how they work (often in synergy) in relation to addressing criminogenic and community development issues is the main reason for the

specific gathering of the research team. Another reason for Dr. Bartkowiak-Théron's involvement is her study of restorative justice practices since her post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Montréal in 2003, police training and research on the topic of legislation and police powers in relation to vulnerable populations, of which young people are part. She was also one of the main academics involved in the Wodonga Youth Show the Way project, a capacity-building, restorative justice inspired initiative designed for young people in Wodonga schools, from 2004 until mid-2006.

Wendy Rose Davison – On Site Research Assistant

Wendy Rose Davison is a research assistant with the University of Tasmania and Charles Sturt University. She holds a Bachelor of Arts (Social Science) degree from La Trobe University and comes to this project with a wealth of community experience. She has worked with Dr Isabelle Bartkowiak-Théron on other sensitive research projects, as well as currently being involved as research officer for an initiative targeting Aboriginal children, their families, community and support services, in their early transition to school. Wendy Rose has been employed in community organisations within the Albury Wodonga region as a community development officer and project worker for the past 18 years, and previously worked in services in Ballarat and Melbourne. She has gained insight into the intricacies of qualitative and quantitative research processes by her ongoing work over the past five years for Charles Sturt University with exposure to diverse projects which she is asked to work on.

Chapter 4 – Progress to date and observations from the field: preliminary considerations

YES received approval for funding in mid-November 2010, and has since worked on the logistics of the IRC. Key milestones were reached in the process by way of: the gathering of a steering committee (November 2010), a formal research contract with UTAS (February 2011), the recruitment of a project worker (March 2011), the identification and booking of an accredited training (March-June 2011) and its successful delivery (July 2011). This chapter breaks down and analyses progress in each of these areas.

1. Key Partners and oversight of the project: keeping track of processes

There are currently two types of institutional partners for the initiative. The first are agencies that have supported the project from the stage of grant application writing, up to the first stages of implementation. These agencies, either government or non-government organisations, have key roles in youth-related matters in Albury or the Riverina, and elect a representative to sit on the IRC steering committee. Their main role is to monitor the initiative from a strategic point of view, and to advise the project worker on a regular basis in relation to logistics, funding, key events, advertising and research. In addition to this, some agency representatives have volunteered their time and resources to support facilitators and Albury Youth & Family Services for the duration of the project. Such help ranges from providing strategic advice, to more involved peer-support for facilitators, or the project worker (when they are have already been trained on restorative practices on a prior occasion).

‘I’ve been on the Committee since earlier this year. I’ve got a reasonable understanding of what (the initiative is about). [...]. And I just mentioned to [the project worker] that if I could help in any way, or be involved, because I used to be a Community Conference Facilitator in another state, that I’m really interested in being involved, and helping if I can.’

The second type of partners involved are the schools and community for which the initiative has been designed. These partners will hold key roles in identifying how the logistics of the initiative can be fine-tuned to ‘match’ circumstances, and will lead the discussions as to how the principles of the IRC can be further embedded in their policies, codes of practice or disciplinary procedures. In addition to being partners in the project, most have elected a representative to sit on the IRC steering committee. However, in comparison to the first type of stakeholder they also are the very recipients of IRC services. They are expected to be the main referral agencies for the IRC. Some of these stakeholders have delegated monitoring, coordination and facilitation roles to designated staff members whose job description fits the IRC portfolio.

Some preliminary interviews were run with a number of stakeholders (n=7) at the time the restorative justice training was delivered. At this juncture, it is important to state that the purpose of these interviews was to capture a snapshot of attitudes and concerns towards the scheme, in the time between receiving funding approval and the completion of training. These observations constitute an initial benchmark in gauging processes and prospective outcomes for the IRC, items which will require further attention in the second interim report (January-February 2012) and in the final report (July 2012). These background interviews were meant to gauge hopes and expectations at the beginning of the IRC, and to capture the overall status of partners at the very beginning of the initiative. Some valuable insights were garnered, and highlight the positive outlook of stakeholders on IRC, and some powerful prospects in the short and long term. Initial feedback obtained from stakeholders gravitated around the following themes: the rationale for the initiative and how it stands amongst all others; foreseen benefits and possible outcomes; concerns; and logistics. These themes are broken down, below.

Rationale for the initiative

Overall, stakeholders hold the initiative in high regard, and whilst they highlight that the funding and sponsorship of the project by the Attorney General lends importance to the pilot, the clearly identified aims of the project help make it stand out in the midst of all other youth-related schemes locally and state-wide. At the forefront of such clearly identified aims are those of keeping young people in school and addressing disengagement from school.

'It's a federal[ly] funded program and it's all about keeping young people at school. Our mandate is to work with kids that are disengaging from school, or who have disengaged, or [are] at very high risk of disengaging. [...] You know, keeping young kids at school, and developing cross sector partnerships. For me, [...] we're all about developing the community that supports all young people to reach their potential.'

One of the stakeholders even highlighted the strong relevance of the initiative in relation to the government's education scheme, in the long term.

'[As schools], we've got two goals basically [...] the Commonwealth Government [...] said that the school retention rate to year 12 needed to increase nationally, and that they wanted it to be 90% by 2015. [...] The reason behind that is that young people do better if they complete their education, and they have a better job, and are less likely to be unemployed, etc.[...] As highlighted by the Aboriginal Community Working Party, the other major focus I guess of our program is to close the gap for Indigenous young people. And that means the gap in them attending school, and completing school.'

Recurrent throughout the interviews was the particular problem of **repeat** suspensions, and how specific disciplinary procedures 'trap' a young person in an ongoing cycle of absenteeism. For an

interviewee, the IRC has a potential to, if not break the cycle, at least slow down the rhythm for disciplinary actions to occur. If lessons are not learnt through mainstream disciplinary actions, then something else needs to happen, and the young people need to mature in relation to the behaviour that is not seen as acceptable from school authorities. The point of the restorative process is for participants to express and discuss their own version of the problem and its origins. Being able to exchange such points of view is seen as an important aspect of the IRC.

'This project especially fits in around capacity building and looking at the issue for young people, obviously they're never going to complete year 12 if they keep getting suspended!

Because quite often the victim can tell the story, and I mean I've seen it in school happen all the time, and then the wrong doer... they're just taking that side of the story and then it's just "You've done the wrong thing, blah, blah, blah, right you're suspended" and a lot of kids don't get that opportunity to talk about what's happened, and so it goes on.'

The specificity of the initiative

More than a scheme that addresses youth education and provides an immediate, reactive response to misbehaviour or anti-social behaviour, some interviewees indicated that the IRC is a holistic response to youth issues. It not only looks at better ways to address problematic behaviour, but also at capturing the young people who usually tend to escape the attention of agencies, or yet again, those who have such complex problems that a multi-agency approach is needed to cater for their needs.

'We are dealing with young people who are falling through the cracks of the system. [...]If we're able to do that, and catch them as they fall through those gaps, then that's exciting. [...]We have the agencies that can, or the services that can meet that need. [...]The IRC is about the creation of a central referral point. When the schools, the police, a community, or whoever identifies a need, this might be a good opportunity to provide restorative conference. That is the call that is made here. [...] And then once the case is sort of resolved, hopefully everything's good. There's been all the follow up done. All the support services are in place.'

'I think it's an approach that can deal with, or work with young people and their community within an assistance approach, in a really strength based approach, and rather than looking at the symptom, at the cause and to really build a support system around that young person in terms of "yes" they may have done a wrong, but generally there's always an action that's caused from something. So the IRC is really getting to the bottom of that and aims to build those healthy relationships and that experience of being able to deal with conflict or an injustice in a structured and healthy way. It can be a really good learning experience for young people. It's a new approach for dealing with

problems that exist that have underlying causes that often get missed, regarding the discontinued focus on the symptom.'

The initiative is also praised for not being a hybrid of existing mechanisms, but for building a new project that builds on documented, good practice for problem solving.

'It's a good project, good practice, there's a really identified need there so you're not trying to mismatch something, and it's contemporary practice as well [...]. Restorative Conferencing works with an absolute clear path. You've got two people who have had some conflict and the conference process to get to an agreement at the end and the restoration and re-integration. What we're going to come across is everything that underpins it, all the predisposing factors that have got these kids' behaviours where they're at or that belongs to your kid. And there is no way we can lose sight of this, if we've got two families and they've got multiple issues but we're actually dealing with just that singular incident then we need to support that.'

Despite the complex nature of the problem-solving that is likely to emerge from the referral and conferencing process, the initiative also stands out for its extraordinary simple underpinning principles, which is what drew some stakeholders to the project.

'It's really quite a simple back to basics, people coming together and having a yarn in a circle and talking. The bottom line is restoring the harm and I love that. It's such [a] simple thing. [...] And it's perfect as early intervention. I mean if you've seen a young person and their behaviour escalating then ...'

Foreseen benefits and outcomes

In the immediacy of the interview at the start of the initiative, all interviewed stakeholders had an idea of where the benefits lay for their involvement in the IRC, or where young people could gain from being referred to a conference.

'If we can successfully intervene in a young person's life and provide them with the structure and the purpose to change, then that's a positive outcome. [...]The school benefits because they're going to fit in better, they're going to be of a lesser risk to other kids and staff, they're going to enable other kids to learn more effective[ly] so the benefits for the school are quite obvious. The benefits for the community are longer term.'

However, managers were also adamant that one of the benefits lay in the delivery of high standard, accredited training in restorative practices and problem-solving. In turn, it is expected that such training will build momentum and will contribute to stronger commitment from all stakeholders, but also to better embedding of the principles of the IRC in existing workplace practices and policies.

'I'm pleased with the amount of training that we're going to have. [...] I just hope it's going to be something that all stakeholders see as real value. I hope that we can demonstrate that through this initial pilot that there'll be an ongoing commitment to it.'

As an immediate benefit to the schools and to the dedication of young people to their education, stakeholders are pointing rapidly to their hopes in relation to lower levels of disciplinary actions against young people who misbehave.

'So I'm hoping, I guess, through this process that the suspensions will decrease, and the opportunities for these young people to participate in their education will increase. [...] It's really good that the schools have come onboard and accepted that they do need some help [...], I mean one would hope that this is a way, I suppose, of implementing early intervention ideas. [...] And I'm assuming that through this process, and again from my previous experience, there might be an opportunity to bring in other support services that you may not have been able to bring in before[...]. Say there's a young person who's [having a] conference because of whatever, and it transpires that their parent, or one of their parents, has a drug and alcohol issue or other [problem]. Well it might be an opportunity to bring in this support [...]. Anything that can change that culture and that expectation, and break that cycle, is really worthwhile.'

A possible visible impact for individual young people can be tracked by schools' internal data, and via the use of school-specific software used to follow the evolution of individual students throughout the years.

'We can have a look at and improve any kind of change into visible behaviour on the part of the young people who have gone through the process. [...] There will be a record and it's very easy to see whether (the student's behaviour) changes or not, to go back and have a look at that record. We use a system that a lot of schools use called RISC. Reports on Individual Student's Contacts. In this software program, we can call up any students and we can look back for the last five years. And we can see quite clearly both the number of reports [...] and also see the nature of reports and you can soon get an indication that way.'

However, interviewees also see the impact of the IRC on suspension rates as a sub-aim to the overall vision of the project. For some, the IRC is a deeper form of problem-solving than an alternative to disciplinary action.

'You know, it's not about talking about the high number of suspensions as a problem. We're looking at this innovative way of dealing with young people with issues that we're encountering in the school, and this is potentially going to have all of these benefits. [...] You know I think it can be done, and that we can sell it in a very positive way, certainly not focusing on numbers of bad kids, or suspensions, or anything.'

The partnership building exercise that is a fundamental part of the IRC is one of the touchstones of the project, particularly for the managers that we interviewed. This consisted of a more strategic

view of the initiative that looks, institutionally at the ‘whole of government’ approach that was an initial key point of the application for funding. This touches on a fundamental issue in public administration theory – collaboration, and highlights the need for more cohesive and coherent practices in relation to youth related problem-solving.

‘For me the initiative revolves around excellent partnerships really increased use of resources particularly around some youth-related programs, like in the YES Youth Connections Program. There is a real opportunity for that to be better integrated and support school attendance and engagement to keep with that lower level of primary care. There’s a really significant possible play for an increased relationship with the community centre, its community and its school community. There’s a real potential for that engagement between families and the community centre and how kids engage in school and stay in school. [...] There’s the real potential. [...] Everyone I’ve spoken to are really supportive, really, really supportive of it, really keen to be able to refer to it or even get referrals from it. When I suggested the initiative to some support organisations, they said “yes absolutely, absolutely, we need to have some sort of flagging when you’re working with a particular family so that we know and we can confirm, so we can support you and the person”. So you see, there is huge buy in already.’

Some interviewees looked at the IRC as a possibility to embed problem-solving and the restorative practice vernacular in their existing practice. For one, the IRC is more than a pilot that will deliver a response to youth-related issue, it is, possibly, a brand new way to do business institutionally. The following excerpt highlights the abovementioned points, but also illustrates how the initiative can meet its second objective (see Fig. 6).

‘I can really just dive into this and use this as soon as I get back to work for the conflicts that go on daily, not just with the kids, but with the adults. If we’re using it and train up volunteers, if we’re using that same common language in asking these questions, then we’re going to get better at it, and the kids will get onto it and they’ll get better at it and then, potentially they could be so doing it themselves [...]. I can see that if we do it like this, it becomes a part of the community and the culture. People will then deal with conflict in a different way. [...] I hope that it becomes, over time, a culture in this community where the community embraces it and they actually use it in their day to day life. That there is some healing that happens in the community because ultimately that’s what it’s all about, it’s restoring the harm, and it gives people the opportunity to hear the wrong doer, to hear a victim’s story because quite often that doesn’t happen. People really know the harm that they have caused, but don’t really know how many people are affected and I think that would have an impact. Teaching people empathy, too. [...] Using that language and bringing them together and allowing them to deal with the conflict, and “OK how have you all been affected”, instead of starting off with “What’s happened”, and them realising how they’ve affected the other person and how they’ve been affected by it, and then coming up with their own solutions. [...] But if we’ve got people trained, and the people that are trained practice in their workplace and in their

community, then for me, at the end of that 18 months, we'd still be able to practice, at that really grass roots level.'

Concerns

Whilst the above highlights the strong, positive outlook of stakeholders on the project, the design and initial logistics of the initiative were not without hurdles. Of primary concern for managers and principals in particular was the amount of resources needed for their staff to either sit on the steering committee, or be involved in the referral and conferencing process. From a more immediate point of view, the question is how to deal with some staff members away from school to undertake the three days of mandatory training.

'Only probably the training is difficult to get the 'buy in' a lot because it's such a comprehensive training package and commitment to being able to do the conferencing and the time engaged and you know it's a big commitment for an organisation to make so that's been a hump as far as the project itself.'

I've got two being trained, so we're funding two. See even in that there's a significant cost to the school [...] we're talking about six relief days, we're talking about two thousand dollars out of our general funding program.'

Some schools just can't afford it [...] which I can understand, because it is resource intensive. But resources invested early will take a lot of heartache down the track.'

As the above quote illustrates, much of the stakeholders' thought process is future-oriented, either at a micro level, in relation to the impact of the IRC on young people's lives, or as will be demonstrated below, at a macro level, in regards to the sustainability of the initiative. More of a 'constant point of focus' rather than preoccupation for IRC partners was that consideration needs to be given to the 'after pilot funding' stage of the IRC:

'And of course the underlying issue is always going to be the sustainability of any project, especially when it's like this, when it's just a pilot one, how do you convince whoever to fund you to do it?'

Like all projects that are a pilot, the concern is that you can get it up and running, and then what will happen once the money runs out. So my concern is about the sustainability of what we do, assuming that it is worthwhile, is paramount in that it's looked into.'

This forward thinking is a positive indicator of how the sustainability of the IRC is approached by all. Steering committee meetings have discussed the possible future for process bedding-in or ongoing institutionalisation of the IRC, and such discussions, at this stage, need to be pursued, so that the matter keeps evolving and being fleshed out with time.

Youth programs are often directed at schools, on the grounds of the many social problems that converge in this place of interaction and socialisation. Therefore, schools are often in a position to identify issues, and are requested to either solve them, refer them to the appropriate agencies, or collaborate to address problems that impact on young people's health and well-being. In those circumstances, it is understandable that some school staff are cautious and guarded when confronted with, yet again, 'another one of these programs'. Their concern is to not forget, in this case, the primary goal of schools.

'Other agendas are being forced upon us [...], we're here to educate kids, that's what we are meant to do. But our welfare commitment is growing exponentially [...]. It is not shared within the non government sector and because they don't have the large numbers of families who are dysfunctional in their processes so we're finding this extraordinary growth in our welfare role. [...] In a way, public education (has become) society's welfare arm [...]. But we should not forget that we are not the Department of Community Services, we are not the police.'

As a concluding point, this particular interviewee made their position clear regarding the running of the initiative. Clearly, this particular partner is seen as a referral agency and a recipient of restorative services. However, whilst they will facilitate the process at all times, they will not own it:

'We'll identify some young people who we think the restorative conferencing would work well with and would achieve an outcome. We are very keen to do that. [...] We will participate but we will not take responsibility and I think that we need to be really clear here...getting the first of the conferences organised and making sure that it functions and operates in a first class fashion and that people can see that it works. [...] It's got to look at the individual, the young person and say, "Is this young person, OK?" These things have been happening in their life. "Is this young person the sort of person who we could have success with if we go through the conferencing program?" And if the answer to that is yes, that's when we implement the conferencing program.'

Furthermore, it was made clear, during steering committee discussions and in the interviews, that there is a need to be cautious in relation to possible negative labelling of participating institutions and schools. As a matter of fact, participating schools are not those that suspend students the most, or those that would be known, anecdotally for their students' antisocial behaviour but rather the schools that had the most capacity (resource-wise) and enthusiasm to come on board. Therefore:

'Some of the concerns were for the schools not to be labelled "Oh, this is a school where there's antisocial behaviour, so that's why they need an initiative".'

Some concerns were also about the amount of time that it took to set up the initiative, along with the preliminary logistics of managing the project and the steering committee. Some were concerned that this might have impacted on organisational commitment to the IRC. Whilst we reiterate that

commitment is now illustrated by the strong presence of stakeholders on the steering committee and at the training, at the very first stage of the initiative, that commitment still had to be demonstrated.

'Well, it took us a bloody long time!'

'I'm concerned that there's not a real strong commitment from some of our partners, and there needs to be [...]. The response we got was "We'll see how it goes." (Laughing). So that was a bit... disappointing, I guess... But it's that having to get the runs on the board before we get the commitments from all. That's where there's a frustration. [...]. But it is understandable: there is so much for one project to achieve.'

However, all acknowledge that for an initiative that addresses such possible complex needs, the process needs to be well thought out before being activated.

'So I think the only thing is with the MOUs [Memorandum of Understanding], [is] the operational framework. We need to get it right. Sometimes you just need to slow down and concentrate on that work to make it work. So that doesn't become like a drowning point but actually becomes [a system] where you've just got to process logistics slowly and work in a different style. But the project's really measured mostly, in its milestones. And again it's like that bedding down time to put this in place.'

Logistics

The above quote leads us to stakeholder discussions about what the overall IRC process would look like, what will lead to a referral and what the logistics of the referral and conferencing will be. Unsurprisingly for some, the IRC is an initiative that needs to 'prove its worth' and 'function in reality' before anything further fine-tuning is done.

'It's a bit hard really until it gets underway to see what the needs might be [...].'

Stakeholders are expecting to see 'how it actually works in practice', the likely impact on suspension rates and process, and whether there are, at school levels, different types of considerations about how suspensions are delivered. Given that the Education Department is said to be sensitive about how many actual suspensions there are, why they're done, and the actual suspension rationale, the IRC will, as said by one interviewee, 'be as good as the schools that participate, and the willingness of everyone to make it work'.

More pressingly though, there are questions being asked about the driving forces behind the actual logistics of the IRC. Logistical concerns about whether there will be someone to drive the process, and if so, whether it will be the project officer's role to do that, along with the concern about the willingness and availability of the facilitators to undertake the conferencing.

'You know, I think that's where it could fall down: we need to make sure that people know how it will actually work in reality. I'm not very clear myself about that at this stage.[...].

Again, my only concern is just how the program will work, as in the logistics of how it will actually operate in the school. Like, who will co-ordinate it, who will call it, who will run it, who will monitor it, all of those kinds of things, and how the outcomes will be followed up and all that kind of stuff.

Is the MOU draft sort of broken down into what are the commitments of the referrals, what do you basically refer for? So school engagement and retention, the school policy, the anti- social behaviour so it's got some guides there[...]. The two bits that really need to be developed [are] resources, one resource would be an organisational guide, basically a 'brochure' that would just be a guide to the conference process so any teacher can look at it¹¹ and it would have little case load examples, so little snapshots, you know cyber bullying snapshots [...]. And the other one is a partner brochure which would be for family and for young people. It would be in really plain English, demonstration of what a conferencing is.[...]'

An idea developed by the project worker was a 'communications' display of facilitation logistics. This communication strategy consists of developing a role play presentation that will be presented in schools and the community centre. The intent is to present a role play in the evening for parents and anyone who is interested:

'The point is just to facilitate that this is the conference procedure. So they can actually come and see one in action.'

This is an important point to make, as many interviewees have expressed their uncertainty in terms of 'picturing' the IRC process¹². The understanding of these logistics or of the general functioning of the IRC is deemed an essential part of stakeholders involvement and commitment to the overall project.

'Even if you don't actually... you know, are not able to commit to be a Facilitator, to have a deep understanding of the process would be invaluable I would think to help support the young people, and more importantly their parents to partake in the process sort of the thing.'

Specifically, there was some uncertainty about the follow up of conferences, and the necessity to make sure that young people receive the proper services and support they need. A stakeholder

¹¹ Please note that such a document was provided to facilitators during the training, as part of the accredited package.

¹² Please note, though, that the training contributed strongly to stakeholders' understanding of not only the 'big IRC picture', but also of the therapeutic social process that occurs during conference facilitation and negotiations. Trainees have indicated (see section below), that discussions during the training shed light on process and possible outcomes, and trainees themselves participated to reassuring their managers about such issues.

insisted on two points: (1) that the process needs to remain as simple as possible, to avoid red-tape or facilitator 'fatigue' and (2) that this process cannot be mapped, as individual needs may differ for all young people, especially in the case of co-morbidity or other socio-economic issues.

'You know it became too hard or whatever, so that would be one concern.[...]. if there's anything that's filtering referrals and/or not supporting the referrals and again that might be, a concern might be how it plays out with the local area command as well and their role around when they obviously have contact with anti-social behaviours and whether we have the appropriate referrals set up with that as well. [...] one of my things that I would be concerned about that we manage well is how when we come across that in a conference situation is how do we deal with it appropriately and effectively and that supports the young person ultimately. I think you can't pre-empt it. We can understand it and know it's going to happen but I think we need to have a few experiences of it to actually make it work properly and to see what systems we have in place that support it, i.e. the referral and/or flagging with DoCS. And that we can actually manage, that we're going to ensure the young person that had those acting out behaviours is not just going to keep re-occurring because we haven't solved the problem. So that would be a big one for me.

The planning be thorough [...]. The reality is that once the conference is completed, what needs to be put in place to support this young person to make the changes that they need to make? How will this differ for each circumstance and each young person? So I think we need to be looking at the young person saying OK well what are the best ways we can support this person post conference?'

At managerial level, concerns focused, understandably, on the amount of time and resources that will be needed to run the initiative, but also in relation to the pragmatics of conferencing. Managers raised questions and indicated that they will discuss with staff how and where facilitations should occur (e.g.: at YES, at school, in a 'neutral space'), and when. It is likely that such logistical details will fall in the remit of the project worker's role, and that there will be sufficient forward planning and coordination to manage time and conference 'maintenance'.

'The other concern and the unknown is the length of time it's going to require for the Facilitator to co-ordinate everything happening. Because again we've got individual schools, but how do they know if someone from one school is going to conference someone in another school, or whether they only do ones in their own school? Like, it's all... there's a lot of co-ordination there somewhere that I think someone has to probably take some ownership of, at least in the initial stages. There needs to be some clear processes and some basic paperwork.'

In the midst of such down to earth considerations about the facilitators involvement and resources, a significant milestone was achieved in the short timeframe of the focus of this report. In mid-July, the long expected accredited training was delivered to 16 prospective facilitators. The training was delivered by a highly recognised professional, who has strong links within the school and industry

arena, who has knowledge of school policies and state youth legislation. We focus on the delivery of the training below. However, the very fact that the training was delivered came as a relief to many steering committee members, who, at the time, got some important answers to the questions they kept asking. Most importantly, some of them realised that the IRC catered for some of the process to be fairly organic, and that some processes could be informed by stakeholders themselves.

'The referral triggers¹³ have been discussed, you know we had really long discussions with the schools, manager of educational services for Riverina and we spoke about, we had the starting place of, and you know the school is the main referral [point] so how it fitted with school policy. And I've spoken at that more regional level and then with the schools individually we've spoken about what are some of the obvious things as referral indicators or triggers[...]

We're three months in. The training starts next week so it's fantastic to be able to say OK we can now start actually doing the project [...]. You know we've done the planning but there was that pre-implementation sort of stage. This is quite clearly the implementation stage we're in now. [...] In meetings we can actually let the players work what they need to do, figure out where they're at and making sure the mechanics of the program are working. We now need to make sure it's running effectively and smoothly, and that we're getting referrals for the right thing. We can really support schools to always getting their head around to what they can refer [...]. I think we've set up a really good framework where the referrals come to YES and if that can go beyond the funding period that'll support having really whole of Albury approach.'

As the quote below indicates, the schools are now assured that they have a say in how the IRC 'fits in' with their individual policies and procedures, but also in their 'traditional way of doing business'.

'The school always has a buy in and they can understand exactly what [is] referred to a conference, what play is a conference [...].'

However, to make sure that the initiative is not 'lost' in the midst of all other procedures, it is important to establish strong links with delegated staff and champions within each organisation. There will always be a need to remind stakeholders of the existence of the initiative, at least in the first instance. Regular 'reminders', which will often come in the form of steering committee meetings, reporting deadlines and communication briefs, will be conveyed to all throughout the duration of the pilot.

'From working with schools we know that they get caught up in other programs, things going on in schools, they're not always focussing the Introducing Restorative

¹³ A 'referral trigger' is an incident or a particular behaviour displayed by young people that is considered a platform for inviting young people and their support persons to a problem-solving conference. Such referral triggers have been documented in internal IRC documentation. A trigger can be anything from a student pushing another on the playground or verbally insulting a teacher, to coming back to school after a long suspension period or bullying incidents.

Conferencing Project [...]. So we don't actually have that formal policy buy in at a regional level [...]. Initially, a concern would be that they didn't drop off as far as that that's what they did.'

To that effect, the project worker, from the stakeholder's understanding has a fairly sophisticated role in terms of communication with all stakeholders and both internal and external coordination.

'I would say that the project officer probably needs to play a major role in the initial stages in the implementation of the program, failing anyone else being available[...]. My intention is to obviously stay on the Steering Committee, and put my hand up I suppose to be a resource if people feel that they might want some support... there may be a need to have someone in a – not really a mentoring role, but a bit like a mentoring role I suppose, in that someone else to sound ideas off.'

Some have also highlighted the research component of the IRC as a possible 'tracking system' for the logistics and process themselves, as well as for concluding outcome documentation.

'Well I guess if I was the funding body I would want to know whether it's made a difference or not at the end of the day, and I think it's really good that you're coming in at the start of the project and taking that snapshot of what the current situation is, and also probably pre-empting any issues that there are.'

2. Key milestone: training the facilitators

Demographics

As mentioned in the above chapter, a key milestone reached was the delivery of the accredited training to all prospective facilitators. Whilst 18 were meant to undertake the training, only 16 persons eventually completed the three days. As shown in Figs. 8 and 9, the trainees came from a variety of backgrounds and their gender followed the usual spread of men/women in social programs. A large proportion of trainees (44%) come from non-government agencies, and have been allocated a 'champion' role by their institution in their job description.

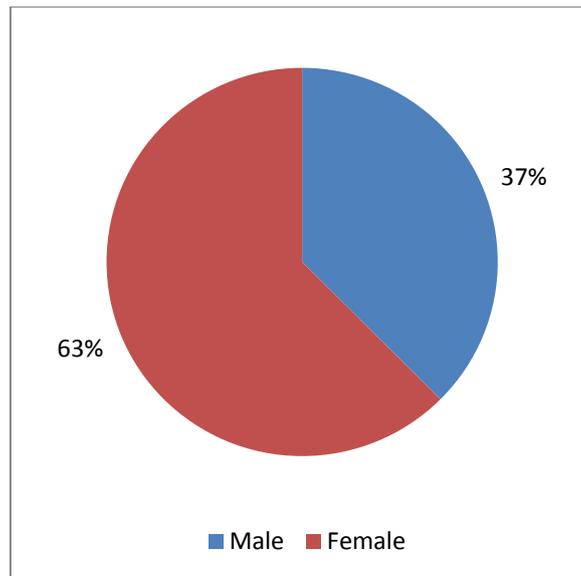


Fig. 8 - Trainees: gender (%)

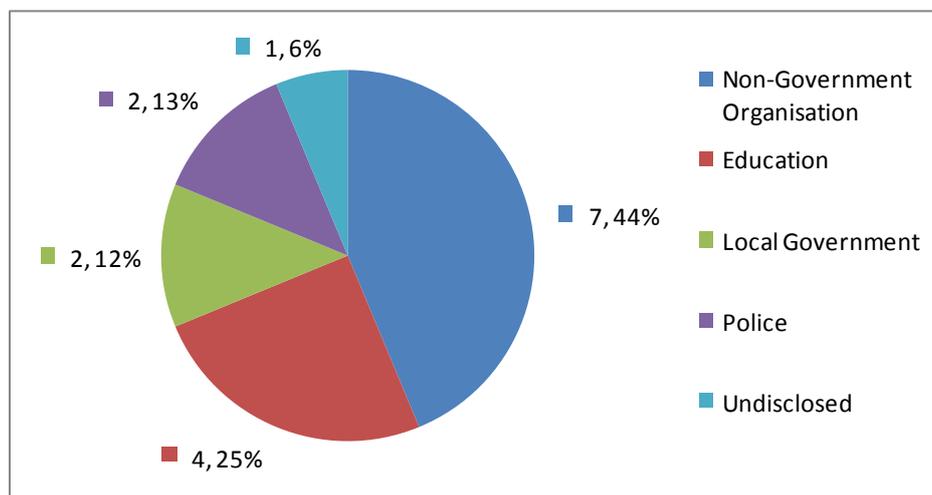


Fig.9 - Trainees: professional background (n, %)

Understanding of IRC initiative

Those who participated in the training, after discussing the IRC initiative throughout the three days, and after filling in our post-training survey, indicated that they had a good understanding of the IRC project itself, and how restorative practice principles suited the overall rationale of the initiative (Fig.10). Overall, half the trainees (n=8) thought that conferencing, within the IRC was meant to heal damaged relationships, followed by dealing with harm (n=5), with addressing reoffending as a sub-aim of the initiative. Collaboration and problem-solving, young people taking responsibility, conflict resolution, early intervention and as an addition to school disciplinary procedures were also mentioned as possible aims of the initiative.

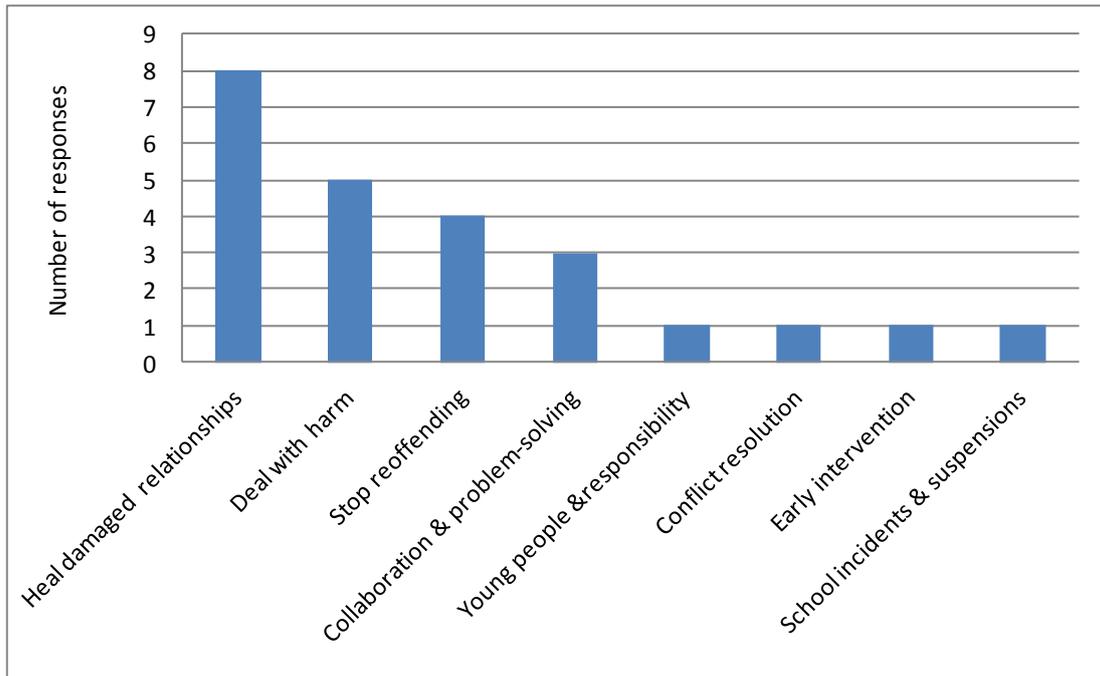


Fig.10 - Trainees' understanding of IRC principles (multiple open answers allowed)

Trainees indicated that they had different (and multiple) motivations for joining the initiative. Whilst many of them responded that they had joined the IRC because they thought it was a great initiative (n=7) or because it fitted their own problem-solving philosophy (n=4), some included that their manager had asked them to be part of the project (n=6), with others highlighting that this had also been made mandatory for them (n=2) (Fig.11).

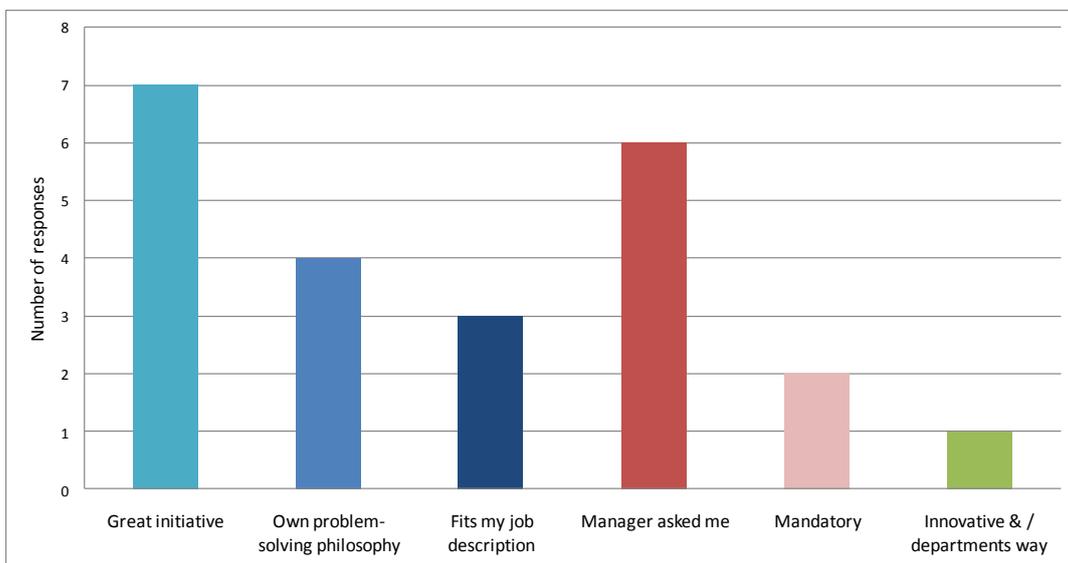


Fig.11 - Trainees' responses as to their decision to join the IRC

Trainees and their understanding of restorative justice

It was never our intention to 'evaluate the training itself', as the training that was delivered as part of the IRC is a highly acclaimed, accredited program that is delivered throughout Australia. This part

of the evaluation rather focuses on levels of confidence amongst future facilitators, in terms of their grasp of restorative principles and of the logistics of conferencing in particular. We had in mind to try and see how much support was going to be needed post-training, and flag any possible concern expressed by facilitators at the end of the training. This early identification of needs is meant to be a proactive exercise on our part, to refer possible support needs to the steering committee, prior to conferences being organised and taking place.

As an important point to this evaluation, we need to highlight that trainees felt quite confident in their understanding of restorative ‘justice’ or ‘practice’. Table 1 outlines the conclusion of a classroom discussion about what restorative justice was, in the trainees’ own words.

Table 1 - Training Exercise: What is Restorative Justice?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediation / conferencing • A form of ‘shaming’ process • Having young people own up to their mistakes • Breaking down barriers • Creating self responsibility • Creating opportunities for young people to see the impact of their actions on other people • Finding a positive aspect to work with young people • Allowing victims to safely express the impact of young persons’ actions • Creating an awareness of one’s social and physical environment • Process to reverse negative impact of young persons’ actions • Tool to curb further negative actions • Early intervention process before court • A holistic approach to righting wrongs • Process to allow young person to reflect on actions and identify better ways to deal with situations

When prompted, whilst undertaking the post-training survey, they highlighted that they had, as a general rule of thumb, a ‘good’ to ‘very good’ understanding of restorative justice practices (Fig.12), such as avoiding blame, reaching a negotiated outcome, allow parties to speak freely, to only quote a few¹⁴.

¹⁴ The only principle that some trainees felt slightly unsure of was the principle of ‘reintegrative shaming’ (see footnote 10). However, reintegrative shaming is documented (Young & Hoyle in von Hirsch et.al, 2003.) as one of the most sophisticated element of restorative justice theory, and it remains, today, one of the most highly debated points in restorative justice across all practices (victim-offender mediation, family-group conferencing, sentencing circles, etc).

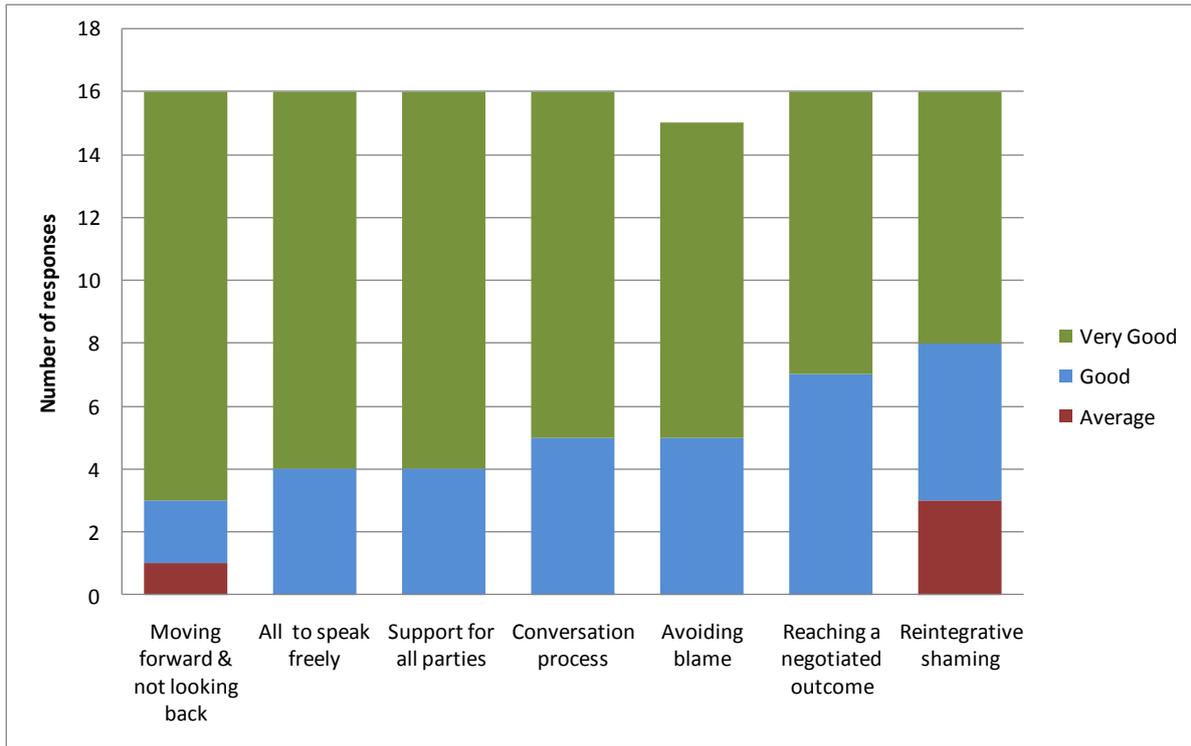


Fig. 12 - Trainees' responses about their understanding of restorative justice principles

Note: one trainee did not respond to 'avoiding blame'

They also had a sophisticated grasp of the values underpinning such practices. Table 2 makes a summary of group discussions on the underpinning values of restorative practices. Such principles demonstrate an understanding of highly ethical practices and fairness in dealing with others, a focus on the self and the individual's identity, whilst others looked at collaborative practices in problem-solving and conflict resolution.

Table 2 - Training Exercise: What underpins these practices?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self respect • Conflict resolution • Mediation not blaming/labelling process • Not punitive action but positive outcome for all involved • Core resolution/reflection not face value action • More proactive not reactive • Ability for changing a cycle • Fairness • Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal opportunity • Strength based/solution focussed • Partnerships, equal ownership • Community strengthening • Awareness of everyone's involvement • Justice, moral • Negotiated justice • To be heard, listening to others • Value of individual role in community • Connectedness • Family

Post-training levels of confidence

A good outcome of the training was the amount of confidence expressed by trainees in relation to organising a conference (Fig.13). 'Organising a conference' is understood as the total activities

needed in the lead up to a conference (contacting the parties involved, gathering information, inviting support persons, etc).

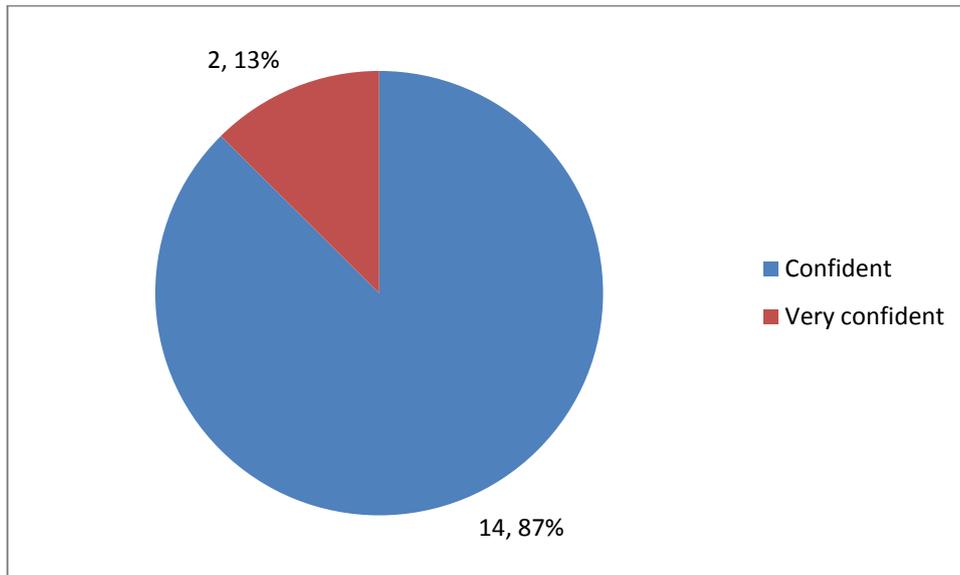


Fig. 13 - Trainees reported confidence level at organising a conference (n, %)
 Note: no trainees selected 'not at all', 'not very', or 'average' level of confidence

An overwhelming majority (87%) of trainees indicated that they felt 'very confident' in relation to organising a conference, with the remaining 13% indicating that they were 'confident'. None of the trainees decided to opt for the three other possible options ('not at all confident', 'not very confident' or 'average').

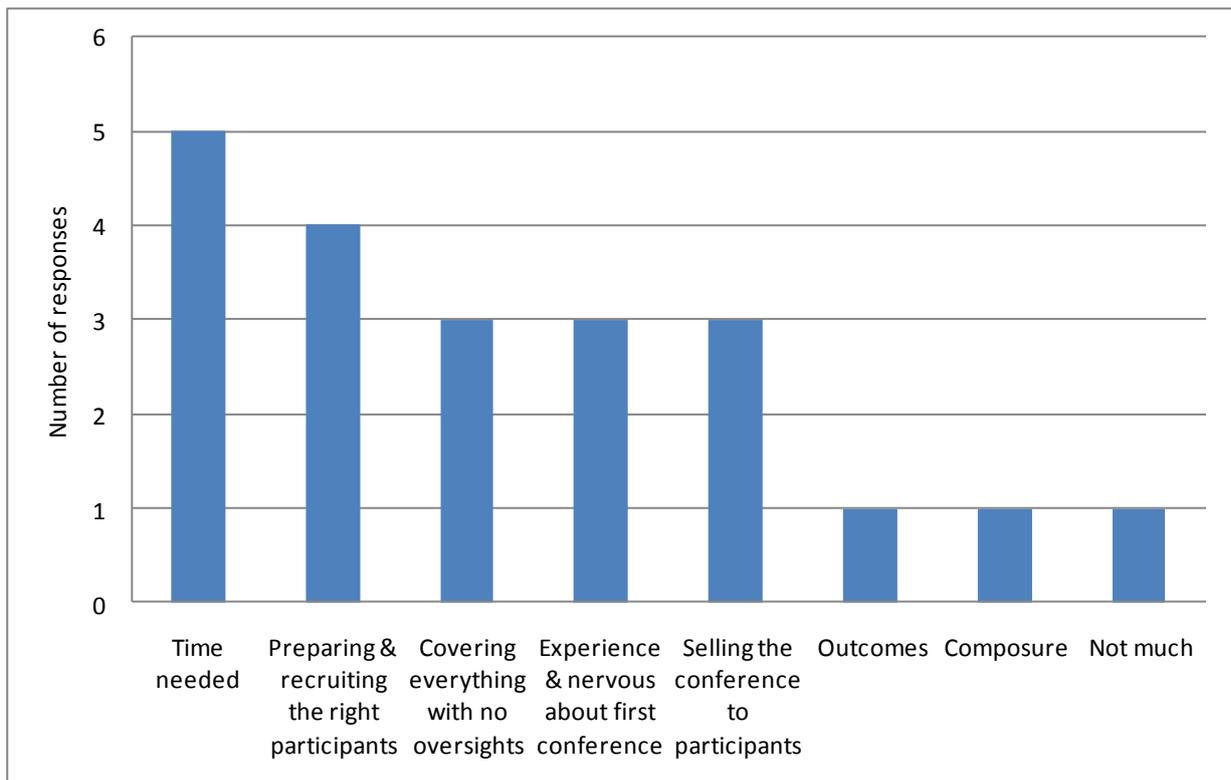


Fig.14 - Trainees' concerns at organising a conference (n)

They were cautious, though, in identifying their remaining concerns (Fig.14), in relation to particular activities. Five trainees indicated that they thought it would take some time to organise the conference well, while 7 had concerns about ensuring a good quality process (4 were mindful of selecting the right participants and 3 wanted to make sure the information collated was the right one)¹⁵. Other responses revolved around acquiring confidence and keeping composure through practice.

Whilst there was a clear cut answer in relation to the organisation of a conference, trainees were more cautious in relation to their capacity to run a conference, although answers remain largely positive (Fig. 15). Overall, 12% of trainees felt very confident running a conference, with the majority (69%) feeling 'confident' and the rest (19%) expressing a feeling of moderate (average) confidence at doing so. This is not surprising, though, as the convening of a conference, for most trainees, comes as a new practice in which they need to 'hone their skills'.

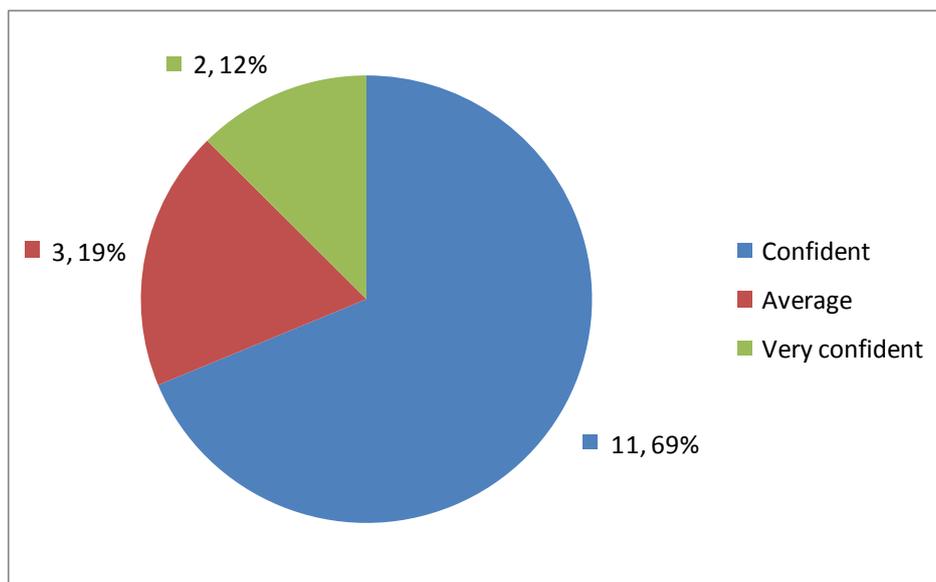


Fig.15 - Trainees' reported confidence level at running a conference (n, %)

Note: no trainees selected 'not at all', or 'not very', level of confidence

Again, there was no negative answer to this question. No trainee felt 'not confident' or 'not confident at all' in running a conference. Most of all, specific concerns about running a conference were about getting through the first one (n=3), the conference getting out of hand (n=3), preparation and outcomes (n=3), people not attending the conference (n=3), or the wrongdoer not

¹⁵ A similar answer was about reaching a good conference outcome, although we highlight here that this touches on the running of the conference itself (see further), rather than on the activities needed prior to the conference.

being involved in the problem-solving process. Other responses highlighted concerns about participants becoming aggressive or having the time to run the conference in the first place (Fig.16).

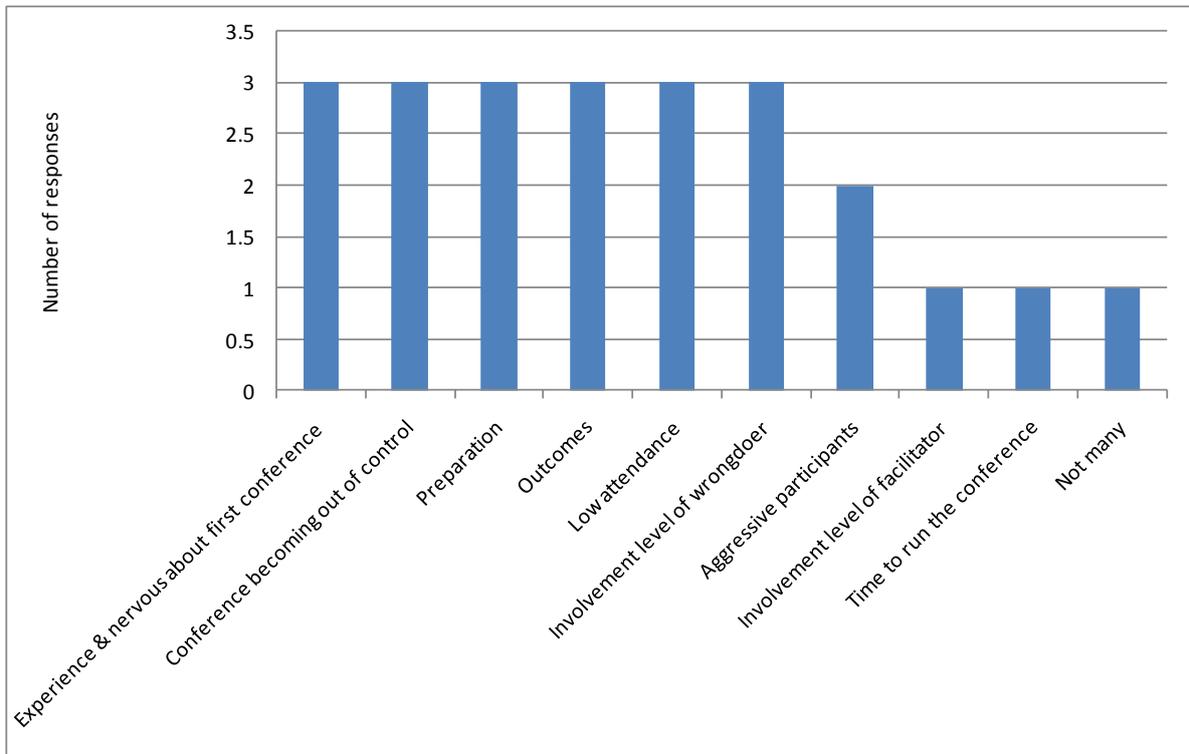


Fig.16 - Trainees' specific concerns at running a conference (n)

Their answers to this particular question matched the overall concerns trainees had about restorative practices themselves and the logistics hidden behind such practices (Fig. 17).

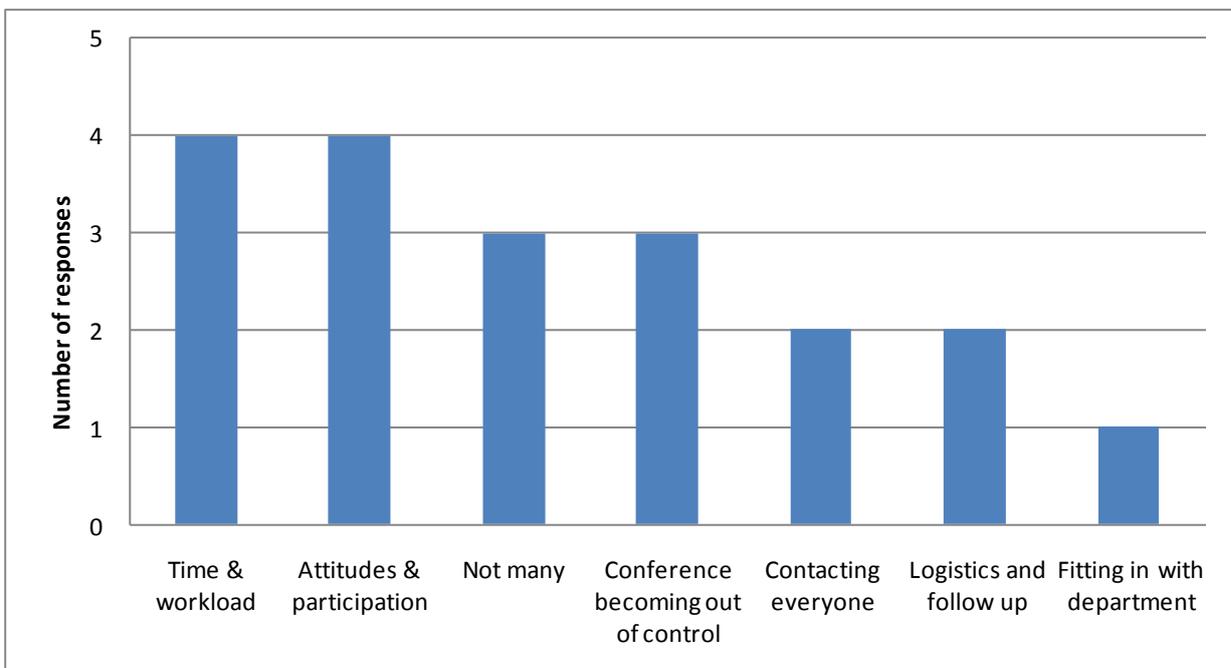


Fig. 17 - Trainees' responses about possible limitations in restorative process

Trainees' concerns about implementation

In relation to possible limitations to the process, trainees perceived that workload and time management could be a problem (n=4), along with attitudes towards the scheme (n=4), followed by the conference becoming out of control (n=3). Less frequent answers looked at the mechanical preparation of the conference, occasionally labelled a 'daunting' task by trainees (contacting all possible participants to invite them to the conference, the negotiation and follow up process, along with 'fitting' the IRC scheme with institutional guidelines of trainees' organisation).

To address these preoccupations, trainees indicated what they thought they would need to properly convene conferences. A number of support solutions were expressed in answers to the survey, as displayed in Fig.18. Whilst 35% of trainees wanted the ability to debrief after a conference, 24% wished they could acquire more experience by running a conference themselves or observing one¹⁶.

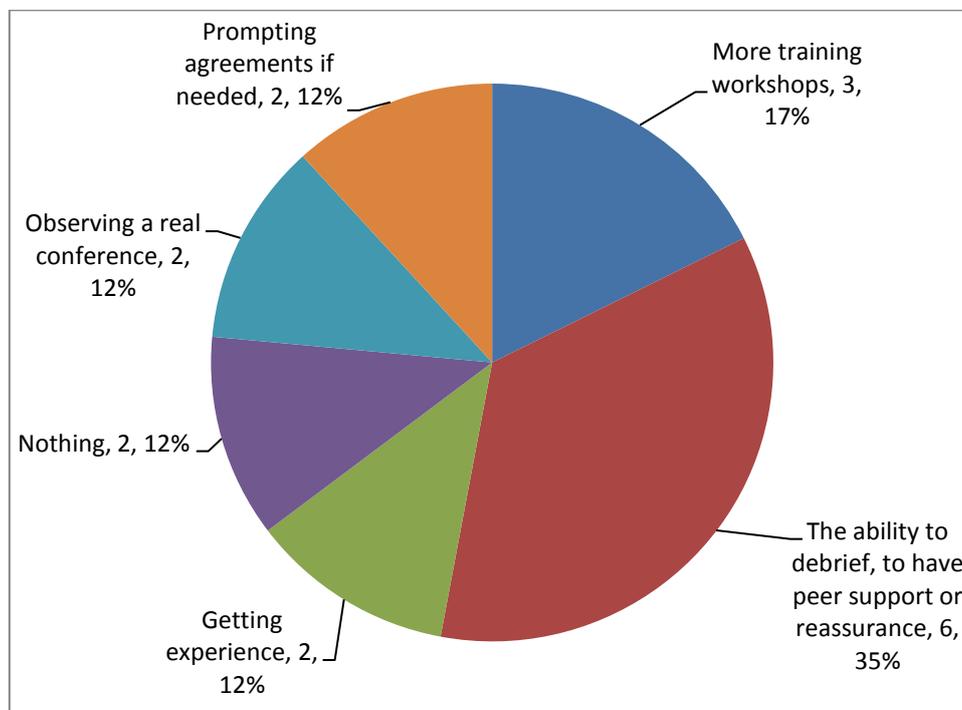


Fig. 18 - Trainees' responses about additional training and advice needed (category, n, %)

Trainees' expectations for additional levels of support emerged when trainees considered the complexity of conference participants' needs. A critical exercise trainees had to complete was a systematic analysis (based on examples) of what conference participants look for in a conference, and what they would like to achieve by coming to a conference. The answer to this exercise, being fundamentally embedded in individual cases, characteristics, social ties and support networks,

¹⁶ Two trainees wished they had more advice as to how to 'prompt' conference agreements. However, this goes against usual restorative or negotiated forms of justice, and is not deemed inclusive enough of parties.

highlighted how complex situations can be, and how varied participants' expectations might be, as shown in trainees responses (Table 3).

Table 3 - What outcomes conference participants look for and what do they want to achieve?	
Harmed	Wrong-doers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wanted to be heard • Wanted to understand what happened on the night • Wanted to know why they did it • Tell wrongdoers what they thought of them • Get things off their chest • Express/share hurt and pain • A step towards closure • Wanted things to change as a result of conference • Vindication • To illustrate the widespread impact on various people's lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to rationalise things • Redemption • Opportunity to show that they had changed • To highlight that the murder was not intentional • Parole • Have the opportunity to tell the harmed how they feel/sorry • Share responsibility/blame • Ownership of actions • Wanted to be seen as human • To show that the boys aren't evil • To illustrate that it was about the lack of thought in the moment

However, trainees were adamant that the training and their involvement in the IRC, despite complex logistics, was a really good thing, and would likely have a positive impact on their job, skills and workplace. Particularly, they thought that their participation in the training and their involvement in the IRC would enhance their own conflict resolution skills, as well as generic conflict resolution skills in the workplace (n=6), listening skills (n=3) or involvement with the welfare of young people (n=1). However, four trainees complained that this would add to their workload, and two indicated that they were unsure of the possible impact of the project on their day to day work (Fig. 18).

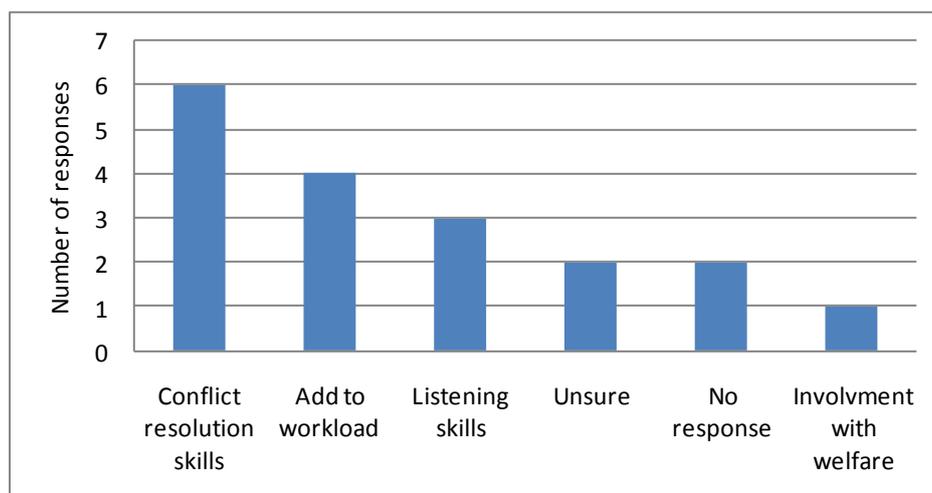


Fig. 19 - trainees' perception of impact on job and workplace (n)

Overall, trainees, on the last day were very satisfied with the training, were full of praise for the trainer and volunteered the following open text feedback about the training itself.

- Was far better than the training delivered in for the 'Victorian Model' 2 years ago¹⁷
- Explained well, facilitated well, folder provided, 'made sense'
- Very interactive and made it easy to understand the principles underpinning the process
- Clear, practical, well developed, well facilitated
- Very good in terms of explaining processes
- The training developed my confidence and knowledge and understanding of restorative justice

¹⁷ This trainee makes reference here to a conferencing project that is implemented in a neighbouring town. Upon further investigation, the trainee indicated that in contrast to the training delivered here by Circle Speak, the other model seemed to be too rigid, with many 'don't do this' or 'never do that'. The level of flexibility allowed in the IRC and the training received was much welcomed by this individual trainee.

Chapter 5 – Concluding remarks & first recommendations

Overall, the initiative is meeting its regular milestones, and problems are being solved as the project progresses. Initial discussions with key stakeholders have indicated that, whilst the IRC had to deal with a few hiccups at the onset (uncertainty of process, slow set up, membership), the initiative is now smoothly progressing and meeting deadlines, as per the funding agreement. The delivery of the training was a key point in this, and provided much reassurance to all stakeholders. At the time this report is published, the first restorative conferences were being organised and scheduled to take place late August / early September 2011.

Six key recommendations are suggested at this juncture. The research team was able to formulate them through the analysis of interviews, current IRC internal documentation and the post-training survey.

Recommendation 1: Process documentation and flexibility

Our interviews with stakeholders and the post-training survey indicate that schools and partnering agencies would like to waive all concerns about processes and internal recording documentation. It is suggested that clearer and more straightforward process documents are released as soon as possible, especially to those in charge of implementing the IRC in schools. As we publish this report, YES was working on a number of project documents, which included a process flowchart (slightly different to the one featured in this report), exit surveys for conference participants (in collaboration with the research team) for quality assurance purpose and data recording, and a facilitation recording template. Considering this is a brand new initiative in Albury, it is important that such documentation is drafted early in the implementation stage of the initiative, to 'ease' stakeholders into the program, and contribute to its further sustainability. In saying this, it is important that the processes portrayed in this documentation remain flexible, and that stakeholders allow for some leeway for the fine-tuning of the project, as it unfolds.

Recommendation 2: The specificity of the initiative

It is important that the initiative, which currently functions according to specific aims and objectives, remains as such, and that simplicity in all areas remains a constant focus for facilitators and project worker. The IRC stands out for its clear focus on harm, relationship and problem-solving. It also relies on a number of internal and external partners, who have been handpicked because of their area of specialty and their good reputation in conducting core business. Such specialisation is the crux of

good referral and collaboration practices, and it is important that not all facets of problem-solving strategies are referred to a *'one size fits all' über agency*. Health matters should be referred to appropriate agencies, for example, and the same goes for housing, etc. In this, we are mindful to indicate that conferencing may unveil what is known in public administration and social work as *'wicked issues'*, *'where the problems and/or the solutions are either hard to define and/or not available or sub-optimal and often carry consequences that might lead to further problems. A wicked issue crosses international and national boundaries and involves multiple agencies and sectors at all levels of government'* (Fleming & Wood, 2006: 2, quoted in Bartkowiak-Théron, 2011). On that note, it is important to highlight that IRC champions have announced strong partnership commitments or interest by external specialised agencies. It is important for such strength to now be illustrated pragmatically, with clear referral guidelines to appropriate services.

Recommendation 3: Bringing expectations back down to reality

Along the same lines, stakeholders seem to have relatively high expectations about what the initiative can deliver. However, the initiative is not going to solve all problems, and certainly is not a magic wand that can be waved to erase all hardship and ease all pain. This is a difficult process, which will likely unveil a number of problems, which will need careful consideration from the stakeholders who will deal with the young people. Furthermore, while all due care is taken to address issues, there are limitations as to what the initiative can achieve. It is highly unlikely that schools will suddenly see their suspension and detention rates reduced to zero, and it must be taken into account that restorative practices are not for everyone. As demonstrated by restorative justice scholars, those who elect to participate are also probably those young people who need admonition the least. The *'high risk'* terminology, here is particularly badly suited to the initiative, and falls outside the remit of an *'early intervention'* scheme.

Recommendation 4: Support for facilitators

Despite positive results in the survey, there was a level of uncertainty on the part of trainee facilitators in relation to the support they would receive after convening conferences. We suggest, for heightening confidence levels, and for facilitators to realise that they are not left running conferences on their own, that several support mechanisms are set in place for the duration of the project. The nomination of mentors that can be reached for advice or debriefing would comfort facilitators, reinforce confidence in their skills, and encourage a capacity to seek out specialised help,

from individuals. Some members of the steering committee who have undertaken different types of restorative justice training have volunteered to play a mentoring role. We also suggest that such debriefing be done using confidential guidelines, and for facilitators not to feel stigmatised or marginalised by their reaching out for help. Similarly, the creation of a 'facilitators network' would contribute to building confidence and critical mass for not only the sustainability of the initiative, but also to exchange ideas about good practice, with examples of matters being dealt with via conferencing. This 'facilitators network' could contribute to strengthening the initiative's identity and would contribute to good practice.

Recommendation 5: Monitoring the outcome of the conference

It is suggested that to keep the momentum of the IRC initiative going, a process be documented regarding the allocation of responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the outcome of the conference. It is important to do so for documentation of the initiative itself, as well as its reporting process. This will likely be an important element in relation to the initiative's accountability to all persons involved, in particular the person harmed, as well as conference participants, who take the time to contribute to the process. It may also serve as proof of 'good behaviour' and of the young person taking responsibility (or of the opposite, if a conference agreement is not seen through to conclusion).

Recommendation 6: Aims and objectives of the IRC

Finally, we suggest that the aims and objectives of the initiative, as set out in the Terms of Reference of the project, be reframed. They do not accurately reflect the purpose of the scheme as it was implemented in its first months of operation. It is unlikely that the true success of the scheme will be observable by measurement against the current – broad – aims. For example the extent to which the IRC in itself should or could be expected to directly reduce the incidence of violence and/or youth anti-social behaviour. A more tangible aim of the program in itself is, perhaps, that it provides an early detection mechanism for early intervention problem-solving and special needs referral for young people displaying anti-social behaviour. This aims to address the harm caused by certain behaviours and the school disengagement ramifications for young people. The reduction in noticeable antisocial-behaviour or misbehaviour itself can be an associated, but not direct, outcome of the restorative process that occurs during a conference. There may be many other contributing factors involved in an individual young person's life which may also impact of behavioural change as

well as the IRC initiative. At the moment, such indicators are part of the expected outcomes and deliverables mentioned in the initial application for funding to the Attorney General's Offices. The reframing of the aims and objectives of the initiative will contribute to the impact evaluation process. Whilst the research team has set out to keep an eye on such indicators, it is important that the IRC does not *fall short of impact measurement* because its true impact is not reflected in the aims of the scheme and is therefore of little interest to those charged with ensuring effectiveness and sustainability.

This report offers a snapshot of the IRC initiative during its first months since funding was received. Much good work has been achieved to date and the IRC has been well received by schools and partnering agencies, overall. The second TILES interim report will concentrate on how the IRC can be further embedded within schools¹⁸, and will report on conferences as of January 1st, 2012. Specifically in report 2 we intend to establish *what has worked so far*, in addition to a further identification of problems and possible solutions.

¹⁸ To that effect, the research team will release a discussion paper one month after the release of this first interim report (i.e.: in October). This discussion paper will be distributed to all stakeholders, and will be published online on the TILES and YES websites.

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APPENDIX 1 – List of Acronyms

AG	Attorney General
AWCWP	Albury Wodonga Community Working Party
CI	Chief Investigator
DET	Department of Education and Training
IRC	Introducing Restorative Conferencing
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LAC	Local Area Command NSW Police
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NSW	New South Wales
NSWPF	New South Wales Police Force
POCA	Proceeds of Crime Act 2002
TILES	Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies
UTAS	The University of Tasmania
YCP	Youth Connection Program
YES	YES Youth & Family Services

APPENDIX 2 – Initiative’s Expected Benefits and Intended Outcomes

Introducing Restorative Conferencing: Expected Benefits

School retention

Restorative approaches used to reduce school suspensions has been successful in Victorian schools.

A decrease in youth petty crime or anti-social behaviours

Police have noted that when youth are not in school the crime rate increases.

Increased school attendance or re engagement of the young person in alternative pathways such as vocational or employment programs

Early intervention

Early Intervention for youth who display anti social behaviour - the program looks beyond the wrongdoing and into what is going on in the life of the wrong-doer

The Development of a holistic early intervention program that can support the young person and his/her family, acknowledging the wellbeing of the whole family impacts on the young person

The restorative program can lead into family conferencing which supports the family in seeking solutions to problems.

Accountability

Youth who have done wrong meet their victim and have the realisation of the effects of their wrongdoing and harm is reduced by working out a way that is appropriate to amend what was done.

Cost effectiveness

The restorative conferencing program once established is financially cost effective and becomes embedded in the organisation’s culture and processes.

Contribution to real-time processing of cases

The program will free up police time and allow police to more effectively engage and work with young people and their families.

Culture-friendliness

Whilst the program will focus upon indigenous young people and organisations which deal with indigenous families, this is not exclusively an indigenous specific program and its application to a range of cultures will be evaluated.

Holistic practices

Restorative conferencing can be established within participating organisations’ operations policies and procedures.

Capacity-building

The project will build the capacity of organisations to adopt restorative practices within their organisation via providing training, mentoring, support and supervision to agencies so that they can be confident and self reliant in using a restorative approach to their work.

More streamlined referral of young people to agencies

Agencies develop indicators for referral of young people to the restorative conferences. Such indicators may include offending behaviour, at risk of offending, anti social behaviour, disengagement from learning, non school attendance.

Recognised training

The initiative will provide accredited training in restorative conferencing.

Documentation and transferability

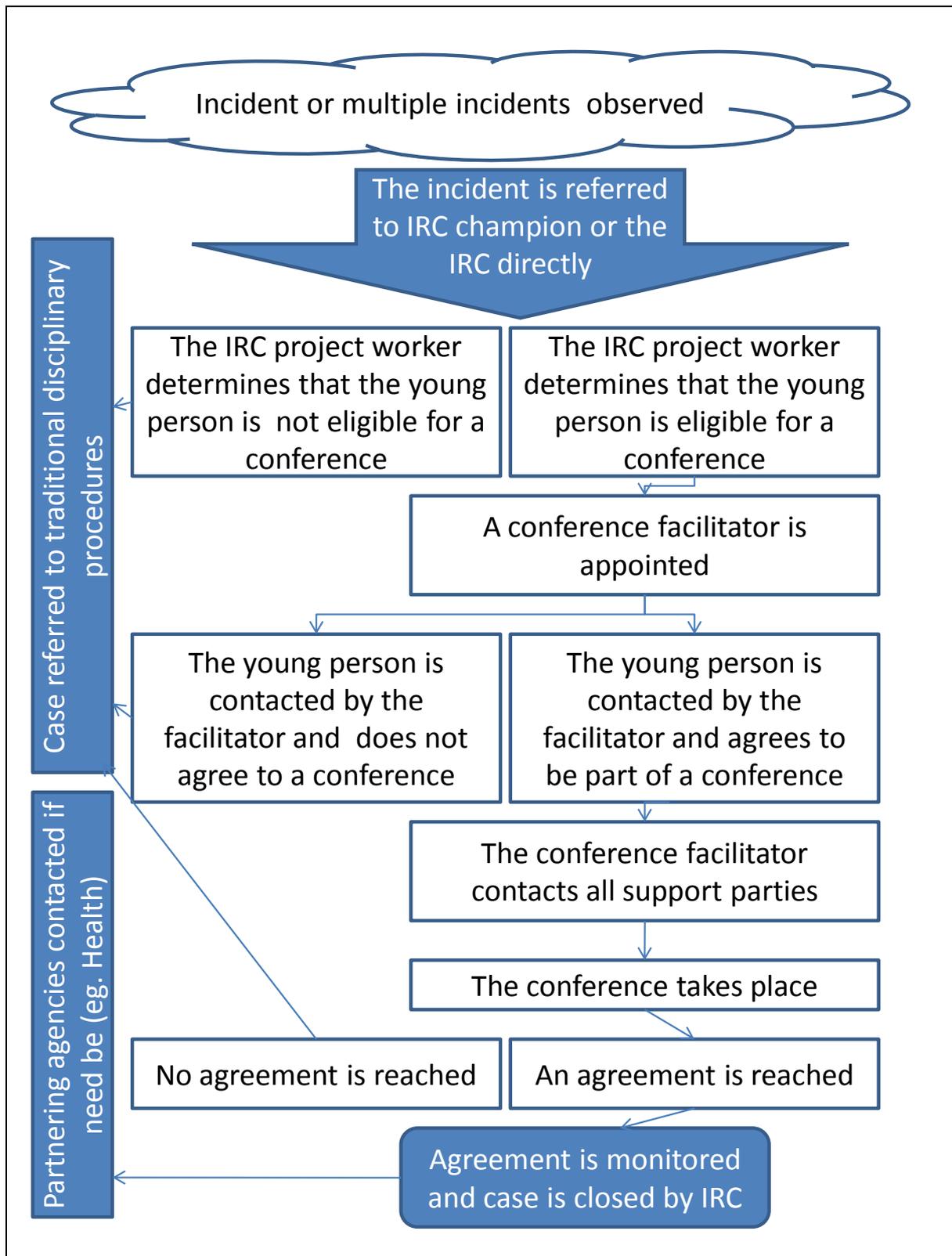
The evaluation will provide a detailed evaluation and report of the process and impact of the program, which will be made publicly and can contribute to not only to the dissemination of results, but also to the transfer of the model to other sites, cultures and situations.

Introducing Restorative Conferencing: Intended Outcomes

- A possible decrease in offending behaviour by young people.
- An early intervention process, that is holistic and available to the young person and his/her family, acknowledging the social and wellbeing of the whole family impacts on the young person.
- Provision of an opportunity for the victim and victim's family to express the impact that the wrong-doer's behaviour has had on their wellbeing. To restore the relationship between the parties and the wrong-doer and to express remorse for their actions.
- Increased school attendance and/ or re engagement in alternative pathways such as vocational or employment programs.
- Post conference support provided by the family members, specialist agencies and services to work with the young person, the victim and or their families.
- Agencies developing indicators for referral of young people to the restorative conferences. Such indicators may include offending behaviour, at risk of offending, anti social behaviour, disengagement from learning, non -school attendance.
- A comprehensive evaluation and report of the process and impact of the program

(Source: Expression of Interest sent to the Attorney General's Office – 2010)

Appendix 3 – IRC process flowchart



Appendix 4 – Research Timeline

Research Stage	Date	Research activity	Status
Stage zero: Research Prep	January 2011 – May 2011	Research Design	√
		Recruitment of research assistant	√
		Ethics approval	√
Stage one: Data collection and preliminary analysis	As soon as ethics approval is received	Collection + perusal of scheme internal documentation to date	√
		Initial ‘background’ Interviews with all stakeholders	√
		Transcription of interviews + analysis	√
	June – July 2011	Observation of training	√
		Training survey (run + results compiled)	√
		Preparation of first interim report (comprehensive of evaluation plan, literature review, and preliminary desktop analysis of data to date)	√
		Delivery of 1 st interim report to Attorney General’s Office	√
Stage two: Comprehensive analysis and write up of 2nd interim report	July 2011-January 2012	Observation of 5 conferences Interim desktop analysis of data to date Compilation of 2nd interim report Delivery of 2 nd interim report to Attorney General’s Office	N/A
Stage three: Final write up Dissemination		Final desktop analysis of data Compilation of 3rd interim report Delivery of 3rd report to Attorney General’s Office Presentation of initial results at ANZSOC conference and writing up of academic publications (September onwards)	N/A

Appendix 5 – Key Performance Indicators

Breaking down aims and objectives into manageable indicators

The IRC, with the delivery of the accredited training to future facilitators, its focal point on collaborative work, early detection of problems and acute referral mechanisms, is focusing on the delivery of good, evidence-based practices. It is therefore important, at this stage of the evaluation process, to further consider the formal measurement of the scheme's 'effectiveness' and highlight potentially challenging areas ahead for consideration in the program's further development.

The IRC is currently funded for a period of 18 months only, and funding from the Attorney General's Office is due to conclude in July 2012. The IRC will need to be able to *prove its worth* if positive impact on the ground is to be recognised by organisations and the sustainability of the scheme is to be assured. Key performance indicators (KPIs) must match the aims and objectives of the initiative, and should quantify the efficiency and impact of the scheme against these pre-determined objectives.

In the table below, we have broken down all KPIs into separate, individual entities (some aims were, semantically speaking, 'double entries'). For each individual aim, we set out how each can be assessed and present a table in the appendix which identifies the tools available to do so and whether the triangulation of such measures is possible, within program constraints. We also discuss the possible limitations of these measurements. As previously indicated in a report drafted by the author and one of her colleagues (Herrington & Bartkowiak-Théron, 2007), researchers routinely observe that 'program objectives as they currently stand are very broad and in some instances remain slightly theoretical. Moreover they are also vulnerable to the influence of a number of extraneous and uncontrolled factors. This makes it very difficult to unpick the program's influence, and therefore the success of [...] program[s]'.

Objectives	Key Performance Indicators	Data Source
1a - To consolidate partnerships in implementing restorative approaches with young people (aged 10-18 years) and other community members, using models inclusive of family and community group conferencing, school conferencing and youth and family restorative conferencing	KPI 1: number of agency referrals	Internal IRC documentation (numbers to be collated every three months)
	KPI 2: number of agencies participating in (representative attending) a conference	Internal IRC documentation (numbers to be collated every three months)
	KPI 3: expectation of and satisfaction with the scheme expressed during background and exit interviews	Background and exit interviews with stakeholders
1b - To consolidate practice in implementing restorative approaches with young people (aged 10-18 years) and other community members, using models inclusive of family and community group conferencing, school conferencing and youth and family restorative conferencing	KPI 4: facilitators attitudes post training and post implementation (6 weeks follow up)	Post training survey + six month follow up survey + + KPI 1 +KPI 2 + KPI 3
	KPI 5: attitudes of facilitators and participants	Internal IRC documentation (numbers to be collated every three months – IRC Conference Exit survey)
	KPI 6: number of conferences facilitated	Internal IRC documentation (numbers to be collated every three months)
2 - Building the capacity of services/sectors (education, police, social services) to adopt restorative approach within their practices	KPI 7: changes to business plans, policies, referral processes, job descriptions (now inclusive of restorative principle components)	Background and exit interviews with stakeholders (if so, documentation evidence)
	KPI 8: indication of informal restorative practices at school or in the workplace	Background and exit interviews with stakeholders
	KPI 9: other forms of restorative justice practices used in the workplace, at school or communication and professional development events held around restorative justice principles or the IRC initiative itself	Background and exit interviews with stakeholders (if so, documentation evidence)
3a - To disseminate key learnings to other communities with regard to: 1) the process of engagement in restorative conferences from a participants perspective;	KPI 10: analysis and report on participants' attitudes	Internal IRC documentation (numbers to be collated every three months – IRC Conference Exit survey)
	KPI 11: participants' engagement observed by research team in 5	Internal IRC documentation (numbers to be collated every three months – IRC Conference

	conferences	Exit survey) Conference Observation
	KPI 12: analysis and report on facilitators' views of participants' engagement	Internal IRC documentation (numbers to be collated every three months – IRC Conference Exit survey) Conference Observation
3b - To disseminate key learnings to other communities with regard to: 2) the impact of such approaches in reducing offending behaviour;	KPI 13: compliance rates with incident resolution/conference decision	Internal IRC documentation (numbers to be collated every three months)
	KPI 14: insight of impact and impact factors by stakeholders (inclusive of changes in young people's visible misbehaviour)	Background and exit interviews with stakeholders
	KPI 15: changes in number of school disciplinary measures enacted / not enacted (numbers to be collated every 3 months)	Background and exit interviews with stakeholders Stakeholder data
	KPI 16: number of school students suspended/expelled (with comparison previous year – numbers to be collated every 3 months)	Background and exit interviews with stakeholders Stakeholder data
	KPI 17: young people's views of impact	Internal IRC documentation (numbers to be collated every three months – IRC Conference Exit survey)
	KPI 18: victims' feelings of safety / reassurance / satisfaction	Internal IRC documentation (numbers to be collated every three months – IRC Conference Exit survey)
	KPI 19: facilitators' and other participants' views of impact	Internal IRC documentation (numbers to be collated every three months – IRC Conference Exit survey)
3c - and To disseminate key learnings to other communities with regard to: 3) identifying key success factors in developing and sustaining partnership to restorative practices	KPI 20: identification of success factors by key stakeholders	Background and exit interviews with stakeholders (Success =evidence of positive or constructive impact, for the purpose of the evaluation)

Limitations to measurement, and consideration of initiative's *deliverables*

Whilst there is data to measure the overall impact of the IRC, the interpretation of the degree to which the IRC in itself has had an effect on youth crime will be limited. Coexisting school,

community, police and governmental programs will likely have an impact on young people's behaviour. Local parenting and crime prevention programs will also impact on behaviour and may influence measured levels of crime and disorder. Unpicking what is the specific result of the sole IRC will be problematic statistically, and there will be a reliance on qualitative data to ascertain this.

However, behavioural data will be available through the school record systems and individual tracking of cases, via the IRC data base, although the usual limitations will need to be considered when relying on these statistics: not all anti-social behaviour or misbehaviour are nor will be reported. The complicating factor is that the IRC and its implementation in schools, may *specifically* increase the likelihood of behaviour being reported, by simply bringing additional attention to different types of misbehaviour. A sudden inflation of numbers is therefore something we need to be aware of, and an increase in the number of recorded victims and offenders of school age may be regarded as a positive outcome, rather than a sign of negative impact. Qualitative data drawn from the review will provide some insight in this matter.

Data relating to the consolidation of restorative practices within institutional procedures can be available through partnering agencies' internal documentation of problem-solving. In unpicking the influence of the IRC, we will need to identify how current and emerging disciplinary procedures are influenced, decided upon or impacted throughout the process. Again, as per a previous report written by the author (Herrington & Bartkowiak-Théron, 2007), 'newly implemented zero tolerance policy in a school [...] will certainly influence the recording of violent incidents' (and enactment of disciplinary procedures), regardless of sustained IRC practices. 'Additionally, transfer of students (expelled from one school to another or moving schools because their parents relocated professional reasons), may impact on measurements as well' (*ibid.*).

The strengthening of partnerships and collaboration in restorative practices can be measured statistically through the number of collaborative events, with the quality of these events and the related strengthening of the relationships gleaned qualitatively through stakeholder interviews. Such events include *ad-hoc* invitations of agencies to come and attend a steering committee meeting, repeat expressions of interesting the initiative recorded by the project worker, along with agencies invited to and attending a conference as a support person for one of the parties. Of course, the involvement of agencies into agreements and/or their monitoring will be a key determinant in the measuring of collaboration. Of all objectives, this is probably one of the least problematic to pin down.