

Introducing Restorative Conferencing

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

Final evaluation report



YOUTH & FAMILY
SERVICES



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Isabelle Bartkowiak-Théron

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Chapter 1 – Background: the IRC initiative and its evaluation

The ‘Introducing Restorative Conferencing’ initiative

The ‘Introducing Restorative Conferencing: A whole of community, early intervention approach to youth anti-social behaviour’ (also known as, and hereafter referred to as, the IRC) is currently hosted under the auspices of Yes Youth & Family Services (YES, see also Appendix 1 for a list of acronyms and abbreviations). Following a successful application to the Attorney General’s Proceeds of Crime Funding Scheme, YES was granted financial support from early 2011 to June 2012 to design, run, and evaluate an initiative intended to address several recurrent youth-related problems observed in the Albury area. These problems included school absenteeism, repeat suspensions from school, school detentions, minor forms of anti-social behaviour observed at school and on the street, repeat summary offending by young people (which may or may not involve young people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background), damage to property, and escalation of anti-social behaviour (Bartkowiak-Théron, 2011a; YES, 2011a).

Community concerns about such topics were expressed by the Albury Aboriginal community, and were confirmed by key personnel at Albury Police Station, at the time the project was designed by YES and Albury City Council in 2009. Statistics were forwarded to YES to support the funding application. The project’s goal, purpose, and objectives, as they were eventually put together for the initiative, are provided in Figure 1 (YES, 2011b).

The IRC aimed to set an example in collaborative work across a range of social and educational providers and the police to provide restorative programs that could work with young people and their families, and to acknowledge that the well-being of the whole family impacts on a young person. Along the lines of best practice in whole-of-government approaches, the project aimed to address the problem of anti-social behaviour among youth by identifying the root cause of the problem and by providing a seamless service system that would support families in accessing services that are appropriate to their needs (Bartkowiak-Théron, 2011a; YES, 2011a).

Introducing Restorative Conferencing - Goal and Purpose

The main goal of the *Introducing Restorative Conferencing* Project is to provide and support practitioners and staff at four targeted primary and high schools, the police and a community centre to access accredited training in restorative conferencing and to implement restorative conferencing within their setting to address young people exhibiting anti-social behaviour, that are at risk of engaging in criminal activities.

The purpose of project is to take an early intervention and holistic approach to working with young people, particularly young people who are disengaged from school or likely to be suspended because of unacceptable behaviour. Through restorative conferencing, the young person's social support and family members, role models and the victim of the young person's behaviour are brought together to raise awareness of the triggers leading to the young person's behaviour, explore the impact of the behaviour on the victim and seek agreement on how the young person can make reparation to the victim and what support can be provided to the young person and their family.

Research indicates that restorative approaches lead to high victim satisfaction rates, accountability by the wrongdoer and reduction in the reoccurrence of problematic behaviours. A restorative model looks at what is behind the act and how the behaviour can be changed and how identified issues can be supported and assistance accessed. There is an opportunity for the victim and victims family to express the impact that the wrongdoer's behaviour has on their wellbeing, to restore the relationship between the parties and provide an opportunity for the wrongdoer to express remorse for his/her actions.

Introducing Restorative Conferencing Objectives

1. To consolidate partnerships and 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.
2. Building the capacity of services/sectors (education, police, social services) to adopt restorative approach within their practices.
3. To disseminate key learnings to other communities with regard to: 1) the process of engagement in restorative conferences from a participants perspective; 2) the impact of such approaches in reducing offending behaviour; and 3) identifying key success factors in developing and sustaining partnership to restorative practices.

Figure 1 Introducing Restorative Conferencing: goals, purpose, and objectives

Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to independently gauge progress, impact, and various processes of the IRC. This evaluation research was embedded in the 2009 application for funding to the federal Attorney General under the POCA funding scheme.

The aims of this evaluation were to:

- track the initial stages of the scheme (bedding-in)
- evaluate the process of implementing the scheme, including provision of training and rapport building with all stakeholders (schools, agencies, young people, the community, families, victims, etc.)
- 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)
- measure the overall impact of the scheme and the extent to which it met its objectives
- document the scheme in order to identify the emergence of a possible flexible model that could be transferred to other situations, cultures, and areas throughout Australia and potentially internationally
- disseminate research results so that others interested in this model may refer to it as a stepping stone or inspiration for their own projects.

This final report provides a global outlook on the initiative as it concluded in July 2012. It addresses the extent to which the IRC was embedded in school procedures, and it provides a picture of the initiative as of 31 July 2012 from the reflexive point of view of key stakeholders. The findings in this report are drawn from the analysis of qualitative data contained in the interview of major stakeholders in the IRC. A desktop analysis of quantitative data was provided in the second interim report, as well as an analysis of feedback obtained from stakeholders after the dissemination of a discussion paper and an analysis of exit surveys distributed to conference participants. While the original research design included an intention to update quantitative data as a follow-up inquiry, the final logistics of the initiative did not permit this. We address this point within this report. As a final examination of the later stages of the IRC, we therefore focus on processes and stakeholder expectations, as revealed by exit interviews with key partners in the initiative.

The findings outlined in the following chapters will help gauge how YES has met objectives and KPIs to date. Upon analysis, it will be possible to provide recommendations built from the ground up, to help with the possible continuation of the scheme in the future.

Desktop analysis

Upon his departure, the IRC project worker provided policy documentation that had been prepared to guide partnering schools and community centres in further embedding restorative practices in their policy and problem-solving processes. An analysis of these documents and their purpose transpires throughout this final report.

Exit interviews

This evaluation consisted firstly of two sequential series of interviews. Members of the steering committee (n = 11), or as many as possible considering participants' availability, were interviewed at the beginning of the initiative and at the end of this evaluation, as well as key informants who are part of the network of agencies supporting the scheme.

The selection of interviewees involved 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 included professional participants from the New South Wales Police Force, Child Protection Agencies, Department of Community Services, and the NSW Police Child Wellbeing Unit. Such agencies/individuals were identified by way of snowball sampling (where other valuable sources are uncovered) during the unfolding of the initiative. The research team was guided by the initiative documentation and by prior interviewees

in identification of relevant agencies for the region in order to achieve appropriate 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 were conducted early in the set-up of the initiative. These allowed the research team to document possible or foreseeable problems (identified by stakeholders themselves) and start mapping out successes/solutions designed from the ground up.

The semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity to garner thoughts on the IRC, gauge agency relationships and networking processes, and elaborate on the holistic objectives of service provision. They documented expectations relating to the overall delivery of the restorative conferencing training and expectations about the initiative itself. Considering the initial numbers of people sitting on the initiative’s steering committee (as of 10 July 2011), it was expected that a maximum of 22 interviews (11 ‘background interviews’ at the beginning and 11 ‘exit interviews’ at the end of the initiative), each of about 45 min to 1 hour in length (according to social research norms), would be undertaken. At the time of preparing this report, a total of 13 interviews have been conducted¹. All interviews were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. Analysis was done via text analysis software. Participation in interviews was voluntary. Any identifying data/information provided by agency managers and CEOs occurred on a voluntary basis. An information sheet about the project and a consent form were provided to all interviewees.

Final data analysis

In consideration of data limitations, and in light of later developments in the running of the initiative, it was decided that this report would be articulated and formatted according to the various aims, objectives, and deliverables² associated with the IRC. The various chapters in this report therefore articulate specific progress or change in project direction or process that occurred over the previous 18 months. This articulation allows a direct insight as to the extent which the initiative met its objectives.

¹ Eight interviews were run at the start of the initiative, and five exit interviews took place in July-August 2012.

² See Appendix 2 for a list of the initiative’s deliverables as featured in the project plan submitted to the Attorney General.

Chapter 2 –18 months process outlook: using restorative practices with young people

Some major amendments occurred since January 2012 and the release of the second interim evaluation. The status of the program, and the buy-in (or lack thereof) of partners in particular, resulted in the project worker considering new directions for the project in building its sustainability for partnering schools and community centres. Major organisational efforts therefore focused on developing relationships with and capacities of the major two stakeholders in the IRC initiative, namely one school and one community centre. This chapter develops on the reasons for such a re-orientation and the logic behind a re-harnessing of energies and resources in the lead-up to the initiative's conclusion in July 2012. However, we start by indicating that, overall, partners expressed their satisfaction in the initiative. We also consider the introduction of restorative practices in school settings.

An appraisal of success

While it is recognised by all that the project did not meet all expected outcomes (with an acknowledgement that stakeholder perception of outcomes may have been slightly unrealistic from the onset), stakeholders are in general satisfied with the initiative. Rather than dwelling on 'what could have been', IRC partners insist on looking at progress made to date, and state the extent to which some schools and community centres have come on board.

It hasn't gone as we thought it would go, but I'm not disappointed in the way it has gone. I think there have been some great outcomes. So I think that's been a pretty huge achievement even though we didn't get the other schools buy in as much as what we thought they would.

Stakeholder 1

Well, it has had its ups and downs I guess. I think it is and it can be a useful project in the community, and especially the evidence of this is in a couple of schools that are actively participating. So the schools that have come on board have really embraced it. So I think it's great if a process can be embedded into a policy. At a community centre it's worked quite well from the feedback we receive at Westside as well.

Stakeholder 2

On the point of aspects that could have been achieved more successfully, they indicate that:

A good way and a bit scary as well. Now it's ended we've had some great outcomes, but we haven't achieved some of what we set out to achieve. I don't want to see it fall off

the face of the earth, so there is a sense of responsibility to all of those stakeholders that were involved even well before my time, to make sure that this continues.

Stakeholder 1

One of the main concerns raised during the interviews revolved around the low number of conferences (n = 9; no change since the second interim report) organised since delivery of the training in July 2011. While some stakeholders found this a disappointing outcome, and linked it with lack of stakeholder buy-in and the decrease of trainees' enthusiasm post training, others adopted a practical stance about the actual circumstances of conferences.

Some have said that we have to have so many conferences because that's the kind of problems that we have, and we need to have numbers to demonstrate success. But you cannot create a problem create a conference, you know. And what they were saying in terms of and I'd like your opinion on that, one of the biggest achievements for the initiative that they thought was the training everyone, having Peta Blood come in and having that structured approach to restorative justice for them was one of the most formidable things that could have been done in Albury.

Stakeholder 1

As requested by this interviewee, an analytical perspective on this point is two-pronged. Conferences are, after all, but a means (a problem-solving process) to several potential ends (keeping young people in schools, developing restorative practices in schools, creating partnerships and information sharing amongst stakeholders and youth-related services in Albury). The demonstration of initiative impact lies less in the collation of a 'critical mass of conferences' as it does in a demonstration of 1- a cultural change amongst stakeholders to approach low-level anti-social problems differently, 2- the take up of restorative principles in 'disciplinary-like' processes and policy, and 3- the effect it has on a young person's behaviour. Therefore, one may look at the demonstration that such principles have a longstanding effect on schools, school processes, and youth anti-social behaviours as a whole. An 'absolute' demonstration of a positive impact of restorative practices could be that of an absence of conferences altogether because problems are 'nipped in the bud' and do not require formal attention or processes, or, as an alternative, a very low level of conference organising, on the grounds that students are better behaved as a result of restorative culture transpiring throughout the whole school community. Whilst this is far from being achieved to date, this possible demonstration of impact (the effectiveness of crime prevention is deemed to be the absence of crime) needs to be kept in mind for possible subsequent longitudinal studies. However, as an evaluation point to make in this report, while there were other concerns raised about the dynamics of the initiative post January 2012, the low number of conferences, from a process development point of view, is counter balanced by a series of qualitative data that are

unpacked throughout this report. Some positive outcomes are therefore analysed later in this document. See for example, chapters 3 and 4.

Stakeholder buy-in

From an early point in the initiative, it had become clear that some stakeholders were more on-board than others in relation to adopting restorative practice at philosophical and policy levels. The partners who had expressly indicated their interest were willing to come on board quickly, and with careful consideration of resourcing. Other possible partners were willing to leave their participation open to consideration, or were considering a better way for them to adopt restorative conferencing as an add-on to their existing policies. As a result, out of the expected two primary and two secondary schools and community centre, only one school and the community centre came on board, and in a rather unexpected manner:

We were initially hoping to get two high schools and two primary schools involved and then the community centre all engaged. But [some partners] were a lot harder than what we anticipated. In the end, we've got the buy-in by one school in a way that was much higher than our expectations, so there's a big investment there. And there's been serious buy-in or serious indication of interest by different schools. So certainly there's been a take up of it, but not in the sense that we originally thought. I think the work with the community centre has been great. But there was always huge buy-in there, and again a bit like the school, the expectations in the way that they've picked it up and really tried to embed it in their everyday running of the centre practice, is probably much more than I would have anticipated. Also, I know that there's buy-in by other schools, probably by more schools than what we anticipated, but not to the level that we had hoped initially. I think the whole project has sort of made me reflect a bit on, you know, the concept of community development and projects like this, and how much they rely on the buy-in of other people. And I know we didn't have a really strong buy-in right at the start. So a lot of the work that is done I think has been about trying to get people to engage with the aims and objectives. Yeah. And to roll with the different directions that the project has taken.

Stakeholder 1

Furthermore, it was stated that buy-in may actually have declined with time, and with the slow realisation, once the project started, that its implementation was not going to be easy. The sophistication of restorative practices was mentioned as an element that could have played to the detriment of partners' full involvement in the project.

Well it's always easy to look in hindsight, but I must emphasise a point from the beginning, that I thought was important: before embarking on the training 'cause after the initial couple of days training there's a high level of enthusiasm to get out and do it. But to actually get the commitment from the schools and to know what it's all about, and the high level Department of Education commitment that schools will be involved

from the very beginning, that is a different thing. It was a complex initiative. The sophistication of the project may have scared some partners off.

Stakeholder 2

It was therefore decided to focus energies on existing partnerships, to consolidate processes and allow for sustainability within existing partnering organisations.

Organicity

Much of the explanation behind such process changes was accounted for by the necessity to leave community development projects unfold organically, to some extent (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006, 260). The organic development of community-based initiatives is extremely complex, but allows to account for the (here: social) environment and varied local needs. It also accounts for an 'inherent capacity to develop to its true potential [...] providing the right conditions [...] for this development to occur' (*ibid*, 261).

I'm not sure that we could have done anything. Oh look I'm sure there would be things that could be done different, but for me it's about trusting the process.

Stakeholder 1

With any good community development, or project development [...] things appear and you need to develop them... and it's recognising the opportunities, when they are there, they mightn't be things that you planned at the start. This is a pilot project, in all one shape and manner and form, and as a pilot project you have to quickly make those decisions as you go along around what's going to work and what's not going to work and what's going to be effective and what's actually going to make a change. [...] You know, so that you don't negate things. You're just constantly looking for opportunities and looking for different ways of doing it and you know. You need to be adaptable and flexible enough to actually just change course straight, if that's what's needed and that happened several times last year, I think [...] like, around the training, who got trained, who didn't get trained.

Stakeholder 5

Project logistics: expectations vs. reality

Upon reflecting on the unfolding of the initiative, many stakeholders indicated that one of the reasons underpinning the initiative's redirections emerged from a re-evaluation of expectations in light of the reality of project demands and resourcing. The reflections of stakeholders on that matter are three-fold. First, they relate to the early intervention nature of the initiative, and secondly to what was labelled the 'hopes and dreams about the IRC as an anti-social behaviour problem "quick fix"'. Finally and most importantly in terms of actual key project logistics, stakeholders highlighted the strain on school resources of organising 'full format' conferences.

The early intervention nature of the initiative

One of the main concerns of the project worker, early into the bedding in of the initiative, was to make sure that the IRC was perceived for what it was, in order to avoid unrealistic expectations — for example, that the initiative would address a range of crime issues or completely replace school suspension/detention policies. It was therefore made clear, from the onset, that the IRC was strictly located within an early intervention framework and would deal with anti-social issues, upstream from the actual commission of an offence. Specifically, ‘the IRC function[ed] along the lines of a problem-solving process [...] based on the multiple principles of restorative justice and early intervention. In essence, people involved in the IRC [were] in a position to identify young people who, through their behaviour (either labelled as ‘misbehaviour’ or ‘antisocial behaviour’), [were] at risk of disengaging with schools’ (Bartkowiak-Théron, 2011a). Indeed,

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, 1985, 74)

Reflecting on these fundamental precepts of the initiative, a stakeholder indicated that

If we’re thinking early intervention, which was the whole aim of this, then to embed that sort of culture of corridor conferencing, restorative conversations in those organisations is an even earlier intervention than waiting for an event that has caused harm.

Stakeholder 1

The IRC as a problem ‘quick-fix’

Pondering how the project unfolded led some stakeholders to think back to the beginnings of the project (often back to the time the grant application was drafted) and to the various dynamics that played out from the moment finances were granted, the training was organised, and the initiative officially commenced. It became obvious during the interviews that some training participants or original stakeholders might have placed too high hopes in the initiative, maybe seeing it as a ‘quick-fix’ to problems, including an overall solution to school absenteeism. However, it had been stated early on in the lead-up to the training taking place, that restorative practice was not a panacea, and required time, energy, and commitment. The difficulties of setting up and following through such restorative justice based projects are well documented in the literature. When combined with a project set-up that fundamentally follows community development principles, some caution needs to be exercised in terms of expectations that may not be fulfilled by immediate and maintained results. However, while these fundamentals had been clearly explained from the onset, such warning from the leading team may not have been heeded by partnering agencies and individuals.

These expectations, they didn't sort of play out until later. I thought we were pretty clear in the aims and objectives. 'Here's the project!', you know, it was all sort of written pretty clearly. Those expectations eventually changed by osmosis. I don't know whether the expectations changed, or people whose expectations weren't being met withdrew. That was difficult, you know, when it's great to have passionate people around the table inputting and creating, but when there's a different expectation or an expectation that can't be met, then potentially we lose those people, you know. And again YES is then responsible for that, you know, and risks the damage to reputation and relationships.

Stakeholder 1

I think on paper the project looks good; in reality it was always going to be a difficult one in the short space of time, and um I suppose expectations were a problem from the onset with the group. I mean at the end of the day if we could have achieved four schools involved, two primary, two secondary, a community centre, and the police being interactive and perhaps even just the legal sector having some knowledge of the program would have been a good outcome. I'm not wholly convinced that we engaged all schools with a degree of success, and I think it was always going to be difficult in that some schools were somewhat non committal. So it's not so much a reflection on the project or the work that was done. Rather on getting that commitment from the school will tend to be hard to achieve.

Stakeholder 2

This interviewee went on to indicate that the enthusiasm of the first few days diminished with time as participating staff probably had other issues or projects on their minds and as the IRC may not have been a priority institutionally or individually:

But I remember walking out after one steering group with her and she said, 'Look I'll look forward to this project', cause she said, 'I have trouble identifying community resources, we have major parenting issues and support for parents.' So she said, 'This project would be very much supported at our school.' Now I'm just not sure what actually happened. She didn't sort of seem to ever come back too often and there may have been other factors that played I'm not aware of.

Stakeholder 2

However, such developments are not unexpected, and many interviewees indicated that YES's performance at maintaining stakeholder interest and at promoting the initiative had been commendable.

Full format conferences

Another point of restorative practice that is well documented in literature (see the works of John Braithwaite or Heather Strang) is the time-intensive nature of conferences. Restorative conferences take time not only in terms of being convened (sometimes up to two hours), but also in terms of preparation *prior to* the parties meeting. Concerns about time constraints were raised during the initial training by future facilitators, as indicated in Figure 2.

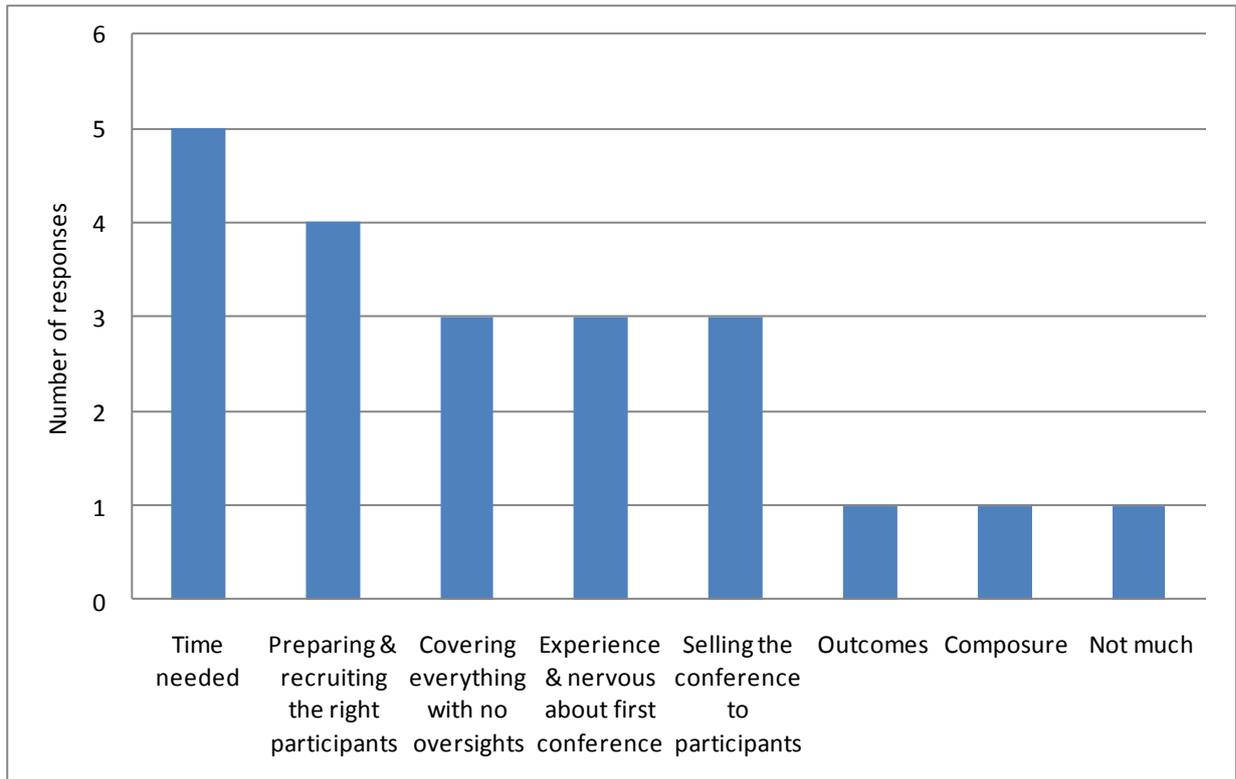


Figure 2 - Trainees' concerns at organising a conference

Source: Bartkowiak-Théron, 2011a

These concerns materialised quickly in the school-based implementation of the project, where time constraints and work commitments became clear obstacles to the use of full conferences on a regular basis.

In terms of the formal conferences, from our experience they're extremely difficult [...] you know, to release staff for the organising, the convening, the timing, the venue, the preparation involved is quite prohibitive. From our perspective, it is certainly difficult to release staff at the time needed. The staff themselves in those formal conferences has been a little bit reluctant.

Stakeholder 4

It was with some regret, though, that full conferences were not implemented. School staff are convinced that full conferences *do* produce some effect and trigger some level of change in student behaviour, as indicated below:

In my own classroom, yes, and in classrooms obviously after events like that one, and for example, for that young fellow who was engaged in that one, he's certainly settled down considerably after. I don't think he realised the impact of his behaviour on other kids until he was actually 'confronted' by the other student. It was a young girl. And the facilitators, they've been fantastic, yeah, the two facilitators have been really good, and very, very positive about it, which engenders enthusiasm I think in other people. The

issue, as I said, is just with those formal conferences, the timing and certainly the amount of work involved in setting them up.

Stakeholder 4

Indeed, the focus of these remarks from school staff is not, as indicated below, on the fundamentals of restorative practices, but rather on the logistics associated with implementing them. One of the solutions (which admittedly was not practical either) required a form of organisational outsourcing for conference preparations and proceedings.

Absolutely. It's not the philosophy, we're all supportive of the philosophy, but the actual logistics of getting the staff members involved. So if it was a staff facilitator as well as another teacher, and then sometimes there's another person supporting the child, because parents are not so supportive. So you're talking releasing three staff members, which is enormous. So we were a bit more comfortable when the YES project worker or someone else offsite was able to facilitate, and do all the preparatories.

Stakeholder 4

This interviewee continued:

I know I'm not sure how long the first convenor took to set the first full conference up, but I know it was a substantial amount of time. The YES project worker was onto him saying, 'Tell me how much of your spare time was being taken up with this.' But it was substantial. So I guess we were reluctant as student management panel to refer to formal conferencing if it involved one of our staff members who were more keen to flick it to someone at YES or someone who was offsite.

Stakeholder 4

Furthermore, school staff felt that there was a component of unease that was at play in teachers' reluctance to take part in a conference (therefore giving up some of their time) and/or set up a conference when they themselves had some involvement, however minor, in a conflict. The latter is a point to take into consideration as, according to good restorative practice, a convenor should *not* be one of the parties at stake, and the neutrality of the convenor is sacrosanct in restorative dispute-resolution processes.

Ah because they'd already ... they were already annoyed by the actions of the students involved, and this was one of our staff's take on it ... and I think he's probably quite right, that they're under pressure to give up their time to come along, um. And then at least one of them came out of it feeling like her opinions weren't valued there, and I think that was a lack of preparation, adequate preparation for one of the conferences.

Stakeholder 4

Another aspect of problematic logistics, from the schools' point of view, lay in the solemnity and large attendance associated with full format conferences. This was deemed daunting for young

persons who were already under scrutiny for their misbehaviour. The preference seems to be for more low-key proceedings:

I think the number of people at them might be a bit over the top in terms of the kids. We tend to try for instance when we're doing suspension resolutions, we try not to have more than two or three adults there at once, because the kids just feel quite intimidated, and I doubt they will either act out or absolutely withdraw often if there's too many adults there. But you know, I haven't been privy to the conference, I haven't been there, so I don't know. I've only second-hand had information from staff.

Stakeholder 4

Another point to highlight is that full format conferences are still considered in serious matters, precisely in relation to their serious and formal protocol. All full format conferences that had been run prior to January 2012 concerned serious cases of anti-social behaviour in schools (as a point of note, the kind of behaviour that triggered this conference probably does not meet early intervention principles):

You know, we still have got them, but we wanted to see then an outcome that was a positive outcome too, because often the cases that we dealt with in the formal procedures were quite serious cases, and they were going to be ongoing cases. Whereas the mini conferences, these were one-offs or minor series of incidents, and we found that a really positive outcome from those ones so far. So they'd run about three, I think. But once again the project worker has been very supportive in doing that. I shouldn't say we've just done it, yeah, that it's been I guess we've the circumstances for those cases we've sort of watered down the full conferencing to a little less formal, and easier to organise and less time-consuming arrangement.

Stakeholder 4

This stakeholder indicated that full-format conferences were undesirable from the school's perspective:

So I don't see a positive outcome for a lot of [full conferences]. As I said, the formal ones we've done, I don't know that we've had as much success. [...] I don't know, maybe they're too top heavy, maybe there's too many people involved. I haven't been actual party to any of them. I've only heard second-hand.

Stakeholder 4

In the next section, we highlight how some new strategies and institutional changes were used to address this problem, and how these actually became one of the major successes of the initiative.

Mini-conferences, mini chats, restorative conversations, and 'How to' compendium

In light of time constraints within schools and staff reluctance to engage in full format conferences, the project worker, in collaboration with senior school staff and after further consultation of relevant literature, proceeded to approach the problem of full format conferences. The preservation of restorative justice philosophical underpinnings, whilst at the same time realistically enabling implementation, was a key consideration of this new initiative process. The outcome was not only the adoption, school-wide, of a series of new, short processes (mini-chats, restorative conversations, and mini conferences — see Figure 3) tailored to the gravity of the incident, but also the compilation of a compendium that allowed the staff to follow flexible and incremental scripts for these new processes.

The Mini-Chat

The Mini-Chat is an abbreviated version of the Restorative Conversation also known as a Corridor-Conversation, with the purpose to be used for lesser incidents in immediate situations such as the classroom or at the conclusion of a class. The Mini-Chat does not require a student reflective agreement and is designed as a quick student reflection and a way of being able to 'apologise, commit and get on with it'.

The Restorative Conversation

The Restorative Conversation is a formal scripted process to be used with one or more students. As defined in the handbook; examples and policy steps, it is to be used when an incident has been unresolved or deemed to need further action and includes the completion of a student reflective agreement³.

The Mini conference

The Mini Conference is an abridged version of a Restorative Conference and is convened by a trained Conference facilitator. The purpose is to bring those who caused harm and those that were harmed with one or two supporting people, such as staff or family members to then come to a formal agreement of what needs to be done to repair the harm.

Restorative Conference

The Restorative Conference is convened by a trained Conference Facilitator and is also known as a Community or Family Conference and could include as many participants who would be relevant to be in attendance. This may be school staff, family members, health and social workers and the police. It is a scripted process and comes to a formal agreement of what needs to be done to repair the harm. This could involve agreeing on several follow up measures and supports by those in attendance.

Figure 3 - New processes: definitions (*Compendium excerpt*)

Source: YES, 2012

These new processes are unanimously endorsed by extant partners and, with the compendium, have been adopted and implemented to date by all staff members.

³ See Appendix 7.

[on shorter conference formats] Absolutely, the shorter the better. And that's why we've found that that those sorts of conferences had been more productive, because they've tended to be short shafted. I mean obviously the staff member should deal with the incident straight away, and deal with it in the same sort of fashion, but we found sometimes just as a follow up that works.

Stakeholder 4

The compendium is a smaller version of the information and reference package handed out at the training session in July. More in the form of a 'how to' manual and an easy guide for immediate consultation by staff members, it was designed along the lines of clear 'scripts' for restorative option available for problem solving. Simplicity and ease of access was a main concern of the project worker during the design stages of this IRC resource, hosted by YES. Designed as an add-on to the more extensive and detailed restorative materials handed out in July 2011, the compendium and its take up by school staff members were deemed one of the best achievements of the initiative.

So the project worker has come up with this and I really think this is a marvellous little booklet, which you've obviously seen I would think, and it's very useful, especially the young staff are really taking it up a lot, and a lot of staff are using this. It's very helpful to sit the kid down and let them run through it — sometimes in a non-confrontational sort of way, to let them sit and reflect and sometimes give them the distance, and then go through the whole process with the dialogue. And yeah, I'd certainly think it's useful, it seems to be working in most cases. I don't know, we haven't surveyed staff to look at the uptake or done anything in that way, but they've certainly all been exposed to it heavily, and I've seen signs of it in corridors.

Stakeholder 4

[on the compendium] but, they had a slightly different template than the one given at the training [...] you know, it's really simple, but it was again for them to have a really clear understanding of the processes, and the various options they have to address a behavioural problem. [...] If there's an activity and something happens, what do you do? So, you go to, like, a Mini Chat, or [...] and if that's not effective, then you go to a Restorative Conversation, wherein there is a behavioural or reflective agreement [...] meaning that it's formalised with an agreement and if that's not effective, then it may go further to, you know, having a Restorative Conference. The idea of the handbook or compendium is that, they could just ... they actually physically pull them out and say 'OK, I'm going to have a Mini Chat. This is what I do. Step One, Step Two.' It's not, like, little lines of [...] and so, it's really clear and it's visual.

Stakeholder 5

Excerpts from the compendium are located in Appendix 6. The compendium is accompanied by a series of advertising resources posted throughout the school (see Appendix 9). The posters are

intended to inform students and parents about the school's problem-solving philosophy and the various options available to students and staff when conflicts occur.

Time resourcing

The other issue raised in exit interviews was the problem of initiative scheduling that became evident from the onset, again from the point of view of setting up a restorative-community-development blended project. The initial timeline may have been under-estimated in relation to school holiday constraints and the understandable unavailability of school staff during that time. Indeed, the IRC was never intended to be developed quickly, and its sequencing should have represented a slow bedding-in and background work with partners prior to full implementation.

From what you're going to report, I think that it needs to be so clear around, you can't do it in 15 months, minus school holidays, minus Christmas. You know, so you're really tracking around 12 months at the most of effective time, to actually do something like that, in those settings. In a school setting you need to factor in that 12 months is broken up with school holidays, so that shortens the time. I'd just be stressing that it's just such a fantastic program, that in practice it's almost a disservice to not understand that the time to actually deliver it and to develop it, is really critical. And ... and that's ... that information is so readily available from anything you read from Margaret Osborne or Peta Blood and that's the first he'll say: it's time consuming.

Stakeholder 5

The interviewee continues:

Considering you are writing a report on this, I'd be quite clearly stating that with huge experience in working in projects, this is one project I've never been so frustrated that it's finishing, because it's not finished and ... and I think, you know, the most obvious thing to reflect on is that you can't do this in 15 months, Restorative Conferencing and speaking to a couple of people who, I know, looked at the project worker position when it was advertised, who had more experience in restorative conferencing, actually had that thought that no, you couldn't do it, which was interesting to, kind of, have those conversations and if you talk to, like, Marg Osborne or Peta Blood, they'll say, like, two to three years minimum, to even embed it into a change. And you know, that sort of key learning of... again, that frustration is the school, right now, is ready to actually start using full blown restorative conferencing, because it's now embedded. The staff are really comfortable, quite confident, understand a lot better around the practice, so they're ready now. So, you know, the project worker just kept adding to it, kept offering 'Can I do this? Can I do that?' So, you know, this ended up with him spending a lot of time with the school, probably around 30 or 40 workshops with the students, so ... and really comprehensively with some of the lower grades. We actually did a series of workshops around restorative practice, so we really drilled down so the kids actually really got it. So, the project worker would come back and do a couple of groups. We did, like, three workshops during the guidance classes to really develop into what's this all about, so they'd get it and they did and probably there were about ten sessions with

the staff. So, it was going faculty by faculty and actually doing them in groups of ten and that was really successful. The feedback was just huge around that, because that was the danger of the staff who were never going to buy into it.

Stakeholder 5

The processes of bedding in and implementation, in addition to providing staff-support onsite, were demanding given the project's logistics and timeframe. Energies had to be spent not only monitoring quality assurance, sustaining the project, and reassuring staff that 'they were on the right track', providing introductory sessions during whole of school training or assemblies, but also in trying to promote the model outside existing partners (a side of the project that became less prominent once the decision to consolidate existing practices was made).

Because the project worker's gone ... he's gone into all the classes through guidance in year seven to ten. He's discussed the dialogue with them and the nature of the process. I have seen the degree of uptake this created, certainly I've seen signs of it just because maybe I'm in my travels I tend to go near the younger staff, who certainly are utilising it. He's been through all the guidance classes. We have guidance periods once a week in years seven and eight, and once a fortnight in years nine and ten. So he's come and he's workshopped with the year advisor, for all the classes in year seven, all the classes in year eight and nine and ten. He's worked around them. I don't think he's finished, but he will have by the end of this term.

Stakeholder 4

While some may think that this may be a rather 'heavy handed' approach to introducing a new mode of conflict resolution in schools, staff were adamant that this was the only way the initiative could have 'gelled' at an institutional level, and from an individual's perspective. The quarter of an hour introduction done at a professional development day (at the end of the school year) was deemed far from sufficient by senior school staff, and it was stated that more 'room or headspace' had to be created for teachers and support staff to fully accept restorative practices in the school environment. Indeed, buy-in from staff was far from being immediate:

Our principal decided that it was after we'd gone to the meetings with YES and all the support, and discussed it with the project worker that maybe we should embed it in our school policy. And there wasn't a lot of ownership I think from staff, and I think so there was a bit of resentment, and then the PD was on the second last day of term or whatever it was, when people are tired. So I didn't think it was as productive a day, and the teachers who participated to the YES training had told me the two days they had with that same presenter, and you went too, they said that that facilitator was fantastic, it was going to be a really good day, and I think staff were a bit disappointed to be honest with you. And [...] there was a one off role play at the end of the day I think, we saw a lot of footage and people saying how good restorative was, but not a lot of actually watching the process or seeing people facilitate the process. And I think that

the staff just got antsy towards the end of the day, because 'what's this got to do with us?' So I guess if we could have timed it better we could have given the staff more ownership, um, and I think we needed more practicalities.

Stakeholder 4

Other more mainstream approaches that had been used immediately after the training (July 2011) had not produced the effects hoped for, and had left staff rather lukewarm, due to timing and a 'professional development fatigue'. A one-on-one approach describing the values, philosophy, and usefulness of restorative practices was deemed the best marketing strategy:

The PD didn't particularly work, I think it was the end of the year and that full day ... I think staff were reluctant, they felt it was imposed on them. I think it's been more the project worker coming to the faculties, although there's some staff who are still resistant. So he gets arguments from staff and challenged, which is a good thing because you need to address why are we doing this. So he certainly keeps visiting.

Stakeholder 4

This reflection of Stakeholder 4 is interesting in the way it contradicts the initial 'top-down' approach that was used at the start of the IRC. Institutional support from managers is undeniable for an initiative to succeed. However, it was thought by the steering committee that the best approach was to get the buy-in from managing staff prior to the scheme unfolding, and that managerial leadership in restorative *practice* would automatically cascade down hierarchy levels to practising staff. While this may be true for some government organisations, according to one stakeholder the stark reality of the community environment is actually different, especially considering the level of personal buy-in that restorative practice requires:

It needs that buy-in from the top ... it needs to demonstrate that, this is a good way of practising doing business. If it's not fully supported at that level, then it's not going to happen I think, or it's more difficult. I'd say it's not going to happen; a lot more difficult.

Stakeholder 1

A contrary perspective was expressed by another stakeholder:

We eventually took the other view and just been really powering along until the very last minute. So ... and that was really with the school right up until the end of last term. The project worker just really invested a lot of time and energy into the school, up until the school holidays, so just a month, I think it was and also, doing that, really doing as much as possible for both the school and the community centre. So, sort of, there's a whole lot of things still developing at the moment; the project is not finished yet and that's around a lot of documentation, particularly one of the key areas of the project, around strengthening the partnerships, not necessarily between YES and another agency, but between the community centre and the school.

Stakeholder 4

Chapter 3 – Stakeholders’ perspectives about the scheme: Consolidation of partnerships

According to stakeholders, some key successes of the IRC have been the development of further organisational partnerships, the consolidation of YES as a broker of youth services in the community, and the creation of a new service awareness mechanism for parents in need of support. This chapter builds on these three points.

Partnership building

As indicated in the first interim report:

. . .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 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 (Bartkowiak-Théron, 2011a, 44).

While the new directions taken post January 2012 have made some KPIs obsolete⁴ and do not allow us to gauge partnerships *quantitatively* in this initiative, there is significant qualitative evidence that partnerships are a rather large contribution to the IRC’s success. Stakeholders are particularly aware of this renewed dimension of the initiative, and often the topic of partnerships was the first issue raised during exit interviews.

A whole-of-community articulation of services seems to be what eventuated of the nine full-format conferences that have been organised under IRC auspices. Particularly, it was indicated that conferences might have played the part of a ‘screening tool’ for students who are most in need of support services, allowing for an early intervention forum guided by both schools and YES. As indicated below, the role played by YES in this is not only one of a service ‘trigger’, but also a catalyst of stronger partnerships in general between all youth-related services, and also between YES itself and Albury schools.

⁴ See Appendix 4. For example, the difficulties in setting up full format conferences and their subsequent replacement by mini-chats on mini conferences has made agency participation to conferences or referrals (PKIs 1 & 2) a rather superseded notion in the evaluation of the project.

But some of them the kids that we've tended to push towards, they have been exceedingly difficult kids, and there are no easy quick fixes, it's got to be ongoing support for them anyway. And I guess an outcome of the whole process has been that connection with YES, and the support that's come with that. So I've seen that as really positive, I think the schools then become more involved in what YES are doing and where are we at, and there's a lot more communication between the two bodies. So I see that as really, really positive.

Stakeholder 4

However, a stronger articulation between services has also emerged via the (late⁵) memorandum of understanding between YES and NSW Police Force (Albury Local Area Command), with the view of a broader trend in early intervention policies and referral procedures for at-risk youth.

Well, it means that in the area of networking and on those specific key performance indicators of networking, well we've got a good indication that that Police has really come on board with that.

Stakeholder 1

The MoU between YES and the Albury LAC formally indicates that both parties work in conjunction with each other⁶. The MoU stresses the importance of information-sharing between YES and the Local Area Command with respect to crime reduction and prevention⁷, and for the benefit of the child, in order to facilitate processes encouraging the smooth handling of problematic, even if harmless, incidents. More specifically, the articulation of this partnership consists of police officers dropping in at YES offices to bring a young person to the attention of YES workers, with the possibility of some restorative processes unfolding in consideration of the child's behaviour, including the seriousness of that behaviour. This process seems to have taken root in the late stages of the IRC pilot.

We had discussed the idea that the crime manager or the crime co-ordinator could start referring young people way prior to the proceedings of the Young Offenders Act. So when the young person is just bordering problematic behaviour in public places, they receive a caution, or a warning, but they could also be referred to YES. Is this now what's going to happen? Yes. That's what I understand. But I mean even though we've

⁵ As indicated the YES report to the Attorney General's office : 'A significant delay has been the processes and time to get an MoU signed off by the NSW Police; the MoU's completion has coincided, disappointingly with the end of the project. This has meant any meaningful partnerships and/or the development of significant officially required practices, procedures and referral pathways have not been possible.'

⁶ Section C of the MoU states that 'the MOU recognises and formalises the mutually beneficial relationship between YES Youth & Family Services and Albury Local Area Command in respect of the Restorative Conferencing Project : a whole of community, early intervention approach to youth and anti-social behaviour'.

⁷ Section D of the MoU is phased as follows : 'Information can be released where it supports crime reduction and crime prevention strategies or as a proactive strategy to assist in the reduction of anti-social behaviour, crime and fear and to prevent recidivism in the community'.

been waiting for that, um, official MOU to come through, we've noticed over the last six months since we initiated discussions with the commander, that we're just getting a lot more of the local police dropping in saying, 'This young person has come to my attention, are you aware of this young person?' which is probably a little bit tricky in terms of privacy confidentiality. But at least it sort of showed to me a willingness to really try and get some intervention rather than the police just, you know, taking them away, taking them home, waiting for the, you know, more serious stuff to happen.

Stakeholder 1

Linking parents with services

Most notably, full format conferences to date have connected parents to specific services. This was an important contributor to stakeholders' appreciation of the scheme. Importantly, there is an indication that full format conferences were specially convened for students (and their families) who had been identified as 'missing out' and 'in great need' of service provision.

Certainly there have been other conferences that have been run off site that I know have connected kids with YES, who haven't previously been. And perhaps this has also given support for parents particularly, who are feeling absolutely at the end of their tether I believe. So connecting them with the services, I think, has been a really productive thing that's come out of those formal conferences. We haven't had many, we try to be honest with you, we try to select ones we thought that there could be some sort of positive outcome.

Stakeholder 4

There is a new dimension in this that warrants attention. The IRC, according to such statements, presents as much more than a desirable community service 'gap filler'. It seems to have generated capacity and mechanisms to identify issues and to provide the parties at stake with a forum (the conference) to further investigate the root causes of social unease as well as a pathway for support for young people who might have fallen through the cracks of public administration, child protection, or community services. Alternatively, this can also be seen as a genuine early intervention pathway, identifying issues before they escalate, and addressing issues holistically, including students, parents, and relevant services in the problem-solving process. Another perception, however, is that it *reinforces* existing mechanisms:

And a lot of those sort of enquiries are going to the Youth Connections team, so that we can get some support in behind those families. A lot of those young people and families are known to that team also.

Stakeholder 4

The prominence and involvement of parents is an issue that was raised several times by interviewees. For example, while parents' attendance to conference is standard practice, some

stakeholders were wondering if parents might not have a leadership role in the IRC, for example, in a consultative capacity or as steering committee members.

I had a series of chats with some of us [in the steering committee], as you know this week, one of the persons was wondering how much we should involve parents in that. So you're saying that staff have been trained, have met the project worker several times, that the kids were aware that that was running in the school as well. But we could also try and see how we could communicate and involve parents more.

Stakeholder 6

Facilitating relationship between external agencies

One of the key successes of the IRC was the consolidation (or, according to some interviewees, the actual *creation*) of a better and more formal relationship between the school and the community concerning the whereabouts of at-risk youth.

It was clearly identified that that relationship wasn't as strong as it could be, you know and that's just disuse or, you know, miscommunication. So the project worker had a meeting with most of the school executive ... It was, kind of, impromptu, but the project worker sat down with the deputy principal and the senior deputy principal. They had a chat about the relationship between the community centre and the school, the IRC and how it fitted around those kids who need the centre and need to attend it when they are suspended. Because this is their school and that there'd been a couple of incidences where there wasn't clear communication around kids being suspended and/or some other, you know, referrals and it was really messy and the project worker just suggested to help the school develop that relationship and school/centre information sharing. And also, this was useful with a new principal, who was really unaware of what the centre was, in general and the community centre's role, who funds it, what's your priorities, what's your purpose, what do you do?

Stakeholder 5

The outcome of the consolidation of this partnership and information-sharing process is the design of a formal policy and associated paperwork (see Appendix 5) which highlights the particulars of a problem and the decision taken by school or centre authorities about the child. This means that both parties now have an actual mechanism to co-monitor where the child is/has been/should be. Incidentally, this resonates directly with the principles and rationale of the IRC, which are intended to 'keep kids off the street' when they are suspended or expelled from school.

So ... as part of the project, without pushing the boundaries, it was really around strengthening that relationship and particularly the key issues around compulsory school aged students. That's a key target area for the restorative work and just being able to strengthen that and develop [the information sharing policy], that was really strong, there were some other things around the school viewing the centre as a drop-in

centre. So, kids get suspended and then they hang out at the centre and do whatever they want and you know, there were a couple of kids who just told a teacher to fuck off and then ... and then they would just go to the centre and so, there was an impression that was not necessarily true. So ... the centre now has the restorative action team which meets weekly, and part of that was developed around the issue of compulsory school-aged policy for kids attending the centre during school hours and that's, you know, some of the stuff the project worker has been doing: helping them in this area. After all, that was part of the brief... they had a lot of things that they do, but it wasn't articulated. It wasn't documented so, you know, some of the stuff has now become quite formal.

Stakeholder 5

Chapter 4 – Stakeholders’ perspectives about the scheme: Capacity building

One of the key aims and objectives of the IRC was to build the capacity of some Albury agencies to use restorative approaches to address youth anti-social behaviour, and keep students in class, as opposed to schools using extensive punitive measures such as detention, suspensions, and expulsions. Indeed, the IRC intended to ‘build the capacity of services/sectors (education, police, social services) to adopt restorative approaches within their practices’ (YES, 2011a). While this is a desirable objective, it was always the case that the IRC had to work within DET guidelines about disciplinary procedures (see Bartkowiak-Théron, 2012, 22). From the point of view of suspension/expulsion trends in the Riverina, the initiative is indeed timely, and this point is addressed later in this report. This chapter focuses on the professional development of agencies and agents in their knowledge of and practice in restorative mechanisms.

Some mitigated results

As indicated earlier in this report, enthusiasm about the initiative post-training lagged to the extent that only two extant partners (one school and the community centre) remained. From a purely tactical point of view, this is a considerable loss in relation to the investment that went in training staff from the four schools and some community services and government agencies. This is an issue stakeholders had in mind during their interview. On the one hand, this was attributed to the level of initial buy-in that was consistently expressed by some potential partnering schools.

Well, I’d say we’re struggling to actually honestly in our evaluation of the project. A large part of it was the community capacity-building in terms of maybe with the experiences of schools where it has been successful according to the staff, and sharing the views with the other peers, you know, in the school sector. And some of the schools that have sort of sat on the peripheral surface, and they’ve been a little bit apprehensive of time of getting involved is, you know, at one stage there was let’s have half a day training session with the schools, maybe you pay some relief staff, some of the main drivers to come together.

Stakeholder 2

Very early in 2012, the decision was made to focus on strengthening the initiative in these two existing places to ensure sustainability and ascertain that not only staff had been trained well but that there was also a sufficient level of ownership and a ‘paper trail’ to ensure the continuation of the initiative post July. As indicated by one stakeholder:

That was probably driven by the necessity to do some of the follow-up [...]. Again, it's getting back to saying, 'As a pilot project, you need to find what's the right thing to do. It's not often the thing that you planned to do.' And it became so evident that we needed to do that really fundamental work, at that really fundamental level, around Mini Chats and Restorative Conversations and ... and making that cultural shift for the two extant partners. And so ... that's been brilliant that team and you know, when it was quite clear what needed to happen for this project in the last six months, that these two sites, they just needed to be absolutely given every opportunity and chance to be able to develop up the practice as best as they could, so that they can stand alone as of next week when the project worker is not here anymore and, you know, that was a concern: working really strongly to ensure that that would stay. So we were hugely invested with those two as well and you dedicated, maybe, 70% of your time in ... on location with them, talking to staff, because school staff has told me that the presentations to staff, the meetings attended, you know, that kind of, I guess, coaching role was important.

Stakeholder 5

This decision was also informed by a lack of engagement in some instances in harnessing partners' potential or YES resources:

Now we don't know if something has happened over time that partners haven't felt valued and their keenness has dropped away. [...] But maybe on the project worker's end, he could have engaged them in as a steering committee member; I don't know the full extent. But I do see that as one sort of area that has some of the project, didn't meet that element that we envisaged in the early stages when we were developing the ideas.

Stakeholder 2

Some suggestions were made about using committee members as possible capacity leverage to reharness agencies that had 'dropped out'. These people could serve as champions of the initiative, as positive role models about how to use restorative practices, as mentors for trainees, and as 're-energisers' for facilitators who found restorative tasks daunting. While lack of engagement is an issue to take into consideration, there was also an idea expressed about the need to have broadened the sourcing of initial trainees in order to widen the scope of services or community areas in which restorative practices could have been implemented.

And maybe it was about just tapping into the expertise on that panel or get people together. There could have some synergy created by saying, you know, 'We know that you have an interest in this area, we know some of the elders in the area', 'cause they were a group of people of importance when writing the grant, um. You could have had ... you could have got their participation I would of thought in some way, 'cause they were certainly very keen.

Stakeholder 2

Some encouraging trends

However, interviewees were prompt to point at the significant success in building the capacity of the two extant partners. Even if expectations had not been met in other areas of government or community, the permeation of restorative processes at institutional and policy levels for these two partners is significant and warrants not only careful consideration, but also celebration.

The first point of interest here is the significant change in policies concerning the two extant partners. Policy change was more of an incidental aspiration than a specific objective in the initial planning of the IRC. There were also some concerns, raised in background interviews (see Bartkowiak-Théron, 2011a), as to how the IRC could 'fit' school disciplinary policies, as these are dictated by state Education Department guidelines. There was hope, however, that the discretionary power of schools and principals could have provided opportunities for the desired changes to occur (see Bartkowiak-Théron, 2012).

So it is becoming embedded in some of the school's suspension resolutions — not all of them, I must admit, but some. ... And I can see signs of evidence of that being utilised. I don't know that it's been a whole staff take-up, certainly not as we would have liked. But well it's embedded within discipline procedures at this stage, so I'm hopeful that people will become more familiar with the dialogue and then take it up just on maths, that's the theory. We're supposed to be modelling it; the kids are certainly aware of it.

Stakeholder 4

And I think it's so hard to change culture of an organisation, you know, that's why I've been so impressed with the school and their willingness to really take it on, because it has changed the whole culture of how that a big organisation works. And that's the key, it's that willingness to go, but if they can see the benefit of it, that's why I think some sort of showcase celebration⁸ at the end of it might be really, really useful.

Stakeholder 1

The extent to which such policy changes could occur has not gone unnoticed by stakeholders, who were prompt to mention existing related policies in different states. In a way, this adoption of restorative practices into school and community centre policies revived the hope that such practices could be more strongly embedded throughout higher level policies (i.e., at state department level):

I'd like to think that it could lead to some further policy development. Like council approved it, YES approved it, it was advocated at a state level with the Department of Education, so it could become something that the department's either keen to research further, and look at some of the standard operating procedures and implementation that's happened locally ... know that in other states such policies exist. The project worker put me on to a great document at the ACT, where it is, um, well I wouldn't use

⁸ See chapter 5 on the issues of celebrating successes and knowledge sharing.

the word 'legislated', but I guess in the Department of Education policy, we're talking about in schools, they do have a policy document around the use of restorative conferencing and how it's set up as a process, um. So you'd hope that the department would look at future implementation possibilities. They've got disciplinary processes, policies ... They could look at a policy on restorative conferencing, being at a state level delivered in a lot of local schools. And you would hope that we could feed into that in some way. I'm not really sure how, but you know, we would be happy to try and do any type of research or, um, you know, however that could occur.

Stakeholder 2

As an important point to raise in relation to impact, some stakeholders were adamant that they had observed a significant attitudinal change in staff. This change seems to be the result of an overall support of the initiative and its foundational principles by staff members at the community centre, and boosted by the enthusiasm of the centre's 'champion' (trained in July 2011) which enhanced the take-up of all restorative processes.

At the centre ... the change there is just enormous and I would look forward to you talking to the coordinator out there, especially around how she perceives it and particularly the relationships, those professional relationships, of skilling up those staff and community members and, again, it's really hard to qualify. But, to see ... for me, to see the shift in their behaviour and to see their knowledge, their adoption of restorative language ... again, they needed to have a framework set in place for a whole range of things. It's gone from, you know, being a really noisy get-together, to it's quite an effective meeting now with a structure and they understand it now.

Stakeholder 2

This stakeholder went on to say that this attitudinal shift permeated through to the way people at the community centre and in the community approach conflict and administer problem-solving techniques and processes.

So, seeing that shift and these are people coming from really unusual backgrounds, or disadvantaged backgrounds ... seeing their behavioural shift in how they deal with conflict is absolutely huge and because ... it can be a pretty engaging, sort of, community outlet, one of the volunteers, you know, initially she would just yell at kids, scream at them. You know, she was known for it and now she has actually said to me 'I've changed how I actually deal with any sort of conflict.' It's so significantly different that she actually can have that sort of meta-thought, meta-approach to problem-solving. She can sit back and say, 'OK, how's this affecting me?'

Stakeholder 2

Chapter 5 – Stakeholders’ perspectives about the scheme: Dissemination of key learnings

It is unclear, at this stage, how key learnings will be disseminated, apart from the delivery and dissemination of this report, as well as the information included in YES progress report to the Attorney General’s offices. However, some stakeholders offered possible dissemination and development scenarios. These relate not only to the issue of local capacity building, but also to the issue of sustainability referred to earlier.

Extant partners as champions

Stakeholders indicated that some prominent educational and community centres now have embedded capacity to implement restorative practices and provide the clear demonstration that policy change is possible. It was mooted by several stakeholders that these centres could become ‘champions’ of restorative practices in school settings throughout Albury but also in the whole local government area.

But maybe there is that capacity built in. It sounds like the high school have it embedded in their processes and can do it. So maybe they could mentor some of the other schools. But it’s developing that relationship with other schools, and the goodwill of the high school to maybe do that sort of thing, you know.

Stakeholder 2

The role of the two extant partners as champions of alternative problem-solving mechanisms needs careful but urgent attention in light of the recent release of suspension and expulsion data in NSW schools (see Figures 4, 5, and 6). The 2011 census data and NSW school data indicate a noticeable increase of long suspension numbers in the Riverina area, a trend that is in contrast to NSW state data (which indicate a sharp decrease between 2010 and 2011). The local trend is worrying in light of the broader contextual data, which indicate a regular progression in suspensions as a percentage of regional enrolment since 2008, but also of the larger demographic outlook in the Albury LGA, which indicates that the target groups of the IRC (school age young people) have decreased in numbers since 2006. A longitudinal study of the initiative and of school policies may further inform the impact of the IRC on school suspension data. At this stage, it is too early to formulate relevant conclusions. However, it will be interesting to see whether championing institutions might be able to cast an effect on disciplinary numbers and influence institutions, either by way of example or by way of active advocacy.

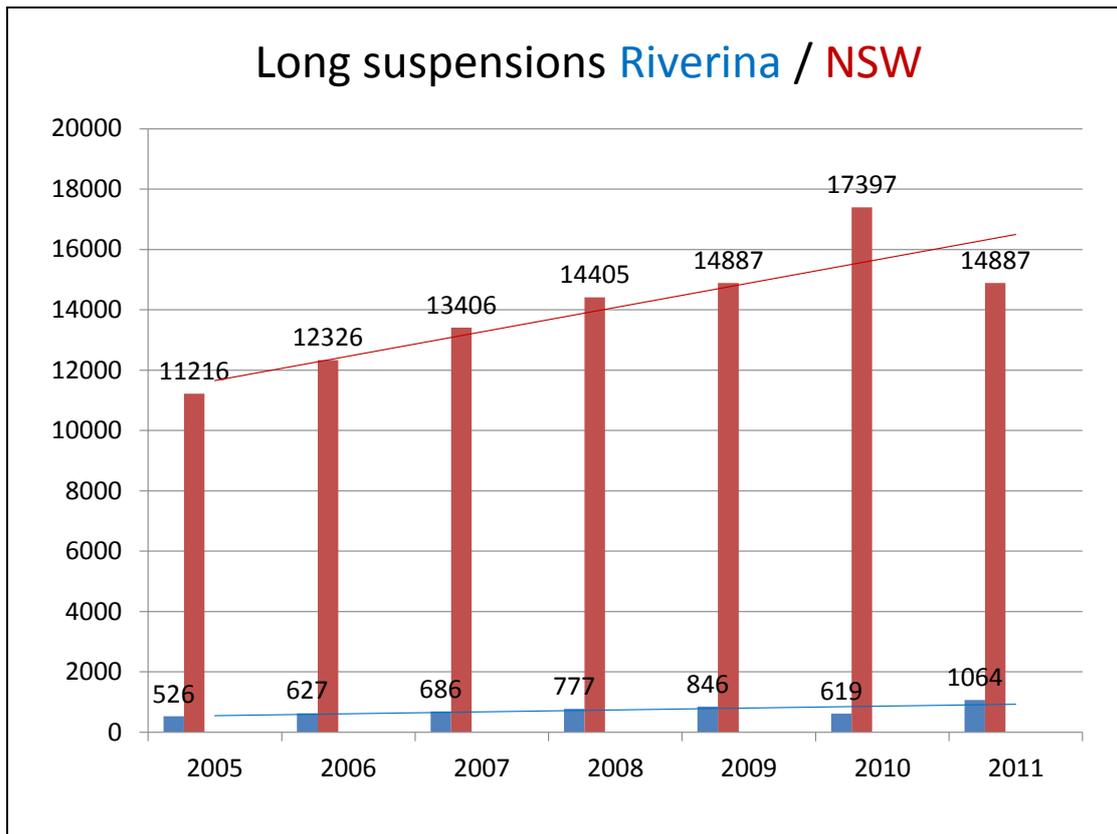


Figure 4 – Number of long suspensions in the Riverina and NSW
 Source: NSW Government, Education and Training, 2012

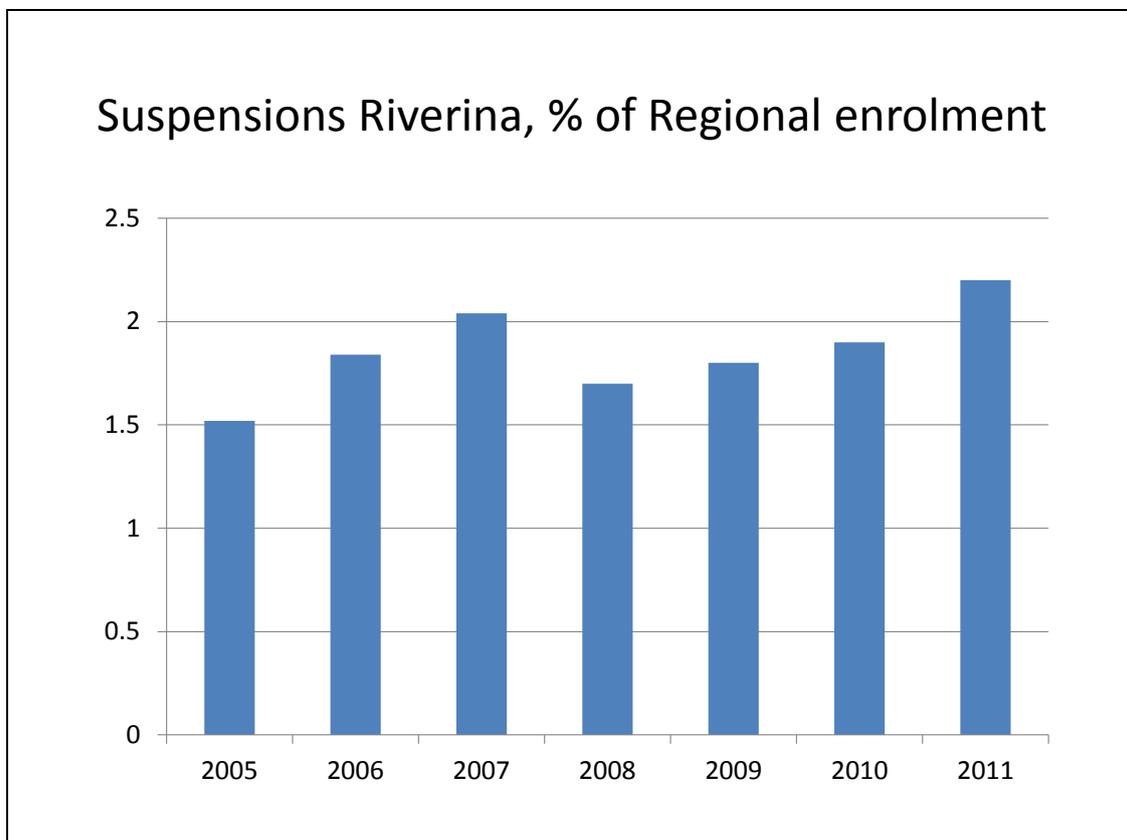


Figure 5 – Suspended students as a percentage of regional enrolment, Riverina
 Source: NSW Government, Education and Training, 2012

Albury Local Government Area: Demographics (2006 and 2011 Census)

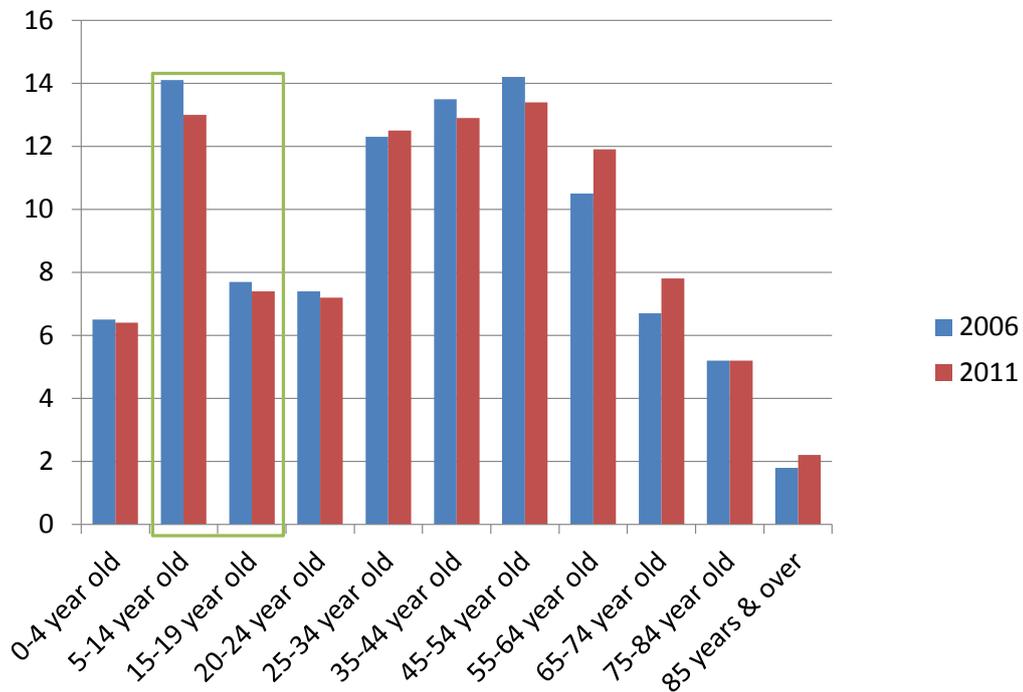


Figure 6 – Demographics, Albury Local Government Area

Source: ABS, 2012

Sustainability issues

The question of how the initiative might pan out post July 2012 was prominent in our interviews with stakeholders. There was particular concern about where the initiative would ‘sit’ and what processes and mechanisms would be set up to ensure that restorative practices could be maintained in the long term.

I think you’re actually quite on the spot, because you were saying that there are some things that exist at some level of policy that might not have really tapped into⁹. And what I’m concerned about now is that if we have tapped into those possible policy pathways, we would have reached higher sustainability already.

Stakeholder 2

It is now clear that YES will retain ownership of the capacity building component, with the allocation of one (trained) staff member to maintain support and liaison with extant and prospective partners.

We are looking at allocating one day a week work time within the youth connections team. We just see the fit there in terms of their aims and objectives with the IRC.

⁹ The interviewee is referring here to Department of Education policies regarding suspensions and expulsions.

There's just a really nice fit. But it won't be the current project worker, unfortunately, who's owned it, got his head around it, passionate about it. So you know, we haven't got that, or not to that extent anyway. So at least we'll be able to maintain it at some level, perhaps not at the level that we would have liked to, and it almost feels like we've just started getting some real momentum on it, and other schools and parties are interested in it now that they can see it working, and it's coming to an end. Well not necessarily an end, but it has to shift down a couple of gears anyway. There's nothing to stop us though for, you know, applying for grants to run training to, you know, bring other schools on board.

Stakeholder 1

However, part of the sustainability also lies in the reconvening of the steering committee, even in a less structured format. The committee's role is perceived as re-harnessing interest and synergies around restorative practices, and to provide advice about possible new pathways or partnerships in this domain.

Well, you can develop a network of people to support each other and the framework, and it's imperative YES does that. I really think that a steering group and a group of doers who can actually do things, are really required to keep the project moving, 'cause you haven't got that passionate person that had the three days a week to do those things. And that'll be a really a role that will be missed. Yes. Well if you want me to think of words of wisdom, so it is to bring back the people that have been involved, which is sort of the steering group and others, so that people can feel valued and part of the project and the journey. Because just by simply engaging the schools in a cohort of education capacity building, it's just not going to work alone, so we need to allow an education forming process. But for the committee to sort of get a sense of where we're at, where do we want to go. We do need to come back as a group and explore those opportunities, and they are opportunities. And you know, it has been successful to date, I would like to hear more and certainly your report would be really great. I'm sure people would love to look at it, and an opportunity to talk it over.

Stakeholder 2

A less structured version of the steering committee is considered desirable from a strategic point of view by some stakeholders who pondered the 'what do we do now?' question.

Well the steering committee needs reinvigorating because there needs to be some key people who keep simply a strategic view on how can the initiative can be made sustainable: Is it a question of dollars? Is it a question of time? So it's almost like an independent body saying, 'Do we still have that restorative culture, and how do we keep building that?' I thought that was a really great question: How do we keep building that capacity for agencies to keep young people engaged in school and out of trouble? Oh that is a real challenge isn't it. I love that idea of having a committee with a strategic view. Because part of what I'm hearing back from the committee too is, you know, what's our purpose, we don't really need to be here, the project's going ahead. Maybe

that's something that could be explored, you know, at that celebration presentation of key findings, you know, a bit of a where to from here, this was raised. But they'd have to be really clear on what the role of that committee was, you know, and that stuff around keeping a strategic view, making sure that this doesn't just drop off the end of the earth so.

Stakeholder 2

This reconvening also links with the idea of celebrating achievements and moving the project forward to another stage. Celebration of achievements to date has been an ongoing topic since delivery of the training. It is seen as an essential part of the process, particularly in the sharing of key learnings and dissemination of the IRC to other partners. In particular, the issue of visibility of this celebration is taken as a considerable step in knowledge sharing with the immediate Albury and school community.

So what's the way forward in terms of expanding restorative justice in terms of celebrating what we've done before? One of the suggestions that I had yesterday was around people becoming a bit creative now, and one of those very first steps into that creativity is when do we get together again to celebrate our successes. And just to make sure that that's the expression that we use, we've got a recommitment of stakeholders into restorative conferencing generally, and to making sure that they will support YES in maintaining that culture. Could that be something like and I'm thinking on my feet here, um, something like a presentation, a report back on the evaluation findings, you know, this is what has been achieved, because not everyone would have seen all of the different aspects of it.

Stakeholder 1

Chapter 6 – Conclusion and Recommendations

The unfolding of the IRC indicates that the initiative has partly met its objectives, and that late processes have attempted to meet local needs, as opposed to push a slightly unrealistic agenda. This is to the credit of YES, as it demonstrates an intent to look for sustainable practices, as opposed to being a mere exercise in ‘planting seeds’. This chapter formulates conclusions in relation to some of the initiative’s deliverables and advances some recommendations in cognate areas of implementation and sustainability.

On restorative conferencing and practices with young people in school settings

Initiatives such as the IRC allow for a cultural shift in how school and community centre staff approach problem solving in a non-intrusive and minimally authoritarian way. They help educating staff and school-aged children in more harmonious ways to solve problems immediately, looking ahead at how behaviours can change positively with the aim of keeping children in schools. Such initiatives take time to set in, however, and require careful consideration of timelines and schedules, considering also the organic nature of communities and community development initiatives. They also require vigilance in relation to specific timeframes constrained by school holidays, weekends, and school activities during which staff and students are not available for consultation.

Initiatives such as the IRC have to take into consideration the needs of collaborating agencies. Some tailored and flexible processes need to be catered for in order to adapt to circumstances and environment logistics. In that regard, the IRC is a good example of how initiatives need to change gear and sometimes directions, focusing on what is achievable, what needs changing (compared to initial project design), and which partners need attention. The design of handy ‘paraphernalia’ (in this case, the compendium, posters, and policy documents) is also a good example for other sites that are considering implementation of restorative practices.

On the points of partnerships and whole of government practices

The IRC has proven its worth in relation to partnerships, especially in relation to partnerships centred on service provision to families in need. It represents a holistic program that is focused on linking clients with service providers (when possible) via an acute identification mechanism of families (or children) in need of support. It appears desirable to include parents further in the process in order to facilitate restorative outcomes and problem-solving as whole. This is a particular recommendation that YES should consider for the continuation of the scheme. The second issue to consider here is that this particular identification and referral capacity created by the IRC may have, as a consequence, the positioning of YES as a first port of call for all behavioural and service

provision issues relating to youths. While this is part and parcel of YES's core business, managing staff should be mindful of workload or external agency requests. YES should be careful to not provide so many external services that it reaches full service provision capacity, therefore at the risk of not having further capacity to engage in new ground breaking or creative endeavours.

On the topics of capacity building and key learning dissemination

YES now holds the potential to build further capacity given that the IRC falls within its auspices. As the continuing monitoring of processes and support of partners is nested in the Youth Connection Pathway program of YES, it will be the role of the designated IRC officer to keep the momentum going. However, and as justly pointed out by stakeholders, there is a need for the steering committee to be revived in order to strategically assess sustainability and learning dissemination needs. In its current format, and without the leadership of a knowledgeable group of interested parties, it is unlikely that the initiative will go beyond its current sphere of activity (one school and one community centre). Earlier research (Bartkowiak-Théron, 2012) has indicated that some prospective partners were keen to investigate how they could adopt restorative practices into their policy procedures. It is important to follow up that interest so as to not to let it slip by the wayside. The steering committee (even in a less structured format) could contribute to the promulgation of IRC processes and model, and look at how the initiative (and/or its processes and philosophy) could be disseminated to new local sites.

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APPENDIX 1 – Acronyms and Abbreviations

AG	Attorney General
AWCWP	Albury Wodonga Community Working Party
CI	Chief Investigator
DET	Department of Education and Training
IRC	Introducing Restorative Conferencing
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
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	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 have 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 well-being 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 that 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 well-being 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 well-being. 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 – 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 (including 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	N/A, due to circumstances
		Interim desktop analysis of data to date	√
		Compilation of 2nd interim report	√
		Delivery of 2 nd interim report to Attorney General's Office	√
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)	Subsequent to the dissemination of this report

Appendix 4 – Key Performance Indicators

(excerpt from Bartkowiak-Théron, 2011a)

Breaking down aims and objectives into manageable indicators

The IRC focuses on the delivery of the accredited training to future facilitators, collaborative activities, early detection of problems, and acute referral mechanisms, and on the delivery of good, evidence-based practices. It is therefore important, throughout 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 was 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 must match the aims and objectives of the initiative, and should quantify the efficiency and impact of the scheme against those 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 the 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 at 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	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

participant's perspective;	conferences	three months – IRC Conference 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 (compared with 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

Although data associated with the impact of the IRC is available, the interpretation of the degree to which the IRC in itself has had an effect on youth crime is limited because 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.

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 is reported. The complicating factor is that the IRC may *specifically* increase the likelihood of behaviour being reported, by simply bringing additional attention to 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 even be regarded as a positive outcome, rather than a sign of negative impact. Qualitative data drawn from the review may 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 (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 for 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 interest in 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.

Appendix 5 – School and community centre information sharing policy

Keep them Safe – Information Sharing


Child Wellbeing & Child Protection - NSW Interagency Guidelines

Provision of information under Chapter 16A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
 Section 245C of the Act allows a prescribed body to provide information of their own accord to another prescribed body that relates to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a particular unborn child, child, young person or class of children or young persons.

High School & Community Centre

The information provided is in regard to:

Information is also provided regarding the following persons: (if applicable)

Name	Relationship to child/young person

The information is regarding:

This information is provided in relation to the following issues of concern held for the above mentioned child/young person or class of children or young persons:

Provision of information under Chapter 16A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
 This information is provided because it relates to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the child or young person (or class of children or young persons) and would assist you with:

- making a decision, assessment or plan,
- initiating or conducting an investigation, providing a service and/or,
- managing a risk to a child or young person that might arise in your capacity as an employer or designated agency.

Should you decide, in accordance with Chapter 16A, to provide some or all of this information, either on your own motion or in response to a request from a prescribed body, the information can only be shared on a confidential basis in accordance with the processes and principles of Chapter 16A.

http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/cts/guidelines/info_exchange/introduction.htm

Appendix 6 – Restorative Practice: Compendium Excerpt

3. CONTINUAL DISRUPTION

Good Practice

- Use relaxed vigilance strategies;
 - The look
 - Stand beside
 - Name the student and give a calm but clear warning
- Use slightly less relaxed vigilance strategies:
 - Move in and speak quietly to the student and give calm but clear second warning
 - "What are you doing? What should you be doing? What do you need to do now?"

Mini-Chat

Mini-Chat at a time when teacher is calm. Once student has described their actions, what they were thinking, what impact it has had and what they are thinking now agree on a consequence. This may be:

- Agreeing to stop, apologizing and returning to class
- Making up time
- Completing work and returning by....
- Changing position in class/seating plan
- Contract
- Write out class expectations

Further Action – Restorative Conversation – RISC entry

If the student does not complete your Restorative Conversation or complete the work OR continues to disrupt after carrying out the agreed consequence complete a RISC entry and refer to the Head Teacher.

4. NO EQUIPMENT

Good Practice

- Have clear expectations of what students need to bring
- Store equipment and books in class
- Have replacement equipment/books in class and exchange for collateral
- Use relaxed vigilance strategies:
 - Give pack up time so that students have the opportunity to reclaim all of their equipment
 - Regularly monitor who is and is not bringing equipment
 - Use reward system –Merits - to acknowledge those who always have the correct gear.
- Use slightly less relaxed vigilance strategies.
 - Contact home
 - Meeting with form class teachers

Mini-Chat

Mini-Chat. Once student has described their actions, what they were thinking, what impact it has had and what they are thinking now agree on a consequence. This may be:

- Agreeing to meet expectations and getting it right from now
- Catch up time to complete work.

Further Action – Restorative Conversation – RISC entry

If the student does not complete your Restorative Conversation or complete the work OR continues to not bring equipment after carrying out the agreed consequence complete a RISC entry and refer to the Head Teacher.

5. NON -COMPLETION OF HOMEWORK

Good Practice

- Co-construct with students at start of year the expectations in relation to frequency, amount and consequences.
- Use relaxed vigilance strategies:
 - Regular reminders as deadline approaches
 - Offer help as deadline approaches
 - Consistently collect on due date and give feedback asap.
- Use slightly less vigilance strategies;
 - Contact home
 - If large group issue, call form class teacher meeting

Mini-Chat

Mini chat. Once student has described their actions, what they were thinking, what impact it has had and what they are thinking now agree on a consequence. This may be:

- Agreeing to meet expectations and getting it right from now
- Giving an agreed extension
- Catch up time to complete work

Further Action – Restorative Conversation – RISC entry

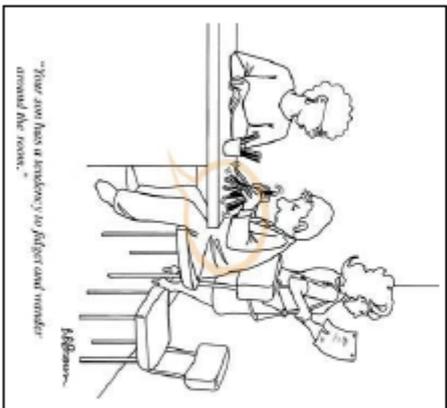
If the student does not complete your Restorative Conversation or complete the work as agreed OR continues to not complete homework after carrying out the agreed consequence complete a RISC entry and refer to the Head Teacher.

6. ABUSE OF STAFF

- If a student is abusive towards a staff member during class time, refer incident directly to relevant Deputy Principal (DP)
- Send a student to Head Teacher or to the Deputy Principal for assistance if required.
- Complete a RISC entry and notify Deputy Principal when completed.
- If outside of class time, inform DP and complete a RISC entry.

ACTION:

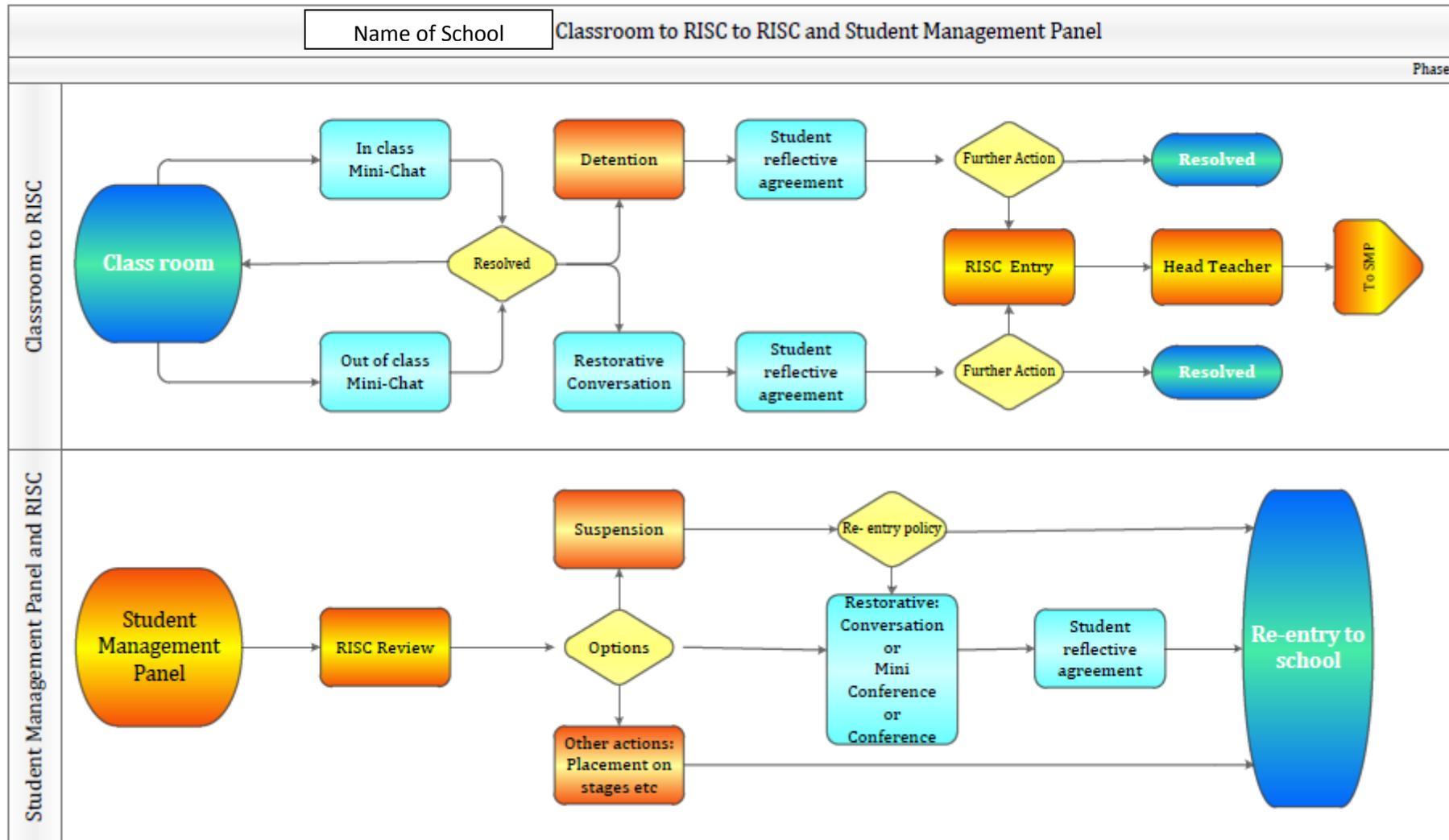
The relevant Deputy Principal will decide upon appropriate consequences in consultation with the affected staff member. Depending on the circumstances, consequences may include in-school suspension or suspension from school. It might be decided that a Restorative Conference could be used to resolve the matter. The aim of the restoration is for the student to accept responsibility for their behaviour and commit to improvement.



Appendix 7 – Student Restorative & Reflection Plan

Student Restorative and Reflection Plan		
Name: _____	Class / Year: _____	Date: _____
Teacher: _____	Subject: _____	
What I did		
What I was thinking or Feeling at the time		
How it affected others		
One thing I will do differently next time		
What will help me do this		
When I return to class my goal is		
How others could help do this		
What I need to do to put things right		
Student Sign: _____		

Appendix 8 – Restorative Process, inclusive of usual school disciplinary protocol



Appendix 9 – Posters

★ A Restorative Mini-Chat ★ Is asking



Tell me what happened?

Who or what did this affect?

What do you think about it now?

What do you need to do about it now?

How can we make sure this doesn't happen again?

&

Make amends and get on with it



An Australian Government Initiative

★ A Restorative Conversation ★ Is asking



What were you thinking at the time?

Who has been harmed and in what way?

What needs to happen to repair the harm?

What would you do differently next time?

&

Complete a Student Reflection Plan



★ **A Restorative Mini-Chat** ★

Is asking you



Tell me what happened?

Who or what did this affect?

What do you think about it now?

What do you need to do about it now?

How can we make sure this doesn't happen again?

&

Make amends and move on



An Australian Government Initiative

★ **A Restorative Conversation** ★

Is asking you



What were you thinking at the time?

Who has been harmed and in what way?

What needs to happen now?

What would you do differently next time?

&

Complete a Reflective Agreement

