

# Restorative approaches to working with young people

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Jesuit  
Social Services  
Building a Just Society

- Who we are
- Our restorative justice programs
- Youth Justice at a crossroads
- #JusticeSolutions tour
- #Worth A Second Chance

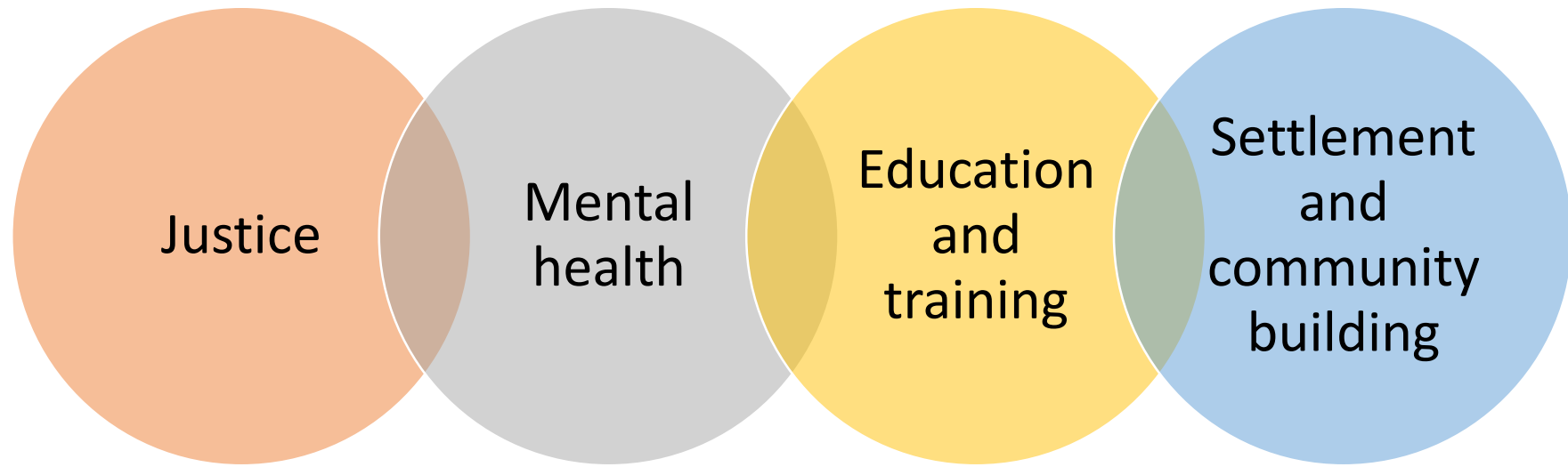


# About Jesuit Social Services

- **Our vision** – Building a just society.
- **Our values** – In all we do, we strive to be:
  - *Welcoming* – forming strong, faithful relationships
  - *Discerning* – being reflective and strategic in all we do
  - *Courageous* – standing up boldly to effect change
- **Our purpose**
  - We are a social change organisation working to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential
  - We partner with community to support those most in need
  - We work to change policies, practices, ideas and values that perpetuate inequality, prejudice and exclusion



# Areas of focus



# Restorative Justice Group Conferencing

The program aims to:

- improve the young person's connection to family/significant others and their integration into the community
- negotiate an outcome plan that sets out what the young person will do to make amends for their offending
- increase victim satisfaction with the criminal justice process
- divert the young person from a more intensive sentence.



# Restorative Justice

## Group Conferencing

It's a problem-solving approach to offending that:

- emphasises the offender's personal accountability
- encourages an inclusive decision-making process that encourages participation
- aims to right the harm caused by an offence



## **Suitability criteria**

Young people suitable for group conferencing include those aged 10 and up to 18 years of age appearing in the Criminal Division of the Children's Court who have:

- been found guilty of offences that do not include homicide, manslaughter and sex offences, and
- committed offences that warrant a sentence supervised by the youth justice service, and
- committed offences no longer than twelve months prior to the finding of guilt, or, in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the court, and
- been assessed by the Department of Justice and Regulation youth justice service, and
- consented to participate.

Legislation allows the court to defer sentencing for up to four months so a group conference can be held and a report prepared for the court.

## **What happens at a group conference?**

- At the conference the young person and the other participants talk about what happened and will agree on what needs to be done about the harm caused by the offence.
- At the end of the conference an outcome plan will be prepared that sets out the agreements that were made.
- The convenor then writes a report which explains what happened in the conference, and this is presented to the Children's Court.

## **What are the possible outcomes of a group conference?**

Recommendations from the conference could include:

- assistance and support for the young person in such areas as education, skill development, employment and counselling
- ways of dealing with the offence (this could mean that the young person apologises, pays for all or part of the damage, or makes a donation)

When deciding on an appropriate sentence, the court will take into account the contents of the group conference outcome plan.



# Restorative Justice Group Conferencing

## In Victoria

- Jesuit Social Services has delivered the Youth Justice Group Conferencing program since 2003.
- The program has been highly successful in enabling dialogue between young people who have offended, their victims and the wider community.



# Restorative Justice Group Conferencing

## It's effective!

- A KPMG evaluation of Jesuit Social Services Youth Justice Group Conferencing program in 2010, found that **80 per cent** of program participants **had not reoffended** after two years
- Compared with over half of the young people who had been in youth detention going on to reoffend



## In the NT

- In March 2017, Jesuit Social Services commenced a pre-sentence, youth justice group conferencing program under section 84 of the *Youth Justice Act*.
- We are working in collaboration with Danila Dilba, an Aboriginal community controlled organisation – engaging with Elders is a key element
- Outcomes
  - 74 per cent of young people showed enhanced connection to family and significant others following their involvement in the program.
  - 76 per cent had both an improved view of their future and an enhanced capacity to set goals
  - 62 per cent of young people showed improvement in engagement with school, training or employment
  - A large percentage of young people described having a better understanding of the impact of their behaviour on victims, their families and their communities.
  - 81 percent of surveyed victims were both satisfied with the young person's outcome plan and the same percentage would recommend the process to other victims.

# Restorative Justice

## What's next? - RESTORE

- Jesuit Social Services is piloting RESTORE, a Family Group Conferencing program to address adolescent violence against family members.
- Delivered in collaboration with the Children's Court of Victoria, to be evaluated by School of Social & Political Sciences (Faculty of Arts) at the University of Melbourne.
- The program will be for young people aged 12-18 years at the time of offending, who have come before the Family Division after receiving an Interim Intervention Order as a result of perpetrating family violence.



# Restorative Justice

## What's next? – Starting Over

- An adolescent family violence pilot program working with schools in Western Sydney.
- This work draws from Jesuit Social Services' experience using restorative justice in responding to youth offending, and offers a Family Group Conference process for young people who have used family violence.
- It is being undertaken in collaboration with schools and local community organisations, and is being evaluated by experts from the University of Melbourne.



# Youth justice in Victoria

- At a crossroads
- Youth crime trending down – ABS data show:
  - For the eighth year in a row, Victoria's youth offender rate has dropped.
  - For the fifth year in a row, the number of youth offenders in Victoria has dropped.
  - 44% decrease in the number of young offenders from 2008/09 – 2016/17 (14,757 – 8,280)
- Media promoting stories of young 'thugs' and 'gangs'
- Victorian Government and Opposition are united in their reliance on 'tough on crime' rhetoric
- Previous successful programs at risk (e.g. dual track)
- New punitive approaches in favour (e.g. building Cherry Creek and tougher laws)

# #JusticeSolutions

- 5 countries - USA, Germany, Norway, United Kingdom and Spain
- 37 briefings
- Report
- Launch event
- Significant media coverage



# What we observed and learnt

- Overall objective: keep the community safe by investing in young people who are at risk of being incarcerated and socialising/re-socialising those in detention
- Any period of incarceration is seen as harmful – to be avoided except for absolutely hardened few
- Find ‘off ramps’ from the road to incarceration
- Keep young people close to home and engaged with education and treatment





# Youth justice advocacy project –

## **The context**

The challenge of a changing political and communication environment

## **Lessons from overseas**

- Be bold, strengthen our collective voice
- Go beyond the base, engage the wider community
- Elevate the voice of young people and those most harmed by the system

## **#Worth A Second Chance–**

We are asking the people of Victoria to join with us to demand the youth justice system our community deserves.

### **This can be achieved by –**

- Strengthening the foundations of our youth justice system and reinstating the approaches that will make our communities safer.
- Investing more in the programs proven to work, such as early intervention, local community initiatives and education.
- Providing support of the highest quality to young people in trouble to prevent further crime and improve outcomes.

# Q&A

