



Australian Association
for Restorative Justice

Mailouts to AARJ members through 2021

From 2014 through 2018, the Committee of the *Victorian* Association for Restorative Justice distributed several *newsletters* annually to Association members.

In 2020, following the formation of the *Australian* Association for Restorative Justice (AARJ), the Committee distributed an annual *Review of Current Practice* to Association members.

Association members requested more regular mailouts, providing information on relevant:

- Job *vacancies* for restorative practitioners and program managers, and
- *Events* offering awareness-raising and restorative skills development.

Since 2021, regular mailouts from the AARJ Committee have also included longer reflective pieces, with links to relevant resources.

The following reflective pieces were distributed to AARJ members through 2021:

Summary of education forum

7th December 2021



Those who attended our **forum on Monday 29th November** [2021] heard engaging presentations from committee members **David Vinegrad** and **Kristy Elliott**, both very experienced educators. Other participants offered excellent comments and questions.

We have prepared a [summary of key points](#)

.... both for those members who attended the forum,
and for those who were unable to join us on [that] occasion.

The forum set a high standard for members' forums in 2022, including a panel discussion on *Leading a Restorative School*.

Communities of restorative practice

for colleagues in the one region, or in one area of professional practice

25th November 2021



Our social movement for restorative practices has struggled to bridge the gaps between:

- **knowing *about*** restorative practices;
- **knowing *how to*** facilitate *processes* and administer *programs*;
- developing **programs** that *apply* this restorative *know-how*, efficiently and effectively;
- *increasing know-how* among a **group of professionals**, so that they can facilitate *more complex cases &/or different types of case*;
- **coordinating service provision** *across programs*, so that professionals can better help their fellow citizens *transform conflict into cooperation*.

It has been easiest to increase *know-how* when colleagues in a funded program are co-located – as has occurred in teams that deliver **youth justice group conferencing (YJGC)**.

Over a decade ago, and using their local YJGC program as the base, the **Central Victoria Restorative Practices Alliance (CVRPA)** demonstrated how colleagues working in the *same region*, but in *different programs*, could work together to consolidate and increase their *know-how* as facilitators and administrators. It seemed that this arrangement would continue to work best in *regional* cities such as Bendigo, where the CVRPA has been based. It has seemed more challenging to form a restorative community of practice in a big capital city. However, earlier in 2021, AARJ-member Lena Lettau initiated a **Melbourne Restorative Practices Group (MRPG)**.

The MRPG has met both online and in-person throughout this year (with colleagues from other states and territories joining the online sessions). Members have worked with pre-prepared role play materials, and with elements of their own current cases, to practise and refine the skills of preparing and facilitating group processes, and to share tips on administering programs. Experienced AARJ committee members have answered some of the more technical questions raised during these practice sessions.

Members of the MRPG recently **reflected** on this experience:

- *The MRPG group has offered a wonderful opportunity to practice the community conferencing process and [related] micro skills in a safe and supportive learning environment, as well as to meet like-minded practitioners with a shared passion for restorative processes. The feedback from group members in relation to role plays and the facilitation of the group has been invaluable;*
- *The practice group is providing me with a great opportunity to refresh the techniques I'd learned when I did the group conferencing course. It's an enjoyable way to connect with other interested practitioners and learn from them, and to serve as a resource to others;*
- *This group allows for the opportunity to learn in a supportive environment, allows mistakes and the chance to explore the components and steps of a restorative conversation or conference;*
- *I joined the community of practice for skill-building and reflective practice, which leads to being a better facilitator;*
- *I have been getting lots of insight into the possible complications of RJ interviewing;*
- *I'm learning some of the practical and philosophical differences between mediating and facilitating;*
- *I'm learning how these wisdoms may be effectively embedded in Victoria's Yoorrook Justice Commission;*
- *I've been making links with other RJ models, and international research;*
- *I've been able to share my experience in RJ service design;*
- *I am getting the opportunity to connect with a group of people who have similar ideals and values to mine: a desire to see a changed world through practical, respectful consensus-building;*
- *The group has been truly generous in sharing the skills and knowledge they have acquired through their own experience and training. Amazing things happen when you bring a group together, and this is a group of motivated people learning how to bring other groups together to find their own solutions and to better understand themselves and each other.*

As we prepare for a “new normal” in 2022 and beyond, the AARJ committee is keen to support Association members to follow this important initiative, and to **establish other regional communities of restorative practice**. A new group might wish to link up online with the MRPG. A group of colleagues who are just getting started might find it particularly helpful to gain a better sense of what others do, or to receive tips on practice exercises that work particularly well.

Of course, as the pandemic has made videoconferencing ubiquitous, it has also become easier for colleagues in the *one profession* to liaise regularly *across different regions and jurisdictions*. We are seeing communities of practice emerge among colleagues who are establishing or expanding programs of **relationship-management-using-restorative-practices** in settings as diverse as **redress**

schemes, detention centres, health facilities, universities. And we are seeing more extensive collaboration to support **relationship-based education in schools.**

If you would be interested to initiate a **community of restorative practice** (i) in your **region**, &/or (ii) your **profession** (across jurisdictions), [please do contact us.](#)

We'll be happy to discuss what's involved, and how we might support you. And if you decide you're up for the challenge, we can call out to like-minded colleagues in your region &/or profession, and help bridge those gaps between knowing *about*, and actually *working with* people to *set relations right!*

Meanwhile: thanks again to *all* our members for your ongoing support.

Review of the National Redress Scheme second year report released

28th June 2021



[The report of the second-year Review of the National Redress Scheme](#) was made publicly available last week. The report will interest many members of our Association.

Ms Robyn Kruk AO commenced the review in July 2020. Her *Final Report* was provided in late March 2021 to the Minister for Families and Social Services and the Secretary of the Department of Social Services.

Governance of the National Redress Scheme was always going to be a complex challenge. However, the need for many of the recommended reforms has long been clear to people involved with the Scheme. As in many other areas of service delivery, State and Territory agencies responsible for service delivery have already been doing some of the recommended work. The report makes **38 recommendations** to improve the Scheme, all of them consistent with some foundational principals for good governance.

The Recommendations are summarised under **4 key headings**:

1. To improve the **experience of survivors**, the report recommends:

- A **review of the current support services and counselling models** to improve the equity, scope and quality of counselling support, including extending access to redress counselling for *families* of survivors;
- A **Direct Personal Response (DPR) action plan** to increase the uptake and quality of Direct Personal Responses. This plan should be implemented by 30th November 2021;
- The Australian Government should work with state and territory governments, together with survivors, nominees, advocates, support services, institutions and restorative engagement experts, to co-design an improved DPR (program and) process;

- A dedicated liaison officer should be made available, where requested by a survivor;
- Barriers should be removed to allow for a DPR to be initiated by someone other than the survivor, and to allow for **professional facilitation of face-to-face Direct Personal Responses**.

In short: The **Direct Personal Response** is an **integral part of the Redress Scheme**.

The DPR **program** should be **well-administered**, and a DPR **process** professionally **facilitated**.

2. To enhance **fairness and integrity** and to deliver better **outcomes**:

- The National Redress Scheme Inter-governmental Agreement should provide for **survivors and non-government institutions to have formal input into the operation of the Scheme**.
- Survivors need end-to-end support through administrative changes which include:
 - simplifying the *application form*;
 - providing assertive outreach support to assist survivors to complete the form;
 - providing clearer policy guidance to Independent Decision Makers;
 - revising the format of the *outcome letter* and *statement of reasons* template; and
 - translating the current content of these documents into plain English;
- The Scheme's Information and Communications Technology system must capture 'whole of client data', and use Key Performance Indicators that 'realign transactional outputs with trauma informed outcomes'.

In short: *It is essential to **ask people** about their **lived experience** of the program, and to take account of their insights when reviewing **what is actually being achieved** by the activities that are being measured!*

3. To **ensure staff** capability and support:

- The Scheme should cease relying on contract staff across the Redress Group;
- The recruitment and selection process for new staff should be clinically-designed, and all staff should be provided the requisite knowledge and skills to provide a trauma-informed redress service to survivors;
- All supervisors should be provided **reflective practices supervision training**.

In short: all complex programs need **systems for improving systems!**

4. To improve **communications**: the Australian Government should, during the next two financial years, fund a **targeted communication strategy** that builds trust and increases awareness of the Scheme among survivors, including awareness of *all* available support services.

In short: ***the intended users of a program should know that the program exists, and how to access it!***

We wish the reformers well.