



Australian imprisonment: a vicious cycle of bad policy and bad outcomes

28th January 2025

Dear AARJ member

A recent article in [The Conversation](#) reminds us that:

- while rates of serious crime in Australia have [almost halved](#) in recent decades, **per capita imprisonment rates** in every Australian state and territory have more than **doubled**;
- just over **10,000** Australians were incarcerated in 1980; in 2024, that figure was **44,400**;
- Australia's national per capita imprisonment rate, at **0.16% of the population**, is now [greater than that of Canada, the United Kingdom, and all of Western Europe](#);
- annual operating and capital costs for Australia's prisons have also more than doubled in the last decade. Those costs now exceed [A\\$6 billion annually](#);
- Victoria is the only Australian jurisdiction in which the rate of imprisonment has been dropping – and only since 2020. As the [Productivity Commission reports](#), the Indigenous incarceration rate has likewise reduced only in Victoria and the ACT.

In contrast, this month, and quite predictably, **the Northern Territory's incarceration rate became the highest ever recorded in an Australian jurisdiction**: [more than 1% of the Northern Territory's total population](#) is now incarcerated in adult prison.

The Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council reports with great honesty that [the experience of imprisonment can result in greater rates of recidivism](#) - yet governments continue to make bail [harder to access](#) and to increase the length of prison sentences. In short, Australia's prison expansion is contributing to a vicious cycle – and is a product of very poor policy choices:

- Australia has the [highest rate](#) of privatised incarceration globally, and while some jurisdictions are now rethinking their [for-profit prison agreements](#) - as part of a broader reconsideration of [how privatisation serves the public good](#) - new prisons are nonetheless still being planned and built in regions experiencing economic decline;

- New prisons are typically [sold](#) as drivers of economic growth and employment, despite evidence from the United States that prisons tend to [discourage other forms of investment](#), and [deepen local poverty](#).

The authors of the *Conversation* article urge governments to increase the availability of *evidence-based alternatives to imprisonment*, such as [place-based initiatives](#), and to “*enact new policies and direct funding towards the infrastructure that strengthens communities and enhances security for all: housing, health care, education, healthy environments and sustainable employment opportunities.*”

Unfortunately, state-and-territory governments-and-oppositions may lack the will-and-skill to favour effective but-complex long-term policy over the simple slogans of electoral politics.

The need for change is urgent. Rather than waiting-and-hoping for governments to *see reason*, and *act on evidence*, many AARJ members are now working with colleagues in place-based initiatives, within already-funded programs, to:

- **coordinate the strategy** of service-providing **agencies**, so that key decision-makers can identify relevant cases and refer them to an appropriate restorative service provider;
- **build the capacity** of individual **workers, and teams**, to deliver restorative processes that support community members to strengthen relationships, responsibility, and respect.

When the systematic use of restorative processes enables effective adaptive change in social networks, throughout institutions, and across regions, restorative practice can function as [a system for improving our systems](#).

In these challenging times, this systemic restorative work is as urgent as ever.



Extending the Stolen Generations Redress Scheme

10th February 2025

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Minister for Indigenous Australians Senator Malarndirri McCarthy today delivered the [Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2024 Annual Report and 2025 Implementation Plan](#).

For those us working as restorative practitioners, an important element in today's announcement is that the Government is **extending the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme** for an **additional two years** (until 30th June 2028).

[As the National Indigenous Australians Agency \(NIAA\) website notes:](#)

Personal Acknowledgements under the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme are transforming senior government officials' commitment to achieve outcomes for First Nations people and communities.

The extension of the Stolen Generations Redress Scheme is consistent with [the Commonwealth Government's recent announcement](#) of a six-year partnership with the Northern Territory Government and Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory to deliver essential services for remote communities, including policing, women's safety, housing, health, and education.

The 2024 and 2025 **Implementation Plan actions tables**, which outline progress and the new commitments, are available [HERE](#).



20 years of the ACT RJU

20th February 2025

Dear AARJ member

Last Friday, January 31st 2025, marked the [20th anniversary of the establishment of the ACT Restorative Justice Unit \(RJU\)](#).

In 1994, the ACT Police had established a pre-court diversionary conferencing program, which was inspired by the pilot program operated by NSW Police in Wagga Wagga, with support from Charles Sturt University.

The ACT police program was evaluated through a series of randomised controlled trials run in collaboration with the Australian National University. Since January 2005, the ACT Restorative Justice Scheme has been guided by the *Crimes (Restorative Justice) Act*. As confidence in the legislated scheme has grown, the RJU has expanded its services:

Phase 1 (2005-): cases involving **young people** who have caused harm, and less serious offences

Phase 2 (2016-): Expansion to include cases involving **adults** who have caused harm and more serious offences

Phase 3 (2018-): Expansion to enable victims of **any offence**, including domestic, family, and sexual violence, to access restorative justice

The Restorative Justice Unit has now convened more than 1,124 face-to-face conferences involving 5,882 people harmed by crime and 4,047 people formally responsible for causing harm. **Participant satisfaction** has remained reliably between 95 and 99% across the life of the scheme, and **compliance with agreements** has been consistently high, at 96% in 2023-24.

Professor John Braithwaite of the ANU notes that “*bottom-up leadership came from [...] many civil society leaders [while] the top-down political leadership was admirably bipartisan. We made mistakes, particularly in the years before the ACT Restorative Justice Act, [but] our local political leaders did not exploit [those mistakes] in partisan ways that might have blown up Canberra’s great journey of reform.*”

Dymphna Lowrey, a founding convenor and later manager of the RJU, notes that “*the success of the ACT Restorative Justice Unit comes not just from the innovative nature of the legislation, but from a deep commitment to those administering the scheme to provide a safe and robust process for victims of crime to be heard.*”

The [Australian Institute of Criminology’s recent evaluation of Phase Three](#) demonstrates that the Scheme continues to work effectively overall. As the current ACT Attorney-General [Tara Cheyne](#) noted last week:

“The government’s commitment to restorative justice has not only strengthened our justice system but has also fostered a culture of empathy and accountability, cementing Canberra’s reputation as an innovative jurisdiction. [...] We look forward to continuing our work to support and build-on restorative justice to provide those seeking accountability, healing and restoration with this valuable forum.”

The ACT Attorney-General emphasised that the ACT Government remains committed to supporting accessibility to restorative justice, and is drawing on recent evaluations and independent research as it reviews *how the RJU can best meet community needs and the Territory Government’s broader objectives.*



A Restorative option for OHS offences

26th February 2025

The **Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council** (VSAC) today (February 26th) published - and officially launched - its final report on the **sentencing of occupational health and safety offences** in Victoria.

[The VSAC report, and a summary of its recommendations, are now available on the Council's website.](#)

The Council developed the report in response to terms of reference that the Victorian Government provided in early 2024. The result has been the first review of the sentencing of OHS offences in Victoria in two decades - since the [Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004](#) (Vic) ('the 2004 Act') came into operation in July 2005, following [the 2004 Maxwell Review](#).

As the Sentencing Council has examined current sentencing practices for occupational health and safety (OHS) offences in Victoria, it has consulted with stakeholders and the broader Victorian community on:

- whether current sentencing practices align with **community expectations**,
- the **role of injured workers and the families of deceased workers** in the sentencing of OHS offences,
- the **enforcement** of sentencing orders, especially court fines.

This time last year, we noted [an illuminating episode of ABC Radio National's Law Report](#) that discussed key findings from the [VSAC's community conversations across regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne.](#)

These consultative conversations revealed a widespread view that OHS sentencing reforms must help to:

- *address the harm* that has been caused in each individual case, &
- ensure that *workplaces are safer* in the future.

These goals require answers to the questions:

- How can a restorative process support **healing and learning** as part of a court process &/or outcome?
- How can key agencies in the workplace safety ‘ecosystem’ better coordinate their efforts at responsive regulation, with a strong focus on **education and public health**?
- How can we better align the efforts of individuals and organisations working to increase dynamic safety, and to implement a restorative just culture in workplaces?

The VSAC review of the *2004 OHS Act* has found that:

- **people affected by workplace incidents** are often excluded from the sentencing process
- **sentencing outcomes other than fines** are very rarely used, and yet these have great potential to improve safety practices
- fine amounts imposed in some cases are out of step with **community expectations**
- many fines for OHS offences go unpaid, especially where companies have been deregistered

Based on these findings, the Council has made **12 recommendations for reform**, including groundbreaking recommendations for **a legislated program of restorative justice conferences to deal with OH & S offences**.

In relation to victims & other affected persons

The Victorian Government should:

- 1: amend the *2004 Act* to allow affected persons to make *impact statements* in sentencing proceedings involving OHS offences.
- 2: amend the *2004 Act* to provide for *restorative justice conferences* to occur in cases involving offences contrary to that Act.
- 3: establish a program to trial the use of restorative justice conferences in cases involving offences contrary to the *2004 Act*, with a system for continuous feedback, an interim evaluation at two years, and a final evaluation at four years.

In relation to sentencing practices

- 4: The Victorian Government should amend the *2004 Act* to rename undertakings as ‘*health and safety orders*’. An order could run for a period of up to five years, with special conditions able to be imposed on any offender, not solely on employers, and conditions able to include a specified project for the general improvement of occupational health, safety and welfare within the specified period. Maximum penalties for a body corporate, and for individuals contravening a health and safety order should also be revised.

WorkSafe Victoria should develop a policy relating to:

5: *health and safety undertakings* that (a) specifies criteria for deciding whether to recommend an undertaking, and its conditions, and (b) encourages the increased use of undertakings in appropriate cases.

6: *adverse publicity orders* that (a) specifies criteria for deciding whether to recommend that a sentencing court consider imposing an adverse publicity order, including the content and medium of the information to be publicised, and (b) encourages the increased use of adverse publicity orders in appropriate cases.

The Victorian Government should:

7: increase the maximum penalties for breaches of health and safety duties.

8: add a provision specifying a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment for individuals who recklessly contravene a health and safety duty under the Act in a way that places, or may place, another person in danger of death, serious injury or serious illness.

9: ask the Sentencing Advisory Council to develop and consult on a *draft sentencing guidelines* for inclusion in the 2004 Act when sentencing offences contrary to that Act. The guidelines should include guidance about how courts should approach specific factors in sentencing OHS offences, such as culpability, objective seriousness of the offence, any injury, illness or harm caused by the offence, and the offender's financial circumstances, and character.

In relation to Fine Payment

10: The Victorian Government should amend the *2004 Act* to more clearly specify that all court fines paid for OHS offences are to be paid into the **WorkCover Authority Fund**.

11: **Fines Victoria** should review all unpaid court fines imposed on body corporates for offences contrary to the *2004 Act*, and consider whether to serve a declared director notice on any relevant persons.

12: The Victorian Government should provide the **Victorian Law Reform Commission** with terms of reference seeking its advice about whether to introduce a legislative framework for successor liability for corporations and other legal entities in Victoria.

Many of these recommendations seem relevant beyond Victoria, and may support comparable reform in other jurisdictions.

Meanwhile, we will watch with interest any pilot program of restorative conferencing in cases involving OHS breaches - confident that a well-administered and evaluated *program*, delivering well-facilitated restorative *processes*, can better address the harm caused in individual cases, and help to ensure safer workplaces.



Two new titles in the Routledge Restorative Practice Series

9th March 2025

Dear AARJ Member

The second and third volumes of the Routledge book series [Contemporary Issues in Restorative Practice](#) are now available for pre-order.

Restorative Justice and Trauma-Informed Practice: Restorative Dialogues for Those Affected by Trauma, by Claudia Christen-Schneider, demonstrates how meaningful dialogue at the intersection of trauma-informed practice and restorative justice can foster safe, inclusive spaces for healing and accountability.

Some of our members will have watched the 2023 French movie [All your faces](#) [Je verrai toujours vos visages], which dramatises one such restorative dialogue program in a French prison. These restorative reforms were made possible in France by a [2014 change to France's Code of Criminal Procedure](#) (*Code de procédure pénale*).

Restorative Justice and Trauma-Informed Practice will officially be released on March 13, 2025.

Claudia Christen-Schneider will discuss *Trauma-Informed Restorative Dialogues* in [a session hosted by Oxford's Mint House on Wednesday 2nd April 2025](#) between noon and 1:00 pm UK time – so late evening across Australia.

Relationships, Community, and the Restorative School: Lessons from Singapore, by Seow Ling, James Lim, Tyler Sim, Enci Li, and Justin Mui, documents [the Builders Project](#), which involves whole-school restorative practices in Singapore, and focuses on community-building and student well-being.

[Relationships, Community, and the Restorative School](#) will officially be released on 25th April, 2025.



BBC Reith Lectures recommending restorative justice

10th April 2025

Dear AARJ Member

ABC Radio National is [this week broadcasting the most recent series of BBC Reith lectures](#), which were originally broadcast in the UK in November and December 2024.

This Reith lecture series is called *Four Questions about Violence*, and is delivered by New Zealand-born, UK-based forensic psychiatrist [Dr Gwen Adshead](#), who is known for her book [The Devil You Know: Encounters in Forensic Psychiatry](#).

Importantly, Dr Adshead concludes the series with an account of the power of restorative justice, both to support *healing* after violent crimes, and to help *prevent* violence.

The four lectures are:

[Is Violence Normal?](#)

[Aren't they all evil?](#)

[Does Trauma Cause Violence?](#)

[Can we change violent minds?](#)

Running through the series are [five key lessons](#) that Gwen Adshead describes having learned from working with perpetrators of violence:

1. Violence is like a bicycle lock, in that multiple risk factors for violence are usually in place before violence erupts, and "*the last number can reflect something that happens between the victim and the perpetrator, which the perpetrator misinterprets.*"

2. Mental illness rarely plays a role with violent perpetrators. Although the motives of violent perpetrators may not seem to make sense, that does not mean that they are mentally ill. People with severe mental illness account for only 5.3% of recorded violence.

3. We can all get into an 'evil' state of mind dominated by ordinary emotions of hatred, envy, greed and anger. [...] "*When traumatised people experience anger, fear or shame, that can then make them see other people as a threat.*"

4. Killers don't set out to be bad: perpetrators of violence usually have a story - a 'neutralisation discourse' - that both justifies and excuses their violence. "*In other words, they identify their own bicycle lock numbers. They normalise their own violence, try to make it understandable. They do not wish to be seen as monsters, but as people who felt they had no choice.*"

5. Violent minds can change: very few killers remain incurious and remorseless after committing homicide- and there are better ways to manage the emotions of loss, isolation and despair that make violence more likely.



Restorative Options for Driving Offences

13th May 2025

Dear AARJ Member

In late 2022, the **NSW Law Reform Commission** was asked to review and report on the existing provisions of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW) dealing with serious road and dangerous driving offences, and on the experiences and rights of victims of serious road crime and their families within the criminal justice system.

[**LRC Report 152: Serious Road Crime**](#) was provided to the NSW Attorney General in February 2025.

The Commission received *overwhelming support from submissions for making restorative justice processes more widely available in relation to serious road crime offences*. Submissions *widely agreed that restorative justice processes should be supported by legislation*.

The final chapter of the report, which deals with victims' experiences and their rights, notes that:

- While Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) offers a post-sentence restorative justice program in NSW, known as "Victim Offender Conferencing", it has limited capacity
- Although some restorative justice processes are available under the *Young Offenders Act 1997* (NSW), they are not available for all serious road crime offences committed or allegedly committed by children (for example, they are not available for offences that result in death).⁶⁵ They are also primarily focused on the offender.

Accordingly, the LRC recommends that the NSW Government *consider restorative justice processes in relation to all offence types*.



Practical bio-psycho-social theory

19th June 2025

Accurate [bio-psycho-social theory](#) is an essential guide to effective restorative practice. Our colleagues at the US-based [Tomkins Institute](#) work to:

- provide resources concerning the biology of innate human affect, and **the role of the affect system in motivating feeling, thinking, and action.**
- explain the role of biological processes in **forming patterns of emotion, perception, and action** that **shape our personalities, our relationships, and our world.**

The Tomkins Institute has scheduled some [online sessions](#) for the second half of 2025 that are highly relevant to restorative practitioners:

[How drawing can be an integral part of a healing process](#)

Saturday, **June 28**

[Sunday morning AEST]

Author and long-time Tomkins institute member Jeanette Wright will share insights and experiences gleaned from her lifelong work as a therapist, largely focusing on addressing trauma issues. Jeanette brings the lens of Affect Theory to her work of engaging clients with drawing as an integral part of their healing process.

[Affects, Cognition, and Language as Foundations of Human Development](#)

Saturday **July 19**

[Sunday morning AEST]

[Professor Paul C. Holinger](#) will discuss ideas explored in his new book [Affects, Cognition, and Language as Foundations of Human Development](#), which

considers human development from the three most basic integrated systems—
affects, cognition, and language. Drawing on the work of Darwin, Freud, Stern,
Basch, and the ground-breaking ideas of Silvan Tomkins, Professor Hollinger will
examine two important societal issues:

- physical punishment, &
- bias, prejudice, and violence.

The Institute has also planned a set of fascinating **monthly discussions of key texts** for the second half of this year:

[Anger Management and Anger Control Scripts](#)

Monday, June 23

[Tuesday morning AEST]

[Affects, Cognition, and Language as Foundations of Human Development](#)

Monday, July 28

[Tuesday morning AEST]

This session will focus on Paul Holinger's *Affects, Cognition, and Language as Foundations of Human Development*

[Hiding in plain sight: The distinct importance of low-arousal positive affect](#)

Monday, August 25

[Tuesday morning AEST]

This session will include a discussion of McManus, Nakamura, and Siegel's
["Hiding in plain sight: The distinct importance of low-arousal positive affect"](#) from
[Motivation and Emotion 2024](#)

[Discovering Intimate and More Effective Ways of Living Together](#)

Monday, September 22

[Tuesday morning AEST]

This session will include a discussion of [Mary Abrams](#)' (2011) "Consciousness as Embodied Movement: Discovering Intimate and More Effective Ways of Living Together "

[Shame-Humiliation and the Taboo on Looking](#)

Monday, October 27

[Tuesday morning AEST]

[Why Poverty Leads to Support for Authoritarianism](#)

Monday, November 24

[Tuesday morning AEST]

This session will include a discussion of Neerdaels, Troster, and Van Quaquebeke's "[It's \(a\) Shame: Why Poverty Leads to Support for Authoritarianism](#)" from the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 2024



Corruption, Social Trust, and Restorative Justice

25th June 2025

Dear AARJ Member

We have received a request from a group of researchers and professionals who study restorative justice and corruption in Europe. Some of this group are also members of the **Working Group on Restorative Justice and Organizations** of the **European Forum for Restorative Justice** (EFRJ).

Members of this EFRJ Working Group are planning a collaborative book titled **Corruption, Social Trust and Restorative Justice**, in which they aim to explore *the relationship between corruption, social trust, and restorative justice across different societal contexts and areas*.

While members of the EFRJ Working Group on Restorative Justice and Organizations focus primarily on European countries, their interests are not limited to those contexts. Accordingly, the EFRJ Working Group has contacted AARJ, calling for **contributions from Australian &/or Aotearoan academics &/or practitioners** interested in *the role of restorative justice in addressing and preventing corruption*.

The EFRJ Working Group are aware of the experience of our [Australian] **national panel of facilitators** who facilitate cases in **redress schemes** that replicate the core elements of the tripartite redress package developed for the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce [DART]. That redress package includes the option of **restorative engagement**, which *links individual healing with institutional reform*, and so helps to address forms of institutional corruption.

However, many members of the national panel, and other members of our Association, also work as individual workplace consultants - or in a small team of colleagues - and may have other *examples of being invited to intervene in cases that involve - or reveal - some level of corruption*.

If you may be interested in contributing to the book **Corruption, Social Trust and Restorative Justice**, and are interested in the possibility of contributing to a collaborative Austral[as]ian chapter, please [contact the AARJ Committee](#).

If you are interested in making your own contribution to the book, please submit a **brief abstract** outlining your proposed chapter to our colleague [Daniela Gaddi](#) at the [Autonomous University of Barcelona](mailto:daniela.gaddi@uab.cat): daniela.gaddi@uab.cat

Abstracts should be ~300 words, excluding a short [100 words] bibliography, and should be submitted by **1 October 2025**.

The editors plan to:

- notify successful applicants by 1st November 2025
- contact publishers with the book proposal at the end of 2025
- oversee the main writing work in the first half of 2026
- edit during the second half of 2026 &
- publish the book in early 2027.

During the writing process, contributors will have an opportunity to meet online on a regular basis to discuss the project, which should help to ensure that the final work is internally coherent.



27th June 2025

Another report calling for restorative options

Dear AARJ member

On Thursday of this week, the **Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)** formally launched the report ***Speaking from Experience: what needs to change to address workplace sexual harassment***.

The report follows a 2020 AHRC workplace sexual harassment review overseen by former sex discrimination commissioner **Kate Jenkins**.

That 2020 review recommended that industry educational bodies, in consultation with the Workplace Sexual Harassment Council, should develop **training** to:

1. build **skills and capacity** on how to prevent and respond to workplace sexual harassment
2. be **trauma-informed**
3. include **content on the nature, drivers, and impacts** of sexual harassment.

Five years on, AHRC Commissioner **Anna Cody** notes that it is clear more needs to be done to educate people about their rights and the options available to them to address any complaints about sexual harassment at work:

- “*We know that only 18% of people actually report workplace sexual harassment. The way in which those reports are responded to is so fundamental for encouraging others to report, and also recognising that it serves the whole of the organisation well to have people reporting because it highlights a safety issue or respect issue across the workplace.*
[...]

- *We aren't recommending any additional responsibilities, just that employers understand their responsibilities and make sure all workers throughout Australia have a safe and respectful workplace."*

As always, the question is: *how?*

The new report identifies **ongoing barriers to better worker safety**, including insecure work, a lack of leadership diversity, and **unhelpful workplace responses**.

The report notes that in:

- 2021, the **Victorian Government** released their response to the Ministerial Taskforce addressing sexual harassment in Victorian workplaces, and accepted, in principle, the recommendation that the Victorian Government explore [options to pilot 'a restorative justice service model' to address workplace sexual harassment](#);
- 2024, the **Australian Law Reform Commission** made recommendations about [restorative justice in relation to sexual assault and harassment](#), and included a specific recommendation for First Nations communities to design, build and deliver accredited restorative justice programs that are free for First Nations people;
- February 2025, the **Sentencing Advisory Council** made recommendations for [restorative justice as a response to breaches of Occupational Health and Safety \(OHS\) Laws](#);

Perhaps not surprisingly then, the **tenth** of the 11 **Recommendations** in *Speaking from Experience* is to:

- **develop restorative justice guidelines** for workplace sexual harassment; &
- **pilot a program** to test the capacity of restorative practice to reduce, and respond more effectively, to cases of workplace sexual harassment.



Australian Association
for Restorative Justice

State of the UK Restorative Justice Sector

8th July 2025

Dear AARJ member

Our colleagues at the **UK Restorative Justice Council** have recently published ***State of the Restorative Sector 2025***, which they describe as a *landmark publication offering a comprehensive overview of the current landscape of restorative practice across the UK*.

The report offers detailed **sector-specific analysis**:

- [State of the Restorative Sector 2025 - Executive Summary](#)
- [State of the Restorative Sector 2025 - Criminal Justice](#)
- [State of the Restorative Sector 2025 - Education](#)
- [State of the Restorative Sector 2025 - Health and Social Care](#)
- [State of the Restorative Sector 2025 - Community-Based Practice](#)

There seem to be many parallels with our experiences here in Australia...



Improving Restorative Practice in Health

9th July 2025

Dear AARJ member

We reported yesterday on [The State of the \[UK\] Restorative Sector 2025](#) report, co-authored by Jim Simon, Chief Executive Officer of the Restorative Justice Council (RJC).

Together with RJC Trustee Joanne Hughes, Jim Simon has also co-authored an admirably succinct argument for [embedding restorative justice into the National Health Service](#) (NHS) to transform care.

Jim Simon and Jo Hughes note pockets of restorative reform across the NHS, with early adopters in maternity- and mental health, and in professional training.

They emphasize that **restorative cultural change** in large systems – including hospitals – requires:

- leadership by example;
- wide and inclusive engagement;
- restorative practice embedded into the system;
- continuous learning.

This list raises the questions of:

- how we **define restorative practice**, &
- *what* should be continuously **learned** – and *how*.

Earlier this year, an international collaborative of 16 authors published an open access paper on much the same topic.

The authors of [Restorative initiatives: emerging insights from design, implementation, and collaboration in five countries](#) note that efforts to implement a [Restorative Justice and Learning Safety Culture \(RJLC\)](#) in health care have been:

- overly focused on *institutional goals* and *supporting clinicians*, whilst

- neglecting to provide the same options to harmed *patients and families*.

Some advocates for restorative health-reform in Australia have been arguing the case for these two related-but-distinct areas of reform:

- **restorative practices** to improve workplace governance

[so that health workplaces are psychologically safe, consistent with ISO standard 45003]; &

- **restorative engagement** as part of a policy of open disclosure

[to link individual recovery with institutional reform].

Similar insights have emerged in the US, where the **Association of American Medical Colleges** (AAMC) initiated the **Restorative Justice in Academics and Medicine** (RJAM) program in 2018. The RJAM program aims to *equip faculty and staff to address institutional harm and improve campus environments and interactions*.

The Duke University School of Medicine (SoM) in North Carolina has been a leader in the program, and has:

- produced a 2023 Scoping Review of Restorative Justice in Academics and Medicine, then
- implemented and evaluated the initial impact of their Duke Restorative Justice training model.

Over the last year or two, those driving the Duke reforms came to realize that they needed to fine-tune their policy-and-practice framework, as the initial framework:

- was not quite accurate *conceptually*; and
- lacked an adequate *suite of practitioner skills*.

Like many Schools of Medicine in US universities, Duke SoM has been enduring swingeing funding cuts, as part of the Trump administration's assault on science, education, and public health. Reformers at Duke SoM are doing their best to think strategically during this crisis. They have revised their conceptual framework to include the insight that:

- restorative *principles* apply across related-but-different **PROGRAMS**;
- these *programs* deploy subtly different PROCESSES.

Many definitions of restorative *justice* imply that restorative *practice* is largely for dealing with **incidents of undisputed harm** (for which an individual is responsible). Yet restorative practices in workplace communities also need processes for dealing with:

- work-teams with a **history of poorly resolved issues**, and
- **complex issues of common concern**.

Australian redress schemes have added a fourth restorative process format - variously called *restorative engagement*, a *direct personal response*, or a *personal acknowledgement* – for dealing with the **betrayal trauma** caused when significant harm occurs *systemically* within organisations.

A collective insight from recent efforts to embed restorative practice into health systems is that it is particularly helpful to focus on **two streams of capacity-building**:

All staff (including leaders) can benefit from the skills of:

- **negotiating agreements** through:
 - (i) appropriately *structured conversations* &
 - (ii) *well-facilitated meetings* to address issues of common concern, &
- **reinforcing agreements**

by providing (iii) effective *coaching feedback*.

Staff with a formal responsibility to respond to conflict and/or harm should augment these foundational skills with the ability to facilitate meetings in all four formats - and those staff can then better support their colleagues to refine organisational systems and staff skills.

Interlinked **Communities of Restorative Practice** can accelerate these reforms.



Talking Together during NAIDOC Week

10th July 2025

Dear AARJ member

New South Wales has the highest indigenous prison population in Australia, and numbers are still increasing.

ABC Radio National asked this week whether connection and culture can reduce the numbers of people from a First Nations background who are serving a prison sentence. Some programs in western Sydney and the NSW Central Coast seem to be having a positive impact on **people leaving prison**, such that they are more likely to remain in community.

In Victoria, meanwhile, negotiations are focusing on how to evolve the **First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria** into an ongoing representative body to provide advice to Government and make decisions over matters that affect First Peoples.

One of this year's NAIDOC Week events in Victoria was a gathering to report on **progress of the Lotjpadhan program**, initiated by Aunty Lois Peeler. The program - which gives people a voice and agency in early, effective, supportive intervention, case-by-case - aims to reduce the number of **people entering prison**.

Lotjpadhan, which means "Talking Together" in the Yorta Yorta language, is a community-led and culturally grounded healing program that brings together individuals, families, and other community members through **restorative practices** and Aboriginal ways of **knowing, doing, and being**.

Lotjpadhan operates across Eastern Metropolitan Melbourne, and accepts referrals from the justice system, schools, out-of-home care, and community agencies. *Lotjpadhan* also accepts referrals directly from community members.

A key part of the *Lotjpadhan* program is the opportunity to participate in a **group conference**, in which a skilled facilitator helps participants to:

- *make sense of their situation - together,*

then

- decide - together - *how to improve it.*

Their agreement can *coordinate the efforts of community members* and any supporting *professionals* as they work to address challenges that may include homelessness, family violence, or substance use.

Reformers are confident that many lessons from *Lotjpadhan* will be widely transferable to other regions.

The [Lotjpadhan brochure](#) is available here



RJ as Human Right

21st July 2025

Dear AARJ member

Our colleagues at the **European Forum for Restorative Justice** (EFRJ) are preparing their campaign for this year's international [**Restorative Justice Week**](#) (16-22 November 2025).

They have proposed the theme of **Restorative Justice as Human Right** – and have invited any **members of our Association** who may be interested in collaborating to **complete this very short [<#RJWeek '25 preparatory survey](#)** by this **Friday (July 25)**.

Consistent with this year's theme, two active EFRJ members, Professors **Ian Marder** and **Mart Susi**, have written a journal article on "[*Conceptualising and assessing a human right to access restorative justice in European criminal law*](#):

Professors Marder and Susi hope that their article may trigger a discussion of how this new human right can be inserted into European criminal law, especially in the revised *Victims' Rights Directive*, to *bring the dream of a right to access restorative justice closer to reality*.

They note:

- The 2022 [**Cartagena Declaration on the Human Right to Restorative Justice**](#), issued by the IV. Latin American Congress of Restorative Justice may prompt legislative work in Latin America and elicit a more creative and progressive dialogue on this subject in Europe and other continents.
- The European Union's **Victims' Rights Directive** of 2012 described restorative justice as '*any process whereby the victim and the offender are enabled, if they freely consent, to participate actively in the resolution*

of matters arising from the criminal offence through the help of an impartial third party'.

- A **2018 Recommendation of the Council of Europe** adopted this definition with the small but important difference of replacing the phrase '*victim and offender*' with '*those harmed by crime, and those responsible for that harm*'. This definitional change:
 1. expands the potential beneficiaries to include people aside from the direct victim or direct perpetrator in a given case
 2. means that direct victims or perpetrators could participate in a restorative process in the absence of the other person if a relevant indirect beneficiary can be found to participate.

The 2018 Council of Europe definition solves the universality challenge emerging from the voluntariness of the process.

This is not a right to restorative justice *per se*, because it does not require a service to be available – only that victims *be made aware of available services*.

The choice of conceptual framework has far-reaching consequences for human rights architecture. The contributors to the 2020 ***Cambridge Handbook on New Human Rights*** concluded that:

All the new human rights can be traced to some uncontested, globally accepted, and long-standing human right norm or multiple norms in conjunction, which provide an overarching conceptual framework for the emergence of any new human rights claim.

Professors Marder and Susi conclude:

- The right of access to restorative justice can be validated as a self-standing human right, a procedural right – a derivate from the **right to privacy**, in particular its autonomous concept of the **right to reputation**, and from the **right to an effective remedy**.
- The **right to an effective remedy** is a procedural fundamental right, guaranteeing to everyone whose rights and freedoms are violated an effective remedy before a national authority.

It is only a challenge of political will, therefore, to include such a right in European criminal law.



Revenge as an Addiction

22nd July 2025

Dear AARJ member

An astrophysicist, a comedian, and a footballer-turned-broadcaster interview a lawyer-turned-psychiatrist.

This could be the premise of an unfunny joke - or a surreal episode in the next series of *Ted Lasso*.

In fact, it is an illuminating recent episode of *StarTalk*, the long-running podcast on science, comedy, and popular culture hosted by astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson and comedian Chuck Nice, joined here by Gary O'Reilly.

The trio interview **James Kimmel Junior**, now an Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine, who has just published *The Science of Revenge*.

James Kimmel's new book focuses on **the neurobiology of revenge**, whereby various forms of hurt activate the human pain-and-affect systems. Revenge offers a form of (fleeting) relief from that pain-and-distress.

Indeed, the cycle of <rage ⇒ revenge ⇒ pseudo-resolution [then] ⇒ repeat> is very familiar to many of us in the helping professions.

Much of *The Science of Revenge* involves examples of how *forgiveness* can:

- deactivate the pain network,
- remove the reward of revenge, and
- activate self-control.

Early in their discussion, Neil deGrasse Tyson suggests that understanding **revenge-seeking as an addiction** is a novel idea. It is certainly is a useful framing.

The quest for revenge can indeed become addictive for individuals - and for groups, including national populations.

James Kimmel suggests that the general population may be ahead of most academics in accepting this framing, and perhaps also ahead of many politicians, lawyers, media professionals - and influencers. However, awareness of the dangers of addictive revenge seems to be growing – perhaps rapidly.

Early in their *StarTalk* discussion, Chuck Nice rightly emphasises that *vengeful violence is a public health issue*.

Neil deGrasse Tyson concludes with the suggestion that *we are all accountable for the behaviour of the one*.

These comments capture **a tension** - throughout the discussion, and indeed the book - **between focusing on the individual and on the collective**, particularly in:

- understanding revenge as [a] an evolved adaptive strategy at the core of in-group – out group **psychology** or as [b] a ubiquitous political **ideology**;
- controlling “**revenge cravings**” through [a] individual work or through [b] public health campaigns and schools programs.

Strangely, neither the discussion nor the book mention restorative practice – which:

- can address the psychology *and* ideologies of revenge;
- can support individual *and* public health approaches; &
- is entirely consistent with findings from evidence-based policing.

That research evidence clearly shows that if policy-makers wish to *increase* crime rates, they should invest in "scared straight"-type programs, and transfer young people to the adult criminal justice system.

For those **policy-makers who wish to decrease crime rates**, the most effective activities are:

- various forms of **target hardening**;
- forms of individual therapy; &
- **restorative justice conferencing**

Unfortunately, restorative justice conferencing remains poorly understood, and insufficiently widely-practised, despite the evidence that it can:

- markedly *reduce reoffending*;
- enable *healing* for those affected by crime;
- strengthen (micro- and meso-) communities.

As recent research has confirmed, a key reason for the efficacy of the group conferencing process in justice system programs seems to be, that it:

- enhances informal social controls;
- functions as a form of **therapy** for all participants, including those directly-harmed.

Restorative programs use the group conference process as mechanism that *can* support forgiveness as one part of *setting relations right*.

A person who has been harmed may *choose* to forgive - but they should not be pressured to do so, and nor does the process require them to.

The factor that most transforms conflict into cooperation is involving communities-of-care in a well-facilitated process.

It is perhaps not surprising that it is *StarTalk*'s resident comedian who stresses this key point:

- *Vengeful violence remains a pressing public health issue.*



Working With

24th July 2025

Dear AARJ member

In 2021, the independent UK think tank **New Local** (formerly the New Local Government Network) published ***The Community Paradigm: Why public services need radical change and how it can be achieved.***

One of the paper's co-author's, **Adam Lent**, is now a Senior Consultant in the Leadership and Organisational Development team of **The King's Fund**, an independent charity established in 1897 that works to improve health and care in England.

Earlier this week, Adam Lent published a short piece on public service reform entitled ***Doing With: reinventing public services in a time of crisis***. He writes that:

- the public sector 'crisis vice' of high demand but low resource has tightened., while the demand to respond to organisational failures has become surprisingly high in the private sector and has reached extraordinary levels in the public sector.
- centralised statist and market-based approaches to public service reform have both failed, leaving an intellectual and strategic void, which is being filled by the grassroots movement for *withist* change, where reform is [at least partly] designed and demanded by those delivering and receiving services.

What Adam Lent calls *Withism*, Australian reformers have been describing as agencies working with those with *lived experience* in *co-design*. Whatever the name, *Doing With* suggests that:

- the chances of central government adopting a thoroughgoing *withist* perspective are slim. Toism is a foundational element of current parliamentary and bureaucratic culture.

Momentum in his project of **helping institutions to shift their practices** from *doing little-or-nothing* &/or doing *to* /or *for* towards working **with** is coming from **an alliance** between

- those many public servants frustrated by a system they know is failing, &
- those with lived experience of public service failures.

This strategy has the merit of:

- creating change on the ground without requiring permission from senior figures within a system;
- using pressure and momentum rather than persuasion to shift the mindsets and practices of politicians and other leaders.

Doing With lists a set of approaches to public sector innovation that share three mutually reinforcing elements:

- deep understanding,
- versatile response,
- collaborative delivery.

These elements can improve outcomes by:

- augmenting institutional resources with the assets, energy, and insight that individuals, families and communities bring to service delivery;
- moving from a primary focus on treatment-based or acute services to a primary focus on prevention;
- addressing failure demand with systems thinking [and acting].

This still leaves unanswered some questions about *how* to shift beyond familiar ways-of-working in systems that have been designed for command-and-control.

In recent years, Australian reformers have had growing success supporting this alliance of reforming-public-servants and those directly-affected-by-institutional-failure - by increasing both:

- mutual understanding - through redress schemes that offer restorative engagement between those in charge of institutional and those harmed by institutional failures; AND
- capacity-for-action - by learning the core skills for working with, through shared foundational training, on-the-job-learning - and our evolving communities of practice.



Channel 7 looks closely at Justice

22nd August 2025

Dear AARJ member

We recently discussed the Restorative Justice Service that the NSW Department of Communities and Justice has been operating since 1999. The Service, which supports people affected by crime who wish to correspond and/or meet face to face, has been evaluated as highly successful.

A restorative process can only take place after the person-responsible has been sentenced, and once any appeal or civil action has been finalised. Depending on the circumstances, a restorative process can be held while the person responsible is serving a custodial sentence, or is on parole, or after their order has expired.

In a program that went to air last Sunday, Channel 7s Spotlight took cameras inside Shortland Correctional Centre, where Samuel Davidson is serving 15 years for culpable driving that caused the death of Danny and Leila Abdallah's son Antony, daughters Angelina and Sienna, and niece Veronique.

This profoundly sad case has received widespread publicity. Danny Abdallah and Samuel Davidson have already met. Their engagement on this occasion is deeply moving – and

also made awkward by the presence of cameras, and some of the questions from Channel 7's Michael Ushering

There is dissonance between Danny and Samuel's focus on the network of people seeking to heal from this harm, and the familiar media focus on the state punishing an individual. A reflective Deputy Commissioner Leon Taylor seems to feel this dissonance keenly.

Cases such as this, and many more managed by the broader NSW Restorative Justice Service, raise the question of **what justice means in cases of profound loss**.

As Leila Abdallah observes:

"The world looks at Danny as this strong inspirational person and I look at him as someone who is broken who keeps going in his life and never gives up, that is how we look at each other."

Danny Abdallah says:

"Nobody wins. I was at a crossroads in my life that day. I could either forgive and lose half my family, or seek revenge and lose everything in that revenge."

[WATCH HERE](#)



Australian Association
for Restorative Justice

Gender-based violence in universities

28th August 2025

Dear AARJ member

In February 2024, in response to the [Australian Universities Accord](#), Australia's Education Ministers released an [Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education](#).

One of the Plan's seven key actions was to implement a **National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence**.

In December 2024, [National Student Ombudsman legislation](#) was passed Parliament.

On Monday this week (25 August 2025), the [Universities Accord \(National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence\) Bill 2025](#) (the **Bill**) passed Parliament:

The Bill creates a power for the Minister for Education to make a National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence as a legislative instrument to:

- *reduce the incidence of gender-based violence*
- *proactively strengthen prevention efforts*
- *improve the response to gender-based violence; and*
- *hold higher education providers accountable for their performance, including in student accommodation.*

The National Code will set standards and requirements that higher education providers registered with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency must meet to proactively prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

Under the National Code, higher education providers will be required to take evidence-based steps to prevent gender-based violence, including providing education and training to students and staff.

The National Code will be a legislative instrument and will mandate accountability at the highest level, require a whole-of-organisation prevention and response plan to drive cultural change, and make sure victim-survivors are respected and supported.

The National Code will apply to student accommodation that a higher education provider owns and operates, controls or is affiliated with. The Code will come into effect for [Table A and Table B providers](#) [i.e. all universities] on 1 January 2026.

*The National Code will be implemented by a new specialist **Gender-based Violence Reform Branch** in the Department of Education.*

This Branch will [...] support providers by **sharing best practice** across the sector, and **gather data** on gender-based violence in higher education.

Restorative practice, with its evidence-base for improving the *response* to gender-based violence, and for proactively *strengthening* prevention efforts, has much to offer this reform initiative.

However, as the research literature indicates, the first of multiple barriers to adoption-and-implementation is *knowing and being informed what restorative practice is*. Then there's knowing *how to do it...* As [recent research confirms](#):

- *extensive reactive interventions and mandatory training* [alone] do not lead to *proactive discussions* aimed at preventing similar issues in the future.

To realise the broader promise of restorative practice in universities will require an accurate mindset, and corresponding skillset from restorative *justice*, restorative *practices*, and restorative *engagement*.

There is an evidence-base for what does and does not work when working to implement restorative practice across the key [categories of student-, academic-, organisational-, and staff-affairs](#) - although, as those of our members who work in &/or with universities will know, some key evidence is not [yet] in the formal literature.

We trust that the team in the new Gender-based Violence Reform Branch will do their homework, developing not only guidelines for *administration*, but also a **system for implementing restorative programs**, such that students and staff **acquire the requisite skills in process facilitation and other restorative practices**, and so can help to improve prevention and response efforts across our troubled higher education system.



A Saturation Model to reduce gender-based violence

18th September 2025

Dear AARJ member

Earlier today (Thursday, September 18th), the Victorian Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, **Natalie Hutchins**, together with **Respect Victoria** and the **Ballarat Foundation**, launched **Respect Ballarat**. This initiative, formerly known as the **Ballarat saturation model**, will support projects to promote respect and equality.

The report of South Australia's Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, released a month earlier (August 19th), cites the Ballarat saturation model in recommending that:

The South Australian government, in partnership with local government, community members and community organisations, design and establish a primary prevention saturation model for South Australia.

The success of Respect Ballarat, and any comparable programs in South Australia, will depend significantly on the extent to which participating schools, sporting clubs, early childhood services, new parenting spaces, and workplaces can augment awareness-raising with capacity-building.

As Benita Kolovos reports in *The Guardian*, all 62 schools in-and-around Ballarat have committed to delivering the Victorian state government's respectful relationships education program. Meanwhile, many couples raising children in Ballarat report difficulties in building equal partnerships; leadership in local workplaces remains male-dominated; efforts to promote inclusion in sport, which is "woven into the culture", have not yet significantly minimised "*misogyny, homophobia and excusing of violence on and off the field*".

In addition to establishing a primary prevention saturation model, the 700-page South Australia Royal Commission Report includes 135 other recommendations. The **136 recommendations**, designed to effect generational reform, are grouped in key themes that include:

- **Structural reform** focused on creating a cohesive and effective system;
- Increasing the **awareness and visibility** of domestic, family, and sexual violence [...];
- Supporting **safe help-seeking** and access to **crisis response**;
- Strengthening **focus on people who use violence** through **programs** and legislative reform;
- Building **holistic supports for survivors** that focus on longer-term recovery and healing; &
- Establishing **a strong foundation for prevention**.

Yet remarkably, given the available evidence base, the report notes that:

The Commission [...] is mindful of the need to consider formalised restorative justice alternatives, [but] prioritised the identification of mechanisms to make the existing justice system work better.

Chapter 5 of the South Australian RCFV report allows:

Following implementation of the Commission's recommendations concerning the justice system [...], it would be open to the South Australian government to consider piloting a restorative justice scheme for domestic, family, and sexual violence, or sexual violence only.

Potential options for a restorative justice pilot could be linked with the alternative reporting pathway for sexual violence [...], or with the expanded Abuse Prevention Program and pilot diversionary scheme.

A closer reading of many of the report's recommendations indicates significant scope for *adopting restorative practices* in the communities of schools, clubs, early childhood services, families, and workplaces - without having to wait until *all the Commission's recommendations concerning the justice system have been implemented*.

Behavioural change requires augmenting the knowing *about* achieved through *awareness-raising* with *capacity-building* for knowing *how to* - and, in this case, how to provide *restorative practices as practical mechanisms for better managing relationships*.

Members of the Ballarat community, working together through Respect Ballarat, can perhaps now help demonstrate *how to...*



UK Churches Restorative Practice Network

2nd October 2025

Dear AARJ member

Conversation not confrontation:

strengthening relationships and navigating conflict in churches

At an event hosted by the Mint House on Wednesday 12th November, the Reverend Jo Williams will describe how restorative practice offers a transformative approach to conflict in churches, and can also support engagement with local communities through peacebuilding and relationship building.

Jo Williams is Joint Minister of Blackley Baptist Church in West Yorkshire, and Co-Director of The [Blackley Centre for Peace and Reconciliation](#).

This event marks the launch of a newly established **Churches Restorative Practice Network**, which seeks to draw together church leaders and members in the UK who are interested in developing restorative practice in churches, and to equip and support church leaders to enhance their skills to facilitate healing and reconciliation in their congregations.

This **online** event will be held on Zoom.

Wednesday 12th November

UK time: 12:00 pm 1:00 pm =

AEDT: 11:00 pm to midnight

[REGISTER](#)

It is interesting to contrast the development of this UK Churches Restorative Practice Network with developments in Australia.

As early as 2011, the [Anglican Diocese of South Queensland](#) began systematically training clergy and lay leaders to facilitate talking circles, to support a culture of collaborative

leadership. Earlier this year, [25 senior leaders, including the episcopal team, attended a workshop on facilitating group conferences](#), and implementing restorative practices.

Several communities of practice are now maintaining this reform momentum, and work is underway to integrate 'skills for establishing and maintaining a relational and restorative culture' into clergy and lay **leadership formation** programs.

Several other Anglican Dioceses are also exploring how **Church Professional Standards Departments** can offer restorative options in some cases involving conflict or harm. These departments all appreciate that proactive 'safeguarding' requires collaborative leadership, and that restorative practices can support a self-reflective learning culture.

A **Lutheran** regional network and **Church of Christ** relational networks are engaging appropriately skilled external restorative facilitators to deal with specific incidents of conflict or harm.

Meanwhile, the [Faith Worker's Alliance](#) (FWA), the national, interfaith trade union that supports, represents, and empowers in Australia faith workers, is actively [advocating for restorative options](#) when a member seeks support regarding conflict with a church employer.

The FWA has now established a Community of Restorative Practice, with members from several denominations meeting every six weeks to consider how to implement restorative practice in their respective contexts.



Australian Association
for Restorative Justice

RJ in Brazil

11th November 2025

During Restorative Justice Week, [New York University](#)'s NYU's [Center on Violence and Recovery](#) will host a panel discussion:

Restorative Justice in Brazil

Four Brazilian scholars, judges, and restorative practitioners will discuss the origins of restorative practice in Brazil, where early pilot projects were supported in three states by courts, in partnership with the Ministry of Justice's Judicial Reform Secretariat and the United Nations Development Program.

The discussion will include examples of practice in the states of Goiás, Rio Grande do Sul, and Rio Grande do Norte.

This is a **hybrid event**:

onsite at NYU's Washington Square Campus or **online via Zoom**.

US East Coast: November 18, 5:30-7:00 pm

AEDT: November 19, 9:30 - 11:00 am

[Information and registration HERE](#)



Australian Association
for Restorative Justice

AAJ AGM 2025

17th November 2025

The Annual General Meeting of the Australian Association for Restorative Justice will be held on **Wednesday 3rd December 2025** from **5:45 pm - 7:30 pm AEDT**.

We will be meeting **online** via Zoom.

Members of the AARJ committee continue to work to achieve a mix of committee membership representing all Australian States and Territories, and a mix of professions that are using restorative practice.

Committee members will provide a summary of current developments in this “restorative ecosystem”, and in our Association’s *Communities of Practice*, then we will hear this year’s **address to members**:

**Dymphna Lowrey:
Program Integrity in Redress Schemes**

Dymphna has several decades of experience in restorative practice. She has been a manager of the ACT RJU, a key member of the leadership team at the Defence Abuse Task Force [DART], and continues to be involved in Redress Schemes. She will discuss the importance of good governance for linking individual healing with institutional reform.

Please advise by Wednesday 26th November if you would like to join us for the 2025 AARJ AGM, and we will send you a Zoom invite.



Australian Association
for Restorative Justice

Manifesto for Restorative Justice and Human Rights

25th November 2025

During the recent Restorative Justice Week, our colleagues at the [European Forum for Restorative Justice](#) launched a [Manifesto for Restorative Justice and Human Rights](#).

More than 30 organisations (including AARJ), as well as individual supporters from around the world, are already signatories.

Our EFRJ colleagues plan to relaunch an updated version of document, with additional signatories, on **December 10th**, which is [UN Human Rights Day](#).

They hope that growing support can help to bring **access to restorative justice** onto the agenda of human rights organisations and promote its integration into human rights strategies.

[The Manifesto is available for download HERE](#)

The EFRJ invite you to **sign** the *Manifesto*, and to help gather additional signatures by **sharing** it through your communication channels.



Art and activism for UK Restorative Justice: The ongoing impact of the play Punch

1st December 2025

The Podcast [*The Rest is History*](#) has issued over 800 episodes since it commenced in late 2020, and its presenters have just completed another tour of Australia and New Zealand. In early 2022, [the UK company that produces *The Rest is History*](#) launched [***The Rest is Politics***](#). Last week's episode of *The Rest Is Politics* [#163] discussed [**Prison Reform, Masculinity, and Restorative Justice**](#).

Presenters [Alastair Campbell](#) and [Rory Stewart](#) both have a very personal interest in this topic: Campbell is best known for his work as communications chief for Tony Blair's UK Labour government, which used the slogan [tough on crime; tough on the causes of crime](#). Stewart served as prisons minister in Theresa May's Conservative government.

[Campbell was expelled from the Labour Party](#) after publicly stating that he had voted for the Liberal Democrats in the 2019 European Parliament elections. Stewart was part of a [group of Conservative MPs suspended in 2019](#) after they rebelled against Boris Johnson's approach to Brexit. He later resigned from cabinet and has since resigned from the party.

In short, both presenters of the *Rest is Politics* have lived experience of the current state of *party politics*, and of the *law-and-order politics* that, by conflating *consequences* and state-imposed *punishment*, have trapped representative democracies in the tedious, ill-informed, and harmful “debate” about *soft versus tough* approaches to crime.

Campbell and Stewart's guests on *Prison Reform, Masculinity, and Restorative Justice* are the prolific UK playwright [James Graham](#) and reform activist [Jacob Dunne](#). As the publicity for Dunne's book [Right from Wrong](#) explains:

In 2011 Jacob Dunne threw a single punch that ended another man's life. Sentenced to prison for manslaughter, he served fourteen months of a custodial sentence. On his release, he found himself homeless, unemployed and struggling to find a sense of purpose. But with the help of others, and with the encouragement of his victim's parents, he managed to get his life back on track.

[...] He has been actively involved with Restorative Justice programmes including the Forgiveness Project, has reconciled with those he has hurt, has earned a first-class degree in Criminology and become a husband and father. Jacob's story is in some ways unique, but it is also reflective of the experiences of young working-class men and boys across the country.

James Graham dramatised Jacob Dunne's experiences in the play [Punch](#), which premiered in Nottingham in 2024. The play seems to be resonating with the *Zeitgeist*: The UK production transferred to the Apollo Theatre in London's West End for a two-month season

that ended last Saturday, while a concurrent season has run at the Manhattan Theatre Club on New York's Broadway.

Much of the publicity for the book *and the play* have focused on *precarious sources of redemption*, and especially the moving relationship between Jacob and the parents of the young man who was killed by a single punch. But like [David Williamson's trilogy of plays about restorative justice](#) from 25 years ago, the story told in *Punch* is about [both relationships between individuals, and the harm caused by institutional practices](#).

A foundational point in the discussion in *Prison Reform, Masculinity, and Restorative Justice* is that all the characters are *stuck* - in much the same way as our *justice systems* and *political institutions* are *stuck*.

Jacob Dunne is now working with the [Common Ground Justice Project](#), a non-profit initiative hosted by the Centre for Justice Innovation, which *listens to people across divides*, and seeks to *uncover a bold new path to cut crime and rebuild trust*.

[Recent research by the Common Ground Justice Project and partners](#) suggests ways out of the soft-versus-tough impasse. The research confirms that [most citizens are open to alternatives - but they struggle to imagine what these might look like](#). However, when people are introduced to [concrete examples that speak to their core values](#), they become far more interested and supportive of reform.

The 2025 report [Course Correction](#) reminds us of the academic evidence that the *certainty* of being caught has far more of a prevention effect than does the future *severity* of punishment. And importantly:

voters who prioritise punishment tend to be less motivated by vengeance than by [the flawed] belief that harsher punishments are better deterrents. Moreover, while this group tends to support harsher sentences for serious and prolific offenders, they also want better rehabilitation.

As Jacob Dunne himself says, restorative justice offers rehabilitation because *it asks questions that help people to identify a [shared] goal or purpose and to find pragmatic solutions*. Restorative practice, more broadly, can address concerns of those who understand themselves as *progressive*, those who understand themselves as *conservative*, and those who feel these categories are becoming unhelpful.

When the time is right, a restorative *process* can empower the people affected to work with each other to *set relations right*. Restorative *practice* includes processes that can improve how our *justice systems* and *political institutions* work to *identify goals and find pragmatic solutions...*



Calls for reform in Canada, and a reform methodology from Canberra

4th December 2025

Dear AARJ member

A report [released in Canada last week](#) urges Ontario's provincial government to [revisit the policy that prohibits the use of restorative justice as an alternative to criminal prosecution](#) in cases involving sexual offences.

The report, by the Women's [Legal Education and Action Fund](#) (LEAF), and the nonprofit [Community Justice Initiatives](#) (CJI), says that **Ontario's Crown policy D.4** deprives people who have experienced sexual harm from choosing *the form of justice that best meets their needs*:

[Bridging Justices: A Critical Exploration of Moratoriums on Restorative and Transformative Justice for Sexual Harm in Ontario](#)

The **D4 guidelines** in Ontario's [Crown Prosecution Manual](#) address Community Justice Programs for adults, which serve as alternatives to formal prosecution, and allow for community-based responses to criminal behaviour. Ontario's moratorium on the use of restorative justice to deal with sexual offences was established in the 1990s, partly due to concerns that restorative justice would be traumatic for people-harmed.

As a result of the moratorium, there has been no incentive to invest in this type of program in Canada's most populous province. But attitudes toward restorative justice have changed markedly since the 1990s, including among those working in the **gender-based violence sector**. The [Bridging Justices](#) report found that:

- 86% of survey participants supported expanding restorative justice options for gender-based violence,
- 89% agreed that all complainants should have such options made available to them.

Bridging Justices recommends:

- changing or **eliminating the D.4 policy**;
- specialized **training** for lawyers and judges;

- expanding **education** on restorative justice to inform the public and the gender-based violence sector about non-criminal legal and community-based options to address sexual harm;
- province-wide **consultations** to determine jurisdictional authority and oversight, and how restorative justice processes should be formally credentialled;
- the government supporting **Indigenous sovereignty** in justice processes and investing in the revitalization of Indigenous legal orders, including community-based approaches to address sexual violence;
- that the provincial government fund and launch **at least four pilot sites** dedicated to restorative justice for sexual harm;
- that pilot programs be “*community-led*” and “*shaped by survivor input*”.

A week before the Ontario report was released, Canada's **Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime** released a 288-page report in Ottawa:

Rethinking Justice for Survivors of Sexual Violence: A systemic investigation

This **Rethinking Justice** report makes **10 key Recommendations**:

1. Fully investigate sexual violence
2. Minimize harm from charges being stayed for a lack of timely prosecution
3. Better protect therapeutic records
4. Humanize cross-examination
5. Offer testimonial aids automatically
6. Provide effective rights and representation
7. Stop redacting victim impact statements
8. Prioritize access to services
9. **Allow restorative justice options**
10. Collect (better) data for accountability

With regard to restorative options, the report recommends that the federal government explore joint funding models with provinces and territories to provide adequate and sustained funding to support *restorative* justice programs and other alternatives to the criminal justice system, such as *transformative* justice.

Activists are seeking access to processes that provide non-adversarial and repair-focused responses to sexual harm. But many officials are understandably concerned by the

suggestion that cases involving serious harm should be referred to a non-criminal justice system program.

Reform advocates in North America continue to draw a strong distinction between **state-run** and **community-led** programs. Much of the discussion tends to conflate features of **program administration** with the nature and quality of **process facilitation**. This lack of distinction between *programs* and *processes* can drive circular discussions about “restorative *versus* transformative justice”.

It should be obvious that safe and effective restorative work requires skilled facilitators. Reform can accelerate when pilot programs are not only *shaped by survivor input*, but draw on decades of collective experience of *restorative practitioners*. This seems to be the aim of the *Bridging Justices* recommendation that *restorative justice processes be formally credentialled*.

Ideally, people affected by sexual harm should have the option of accessing an expertly-facilitated *non-adversarial, repair-focused* process through **multiple pathways**: self-referral, referral from community agencies, or referral from police, courts, or corrections. However, a hard distinction between [harmful] *state-run* programs and [implicitly intrinsically good] *community-led* programs can have the unintended effect of thwarting reform.

As the title of the *Bridging Justices* report suggests, survivors and their communities-of care will have more options when there is an integrated approach to restorative practice across services-and-sectors. Programs that provide effective *restorative* processes, with creative collaboration between state and non-government organisations, can gradually have a *transformative* effect on justice system policies-and-practices.

With notably appropriate timing, the [Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology](#) (ANZSOC) has this week awarded our fellow AARJ member Dr [Siobhan Lawler](#), with her [Australian Institute of Criminology](#) (AIC) colleague Dr [Chris Dowling](#), and former AIC member Dr [Hayley Boxall](#), the **Adam Sutton Crime Prevention Award** for their report that shows how *restorative* processes can have a *transformative* effect on the criminal justice system:

Restorative justice conferencing for domestic and family violence and sexual violence

The ACT restorative program marked its twentieth anniversary earlier this year. This important AIC report addresses Phase 3 of the program, which has been operating since 2018, and has involved the ACT Restorative Justice Unit accepting **cases involving domestic and family violence and sexual violence**. When the AIC first reported their findings on Phase 3 in late 2023, the ACT Attorney General reflected:

If these processes are so effective for all the parties involved, we should consider additional referral pathways beyond police, court, and corrections.

Importantly, the ACT experience demonstrates how the **confidence of legislators-and-funders** to consider community referral to the non-adversarial, repair-focused process of group

conferencing can develop in parallel with the **competence of restorative practitioners**: those program administrators and process facilitators who work with people every day to help set relation right.

As the AIC report reveals, an effective system for continuously refining restorative skills on-the-job not only maintains-and-extends the competence of restorative practitioners, but can also help authorities gain the requisite confidence to support restorative programs, and gradually extend the application of restorative practice to more complex cases - such that citizens finally experience *a form of justice that meets their needs*.



The Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme

11th December

Dear AARJ Member

The [**Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme**](#), which is operated by the [National Indigenous Australians Agency](#) (NIAA), has been extended until 2028.

The team responsible for the **Personal Acknowledgement** element of the Scheme have recently published, on the Scheme's website, [a set of videos and animations](#) that answer foundational questions about the Redress Scheme in general, and about the option of a Personal Acknowledgement:

- [What is the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme?](#)
- [What you can expect if you apply to the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme?](#)
- [What is a Personal Acknowledgement?](#)
- [What to expect when applying for a Personal Acknowledgement](#)

In these four short, poignant videos, survivors who have participated in the Scheme describe their experience, and encourage others to participate:

- [Angelique's story](#)
- [Elaine's story](#)
- [Phillip's story](#)
- [Sonja's story](#)



Magazine on RJ and Human Rights from the EFRJ

11th December

Dear AARJ Member

Yesterday, Tuesday December 10th was [UN Human Rights Day](#), and our European Forum for Restorative Justice [EFRJ] colleagues chose the date to relaunch an updated version of their Manifesto for Restorative Justice and Human Rights.

They also published an [accompanying magazine](#), which includes the Manifesto, and features stories from people who have participated in restorative justice, and from restorative practitioners, policy makers, and a human rights expert. It also explains the background of the [Cartagena Declaration](#) by restorative justice professionals in Latin America.

[The publication is free to download and distribute.](#)

Our EFRJ colleagues suggest: Feel free to use [this document](#) to suggest to others that it is time for access to restorative justice to become part of human rights...