

# Restorative Practices within Queensland Youth Detention

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# Acknowledgement

*I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land in which we meet today, the Ngunnawal people of the ACT and regions.*

*I would also like to pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to any first nations people in the room as well as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander young people and staff we work with each day.*

# Introduction

My name is Sarah, and I am the Restorative Practice Coordinator at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre in Townsville, North Queensland.

I have worked within Youth Justice in Queensland for over 12 years predominately in Youth Detention Centres in operational, restorative justice and now restorative practice roles both in Brisbane and Townsville.

I have a Bachelor of Behavioural Studies (psychology) from the Swinburne University of Technology and was one of five successful applicants in gaining a fully funded impact scholarship from the International Institute of Restorative Practice (IIRP) last year. I have just completed my first year of the Master of Science in Restorative Practices.



# From Awareness to Practice to Transformation

The aim of this presentation is to demonstrate the contemporary restorative practices conference theme ... *from awareness to practice to transformation*, by sharing how Youth Justice, Queensland are utilising restorative practices within their Youth Detention Centres.

Restorative Practices can support the safety and wellbeing of young people and staff; while assisting with the re/**habilitation** of the young people we work with each day. Today I will provide an overview of the implementation and ongoing practice restoratively, with specific insight into the current work facilitated at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, Townsville.

As stated in our policy (available to the public on our website):

*“The department is committed to the use of restorative practices in youth detention Centres (YDCs) to support the safety, wellbeing and rehabilitation of young people. The department also recognises that restorative practices promote staff safety.*

*Restorative approaches provide YDC staff with a relational way to mentor and engage with young people and each other. Restorative practices and the behaviour support framework are interconnected, supporting staff with assisting young people in developing their interpersonal skills and addressing their behavioural needs”.*

# CHECK IN

- Ø If I could get everyone to stand up...
- Ø How are you this afternoon on a scale of 1 (not so great) to five (amazing)? Hold up your hand with the number.
- Ø Now, turn to the person closest to you and find out the reason you each choose this number.

This is one of the ways we check in with young people and staff during couch time, a circle process held each morning, afternoon that includes a check in, individual and group goals, issues, needs and any good news for sharing. Couch time can also assist with problem solving as issues arise at Cleveland Youth Detention Centre.



*Building relationships, pro-social skills and solving problems*

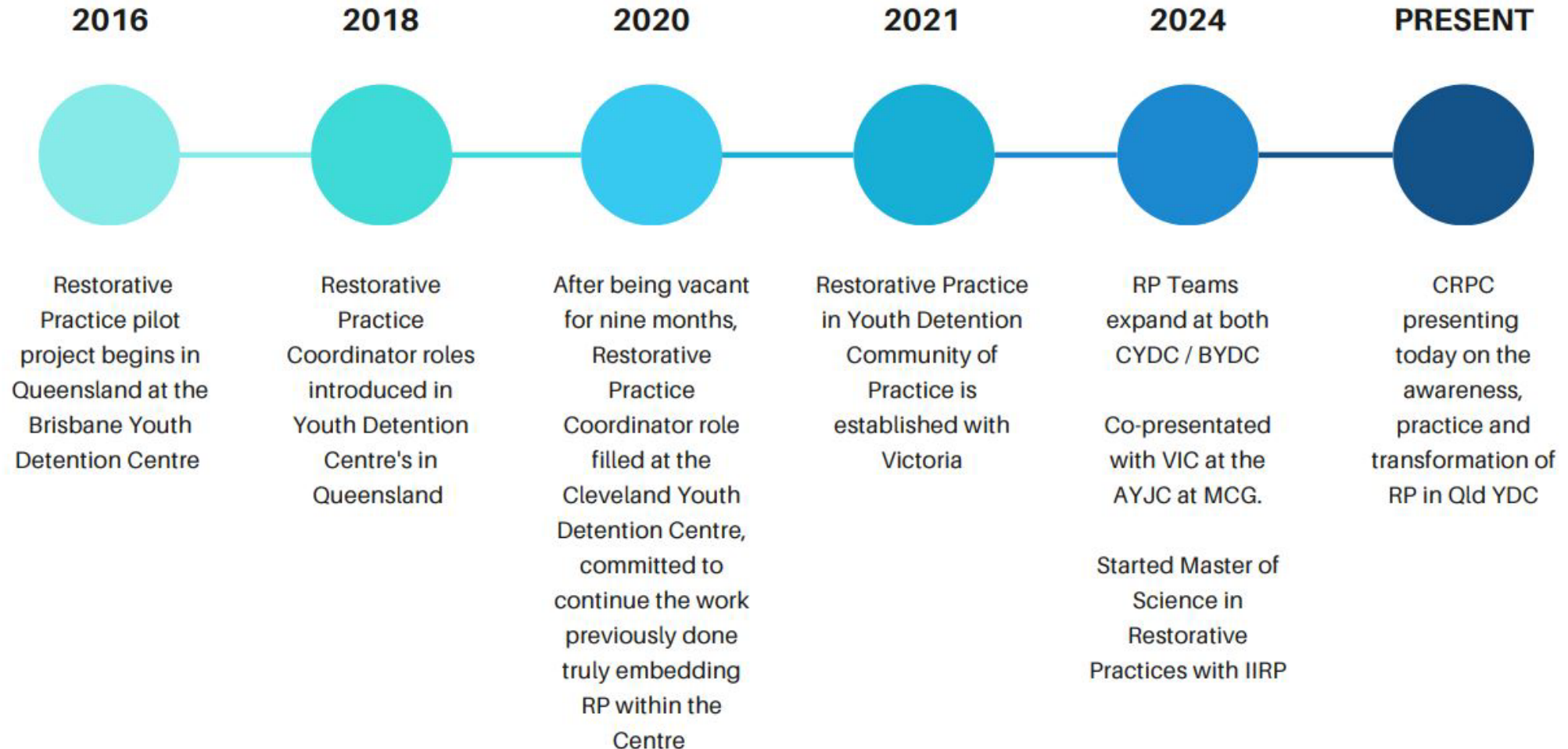
# AWARENESS

Historically, youth detention centres had focused on behaviour management to maintain the security and good order of the Centres. While behaviour management interventions are required to establish safety in specific situations, they do not necessarily address the core issues resulting in behaviour presented or conflict, the impacts and ways to repair any harm that has resulted.

Safe and respectful relationships between young people and the staff working with them (and with each other) are vital, and implementing restorative practices as a style of communication and work practice are a great way to strive toward achieving this.

Due to the success of the police and court referred Restorative Justice Conferences facilitated by Convenors in Youth Justice Service Centres in the community, awareness of the potential benefits of implementing restorative principles into Queensland's Youth Detention Centres saw the creation of a Restorative Justice pilot project.

# TIMELINE





# Restorative Continuum of Practice

Based on the idea that positive relationship building with professional boundaries allows staff to effectively work with young people displaying a range of behaviours. The table below details proactive, reactive and targeted restorative responses.

Staff should use the continuum to effectively engage and communicate with young people and each other to build, maintain and repair healthy relationships through incidental, informal and formal interactions. While some processes may be reactive or responsive to harm, the use of restorative practices can also prevent harm, promote wellbeing and increase safety.

The restorative continuum of practice can be used to support the implementation of restorative practices and tailored for flexible application across YDCs within Queensland.

Proactive ←						→ Reactive
<b>Incidental and informal relationship building</b> Authentic engagement with clear professional boundaries.	<b>Structured relationship building processes</b> Facilitated check-in circles, community building circles or couch time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• build connection</li> <li>• positive engagement</li> <li>• develop important social skills</li> </ul>	<b>Prosocial practice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staff role-model behaviour expectations</li> <li>• promote prosocial behaviour</li> <li>• challenge antisocial behaviour</li> <li>• develop young people's skills and emotion regulation</li> </ul>	<b>Restorative conversations</b> A process for unpacking and understanding an incident or behaviour: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. then</li> <li>2. now</li> <li>3. next</li> </ol>	<b>Conflict resolution (mediation)</b> A three-phase process for resolving conflict: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. preparation</li> <li>2. facilitation</li> <li>3. follow-up.</li> </ol>	<b>Restorative meeting (trained facilitator)</b> A formal process, where a young person is able to set relations right, in response to the breakdown of a working relationship or where harmed has occurred.	
<b>Build relationships</b>		<b>Maintain relationships</b>		<b>Repair relationships</b>		
Restorative language skills are relevant at all stages of the continuum						



# PRACTICE

Couch time

Conflict coaching

VOYCES program

Restorative work

Behaviour appeal

Young Person Meeting (YPM)

Restorative Reflection Workbook

Restorative meetings (mediations)

Restorative Justice Conference support





# Conflict Resolution

Conflict is inevitable in life and in an environment where young people and staff from all different walks of life are in close contact for the time they are staying/working in a Youth Detention Centre.

Addressing conflict can be complex given the custodial environment, with unique customs, rules, and regulations - coupled with challenges relating to young people's emotional regulation and problem solving abilities.

Restorative practices provide Youth Detention Centre staff with a relational way to mentor and engage with young people and each other (*Department of Youth Justice Queensland, 2024*). This approach provides a diversion away from historically fear and force-based behaviour management.

Conflict resolution skills are developed in a range of ways:

- During our two-day RP training
- By facilitating restorative meetings (mediations) between young people and with staff when required
- By coaching, mentoring and co-facilitation of meetings with staff

**IT'S NOT ABOUT THE NAIL**

# TRANSFORMATION

Youth detention Centre  
OPERATIONAL POLICY  
YD-1-16 Youth detention –  
Restorative practice

Young Person Meeting  
(YPM)

RJ Conferences – young  
person support within YDC  
process implemented

Commitment from  
Management for RP training  
of all YDC staff

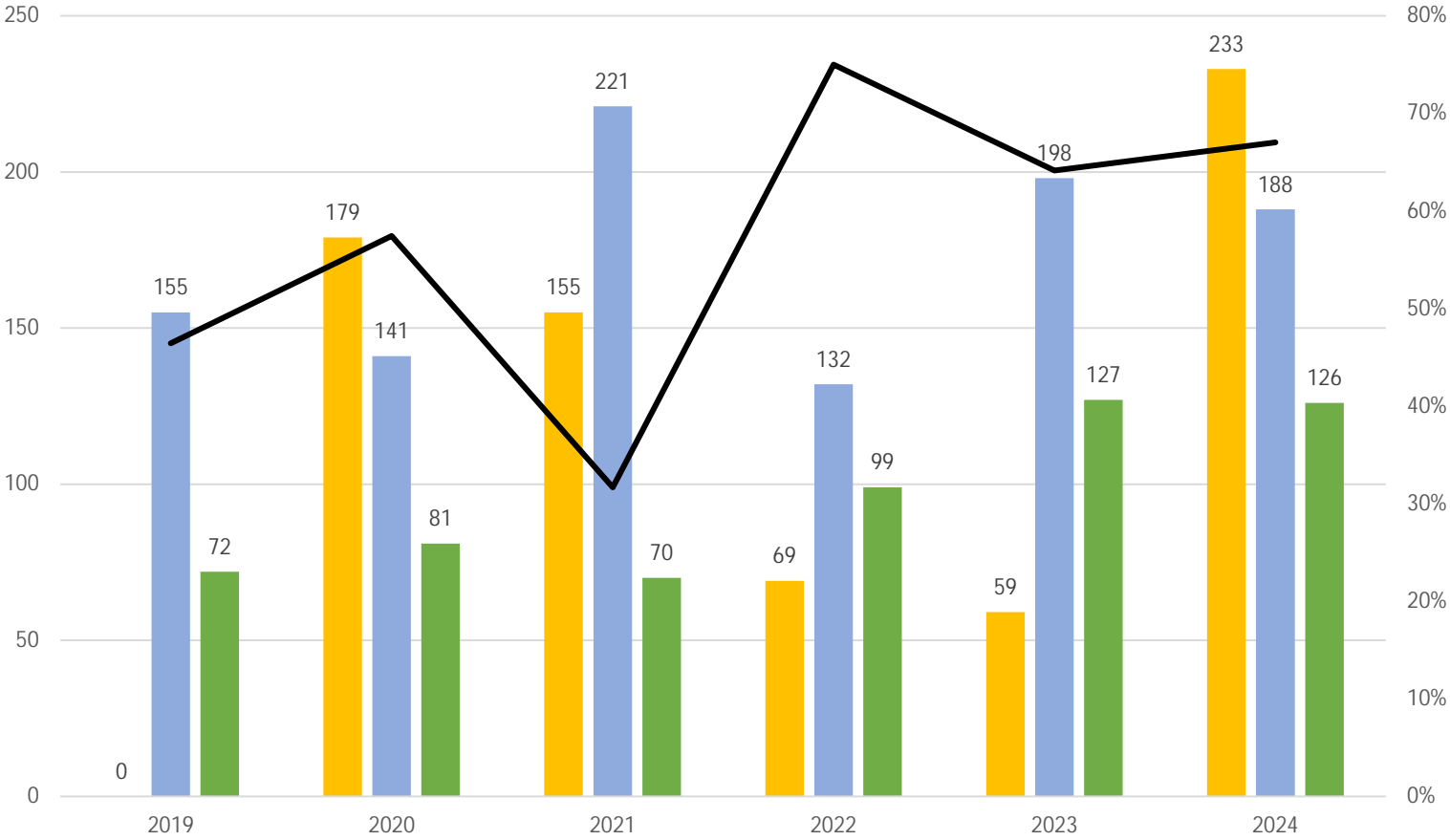
Staff gaining confidence to  
facilitate conflict resolution  
processes as issues arise

Young people running their  
own couch times and  
requesting restorative  
meetings to talk through  
conflict



# Cleveland Youth Detention Centre RP stats

Couch Time – RP referrals received – RP referrals complete – Completion rate



**Young Person Meeting (YPM)**  
 2023 – 9 meetings  
 2024 – 26 meetings

Year	Training delivered to YDC staff
2019	8
2020	18
2021	83
2022	57
2023	90
2024	127
<b>383</b>	

■ Couch Time 
 ■ RP referrals received 
 ■ RP referrals complete 
 — Completion rate

# Future goals

- ✓ Training of all Youth Detention Staff in Restorative Practices
  - Priority: staff directly working with young people*
  - Secondary: all staff with package tailored to each work group (HR/Admin/Ancillary)*
- ✓ Ongoing coaching, mentoring, regular mandatory competency and accreditation opportunities post initial induction training
- ✓ Build RP team staffing to appropriately service the number of YP and staff
- ✓ Expand RP in YDC Community of Practice, strengthening our network of RP practitioners in youth custodial centres across Australia (opportunities to connect at the end of this presentation)
- ✓ Incorporate learnings from the IIRP Master's program. If approved to complete the thesis option, this will focus on the effectiveness of RP in YDCs to continue embedding evidence-based, best practice, solidifying the need for restorative practices within youth detention, the wider department in Queensland and other Australian jurisdictions.

# CONNECTING post CRPC

The Queensland and Victorian Restorative Practice (RP) teams, have a Community of Practice (CoP) for RP within Youth Detention Centres. We meet once a month via Teams to connect with other practitioners, share ideas, problem solve and discuss best practice.

We would love to include more people working in this space, specific to youth detention and community-based youth justice environments, so please reach out and connect.



***Sarah Cahill (Townsville, Qld)***

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# CHECK OUT

- Ø If I could get everyone to stand up again...
- Ø A little different to before, I would like you to raise your hand and give me a thumbs up/thumbs down on how you are feeling right now that it is nearly the afternoon tea break?
- Ø Now, turn to the person closest to you the opposite side to before, and find out which presentation they are going to next?

Thumbs up or down is another way we can check in with YP if they are not super keen to set a goal or are not particularly wanting to engage.



*Building relationships, pro-social skills and solving problems*





**Thank  
you!**