

# Jesuit Social Services

*Building a Just Society*

## Youth Justice Group Conferencing in the Northern Territory

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# Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the lands that we live and work on, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

# Our work in the Northern Territory

Majority of our work in the NT is focused on supporting children and young people caught up in the youth justice system

Draw on practice and policy expertise, having worked for more than four decades in the justice system

Provide restorative responses, and therapeutic and practical supports to help divert children and young people away from the justice system

## Our Footprint:

- Youth Justice Group Conference
- 'Element Two- Restorative Justice' of the Back on Track Program in Katherine
- Policy and advocacy in Climate Justice
- Consortium partner in the Justice Reinvestment Project in Katherine

# Youth Justice Group Conferencing in the Northern Territory

- **Diversion** process functions as an *alternative* to court (as is the case with *police youth diversion* conferencing under s39 of the Youth Justice Act (YJA))
- **Sentencing support** functioning as an *adjunct* to court, with the proceedings and agreement reached at the Group Conference taken into account in sentencing (as is the case with the NT Youth Justice Group Conferencing program, under s84 of the YJA)
- **Post-sentencing healing**, whereby people affected by the offence meet to make sense of their experiences in a way that enables them to move forward.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Moore, DB. and Vernon, A. Restorative Group Conferencing Convenor's Manual, Victorian Association for Restorative Justice (VARJ)

<sup>2</sup> See Larsen, J. (2014) Restorative justice in the Australian criminal justice system, Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) Research and Public Policy Series, Report 127, p.1 (online)

# Program considerations in the NT

1. Tailored to the participants world view
2. Common types and patterns of offending
3. Geographic and climate challenges
4. Case study

# 1. Tailored to the participants world view

## Program Principles

### 1. Do no further harm

The safety of all participants is paramount.

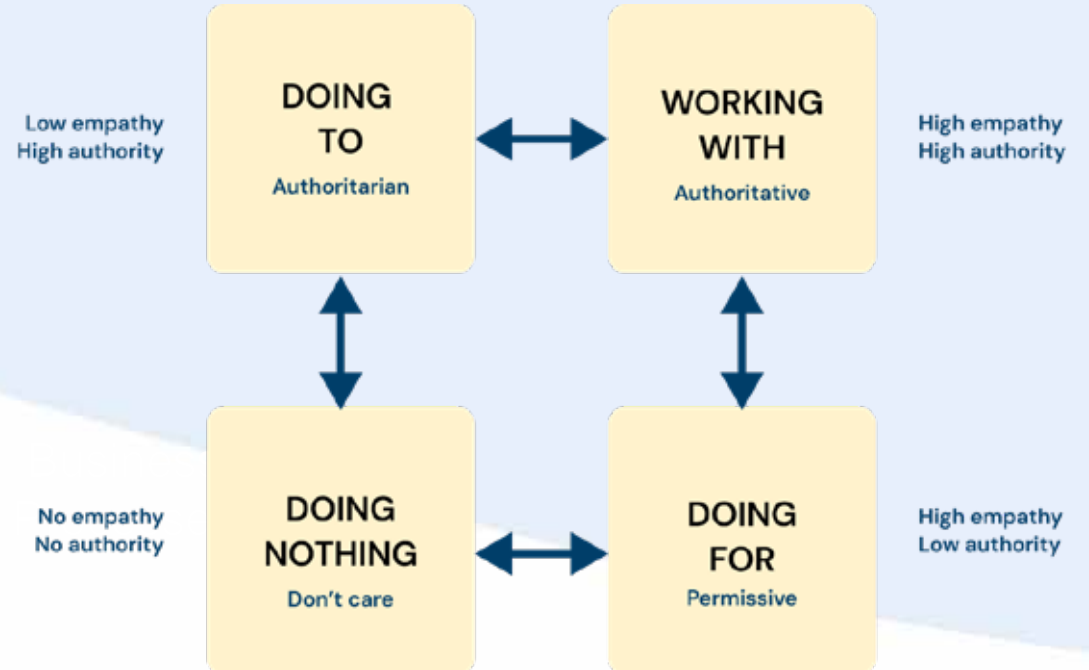
### 2. Work *with* people

Rather than doing things *to* or *for* them.

### 3. Promote wellbeing – by:

- a) Restoring or re-setting right relations (repairing harm), and
- b) Preventing future harm.<sup>3</sup>

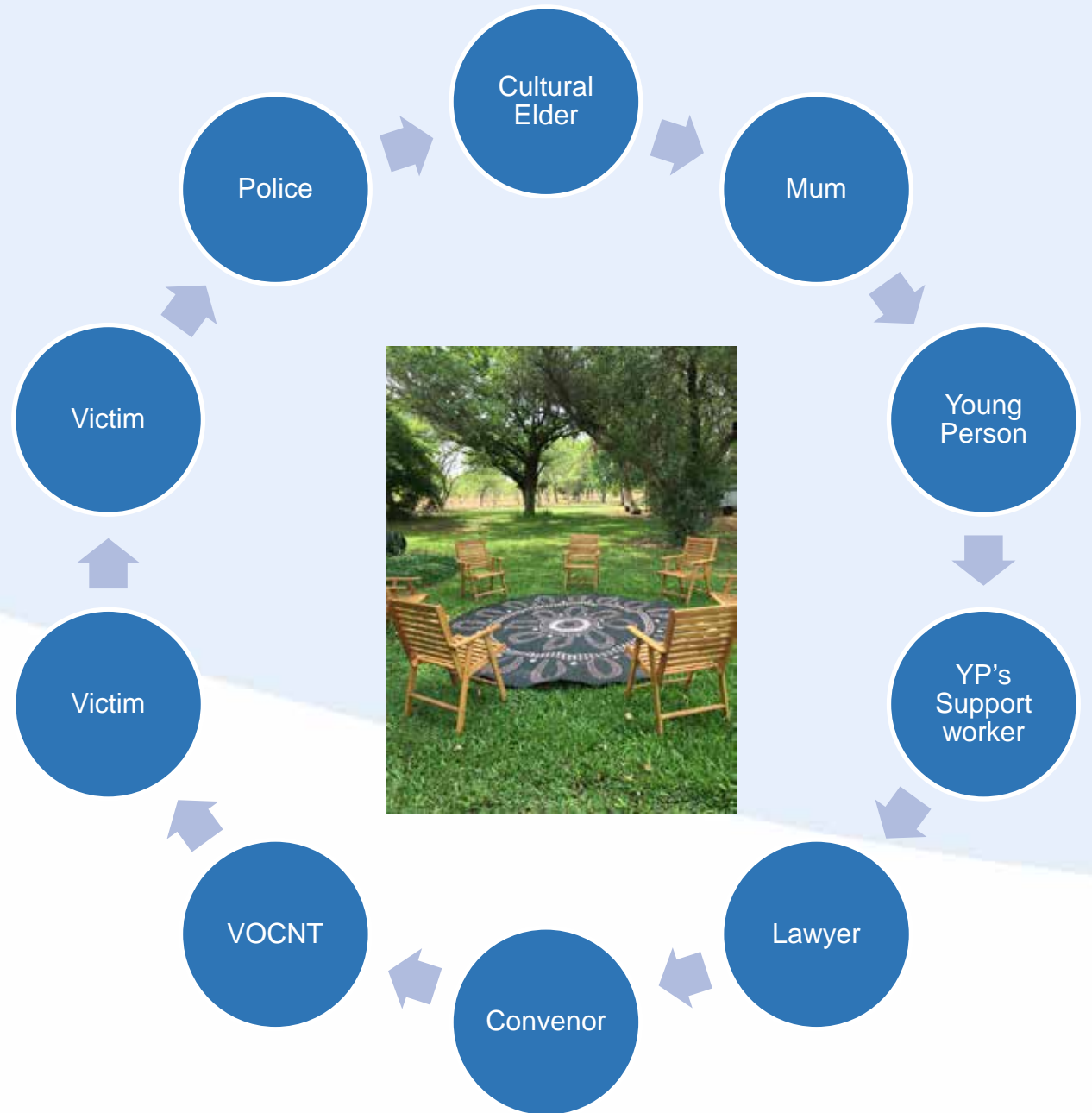
The process of restoring right relations is complex and requires participants to address harm and the resultant conflict both *within* themselves, and *between* themselves and others.



<sup>3</sup> Moore, D.B. and Vernon, A. (2017) Clarifying Terminology: Restorative Justice and Restorative Practices

# The Conference

- The conference takes place in an informal setting that feels safe for both the victim and the young person.
- All participants sit in a circle, providing a sense of openness and inclusion, with the placement of each participant intended to maximise feelings of safety and support (for example, the young person and victim seated next to their respective support people).



# Outcome plans – Artworks for Victims



Hand made cross for a church that had been burgled and vandalised. Cross now hanging in the church.



An elderly lady was too afraid to attend the conference. Her husband attended and said her passion was cats. The apology painting was well received.



The victim, a prominent artist, attended the conference and asked for a painting.



## 2. Types and patterns of offending

Aggravated Robbery - Aggravated Unlawful Entree - Stealing

Unlawful Assault - Unauthorised use of a Motor Vehicle

Unlawfully caused serious harm – Property Damage – Breach of Bail

Possesses Controlled Weapon - Engage in Violent Conduct

Intentionally Supplied a Substance to Another Person



### 3. Geographic & climate challenges

- Darwin to Katherine = 317.1 km  
3 hr 17 min
- Katherine to Tennant Creek = 674.6km  
6 hr 55 min
- Tennant Creek to Alice Springs = 508.2 km  
5 hr 9 min

# Case Study

Bobby



# BOBBY

- A Pre-Sentence referral (8 Weeks) for two offences; Damage to Property and Unlawful Entry
- Young Person lived in a remote community
- Obtained reports and spoke to relevant people
- Identified ways the young person builds trust and relationships and was advised to introduce self gradually

# Preparation

- Attended the community and met Bobbys case worker
- Made arrangements to attend a cooking program with Bobby
- Met his family and spoke to Bobby about any concerns he had about the Group Conference
- Outlined next steps and a plan forward including ways Bobby would be supported at the Conference
- Met with the Victim and conducted preparation work to ensure they felt comfortable

# The Group Conference

- Provided soft toys and emotion cards
- Group Conference still followed a similar process but instead of Bobby talking, a PowerPoint presentation was shown
- The victim accepted Bobbys apology and encouraged him to say hello if they saw each other in the community
- Since the Group Conference Bobby has;
  - Completed two more conferences
  - Works in the community at the music centre
  - Maintained a relationship with the Convenor

Any Questions?

