

# Restorative practice trial in ANU residences

Prof Tony Foley

## **Trial participants**

Prof Tony Foley, Emeritus ANU College of Law

A/Prof Miriam Gani , Dean of Students

Dr Peter Hendriks, Deputy Dean of Students

Prof Miranda Forsyth, Regnet

Prof Meredith Rossner, Centre for Social  
Research & Methods

James Brann, Director University Experience

Susan Helyar, Director Residential Experience

Dr Nerilee Flint, head Fenner Hall

Hannah Leary, residential wellbeing coordinator  
Fenner Hall

Sue Webeck, RRU to May 2021

Joel Radcliffe, Manager RRU

Joss Perry, Education & Engagement RRU

# What is restorative practice?



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## Philosophy/values

Respect

Inclusion

Equality

active accountability

Repairing and preventing harm

Compared with other approaches that focus on breaking of rules, RJ focuses on impacts on people

Empowerment

Responding to harm/conflict (restorative justice):

## Practice

Dialogue/Circles

Trust-building

Establishing group norms

Focus on building, repairing and maintaining healthy relationships

Responding to harm/conflict (restorative justice,

Facilitated conversations)

# The 'everyday' is different: res life experience

- Their new home may be a hall, with different levels of catering, or a lodge with single studios or multi-share apartments
- They may be in a catered hall or may need to learn to cook
- They will relax, study, cook, share meals, socialise and find entertainment with others
- They will live in a community with pastoral care, support and intervention from both fellow students & staff

# Trial in Residences:

- Semester 2, 2020 - pilot in 3 residences (Fenner, Burgmann and Lena Karmel): 24 SRs undertook online external training. 12 completed full training & were supported in implementation by their hall & the Dean of Students office. Feedback suggested very little uptake and training was found to be too theoretical for everyday cases.
- Semester 1 and 2, 2021 – trial across all residences: 60% of all SRs [140/240] given face-to-face training in use of restorative circle in February & July by internal ANU trainers. Initial feedback suggested enthusiastic uptake in several halls, especially Fenner.
- November 2021 – introductory RJ session in training block for 2022 SRs.

# The restorative circle model used by SRs

- The 90 minute training session introduced SRs to the use of a restorative circle including:
  - Setting up the circle
  - Role of facilitator
  - Speaking notes: what is a circle; what you can hope to get out of it; setting an introductory ice breaker question
  - Setting ground rules: safe space; choosing not to speak is OK; wait your turn to speak; what gets said here stays here
- Guided practice on the topic – “What is important to make living in a residential community successful?”
- Guided practice in developing a priority of agreed actions for implementation in their pastoral care groups.

Experience in the trial shows restorative practice was most useful in halls for -

Initial meetings  
with residents

Norm setting  
exercises

Building a culture  
of respect and  
accountability

To deal with low  
stakes forms of  
conflict



# Best use of restorative practice in halls

“Norm setting and culture setting was a big part of the role in the first month or so – we use peer-led presentations at the start of the year on how we behave and how you respect others. Our role is more of about getting a bit of a vibe about how people were responding to that. That was about setting expectations.”

Use of circles for day-to-day dispute management:

“It is helpful in solving things like noise complaints, how we can be respectful in speaking to the person. My wing is a mix of really outgoing and really introverted people, so noise complaints were common and restorative practice was a way of sitting down together as a pod. It helped us with how we understand each other’s boundaries.”

# Difficulties using restorative practice in halls

“Someone would ring me up from some floor complaining that people on the floor above were partying and it’s 10pm and there is a 10pm curfew. [In that case] it’s not really the place to all sit down and have a restorative circle, you just tend to say “hey, can you (in a polite way) shut up?”

# Difficulties using restorative practice in halls

A typical comment was: “I’m not sure that I feel comfortable sitting around in a formal circle and facilitating – it felt like a teacher and student. I’m a bit above them in terms of power and authority, but not to a degree that it felt comfortable [to run a circle].”