

Inquiry into Restorative Justice in Youth Settings

Background:

Volunteering ACT is the Peak Body for volunteering in the ACT and Southern NSW and represents the interests of all community volunteers and organisations that involve volunteers.

An important part of the work conducted by VACT is assisting Not for Profit organisations to establish volunteer programs by providing support in the implementation of appropriate management processes. These processes include recruitment, retention, training and management. An example of this work is the highly successful Volunteers in Policing Program. Volunteering ACT assisted the Australian Federal Police to establish this program and have continued to work closely with them to develop the program to a nationally recognised program having been awarded the National Australia Bank Award for Volunteer Management.

Statement addressing the Inquiry:

The Restorative Justice process with which I am most familiar, utilises the services of a trained facilitator. Given the broad range of volunteer expertise available in the community, I believe that appropriately recruited, trained, resourced and managed volunteers would serve in a most effective and useful role as facilitators in the Restorative Justice process.

Volunteering ACT commends the Restorative Justice process within the ACT education system and believes it will assist greatly in the creation and maintenance of a safer school environment for students and staff alike.

For the process to work effectively however it is imperative that those volunteers selected for the facilitator role are properly trained and resourced as this is a vital part of effective management of any volunteer program.

In addition to acting as facilitators it would be possible for volunteers to be involved in a support role to the parents of children in schools. They could facilitate educational programs that allow parents to have a greater understanding of the Restorative Justice programs in order that there is a consistency of process both at home and at school.

It could be possible too for volunteers to co-ordinate a consultative process with the students themselves to encourage their input into what they could see might contribute to the effectiveness of the program.

Conclusion:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter and to put before you these suggestions from Volunteering ACT.

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