



# RESTORATIVE JUSTICE UNIT

Level 7 HDB 20 Lee Street Sydney NSW 2000 TEL: 02 8346 1054 FAX: 02 8346 1141  
E: [restorative.justice@dcs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:restorative.justice@dcs.nsw.gov.au)

## NEWSLETTER

August 2009

### **A victim-offender conference after an armed robbery**

A young woman and her colleague were working one night in her family's kebab shop. Two offenders entered the kebab shop, one of them armed with a knife. The man with the knife demanded that the till be opened and the money be put into a bag. His co-offender went around the counter and helped himself to a stack of cigarettes. The one with the knife demanded the safe be opened. The victims told them that they couldn't. The offenders then walked out and, once clear, ran off.

The offender who was armed with the knife was arrested many months later after he had been convicted of a similar offence. He was charged with armed robbery and plead guilty. He was sentenced to four and a half years with a non-parole period of two and a half.

About twelve months into his non-parole period he had some dealings with the correctional centre welfare officer. After some ongoing discussion between the two of them, the welfare officer referred Bob to the Restorative Justice Unit.

Bob was assessed as suitable to participate in the programs of the Restorative Justice Unit as he demonstrated responsibility for the offence, victim empathy and insight into his offending behaviour.

Both victims of this offence were contacted. The young woman responded to the letter we had written and agreed to meet with the restorative justice co-ordinator. At this initial meeting Stella spoke about the impact of the crime. This was the third armed robbery at work in which she had been the victim. As a result of this offence she was traumatised and had received counselling. Stella could no longer work at night, in fact she felt unsafe going out at all after dark. She could no longer socialise and have fun as she always had prior to the offence. Stella had also developed a mistrust of people from the same cultural background as the offender.

Stella agreed to participate in a victim-offender conference. Her boyfriend and sister also agreed to attend the conference. The welfare officer and a custodial officer agreed to attend as Bob's support people.

Bob became very nervous prior to the meeting. As the conference began Stella also felt quite uneasy. Bob opened the victim-offender conference, speaking about what had happened when the crime was committed and why they chose the kebab shop as their target. Hearing that it was the closest shop to where the offenders were, relieved Stella of feelings that she had been specifically targeted.

Bob then spoke of how he was apprehended. This was significant information for Stella, as she did not know how the offender was caught.

Next, Bob was invited to speak about how he thought his actions may have affected the victim and her family. Stella then spoke about how she had been and still was affected by the offence. This had a powerful impact on Bob as he heard about how Stella's ability to live her life as normal was impeded. Stella's sister and boyfriend then spoke about how they had been affected by her distress.

The welfare officer spoke about how the offender kept approaching him to participate in restorative justice and how remorseful he believed Bob to be. This resonated well with Stella. The area manager then spoke about what Bob had done in custody. This information was reassuring for Stella as she heard first hand about Bob's progress and the steps he was taking to address his offending behaviour.

Bob offered an apology that was received as genuine by Stella. Stella made a specific request of Bob, with which he agreed as he was keen to make amends for the harm he now knew for sure had resulted from his actions that night in the kebab shop. After the scripted victim-offender-conference process Stella and Bob spoke at length about Bob's family and his future plans.

Participating in the victim-offender conference allowed Stella to make a significant shift; she witnessed a very different side to the offender than on the night of the offence. Participating in the victim-offender conference also humanised Stella and his other many

victims for the offender. In the past he had never given much thought to the victims of his offences, as he had never seen the impact of his offending behaviour on them.

Stella reports that she is feeling much better since meeting Bob. She feels less afraid of the offenders, less anxious and more in control of her life. Two months on, she has even returned to working some night shifts.

Bob feels proud about participating in restorative justice. He feels like he has now made amends for the crime. Bob reports that he could never do another armed robbery after meeting with Stella and seeing how deeply she has been affected.

## Victims Rights Survey

The NSW Department of Justice and Attorney General wants to improve services for victims of crime and would appreciate your comments and ideas.

**Hurry! Closing date 4 September 2009**

1. Go online and follow the links to complete the survey at:



[www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs)

2. Request the survey via email:



[vct@agd.nsw.gov.au](mailto:vct@agd.nsw.gov.au)

3. Phone Victims Services on



**1800 069 054**

**For any other information  
about the Victims Rights  
Survey phone the Charter Co-  
ordinator on (02) 8688 5511**