

Towards Restorative Justice

The Challenges, Promises & Processes of a New Paradigm

Call for Paper Proposals,
Deadline for submission of abstracts - 14th August 2009

**A conference on language, law and social justice co-presented by
the Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics Association
and the Sydney Institute of Criminology.
7th-9th December 2009,
Sydney Law School, University of Sydney**

Governments around the world are actively experimenting with new ways of doing justice. Family group 'conferencing', circle sentencing, native title tribunals, land rights claims, truth commissions—all in various ways attempt to deliver a better quality of justice for those most immediately affected by a crime and to redress the disadvantages that certain social groups have historically experienced before the law. How are acts of repair and reconciliation negotiated in the fine detail of such processes? How do they compare to more familiar genres of police work and legal-judicial practice? Where does the vision of restorative justice begin and end?



Confirmed Keynote Presenters:

John Braithwaite (ARC Federation Fellow, Australian National University) • **Diana Eades** (Honorary Research Fellow, School of Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Sciences, University of New England) • **The Hon Peter Gray** (Judge, Federal Court of Australia) • **Frances Rock** (Cardiff University, School of English Communication and Philosophy) • **Julie Stubbs** (Professor of Criminology, University of Sydney)

Submission of Abstracts (250-500 words)

Proposals for papers (limited to 20 minutes, thus allowing 10 minutes discussion) may be submitted to Dr Paul Dwyer, Department of Performance Studies, University of Sydney (paul.dwyer@usyd.edu.au). Please include with your abstract a brief biography, statement of institutional affiliation, address and email contact details. Successful authors will be notified of the acceptance of their abstract by the middle of September. Authors who require earlier notification for the purposes of organising conference travel support from their institution should indicate this at the time of submitting their abstract.

The Conference Theme:

In recent decades, governments around the world have begun to experiment with new ways of doing justice, either as adjuncts or as alternatives to courtroom proceedings and other conventional legal processes. Often grouped under the rubric of “restorative justice”, these new processes include such genres as victim-offender mediation, circle sentencing, and family group ‘conferencing’. More broadly, we might also consider the way native title tribunals, land rights claims, truth commissions and the like are contributing towards a culture of reconciliation and restorative justice.

Whether or not these processes are able to deliver on all their promises remains a highly fraught question. In what ways do they address the disadvantages that certain social groups have historically experienced before the law? Can they reliably deliver a better quality of justice for offenders, victims and their immediate communities of care? To date, most of the research on which governments and policy-makers have based their decisions has been quite narrowly focused. Evaluations of restorative justice programs have generally hinged on attempts to measure the satisfaction levels of participants, the impact on recidivism rates, the time involved and the costs compared to those for court proceedings. As important as these matters are, if they are the only arguments that ever carry weight, then we are quite likely missing a large part of whatever is ‘new’ about the new paradigm of restorative justice.

Our intention for this conference, therefore, is twofold: first, to encourage greater emphasis on qualitative research (including the use of discourse analysis

methods, broadly conceived) into the communicative processes of emerging restorative justice genres and, second, to bring this kind of research into a closer relationship with studies of courtroom discourse, interviews, interrogations and other, more familiar genres of legal-judicial or policing practice. In addition to work being done by linguists of various persuasions, we would welcome contributions from criminologists and scholars in other humanities and social science disciplines whose research bears upon the conference theme.

Issues on which we invite discussion include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- Setting an agenda for restorative justice practitioners: learning the lessons from studies of courtroom discourse, police interrogations and other genres
- What constitutes a ‘community of care’ for the purposes of justice and reconciliation? How is the notion of ‘community’ defined and mobilised in legal-judicial practices?
- Restorative justice versus retributive justice: a false dichotomy?
- ‘Traditional’ dispute resolution in indigenous cultures and its links (real or imagined) to contemporary restorative justice models
- When truth is not enough for reconciliation: negotiating amnesty and reparations
- Discourses of empowerment and the scope for action afforded to victims and offenders
- Training for restorative justice practitioners
- The limits of restorative justice

The deadline for submission of abstracts is 14th August

Organising Committee:

From the School of Letters, Art and Media at the University of Sydney:

- Paul Dwyer, Department of Performance Studies (paul.dwyer@usyd.edu.au)
- Jim Martin, Department of Linguistics (jmartin@mail.usyd.edu.au)
- Michael Walsh, Department of Linguistics (michael.walsh@usyd.edu.au)
- Michele Zappavigna, Department of Linguistics (michele.zappavigna@usyd.edu.au)

For more information and to register, please consult the conference website, care of the Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics Association: <http://www.asfla.org.au/towardsrestorativejustice/>

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ASFLA
Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics Association



The University of Sydney
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