

TAC Restorative Justice Program

The TAC is partnering with Open Circle at the Centre for Innovative Justice at RMIT University to provide a restorative justice program for people who have been impacted by road trauma.

What is restorative justice?

Restorative Justice is a **voluntary, non-legal process** that can support a person's recovery after an accident.

It creates a safe and supported opportunity for:

- **Those harmed** to share their story, gain understanding and seek acknowledgement
- **Those responsible** to reflect, express remorse and take steps towards accountability and growth.

The process recognises the emotional and psychological impact of the accident and aims to repair harm, **regardless of who was at fault**.

How can I identify clients who might benefit?

As a healthcare provider or legal professional, you play a key role in identifying clients who may benefit from restorative justice.

Clients may be suitable if they express:

- **A desire for communication** – interest in speaking with, or hearing from, the other party involved
- **Unresolved emotions** – feelings such as anger, guilt, grief or needing closure
- **A wish for acknowledgement** – wanting the harm they experienced to be recognised
- **Openness to apology or forgiveness** – believing that this could be meaningful, while being open to the idea that outcomes vary
- **A readiness to heal** – wanting to move forward emotionally
- **An interest in prevention** – wanting to share their story to help others or promote road safety.

Who is suitable?

All TAC clients can explore the program. Suitability is assessed by a **TAC Restorative Justice Coordinator** and **Open Circle** based on:

- **Voluntary participation.** For facilitated dialogue, both parties must agree for any communication to take place.
- **Confidentiality.** The process is private and safeguarded.
- **Readiness and safety.** The program must be safe and beneficial for everyone involved.
- **Clarity and legal considerations.** Dialogue can only proceed when there is a shared understanding of the harm that occurred. In some cases, ongoing legal proceedings or disputes may impact readiness or require the process to pause.

How to refer a client

1. **Discuss the program.** Introduce the idea and how it may support your client's justice needs.
2. **Gain consent.** Ensure your client is comfortable with sharing information.
3. **Submit a referral:**
 - Complete the Restorative Justice Enquiry Form, or
 - Call the TAC on 1300 654 329.

What happens next?

- The **TAC Restorative Justice Coordinator** will contact your client to discuss the program.
- If your client is interested and the program aligns with their needs, they will be referred to Open Circle.
- Open Circle will arrange a meeting to explore their situation and potential next steps.

Learn more at tac.vic.gov.au/restorative-justice or email restorative_justice@tac.vic.gov.au

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Understanding justice needs

Restorative justice supports a person's **justice needs** – what they may need to feel acknowledged, heard or supported following road trauma. These are different from therapeutic, legal, financial or health needs and often relate to the emotional impact of the accident and its effect on relationships.

If your client was harmed in the accident, they may need to:

Be involved in addressing the impact of the accident

Tell their story and explain how the accident has affected their life

Feel believed and have their experience acknowledged

Understand more about what happened and why

Have the harm recognised by the person responsible

Repair relationships with family, friends or others impacted

Help others by sharing their story to raise awareness or promote road safety

Feel a sense of resolution that the harm has been acknowledged and their needs have been addressed

Honour someone's memory if a loved one died in the accident.

If your client was responsible for the accident, they may need to:

Offer an apology or express remorse for the harm caused

Acknowledge the impact of the accident on others

Answer questions or provide information the other person may be seeking

Take responsibility for their role in what happened

Repair relationships that were affected

Reflect and learn from the experience so it can lead to growth or help others avoid similar harm.

What can your client expect?

The program is designed to meet your client's individual needs and offer a safe, supported space for healing. Participation is always voluntary and the client remains in control – they can engage at their own pace and in a way that aligns with their recovery journey.