

# Youth justice group conferencing case study

Amos\*, 17 years old, Darwin

## Context

Amos is 17 year old boy living in Darwin. One night, distressed and angry following an argument between his parents, Amos left his home and broke into a local community centre, spraying graffiti and setting fire to the bins. Amos was charged with trespass and intentionally causing damage to property. He was ordered by the Court to participate in a Youth Justice Group Conference.

## The Conference

Amos was anxious about attending the Conference but was committed to making amends, and worked closely with the Jesuit Social Services Group Conference Convenor to prepare for the day.

In his meetings with the Convenor to prepare for the conference, Amos had the opportunity to explain the context for his actions. He also explained that the graffiti he wrote expressed his concern for the state of the world. He acknowledged that many people had been affected by his actions and wanted to make up for what he had done in a way that was meaningful to those affected.

The conference was attended by the building owner and community members who use the centre regularly, accompanied by a Victim Support Officer from Victims of Crime NT. Amos attended, supported by his cousin and support worker. His lawyer and Youth Outreach and Reengagement Officer (YOREO) also attended.

At the conference, Amos spoke honestly about his actions. He heard from the building owner and community members about how it affected them, including the time and cost involved in cleaning up the graffiti and repairing the fire damage, the loss to the community groups who weren't able to use the centre while it was being cleaned up, and their anxiety that something like this might happen again. Amos apologised at the conference for the damage and distress caused.

The conference was an opportunity for all participants to agree on how they could move forward together. Amos committed to writing an apology and a promise to the building owner that he would not trespass or cause damage like this again. At the suggestion of the building owner, he also agreed to spending 50 hours helping out with the gardening and maintenance around the centre as a way of giving back.

To help him stay on track, Amos agreed to continue to work with his support worker and YOREO, focusing on getting a job. To help him manage mental health concerns, Amos committed to continuing to see his doctor and reaching out to people for support when he is upset and overwhelmed, rather than expressing his feelings in more harmful ways.



## After the conference

Amos has followed through with his commitment to helping out at the community centre, turning up every week. Feedback from the community groups who have used the centre indicates they have been very impressed with how diligently he has worked, taking pride the garden and his maintenance jobs. Amos has also completed his apology letter to the building owner, who was grateful to receive the letter.

With the help of his support worker, he has prepared a resume and is applying for jobs, he is also learning to drive, to help him with his goal of gaining employment. The group conference was a positive experience for Amos and he has continued on a positive path.

**“We have been running these Conferences in the NT since 2017, and I have lost count of the number of young people who have switched to a better path as a result of this process.”**

Julie Edwards, CEO, Jesuit Social Services

**Name:** Amos

**Age/Gender:** 17, male

**Offence:** trespass, property damage.

**Conference attendees:** Amos, supported by cousin and support worker, his lawyer and youth worker.

The building owner and community members, supported by a victim support officer.

**Conference experience:**

Reflection on the impact of his actions, commitment to written apology and 50 hours of maintenance work at the centre.

**Outcome:**

Amos has taken pride in his gardening and maintenance work and provided written apology letter. He is now learning to drive and applying for jobs.

*\*Names and images have been changed to protect identity*