

# Restorative justice 'business as usual'

By John Maslin

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Preventing conflict, repairing harm and making communication respectful and effective remain key goals for the Whanganui Restorative Justice Trust.

And trust chairwoman Jenny Saywood said that message would be a thread throughout this week's International Restorative Justice week.

Ms Saywood said restorative justice had been operating in Whanganui since 1999, developed initially by the local community and inspired by Judge

Andrew Becroft, who is now principal Youth Court judge.

She said restorative justice was now "business as usual" in Whanganui District Court, and was a process to allow victims of crime and perpetrators to meet.

"Legislation now requires restorative justice to be considered in most cases, where a person pleads guilty to a crime. It allows those who have been harmed the opportunity to talk about the effect this harm has had on them, have it acknowledged by the perpetrator and together work towards repairing the harm. It can be a

very powerful and empowering process," she said.

She said that over the years the definition of restorative justice has given way to restorative processes and then restorative practice when used in the wider community.

"Restorative practice can be used anywhere to prevent conflict, build relationships and repair harm by enabling people to communicate respectfully and effectively.

"In Whanganui we're working towards a restorative city," Ms Saywood said.

"We're part of an International Learning Community and

one of a number of cities around the world pursuing this vision."

She said the Whanganui District Council had committed to this approach and many organisations, government departments, workplaces and schools throughout the city had adopted the restorative approach.

"Restorative practice is a philosophy in action. It's organic in that it develops as people practise the approach and see that it is successful.

"In Whanganui we're hoping, and it is our goal, that people will eventually say 'This is the way we do things here'," Ms Saywood said.