



RESTORATIVE CITY WHANGANUI

He waipuketia aroha mo
nga tangata rawa kore



MANAGER'S ANNUAL REPORT

Presented by Steph Lewis, Manager

www.rcwt.nz

Manager's Annual Report for 2024-2025 Financial Year

General Reflections

The last 12 months has been a steep learning curve for me as I have found my feet in the Manager's role and grown in my understanding of how Restorative City Whanganui Trust (Restorative City) operates and the services we provide.

I want to thank the Board and our staff the great deal of support you've all given me.

After an initial few months learning and observing, I set myself some goals to work towards, that also aligned with our Strategic Vision. Broadly, those goals were to:

1. identify and obtain additional funding to bridge our projected budget deficit
2. merge our two existing websites and update the new one to be more user friendly
3. identify and fill gaps in policies and procedures
4. support the growth and capability of our staff and pool of contractors, and
5. grow Restorative City's profile in the community.

I am pleased to report we have made significant progress in all those areas.

Funding

I applied to numerous organisations for additional funding. While not all applications were successful, we were successful in our application to the Community Lotteries Grant and received \$20,000 towards our annual operating costs, including power, manager's wages, and petrol.

Website

The decision to merge and update of our websites triggered a look at our branding as well. I put the questions to the Board and our Team – who are we as an organisation now, where have we come from, and who do we want to be in the future? Does our existing brand reflect their answers to those questions? From the resulting discussions, it was agreed that we should consider refreshing our brand to reflect who we are now, and where we want to be in the future. While this decision delayed the build of our new website, I strongly believe that it was the right decision for Restorative City.

During discussions about refreshing our brand, we met with Senior Kaumātua, John Maihi. We are incredibly grateful to him for his gift of a new whakataukī “He waipuketia aroha mo nga tangata rawa kore”. Our whakataukī reflects the mahi we do in our community, our values as an organisation, and ties in with our refreshed branding.

Work on refreshing the brand was completed in early 2025, and attention then turned to building a new website that combines both the former restorative justice and restorative practice websites. The new website has been live since August and feedback to date has been very positive. There is still some work to do to roll our stationery with our refreshed brand, and to integrate the ability for people to donate to Restorative City directly through our website. It is hoped that by making it easier for people to donate to our organisation this will also go some way to bridging the gap between our current level of funding and our annual operating costs and make it easier to directly appeal to the community and private donors.

Policy Development

In the last 12 months I have reviewed, with the team and Board's support, a number of policies and procedures. I have updated and refreshed some and written new policies where gaps have been identified.

In May 2025 we participated in a Social Services Accreditation Audit. We successfully maintained a level 3 social service accreditation, which is required under our Ministry of Justice contract. However, the audit did identify areas for improvement in our suite of policies and procedures. Work has already begun to address some of the areas identified and will continue throughout the new financial year.

Team Capacity

Between September and October 2024 two of our three accredited Restorative Justice (RJ) Facilitators moved away. This meant Restorative City had one fulltime, fully accredited facilitator working on every case referred to us. This was a challenging time and was a huge increase in workload for our Facilitator/Coordinator.

In February 2025 we contracted a further fully accredited facilitator and since then have also recruited a further four trainee facilitators. The arrival of additional facilitators, while very welcome, has also proved challenging in terms of providing mentoring and supervision while they complete their training and work towards becoming accredited. This has meant our Facilitator/Coordinator has maintained a very high case load to ensure Restorative City meets our contractual targets.

I am beyond grateful to our Facilitator/Coordinator for the grace shown in such trying times and for her commitment and dedication. It was in large part due to her efforts that we met our 2024/25 targets.

In the last year the Board approved purchasing a license for Asana, this has enabled us to create and migrate to an online case management system. So far this has been rolled out just for restorative justice cases and we are continuing to refine the system. In time, it is hoped that restorative practice cases will also be recorded in Asana.

Growing our profile

In addition to the above, and where capacity has allowed, we have continued to maintain and build relationships with stakeholders in the community. Including with the Courts, Police, lawyers, Victim Support, Woven Whānau, Jigsaw, Whanganui District Council, Safer Whanganui, the Social Services Network, and other RJ providers.

Our Facilitator/Coordinator has presented at several community workshops, including the Woven Whānau conference, in the last year. She and I have both presented to new police recruits about the RJ process.

In November 2024, our Facilitator/Coordinator and I travelled to Canberra and attended the International Restorative Justice Conference in November 2024. This was a great opportunity for us to learn about developments and how restorative approaches are being progressed internationally. It gave us ideas about how we can grow Restorative City in the future. The

Conference was also a great networking opportunity and the connections we made there have already proven beneficial.

Likewise, the March 2025 Restorative Justice Conference in Palmerston North was a great chance for all our facilitators to learn more about the RJ sector and build relationships with other RJ providers and facilitators from across Aotearoa.

In May 2025 Restorative City provided a team of facilitators to facilitate the Whanganui District Council's inaugural Citizens' Assembly. A group of 39 citizens, selected at random from the community, were tasked with providing a recommendation to Council about the future of the local aquatic network, including the Whanganui East Pool. Feedback on Restorative City's participation and facilitation has been overwhelmingly positive from participants, Council Staff, and Councillors.

Even with reduced capacity we have maintained strong community connections.

In addition to kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) engagement, I have started working to increase our presence and engagement on social media. I've combined our two Facebook pages, created a LinkedIn profile, reviewed our contacts list and created a Mailchimp account to send newsletters and updates about our mahi. I've also created a Google business profile, that allows us to track the number of people looking for our profile, visits to our website, the number of people phoning us from our Google profile or seeking directions to our office. This has trended up and down over the time we have had the profile.

Financial status

As the Board will recall it has only been a few years since we adopted the use of Xero. However, it was in the 2024/25 year that we began setting our annual budget in house. It took some time and has been an iterative process, but we now have budget templates that are easy to use and track our progress during the year, and importantly, report against to the Board each month.

In the 2024/25 financial year we received a slight increase in funding from the Ministry of Justice. That was comprised of a cost pressure adjustment and reflected that we had negotiated an increase to our pre-conference targets.

Even with the funding increase, our 2024/25 Budget anticipated that Restorative City would run a considerable deficit for the year. That reflected an increase in operating costs, including staff costs, fuel and power costs, and the decision to refresh our brand and website.

However, we pulled back on planned spending, for example on advertising. The departure of and subsequent period, where we had no RJ contractors saw our labour costs reduce, which was reflected in the final total for the year. The funding from Community Lotteries Grant also helped significantly, to reduce the deficit we faced.

We also had an increase in the number of restorative practice (RP) cases which again helped to reduce the anticipated deficit. Though, it should be noted, that given our non-profit charitable trust status we do not make large profits from our restorative practice cases. We make enough to cover labour costs, and a contribution towards our operating costs and achieving our charitable purpose.

We finished the 2024/25 financial year with a deficit of \$203.00 which in the circumstances is I am very pleased with. Attached to this report is our Annual Financial Statement which has been prepared by our accountant.

Restorative Justice

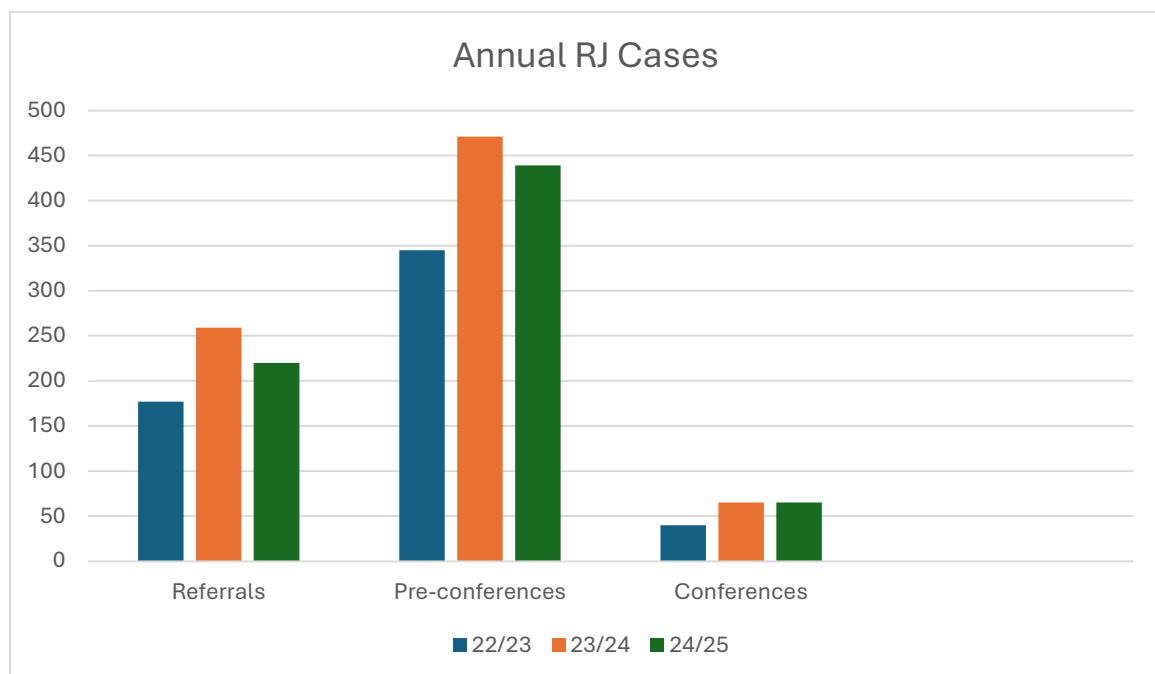
As noted above, the big challenge in the RJ space over the last year has been rebuilding our team and its capacity. We now have 1.5 FTE dedicated RJ facilitators, and four contracted RJ facilitators. Of those two facilitators are fully accredited with family harm endorsements, three have completed the Ministry of Justice five-day workshop and are working towards obtaining accreditation, and one is completing the self-directed modules, and will attend the five-day workshop before the end of this calendar year.

Given the challenges in our capacity over the last 12 months, it is phenomenal that we achieved 100% in both our pre-conference (428) and conference (65) targets for the 2024/25 financial year. That is in large part to the huge effort from our Facilitator/Coordinator.

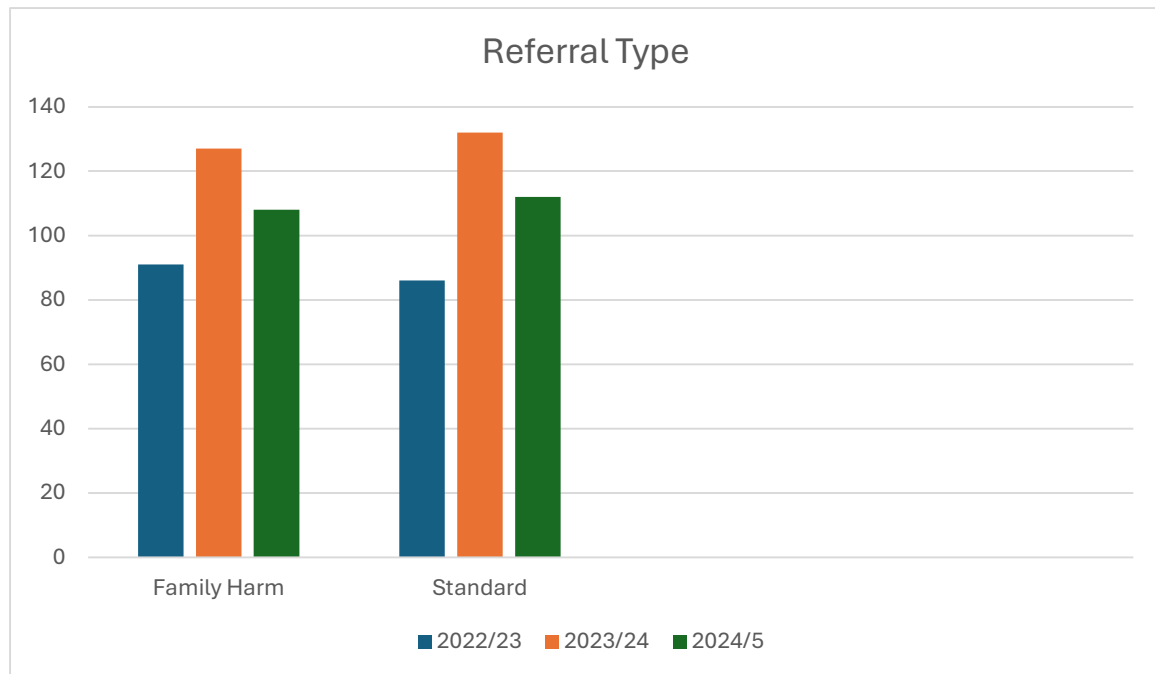
In the coming year, under our contract variation agreement with the Ministry of Justice, our conference targets will increase by two to 67, however, there has been no cost pressure adjustment to funding for the coming year.

Last year saw the number of RJ referrals decrease on the 2023-24 year, but they remained at a level that allowed us to meet our MOJ targets.

The following table shows the number of referrals received, pre-conferences and conferences completed, over the last three financial years.



The following shows the proportion of standard and family harm cases over the last three financial years.



Feedback

We have continued to collect feedback from RJ participants who have attended an RJ conference. Feedback from participants in RJ continues to be positive. This has also been backed up by the results of the survey the Ministry conducted with victims who have participated in RJ. In the Ministry's survey, 82% of respondents said they had a positive experience, and 84% said they would recommend RJ to others.

A sample of feedback from RJ participants is provided below.

Feedback from Offenders:

"It's a good way of manning up to something you have done wrong. It was just good. It helped me a lot."

"I was glad to be a part of it to be honest."

"It opened my eyes a bit more. Made me realise things I never opened my eyes to before."

Feedback from victims:

"I think it was pretty well done. The meaning behind restorative justice is really good. It's ultimately a good way for the victim and offender to meet and talk about the offending."

“It was perfect. [Facilitator] was amazing, [they are] my spirit sister. I haven’t felt safe before but I felt safe there. I haven’t experienced this before. I was heard. You guys are amazing what you do.”

“The whole process has helped us to move on. We were very pleased to meet [the offender] and [their relative] and are hopeful [the offender] will change [their] life for the better.”

“My experience was wholly positive but I can imagine it is not like this for everybody. In my pre-conference I conveyed exactly what I would bring to the table and that I would not be aggressive, but I was very wary of how the offender might react or respond. I can see that it is quite a balancing act for the facilitators to achieve the best outcome on the day. It took me a while to process the effects my words had on the offender, I felt a bit ‘off’ that [the offender] was so ashamed and remorseful after [they] heard what I’d said and that my words had caused that but then I realised that this was what the process needed to achieve. I don’t think I realised the gamut of emotions I would feel during and after the hui and I’d like to have better prepared for that. The process helped me see the larger picture of what was going on in the offender’s life and understand that there are many factors that influence how a person behaves. Although this didn’t excuse [the offender’s] actions of harm, it provided me with some context and gave me an appreciation of what others are going through.”

Feedback from stakeholders (e.g. lawyers, court and corrections staff):

“Thank you as ever for a very comprehensive and helpful RJ Programmes and Report.”

“I met with [the offender] later that day and [they were] very happy to have gone through the process.”

“A great report! Ka pai!”

Restorative Practice

Over the last financial year, we have had an increase in the number of restorative practice cases we were engaged to provide services on. We were contracted on six separate occasions to provide restorative practice services by a range of different organisations.

Notably, we were asked by the Whanganui District Council to facilitate five Citizen’s Assembly workshops spaced over the course of five weeks, with 39 participants in attendance. This was a great opportunity for Restorative City and really showcased the skills, professionalism and experience of our facilitators. As noted above, feedback has been incredibly positive. The Council shared the following with us:

“The inaugural Citizens’ Assembly in Whanganui was a milestone moment for our community, and the role of Restorative City Whanganui Trust was central to its success. The Trust’s facilitation team created an atmosphere where every voice was valued, helping a representative group of 40 community members engage in constructive, respectful dialogue over several workshop sessions.

The outcome gave Whanganui District Council the clarity and confidence to make decisions on the future of Whanganui’s aquatic facilities. Participants and Council alike spoke with high praise for the integrity and professionalism of the facilitation, which ensured the process remained inclusive, balanced, and community driven.

Should Council convene citizens' assemblies in the future, we would wholeheartedly welcome the facilitation and support of Restorative City Whanganui Trust."

In February 2025 we also held our first Restorative Conversations introduction workshop. This was a two hour brief introduction to RP and restorative conversations. This event was run in collaboration with the Women's Network as part of La Fiesta. We were able to offer places for 15 participants, free of charge. Registration was on a first in first served basis. We received interest from a further 13 people who wanted to attend.

While we made a loss on this event, costs were kept to a minimum and it exceeded our expectations in terms of raising Restorative City's profile in the community.

Participants were asked to provide feedback at the end of the workshop, and feedback was exceptionally positive. All but one participant rated the workshop 5/5 and one person gave it a 4/5. Comments included:

"Well structured & well supported! Group participation well facilitated. Thank you"

"Great prompts & skills to use on a daily basis in all situations"

"Loved the content, pace, encouraging atmosphere. Excellent – superb facilitators"

"Very safe space with good information. Easy to understand. Good mix of theory & practical."

"I am so grateful to have been able to attend & share the experience"

Overall, it was a good year for RP. The goal now is to continue to increase our profile and look at ways to expand our services.

Social media reach

Over the last financial year, I have made efforts to increase the presence of Restorative City on social media. This began by combining the two Facebook profiles that existed with the name "Restorative City Whanganui". One account was managed by our Office Manager, and one was still held by a former staff member who had been unable to transfer ownership of the account. Ownership of both accounts was transferred to me, and I obtained permission from Facebook to combine the accounts.

I also created a LinkedIn profile for Restorative City. This has enabled us to connect with other restorative professionals and organisations who are not on Facebook.

Restorative City had a contacts database that had not been used or updated in some time. We reviewed and updated that list and used it to build a Mailchimp account. As expected, when we sent our first newsletter via Mailchimp, we saw a high number of email addresses that were no longer in use, and we have seen a small number of individuals unsubscribe. The number of people reading our newsletters and clicking on links added has been positive.

As noted earlier, we have also created a Google business profile to track the number of people searching for us.

Finally, we have continued to advertise in print media. Most of this has been ads in support of kaupapa that align with our values, for example international day of non-violence.

	Facebook	LinkedIn	Mailchimp	Newspaper Ads
1 July 2024	4 likes 5 followers	0 Followers	3 Emails sent between 11 December 2024 (to 488 recipients) and 1 April 2025 (408 recipients).	3 paid adverts in the RCP and 1 article in the RCP about the restorative conversations workshop.
30 June 2025	Likes: 501 Followers: 38	Followers: 91		

Summary

It has been a challenging year for our organisation. Despite those challenges we have continued to grow, have made significant process towards our goals and have remained true to the values we hold as an organisation.

Notably we achieved 100% of our Ministry targets, even with reduced team capacity. We have a new website, we've participated in new restorative practice opportunities and are beginning to grow our profile in the community again.

There is still much work to be done, the highest priority being to support our newer facilitators to obtain their accreditation and working to reduce the workload of our Facilitator/Coordinator. We have started but have more work to do to complete the policy improvements identified in our May audit. Given the deficit we are predicting in the coming year a greater focus is needed on becoming more financially resilient while maintaining a high standard of service, achieving our contractual targets, and staying true to our charitable purpose.

Once the final steps of our brand refresh and website are completed, it would be good to celebrate this with the community and the fact that our organisation has been part of our community for over quarter of a century.

Finally, thank you to everyone who has supported Restorative City on our journey over the last 12 months, in particular our staff and contractors.