

## Edmund Rice Justice Aotearoa-New Zealand



The Edmund Rice Justice Trust grew out of an Auckland-based Edmund Rice justice group, first formed around 2005. The group included people from India immersion trips, reflections groups, ER Camps and the old Edmund Rice Volunteer scheme, who were interested and passionate about social justice issues. It became clear that a formal structure was needed and so Sam Drumm (at that time, a recently returned volunteer from CER in Timor-Leste), drew up a constitution and invited members from the wider community to become Trustees. Sam became the first executive officer.

Initially, the primary focus of the Trust's work was the support of migrants and refugees and a full-time worker was employed. However, after eighteen months, the Trustees concluded that it was an area where there was good support for refugees from government and many community services. Then with Christine O'Neill, Principal at St Thomas of Canterbury College Christchurch and Canterbury Law community law manager Paul O'Neill becoming Trustees, the Trust's primary focus moved to Restorative Justice and New Zealand prison reform. About this time the Trust with Te Runanga o Nga Maata Waka commissioned *Living on the Fringes* which was a report exploring the issues faced by those living on the borders of Christchurch's post-earthquake red zones. In 2013, Edmund Rice Justice Aotearoa-New Zealand and Edmund Rice International published a joint submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review of New Zealand. This report focused on major issues affecting the rights of the child and indigenous peoples, especially the impact of poverty on children and the incarceration rates for Māori young people in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

### Te Kaupapa Whakaora – Restorative Justice

One of our main works is **Te Kaupapa Whakaora**. Karen Currie (pictured) is our national RJ co-ordinator and oversees and manages the process. In partnership with Victim Support New Zealand and Pathways Reintegration, the Trust offers to victims and survivors, their families and those in prison, restorative justice (RJ) conferencing. Te Kaupapa Whakaora is one of the few programmes in New Zealand that provides RJ conferences with prisoners at the high end of offending. Our current work focuses on the prisons in Christchurch. Most of the cases involve serious crime with lengthy prison sentences. We have worked with situations involving murder, murder of children, rape, sexual offending within families, arson and violence. Much preparation goes into the lead up for the RJ conference with separate meetings with the prisoner and the victims /survivors/ families. The purpose of RJ conferencing is to give a voice to the victims of crime or conflict. It brings parties together to enable questions to be answered, and stories of the impact to be shared in a safe setting. It encourages offenders to take responsibility for their actions and the hurt they have caused. It is an important process which can enable healing to begin for the victim. It gives all those affected by the crime an opportunity to participate in the process. Sometimes forgiveness occurs, but it is not an expectation. Healing and restoration in varying ways may be an outcome. Many participants have shared that they feel 'lighter' or having 'burdens lifted' for facing each other, given the Justice System, in general, does not allow for this process adequately or at all. Karen organises our lead RJ facilitators who have a background in working in prisons and in RJ.



Victim Support focuses on the victim while Pathways Reintegration focuses on the prisoner's welfare. Sometimes the formal conference does not go ahead if Karen or any of our partner groups believe that any of the people involved are not ready.



### **National Project Officer**

In Auckland, our national project officer, Campbell Wood (pictured with NZ Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern), co-ordinates our other current projects. These include Ethical Encounter gatherings, Street immersions, and the Auckland Edmund Rice Reflection Group. Campbell is also responsible for our website and Trust newsletters and preparing reflection resources and justice resources available from the website.

### **Ethical Encounter Gatherings**

The Ethical Encounters are ninety-minute breakfast gatherings for about ten people on a particular social or justice issue. It brings together people of influence from within the Edmund Rice Network as well as experts and practitioners to explore the issue from a justice or ethical approach. These gatherings are not about debating the morality of the topic but rather to try and understand the issues, arguments and different perspectives. Hopefully, people can then better engage in conversations and discussions. The Trust organises Ethical Encounters in Christchurch and Auckland. This year, the Trust will offer them in both Oamaru and Dunedin. Topics have included: Restorative Justice, Restorative Justice in Schools, Cross-Cultural Immersion, Workplace Bullying, NZ End of Life Legislation (Euthanasia), Homelessness, Non-Violence and the NZ Housing Crisis. Topics for this year will be Medicinal Cannabis Law Reform, The Role of State involvement in Education, and Nuclear Energy as a sustainable option for New Zealand.

### **Street Immersion Programme**

Another Justice Trust programme is the Edmund Rice Street Immersion Programme. This programme is for three people at a time, where those participating sleep out and live on the streets in Auckland's CBD for three days. The participants must have left school, already completed either an immersion programme, an Edmund Rice Camp, the ER Secondary Schools Retreat programme or have been a member of an Edmund Rice reflection group. It is not about sleeping rough but rather coming to understand the world of the homeless and the issue of homelessness in New Zealand society. It ends with a conversation with the writers of the report on the experience of the rough sleepers in Auckland. Lifewise, the Auckland City Mission, and ThinkPlace together developed the report.

The Trust also works with cross-cultural immersion groups, providing immersion training and mentoring for immersion leaders and programme coordinators. It has run conference workshops and provided speakers on Restorative Justice, cultural immersion and youth justice.

### **Other Projects**

Through the work of David Ivory, the Trust initiated and seeded the Youth Custody Index project with St Thomas's of Canterbury College. The index is an annual report which monitors young people who are incarcerated in New Zealand prisons. The Trust also initiated and mentored a Pillars programme between St Peter's College Auckland and a lower socio-economic primary school in South Auckland as well a leadership programme involving Edmund Rice Camps Auckland and Murupara Area School. Murupara is a lower socio-economic, predominantly Maori, forestry town in

the Bay of Plenty where there was a Christian Brothers' community from 1989 until 2017. The Trust sponsors the annual New Zealand Edmund Rice Secondary Schools Street Retreat held in Christchurch and assisted in the construction of the programme.

To find out more about the Edmund Rice Justice Aotearoa-New Zealand and the work of the Trust, go to our website: [www.erjustice.org.nz](http://www.erjustice.org.nz)

If you are interested receiving the Trust's monthly newsletter then go to:  
[www.erjustice.org.nz/2018-newsletters](http://www.erjustice.org.nz/2018-newsletters)

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