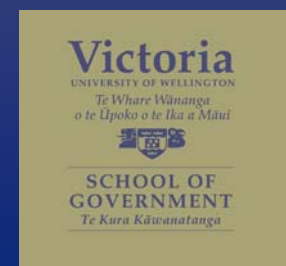


# Towards a Restorative Society

Professor Jonathan Boston  
Deputy Director  
Institute of Policy Studies  
School of Government, VUW



# Introduction

1. 'Restorative society' as an organizing principle
2. Key themes and issues
3. Policy implications
4. Where to from here?

# 'Restorative Society' as an Organizing Principle

## Positive features:

1. Excellent lens through which to view the world
2. Capacity to bring together many different disciplines, traditions & fields of inquiry
3. Applicability to many different policy settings and areas of life
  - local, national & international, etc.
  - schools, prisons, the workplace, etc.
  - relevant to both theory and practice

# 'Restorative Society' as an Organizing Principle

## Positive features:

4. Inspirational concept – resonates with a universal human experience of failure, disorder and brokenness & a universal desire for wholeness, acceptance, forgiveness, repair/healing, reconciliation and peace/shalom
  - resonates with experience of light and darkness, hope and despair, empowerment and bondage, evil and good
  - inclusiveness – embraces all humanity, relevant to all – we all have a need for restoration
  - relevant both individually and socially; gender, ethnicity, culture, etc
  - links with major themes of a number of great religious traditions
  - has the power to motivate and inspire – basis for a transformative social & political movement

# ‘Restorative Society’ as an Organizing Principle

## Cautions:

1. Like other major themes, concepts and principles – justice, equality, liberty, fraternity, community, the ‘good society’ etc. – it has limitations:
  - What actually does a restorative society mean?
  - What does it look like?
  - How do we achieve ‘restoration’?
  - Restoration of what? Do we not want something better than what went before?
  - Where does restoration fit with other central human values and concerns – such as freedom, stewardship, sustainability, etc?

# ‘Restorative Society’ as an Organizing Principle

## Cautions:

- Currently we have but fragments, not a full, comprehensive theory; different theological and philosophical foundations
- Limitations posed by the dark side of human nature – realism; Niebuhr and ‘possible impossibilities’
- Too much focus upon the ‘ideal’ can lead to disillusionment

# Key Themes and Issues

1. Much innovative thinking and practice around NZ – many experiments, much to celebrate, much to learn, currently a ‘work in progress’
2. Many opportunities for restorative endeavours, but also many barriers to change, including legal impediments
3. Some key ingredients
  - A common vision of the possibility of something better
  - Leadership & inter-agency cooperation
  - Attitudinal changes
  - Buy-in at the grass roots level
  - Adequate resources and support

# The Policy Implications

1. Policy makers need to be willing to take risks and experiment (or allow experiments by others) – trial and error, incrementalist model v ‘rational’ model, ‘hybridity’
2. But also need proper evaluations – contributing to evidence-based policy making
3. Need to be willing to use different models and try different solutions in different context – raises questions about what is tolerable and justified in a ‘secular’ state
4. Need for ‘institutionalising’ of innovations – via funding, structures, training, etc.
5. The language of discourse – framing the public debate appropriately will be important if long-term progress is to be made

# Where to from here?

## 1. The IPS:

- An edited book
- Another conference?
- Encouraging other research, workshops, policy initiatives

## 2. Others:

- A broader network – website, etc.?