

Practising Environmental Restorative Justice: Open houses

Open houses are information sharing events that involve many small stands staffed by experts in a particular area. This may include scientists, council workers, outreach and communication officers and lawyers. Industry groups and particular businesses may also be represented. Open Houses are held outside work hours to make it easier for people to attend. Anyone from the community can attend an open house to ask questions and get information on their concerns.

Open Houses showcase the restorative justice values of collaboration, deep listening, safety and citizen empowerment.

Advantages

- ✓ **“no wrong door”** people can circulate between different points of information to understand and to talk directly to people about what their role is and where they can help with their concerns.
- ✓ **Accessible** because Open Houses are run as a drop-in session, and children are welcome, they can be attended by a wide variety of people

Disadvantages

- ✓ **All talk no action?** Some community members feel that Open Houses are used to placate the public on issues that they are rightly angry about, without actually committing to change.
- ✓ **Resource-heavy** Because Open Houses need a wide range of experts, they involve a lot of government and industry staff time.

Best practise for Open Houses

- ✓ Make sure that problematic businesses attend in person
- ✓ Accurately and fully record and act on the main concerns that are aired by community members
- ✓ Have a station for Indigenous representatives and for Aboriginal Victoria
- ✓ Have materials in common language other than English, or translators present

