

annual

Youthlaw Annual Report
for the Year Ended 30 June 2008

report



About Youthlaw

About Youthlaw

Youthlaw is Victoria's state-wide community legal centre for young people. Youthlaw works to achieve systemic responses to the legal issues facing young people through casework, policy development, advocacy and preventative education programs, within a human rights and social justice framework.

Youthlaw is based at Frontyard Youth Services in central Melbourne. Frontyard consists of an integrated team of colocated services that work collaboratively to address the needs of young people at risk, including accommodation, financial, legal and health needs.

Youthlaw provides free and confidential legal advice for young people up to 25 years of age.

Drop-in clinic: Monday-Friday 2-5pm (no appointment needed).

Telephone and email information: Monday-Friday 9am-5pm

Questions

We can answer questions about:

- Public transport
- Police
- Security guards
- Alcohol and drugs
- Family issues
- Violence or abuse at home or in a relationship
- School issues
- Discrimination
- Financial support
- Employment
- Debts
- Relationships

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Annual Report

2007 - 2008

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Chair's report

Chair's Report

Youthlaw has once again had a highly successful year, providing an accessible legal service to young people under the age of 25 and addressing systemic legal and social justice issues through community education, advocacy and law reform.

Our legal advice and casework services continue to ensure that young people can access effective legal support when they need it. Without this valuable service many young people, particularly young people experiencing homelessness or those from culturally and linguistically diverse back-grounds, would not have their legal issues addressed or resolved.

We look forward to the addition, in the coming months, of a new community outreach lawyer, as a result of a one off payment from the Federal Attorney-General's Department. This new position will increase our ability to meet the specific legal needs of young people experiencing homelessness and will require a close working partnership with homelessness services in Victoria.

Throughout the year Youthlaw has continued to provide high quality community education services to young people and those working with young people, as well a diverse range of advocacy and law reform projects.

The participation of young people in a wide range of Youthlaw's projects has ensured that their views, opinions and experiences have guided and informed policy and service delivery and provided an important basis for much of the work that we do.

The strong focus on the rights of young people, from a human rights framework, continues to permeate Youthlaw's work, and significant and important gains have been made in partnership with, and on behalf of, young people.

Working collaboratively with a range of talented and committed services, and their staff, has enabled Youthlaw to effectively reach a diverse range of young people. Youthlaw has successfully partnered during the year with the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, CREATE, YACVic, the National Children and Youth Law Centre, Melbourne City Mission and Human Rights Act for Australia.

Youthlaw would not be able to undertake any of this work however, without our financial supporters, who have once again shown their generosity and commitment. Blake Dawson, Victoria Legal Aid, the Federal Attorney-General's Department, the Law Institute of Victoria Young Lawyers Development Committee, the Legal Services Board of Victoria, Reichstein Foundation, Helen McPherson Trust, Donkey Wheel Trust, Department of Justice, Victorian Law Foundation and the Melbourne City Council have all provided funding or in-kind resources to support the work of Youth-law.

However, without the dedicated and talented Youthlaw staff, secondees and volunteers, who have worked tirelessly throughout the year with remarkable results, none of this work would be possible.

We look forward to another successful year next year.



Michelle Marven,
Chairperson



Annual Report

2007 - 2008

Our vision & objectives

Our Vision and Objectives

Vision: A just and equitable society for, and by, young people.

Values: Youthlaw is a fearless advocate for young people. Youthlaw works within a social justice and human rights framework. Our work is based on principles of community development and we work together with young people to realise our shared vision. We recognise and value the diversity of young people and we strive to reflect that diversity in our work. Youthlaw works collaboratively to stimulate and create systemic change in the community for the benefit of young people.

Mission: To provide an accessible legal service to young people under the age of 25, focusing on areas of unmet legal need. To address systemic legal and social justice issues in Victoria through community education, advocacy and law reform both for and with young people and their advocates.

Objectives

1. To respond to young people's unmet legal need and improve young people's access to the legal system.
2. To improve the level of understanding within the community about how the law affects young people.
3. To advocate for systemic changes in legal and social policy to promote the interests and rights of young people.
4. To meaningfully involve young people in Youthlaw.
5. To ensure Youthlaw's ongoing sustainability and ability to operate efficiently and effectively on a day-to-day basis.

Legal advice & casework

Objective: To respond to young people's unmet legal need and improve young people's access to the legal system.

Youthlaw has 3 lawyers including a secondee lawyer on 6 month rotation from the law firm Blake Dawson.

The responsibilities of a Youthlaw lawyer are very different to private or even Legal aid lawyers. Addition to client casework Youthlaw lawyers respond to email and phone legal queries, present most of our education sessions and they comment on policy and law reform. They are largely responsible for all their own admin as Youthlaw has no administrative staff.

Our legal clinic is open each week day from 2-5pm at Frontyard Youth Services in the Melbourne CBD.

We also provide an outreach legal service each fortnight at the Flemington High rise flats in partnership with Moonee Valley City Council and Flemington-Kensington Legal Centre.

We provide email and phone legal information and to broaden our reach we will be piloting in 2008-09 legal advice by Webex and webcam.

We provide phone and email advice to youth workers, teachers and parents. We provide advice to other lawyers and barristers who are new to this area of law.

Youthlaw achievements 2007/2008

Our legal service assisted 804 people this year.

This consisted of the following services:

- Legal information by email and telephone = 371
- One-off advice face to face = 159
- Casework including court work = 415

In addition our lawyers conducted 60 legal education sessions and presentations involving 1,666 participants.

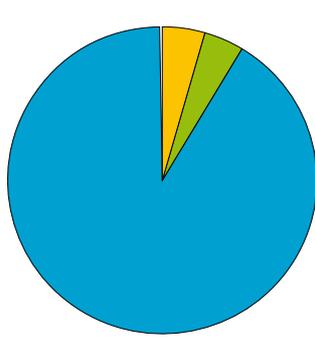
Over the 2007-8 year there was a significant increase in on-going legal casework and a slight decrease in one-off advices. We believe this reflects the complexity of the issues facing young people we see, their need for on-going supportive assistance and the expertise of our lawyers that enables Youthlaw to assist with a very wide range of legal issues without needing to refer out.

Our legal information by email and phone slightly increased this year. We have included a breakdown of the type of calls received.

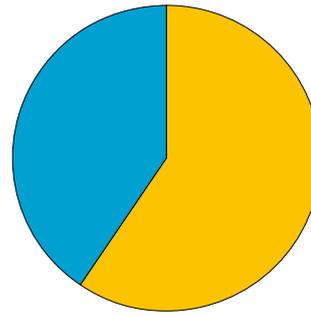
Complementing our service the National Youth and Childrens Law Centre provides email legal advice in partnership with Mallesons law firm through its web based site *Lawstuff*.

Profiles

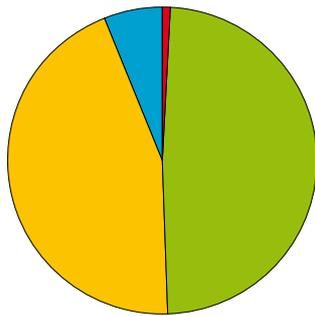
Profile of Advice and Casework (Face to Face)



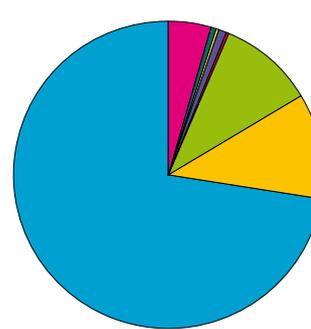
Centrelink
Employment
Other
Income Source



Female
Male
Gender

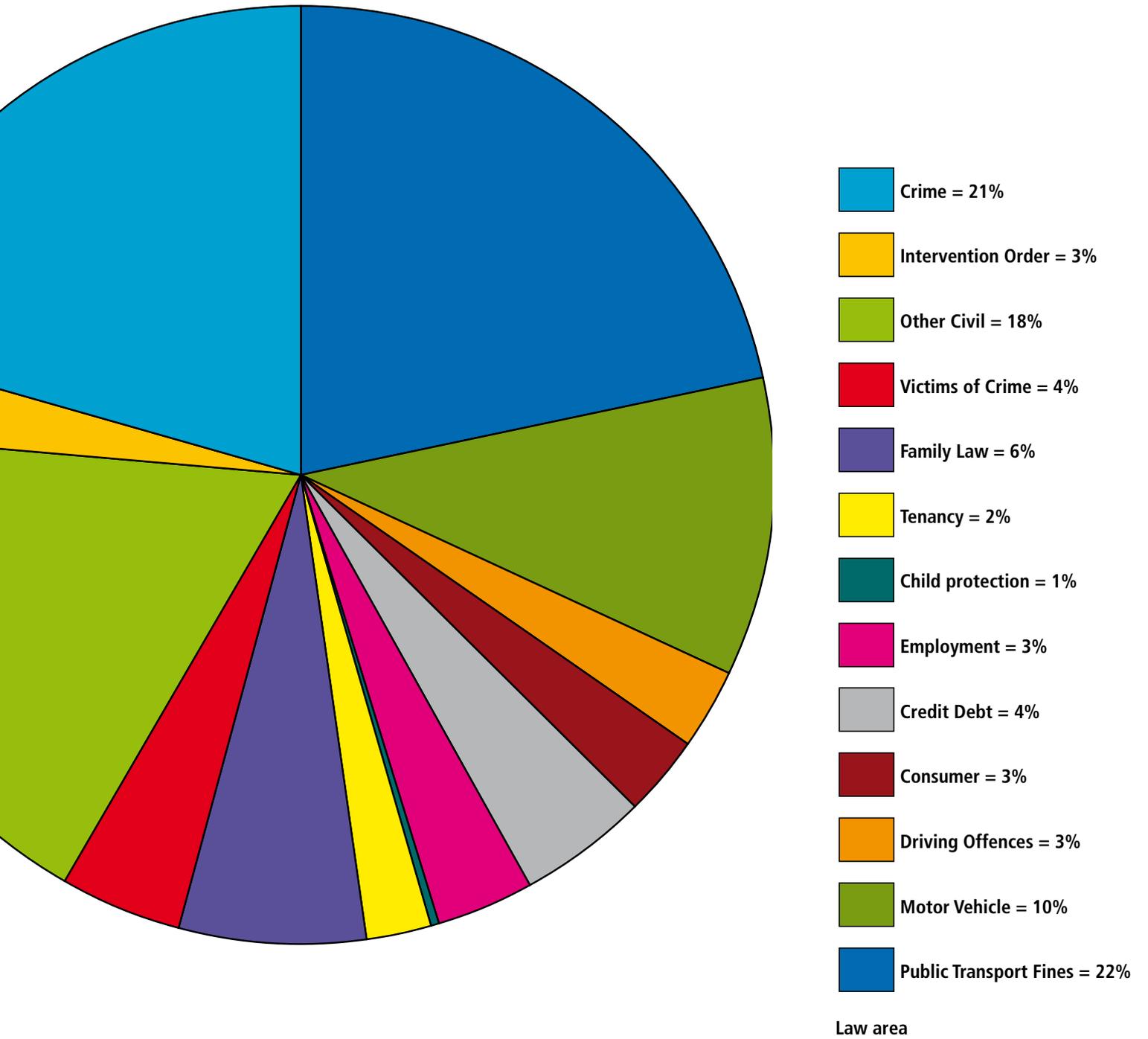


0-17
18-20
21-25
26-30
Age



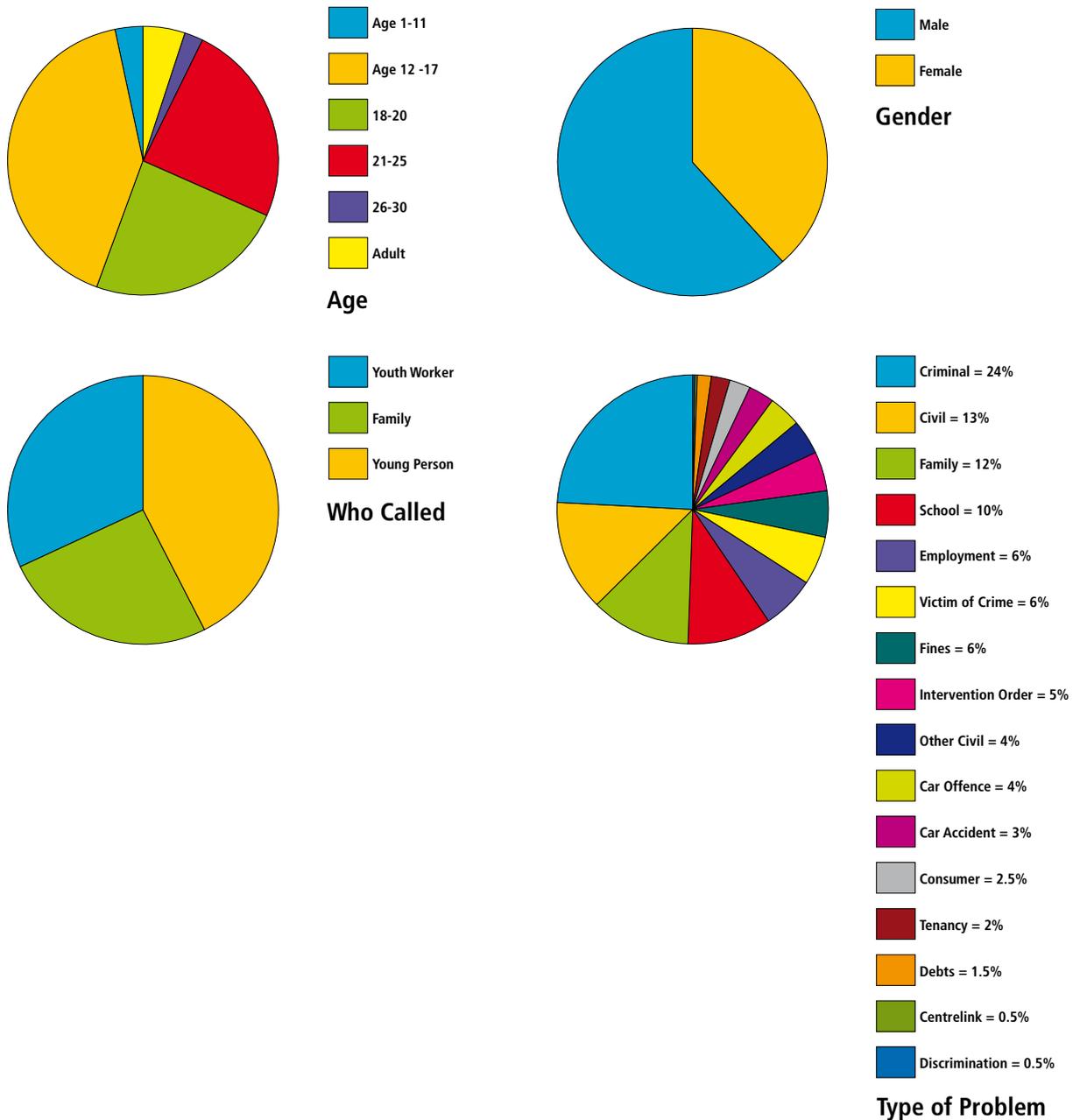
Australia and New Zealand
Africa
Asia
South America
Europe
Central America
Greater Antilles Archipelago
Not Stated
Country of Birth

Law Area for Advice Work



Profile of Email and Phone Requests

Youthlaw email and phone requests are from adults as well as young people. Overwhelmingly requests from adults (youth workers, family and teachers) are about a young person. A smaller portion are professional consultations – eg. youth worker about their legal responsibilities (eg mandatory reporting). The age pie chart indicates the age of the person with the legal need irrespective of who called. For data on 'who contacted us' see below.



Case Studies

Mobile phone contracts

Bethany, age 19, came to our centre seeking assistance with a \$1400 mobile phone bill. Bethany had been homeless since she was a teenager, having been in state (DHS) care with her siblings until she turned 18 and was residing at Lighthouse Foundation accommodation. Her only source of income was Youth Allowance and she was studying VCAL. We wrote to Telstra and sought to have the contract cancelled and all fees and charges waived on the basis of financial hardship. Telstra ultimately waived all fees and charges.

Jessica, a 21-year-old single parent, came in with a number of bills from her mobile phone provider. There were a number of items on the bill which she was disputing. She told us she had tried to contact the call centre in India and struggled to get through to anyone. We then wrote to the mobile phone company and attempted on numerous occasions to contact them to try and get these charges in dispute withdrawn, the handset returned and the contract cancelled. It was not until we referred the matter to the TIO (Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman) that we were able to resolve the matter and have the early termination fees and the charges in dispute waived. The TIO was very helpful in this matter.

Criminal charges

Minh, 22, was long-term homeless and had numerous outstanding driving and related charges in Frankston and Melbourne Magistrate's court. In addition to being homeless he had drug and alcohol issues and no support in the community. There were four charges of driving whilst disqualified and reckless conduct. He had several priors for driving whilst disqualified and had recently completed an ICO (Intensive Corrections Order). He was the first of our clients to do so. We referred him to the CISP (Court Integrated Services Program) based at Melbourne Magistrate's Court to assist him to find accommodation and refer him for drug and alcohol counselling / treatment. Ultimately all his matters were listed for consolidation

Unfortunately the magistrate dealing with his matters imposed a jail sentence of five months. An appeal to the County Court against the sentence has been lodged and we are awaiting the out-come.

A mother of a 16 year son called in regard to pending charges of assault. The police interview happened over a month ago and police fingerprinted and photographed him. The mother was up-set as she did not know her son's rights. Information was given about police powers and a referral offered to Youthlaw if her son received a summons

The girlfriend of a 24 year old young man called in regard to the 'anti-hooning' laws. He had been charged with "improper use of a car" and police threatened to have the car taken off him but this had not happened. Information was given in regard to the laws and a referral to Youthlaw.

Public transport fines

Justina, 20, had been homeless for several years and had incurred over 30 public transport fines. We applied to have her fines revoked on the basis of her special

circumstances, ie. her homelessness and mental health issues. Ultimately her fines were revoked and she was placed on an undertaking. A condition of the undertaking was that she continues to be linked in with her support services and attend the "FARE" program which DOT (Department of Transport) have set up for fare evaders.

Discrimination

Youthlaw assisted WAYOUT a group of gay and lesbian young people mainly from country Victoria with their legal action against the Christian Brethren for discriminatory action against the group.

The group made a booking at the Christian Brethren resort at Phillip Island to hold a weekend camp to discuss issues they face as gay and lesbian young people. The Christian Brethren rejected their request. The case went to the Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission in May 2008. Conciliation was not successful and it has proceeded to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). The Christian Brethren is likely to rely on the exception in the Equal Opportunity Act that allows a religious body to discriminate to comply with the doctrines of the religion or to avoid injury to the religious sensitivities of its followers.

Youthlaw provided training on discrimination law to the group in April this year and then provided initial advice and assistance to them to obtain pro bono legal representation. Solicitors from Mallesons Stephen Jaques are representing the group in their discrimination complaint. Ms Debbie Mortimer QC appeared for the group at VCAT in September 2008. The case awaits a full hearing.

A family friend of 15 year old girl called as the TAFE the young person attended said she could not continue as a student once she was 5 months pregnant, as she was a risk to them/school. Information was given about discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and that it is unlawful. They were referred back to the Coordinator at TAFE to confirm exactly what their position is and then referred to EO&HRC for advice on a discrimination claim.

FOI request

Yusuf was from Ethiopia and was aged 20. He had been charged with resisting arrest by police. He came to us for help because he told us that he was harassed by police. We advised him the arrest might not have been lawful and advised him to contest the charges.

We were able to get Legal Aid to fund this matter because of the public interest this case had.

We helped him put in a complaint about the police to Victoria Police Ethical Standards and made a Freedom of Information application for the ESD file. We were denied the file at first and so together with help from Blake Dawson we issued an appeal against the decision at VCAT. We were able to resolve this matter at a special mention of the Magistrates Court as part of the criminal proceedings and were able to view the file and obtain copies of the documents we sought.

The charge was dismissed and our client was found not guilty. Costs were awarded against Victoria Police.

Court Diversion

Jane was 18 years old and came to our clinic after being interviewed by police for possession of a small amount of amphetamine. She had been homeless and living on a friend's couch having moved out of home due to family violence. Jane didn't have much support and life had got a bit out of hand.

We started to help Jane by approaching the police and advocating that her matter be considered for diversion. Jane had got into a little trouble when she was 15 and been to the Children's Court but this was her first adult court matter and so the police considered her case and recommended her for diversion.

We linked Jane into a youth substance abuse service and she was able to get a caseworker and some treatment.

We obtained support letters from her new worker about the good work Jane was doing to manage her drug use.

At the diversion hearing we were able to advocate for Jane to the Magistrate using the support letters and other material we have prepared for Janes' case.

Jane was placed on a diversion program which she completed and her matter was diverted. Jane did not get a criminal record for this matter.

Family and relationship law

A 16 year old young woman called. She was living with her mother and younger siblings but wanted to move to her father's half the time. Her mother had Family Court orders and was opposed to her staying with her father. Information was given about her rights in regard to living with father and, the orders in place and what the Family Court takes into account including 'child's wishes', particularly older children her age. Referral made to Reconnect.

A 15 year girl called in regard to her parents family law case involving child arrangements. She wanted to know if she could go to court. No independent Child lawyer had been appointed. Information given and referral to Women's Legal Service and VLA family section for advice.

A 20 year old young woman sent an email query about wanting her 15 year old brother to move in with her and her fiancé. Her father was abusive to her at that age causing her to move out and she fears that this is happening to her brother. She was sexually abused by her father when she was placed with him and no action was taken. Information was given about leaving home and about VOCAT in regard to the sexual abuse. She attended our clinic for further assistance

A teenage boy emailed a query about his father telling him to leave home. Legal information given and information about support services such as Melbourne Youth Support Service and Reconnect.

Employment

Email query from a 20 year old young man about wages owed. Information given about taking up with the Workplace Ombudsman.

Consumer and civil

A mother called about her 13 year old son being bullied at school by a student and concern that the school was not taking it seriously. We gave her information about duty of care, complaints process in schools and referred to Parents Victoria for support.

A TAFE teacher called about a gym membership contract signed by a 22 year old male student who cannot afford it. Information was given. The young man then attended our clinic for further assistance.

A suburban lawyer called for information about VOCAT for a 14 year old male who had been assaulted at school but had not reported it to police. Information was given about completing a statutory declaration stating why crime not reported, etc and back up with evidence.

A youth worker rang about a 14 year old boy wanting to work in a supermarket. We gave information about permit required and contact details for the government department.

A youth worker called about a 15 year old girl getting harassing and sexually explicit mail from a 41 year old neighbour. We gave information on contacting police and the youth liaison officer if problems communicating with police, also information about applying for an intervention order. The young woman came to Youthlaw for further assistance.

A worker called in regard to a 15 year old young man enrolled at a Special School because of his learning disability. A teacher's aid rough handled him and he refuses to go back to school and has complained via his mother. The young person and his mother were not happy with the school response. Information was given on the appeal processes, the Regional office of the Department of Education, the Ombudsman and a referral to Youthlaw for further assistance.

Youthlaw secondee

Youthlaw Secondee

Youthlaw has a secondee lawyer from Blake Dawson. Every 6 months a new lawyer arrives. Paige Madden our secondee lawyer from February to August 2008 wrote about her experience.

'Corporate Lawyer at Youthlaw'

Before starting my secondment at Youthlaw, I had spent the previous 10 months working on a litigated matter, representing one of Australia's largest resources companies in a stamp duty dispute. As a junior lawyer in a large corporate firm, I had minimal client contact, minimal ultimate responsibility and was not involved in the development of case strategy. This was far from what I was about to experience.

My first day on secondment included the typical meet and greet, tour of the premises and then some introductory reading. I don't remember much from the tour, other than what people were wearing... I was very excited about putting my black suits and high heels at the back of my ward-robe and substituting them for jeans and thongs.

My first month was almost overwhelming. Not only was I in a new state with different laws, but these laws weren't anywhere near the areas I had practiced in at my corporate firm. But my enthusiasm and desire to learn got me through the steep learning curve that comes with such a dramatic change. I didn't have too long to wean myself in though as there were 32 client matters waiting for me to take the reins on. From then on, it was very much a 'learn as you go' experience.

I worked with two other lawyers, who operated like machines. Their efficiency and wealth of knowledge was incredible. And the best thing about it was that they were always happy to share it! It wasn't just the substantive law that I needed to know to do my job competently, it was also procedural law, who to contact at prosecuting agencies and other services, how to fill out the myriad of legal aid forms, how to provide telephone advice, how to interview clients and what to ask, how to open and close a casework file, my ethical and professional responsibilities and duties, how to brief a barrister, what to say in court, and most importantly, how to be practical about everything.

It took me about 2 months before I felt like I was actually contributing something. But it only got better from there. I learnt the laws and procedures I needed to deal with the main legal issues being presented by the clients, I developed relationships with clients, I was appearing regularly in court with confidence and getting great outcomes, and I was developing the confidence of the other lawyers in my abilities.

A regular day for me was appearing in the Childrens' and Magistrates' courts in the morning, head back to the office for a few hours of casework and letter-writing, drop-in clinic from 2-5pm and then prepare for the next day. The days flew by! Apart from the work, another obvious difference between a large corporate firm and Youthlaw was the physical working

environment. Even though the complete lack of natural light and fresh air took a while to get used to, Youthlaw felt 'real'. The lawyers do their own photocopying, type their own letters, post their own mail, do their own filing (I could go on), along with doing all of the actual legal work that they need to do to manage their many matters.

What was most rewarding to me about the secondment was the feedback I received from my clients. One day, quite early on in the secondment, I appeared in court on behalf of a client. He had brought his mother along as support, which was rare as so many of the clients present with no family support, along with other difficulties such as homelessness, substance abuse and poor mental health. I made submissions about why this client should receive a lenient sentence for the charges he was pleading guilty to, and the Magistrate responded to my request. I left the court-room feeling that I had done my job. My client was over the moon and his mother came up to me and gave me a hug to say thank you. I noticed that she was crying.

It was on this day that I realised just how important Youthlaw and other similar organisations are; they have a direct impact on people who genuinely require assistance. I also realised the responsibility that comes with acting on behalf of someone with difficulties that affect their ability to achieve a better quality of life. I had not been faced with this responsibility before at the large corporate firm, where everything I did went through a partner for approval, and individual livelihoods were rarely affected. After that day, I had many hugs and hand-shakes of thanks from my clients. These were all personally rewarding and satisfying moments and I felt like I was really doing something beneficial for the greater good.

Towards the latter part of my secondment, I had clocked up 74 clients. In a 40-hour working week, this meant I had just over half an hour for each one. But as a lot of my time was spent at court, it was obviously a lot less. Despite this, I managed to remember each client and what I was assisting them with. But what I was more impressed with was that I could competently manage that work-load. I had obviously developed the skills and knowledge I needed to do my job effectively and efficiently. Many of these skills are skills that I would never have had the opportunity to develop at a large corporate firm.

I am amazed by the passion, dedication, enthusiasm and hard-working nature of every person at Youthlaw. They are under-paid, under-resourced, over-worked and yet do such a brilliant job at providing essential assistance to those in need, with quality outcomes. I'm sure it's like this at so many other community legal centres and it's such a shame that there isn't more funding for them. I feel very proud to have worked at a large corporate law firm that does recognise this though, and is trying to make a difference through its pro bono work. I hope that others can also recognise the importance of places like Youthlaw and can contribute something as well.

Community education

Community Legal Education

Objective

To improve the level of understanding within the community about how the law affects young people.

Key achievements 2007/2008

A total of 60 legal education sessions and presentations to young people, workers and the general community were conducted with a total of 1,666 participants.

Youthlaw conducted many workshops and training sessions with youth workers and youth work students in recognition that these services are often the first point of contact for young people. This included a workshop in Warnambool which attracted a range of workers from residential and welfare services in the region, legal training for many local council youth workers and presentations to school youth support services.

With the introduction of the Graffiti Prevention Act in Victoria Youthlaw developed fact sheets, initiated discussions on how to get information on the new laws out to young people and spoke at a number of forums.

We provided the legal training to 131 volunteers who joined the Youth Referral and Independent Person Program (YRIPP). This training was provided in the regions where YRIPP services have been introduced including urban and regional locations.

Youthlaw worked with RMIT on the course outline of their 3rd year Legal and Justice Issues for Youth course in the Bachelor of Social Science (Youth Work) Program. Youthlaw was a guest lecturer on a range of legal areas, law reform and human rights.

Youthlaw community legal education this year included:

- Melbourne Youth Support Service (MYSS) housing workers – youth workers and the law workshop
- Youth Referral and Independent Person Program (YRIPP) legal training for volunteers – Melbourne (26 volunteers), Knox (40 volunteers), Carlton (20 volunteers), Ballarat (45 volunteers).
- Metropolitan Remand Centre for youth – 3 visits to provide information on Youthlaw, other youth services and law areas to young people
- Melbourne School youth support services forum (youth workers and counsellors)
- Chisholm TAFE, Frankston youth worker course – presentation to students on the criminal justice system, young people and the law
- WAYOUT gay and lesbian youth group camp at Bacchus Marsh – Presentation on discrimination and sexual orientation law to 15 participants
- CALD Youth Forum organised by CMY and City of Whittlesea in Epping – presentation to secondary students of CALD background from a number of neighbouring schools
- RMIT (3rd year Bachelor of Youth Studies) – lecture on law reform

- Wodonga – 2 groups of year 11 students – driving laws, young people and the law (360 students)
- Melbourne University Law School – Social change and Justice course (60 students)
- Cobden Technical College – Year 11 and 12 (40 students and teachers)
Presentation on police and other authorities and young people's legal issues.
- Local Government youth services forum (30) – presentation on new graffiti laws and young people
- 15 Foundation – presentation to 26 program participants
- St Helena Secondary College – (45 students and teachers)
- Caulfield Community school – 2 sessions 13-14 years and 15-16 years (36 students and teachers)
- Inner city youth workers on graffiti laws
- Victorian Co-operative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG) in Coburg – Training of mentors on police powers, youth legal issues and VOCAT actions
- Training for lawyers on the Children Youth and Families Act
- Legal training for Stonnington Council youth workers
- Victoria University youth work students
- Presentation on youth legal issues at a Yarra region annual training day for community workers (100 people).
- Young Islamic Womens Group – introduction to youth issues and legal system
- Victoria Police Youth Resource Officer training
- Corio Secondary College – Year 11 students – youth legal issues.
- Gay and Lesbian rural network – Session on age of consent, bullying and police powers.
- Bullying forum -Presentation on panel to workers, teachers and young people in Geelong (90)
- Training for workers (youth related fields) in Warrnambool (25)
- Broadmeadows Secondary College students
- Stonnington City Council Youth network – youth legal issues workshop
- Presentation at Forum for Student Representative Council representatives (from high schools throughout Victoria) organised by Second Strike.
- Presentation at Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS) young people leadership training day in Moreland (15)

What do I do when...? A practical guide to the law for people who work with young people

Our publication "What do I do when..?" was produced in 2006 in response to large numbers of queries from youth workers and others who work with young people. It provides accessible information on legal responsibilities and answers to common legal questions.

Another 3,000 copies were printed this year thanks to funding from the Victoria Law Foundation, the Department of Justice and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic).

This booklet has been distributed widely with very positive feedback. We have also conducted many legal education sessions using the booklet.

As youth workers and teachers are often the people young people talk to first about their problems they will continue to be a priority when targeting legal education.

Visible and Vocal: Exploring Young Women's Legal Needs Project

This year we obtained funding from the Victorian Womens Trust to undertake a project to consult with young women about their legal needs and the obstacles they face in accessing legal services.

We also wanted to find out what young women's legal issues are and how these might differ between groups of young women.

During the project we spoke to 8 groups of young women (42 young women in all) We also conducted an on-line and hard copy survey that was completed by 71 young women and 15 workers.

The project was completed this year and a booklet produced for legal services, lawyers and others who work with young people. It has great quotes from the young women involved about their experiences, the laws they want changed and the features and practices they would like to see in legal services they use. The booklet will be launched in November 2008.

'The lowdown '

Youthlaw's bimonthly e-newsletter, the lowdown continued to be sent out bi-monthly (well mostly!) by email. Part of the format includes a question of the month the answer being posted onto the website. The newsletter provides a snapshot of Youthlaw's work and other relevant justice news for young people, those working with young people and those interested in youth law issues. It provides updates on Youthlaw projects and submissions, new laws and research and links readers to relevant sites. The number of subscribers has steadily increased since it was launched.

Policy, research & law

Policy, Research and Law Reform

Objective

To advocate for systemic changes in legal and social policy to promote the interests and rights of young people

Youthlaw achievements in 2007/2008

In the last year we have lobbied and developed submissions on a range of issues impacting on young people and have responded to a number of government inquiries. We have also been involved in several law reform and legal policy projects and campaigns.

Law reform submissions

Key submissions and consultations this year included:

- Australian Law Reform Commission Privacy Review
- Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic) Review
- Victorian Department of Justice EO Act Exceptions and Exemptions Review (Vic)
- Transport Act (Vic) Review
- Alternative Dispute Resolution Inquiry (Vic)
- National Green paper on Homelessness
- Graffiti Prevention Bill
- Body Piercing Bill
- Liquor Control Reform Amendment Bill
- Sentencing Advisory Council -sentencing model review
- Vic Government consultation on employment law and young people
- DOJ Mental Health Strategy for young offenders.
- Review of Volatile substance abuse legislation.
- National consultation on development of an Australian Youth Forum
- Victorian Law Reform Commission review of Abortion law in Victoria

Projects

Voicing Young People's Rights Project

This project was funded by the Lance Reichstein Trust and the Helen McPherson Smith Trust. We worked with CREATE Foundation and a group of young people to develop a rights monitoring kit or tool that could be used by other groups of young people to monitor and advocate in regard to their human rights.

This tool became an on-line survey and will go on-line from October 2008 to March 2009 via a number of sites including the new youth human rights website www.humanrightsact.tv. As of August 2008 the Human Rights Act site was getting 60 hits a day and 550 young people had joined up via Facebook and MySpace to get involved.

The responses from the survey will also contribute to:

- The non-government organisation (NGO) shadow report (also called the alternate report) to the United Nations on Australian government compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC).
- The Victorian Equal Opportunity Human Rights Commission 2008 Charter report. The theme this year is Children and Young People.
- Project R.A.C.E – Youthlaw and the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues received funding from the Foundation for Young Australian to work further with a group of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) young people (mainly Muslim) about discrimination.

This project trained about 12 young people in performance. They then devised and performed comedy skits about racial and cultural discrimination. The highlight of the project was a public performance during Youth week. Over 120 people attended. A number of the participants in this project have taken up other performance opportunities such as Saleem Café (SBS), the Melbourne Comedy Festival and the Melbourne Fringe Festival.

Human Rights Website Project

This project was funded by Donkey Wheel a Victorian trust. Youthlaw partnered with a local branch of the group Human Rights Act for Australia to develop a portal for young people about human rights.

The website www.humanrightsact.tv was completed in July 2008. The website includes information on current human rights protection and how this impacts on young people and provides youth friendly mechanisms and funky features to encourage young people to voice their opinions.

'Seen and Heard' Anniversary Workshop

In 1997 the Australian Law Reform Commission released its report *Seen and Heard: Priority for Children in the Legal Process*. This report is a comprehensive account of the status of children within the Australian legal system

On the 10th anniversary of this report Youthlaw together with the National Youth and Childrens Legal Centre and Melbourne University Law school held a child rights forum in Melbourne. This event was attended by lawyers, members of the judiciary, young people, human and child rights organisations and academics from all over Australia.

A progress report on the status of the 286 recommendations was tabled. This report was prepared largely by law student volunteers attached to Youthlaw and the national centre and volunteer lawyers from Mallessons Stephen Jaques law firm in Melbourne. The status report was provided to all participants and is now a working document for on-going monitoring of how young people and children are fairing in the legal system.

Public Transport for Homeless Young People Campaign

Youthlaw initiated a campaign to lobby Government to introduce a 6 month free public transport card for home-less young people. This was in response to the large number of young people we assist with public transport fines and the enormous cost to the government and the community of administering and prosecuting these fines.

A proposal was submitted to the Department of Transport in May 2008 and Youthlaw met with Department staff to present the proposal.

The campaign conducted a survey and collected responses from 172 young people and 72 agencies. The young people surveyed owed a total of \$28,903 in fines which they started incurring from age 15.

The survey found that these young people.

- Were either on Youth Allowance or another Centrelink benefit
- Were either homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- The main reason for not having a ticket was that they didn't have the money.
- They spent \$10 or more a week on tickets. A significant number spent more than \$10
- They need public transport for a wide range of activities including family and social interactions and access to study, support and medical services and job training and opportunities.

As of September 2008 the Minister for Transport Lynn Kosky announced that the government will provide a free travel package for homeless youth from next year. This will consist of \$50,000 to organisations for Metcards to give homeless youth 'better access essential services'.

Youth Referral and Independent Person Program (YRIPP)

We hosted the YRIPP program and co-coordinator for the inner city region this year. Rebecca March set up the inner city program from scratch and by the end of this year had established the program at the 13 inner city police stations and recruited 52 volunteers.

Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS)

This service was set up in 2006 through a partnership of the Youth Affairs Council (YACVic), Youthlaw and the Disability Discrimination Legal Service.

We continue to provide partnership input and share information, skills and ideas between our organisations. This year the service was evaluated by Tim Childs Consulting. The evaluation was glowing of both the individual advocacy service and the broader advocacy activities of the service.

Regular meetings and networking

- Youth Justice Ministerial Roundtable
- Victoria Police Ethical Standards Community Consultative Committee
- Public Transport Enforcement Forum – Department of Infrastructure
- Volatile Substance Abuse Protocols Advisory Committee – Department of Human Services
- National Youth Advocates Network – National Children's and Youth Law Centre
- Human Rights Committee of the Law Institute of Victoria
- Inner City Regional Youth Affairs Network
- Federation of Community Legal Centres – Children and Youth Issues Working Group, Human Rights and Justice Initiatives Standing Group.

Youth participation

Youth Participation

Objective

To meaningfully involve young people in Youthlaw

Youthlaw achievements 2007/2008

- **Committee of Management** – Two positions on the Committee of Management are dedicated to young people and this year three young people participated as members of the Committee.
- **Membership** – Youthlaw continues to promote membership of Youthlaw to young people and we are exploring new ways of reaching young people and meeting their legal information needs.
- **Projects and Policy** – Youthlaw has identified the need to work more effectively with young people in their own communities to support them to address issues of concern to them.

We undertook a number of projects this year to further this objective:

- **Voicing Young People's Rights Project** – Involved 8 young people in the on-going development of an on-line survey.
- **Forum on Body Piercing Bill and Tattooing** – We conducted an on-line survey for young people (49 responses), and held a public forum held at Frontyard Youth Services for young people between 16 and 25 years. The forum was organised by YACVic and Youthlaw to give young people an opportunity to voice their opinions on the proposed changes to the law. The responses of the young people who attended were incorporated in our submission to government on the bill. Young people were largely concerned about health impacts of piercing and the need for better information to be given.
- **Visible and Vocal (young womens legal needs) Project** – This project involved 8 groups of young women (42 young women in all):
 - A group of young women with disabilities
 - A group of young women accessing family support services and others attending local schools, in rural and regional Victoria
 - A group of young women accessing post release services and with an experience of youth justice centres
 - A group of young women connected with multi-cultural youth services. This group included many newly arrived refugees.
 - A group of same sex attracted young women from regional and rural towns in Victoria.
 - A group of young women with a history of mental health and/or substance abuse issues.
 - A group of young women accessing a CBD youth hub that provides support to homeless and at risk young people.



Annual Report

2007 - 2008

– A group of indigenous young women.

We also conducted an on-line and hard copy survey that was completed by 71 young women.

- **Website redesign project** – We conducted an on-line survey to get young people's views on our website and what they would like it to look like. We were also assisted by a placement student Emma Chala from RMIT who went out to youth drop in centres to talk to young people about what they knew about Youthlaw and what would be a good way to publicise our service.
- **Public Transport campaign** – The campaign conducted a survey and collected responses from 172 young people

Sustainability

Organisational Sustainability

Objective

To ensure Youthlaw's ongoing sustainability and ability to operate efficiently and effectively on a day-to-day basis.

Youthlaw achievements 2006/2007

- **Blake Dawson** – We have maintained our strong partnership with Blake Dawson (BD). The BD pro bono program provides invaluable support to Youthlaw including the six-monthly secondment program and in kind legal research, administrative assistance and venue support. Our partnership with BD continues to thrive and we thank them for their generous financial donation this year.
- **Funding Agreements** – We have fulfilled our obligations under the service agreement with Victoria Legal Aid for state and commonwealth funding.
- **Volunteers** – Youthlaw values the assistance of volunteers. In the last year over 170 people (mainly students) have contacted us interested in volunteering with Youthlaw. On any one day we have at least 1 but usually 2 volunteers in the office. We have also had a number of volunteers on internships (eg research for the public transport campaign).

We have also had a number of work placement students many who are students in youth and justice courses. They have assisted with day to day administrative support and some project work. This is invaluable given that Youthlaw has no paid administrative staff. Youthlaw staff offer these students many opportunities to get to know Youthlaw, the Frontyard youth services and the issues facing young people. A number of these students and volunteers have subsequently become members of Youthlaw.

Committee

Youthlaw Committee of Management

- Michelle Marven (Chairperson)
- Ari Nagar (Treasurer)
- Jenny Lawton
- Noelle de Clifford
- Will Crawford
- Simon Gauci
- Marina Lou
- Natalie Mendelsohn (Blake Dawson)
- Sophie Osborn (Blake Dawson)

Staff

Youthlaw Staff

- Ariel Couchman, Director
- Anna Radonic, Principal Lawyer
- Tiffany Overall, Advocacy & Human Rights Officer
- Hala Atwa, Lawyer
- James Anderson, Seconded Lawyer (to December 2007)
- Paige Madden, Seconded Lawyer (to August 08)
- Cecilia Reibl, Seconded Lawyer (from August 2008)
- Sally Goldner, Finance Officer
- Rebecca March – YRIPP co-ordinator – Inner City
- Bridie Hudson –Project officer

External Support

External Support

- In-kind administration and design and printing support provided by Blake Dawson
- Thanks particularly to Gemma Wallace, Kate Ashley and Elaine Brown
- Pro bono legal assistance provided by Blake Dawson
- Project design and printing by Meghan McBain (The Design Bus)

- Website design and maintenance by Nicole Jones.
- IT support provided by FINREA Computing Services and to secondee by Blake Dawson
- Pro bono submission support from Suzanne Paton

Volunteers

- Ari Nagar, Marina Lou, Lisa Morstyn , Rob Sacco, Patrick Donovan, Nicole Jee, Chenoah Ellis, Anushka Dantanarayana, Ee Lynn Tan, Emma Jane Chala, Rebecca Dunn and Cassandra Old

Thanks

Particular thanks to:

- Blake Dawson
- Department of Justice Victoria
- Department for Victorian Communities – Office for Youth
- Victoria Legal Aid
- Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department
- Victoria Law Foundation
- Lance Reichstein Foundation
- Helen McPherson Smith Trust
- Foundation for Young Australians
- Law Institute of Victoria Young Lawyers Development Committee
- Victorian Women's Trust
- Donkey Wheel Trust
- Melbourne University Law School
- Legal Services Board of Victoria
- YACVic
- Defence for Children International – Australia
- National Youth and Childrens Law Centre
- Human Rights Law Resource Centre
- Victorian Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
- John Tobin Melbourne University Law School

financial

Youthlaw Financial Report
for the Year Ended 30 June 2008

report

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Annual Report

2007 - 2008

Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2008

	2008	2007
	\$	\$
Current Assets		
Cash	219,498	99,558
Receivables	4,140	12,617
Prepayments	1,865	1,448
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	<u>225,503</u>	<u>113,623</u>
Non Current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	9,383	6,969
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>234,886</u>	<u>120,592</u>
Current Liabilities		
Payables	17,867	15,854
Provisions	36,381	21,283
Grants in advance	81,771	20,622
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	<u>136,019</u>	<u>57,760</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>98,867</u>	<u>62,833</u>
Equity		
Committed Fund	98,867	62,833
	<u>98,867</u>	<u>62,833</u>



Annual Report

2007 - 2008

Income and Expenditure Statement for the Year ended 30 June 2008

	2007-2008	2006-2007
	\$	\$
NET SURPLUS/DEFICIT FROM PREVIOUS YEAR		
Surplus/Deficit from previous year	(1,438)	12,091
Approved Expenditure from Surplus	0	0
Net surplus/Deficit from Previous Year	(1,438)	12,091
CLSP INCOME		
Commonwealth	76,176	74,683
State	105,728	64,981
Service Generated Income:	2,507	2,249
Total CLSP Income	184,411	141,913
CLSP General Purpose Income (Total CLSP Income & net)	182,973	154,004
CLSP EXPENSES		
Salaries	120,681	115,259
Superannuation	10,864	10,083
On Costs	7,249	332
Rent	8,117	7,792
Repairs and Maintenance	70	505
Other Premises Costs	852	679
Staff Training	2,205	933
Staff Recruitment	0	428
Communications	7,377	3,404
Office Overheads	2,926	2,319
Insurance	1,873	2,068
Finance, Audit & Accounting Fees	4,478	4,324
Library, Resources & Subscriptions	3,059	2,337
Travel	2,127	1,507
Programming and Planning	1,486	705
Client Disbursements	84	0
Leases	0	0
Minor equipment	203	130
Depreciation	3,534	2,358
Other	81	0
Salary & Related Expenses	138,793	125,674
Total Operating Expenses	38,472	29,490
Total CLSP Expenses	177,265	155,165
Surplus/Deficit for Current Year	7,146	(13,252)



Annual Report

2007 - 2008

	2007-2008	2006-2007
	\$	\$
OTHER INCOME (not to be added to CLSP Funds Surplus/Deficit)		
Total Funds Received from Other bodies	50,000	35,000
Total funds Received from Other bodies for non-CLSP CLSIS Activities	50,000	35,000
Less Actual Capital expenditure in Current Year	(3,774)	(277)
Surplus/Deficit for Next Year	1,935	(1,438)
ASSETS ACQUIRED WITH CLSP FUNDS DURING FINANCIAL YEAR		
Computer equipment	0	0
FUTURE CONTINGENCY RESERVE		
Item Description		
NIL		



Annual Report

2007 - 2008

Income Statement for the Year ended 30 June 2008

	2008	2007
	\$	\$
Revenue from ordinary activities	414,661	252,491
Employee expenses	(251,287)	(254,386)
Depreciation and amortisation expenses	(3,534)	(2,358)
Other expenses from ordinary activities	(123,806)	(59,083)
Surplus/(deficit) from ordinary activities	36,034	(63,336)
Increase/(decrease) in reserves from prior year adjustments	36,034	(63,336)



Annual Report

2007 - 2008

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year ended 30 June 2008

	2008	2007
	\$	\$
Cash Flow from Operating Activities		
<i>Receipts</i>		
Operating grants	180,408	138,164
Donations	57,180	35,000
Interest Earned	3,340	3,569
Other receipts	266,114	78,269
<i>Payments</i>		
Payments to suppliers and employees	(381,154)	(305,189)
Cash Flow from Operating Activities	125,889	(50,187)
Cash Flow from Investing Activities		
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	(5,949)	(277)
Cash Flow from Investing Activities	(5,949)	(277)
Net increase/ (decrease) in cash held	119,940	(50,464)
Cash at the beginning of the year	99,558	150,022
Cash at the end of the year	219,498	99,558

Audit Report



J L COLLYER & PARTNERS
ACCOUNTANTS & AUDITORS

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PO Box 340
Glen Waverley Vic. 3150
Phone: 03 9560 0211
Fax: 03 9561 5407
Email: jrc@collyerpartners.com.au

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the members of YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEGAL RIGHTS CENTRE INC

Report on the Financial Report

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of **YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEGAL RIGHTS CENTRE INC** which comprises the balance sheet as at 30th June 2008, and the income statement, statement of changes in equity and cash flow statement for the year then ended, a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The management of **YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEGAL RIGHTS CENTRE INC** are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report and have determined that the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, which form part of the financial report, are appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The management's responsibility also includes designing, implementing and maintaining internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. No opinion is expressed as to whether the accounting policies used, as described in Note 1, are appropriate to meet the needs of the members. We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. These Auditing Standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the directors, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

DIRECTORS
JANET L. COLLYER FCPA
LIONEL R. ARNOLD CA B.BUS
RAELENE LAI CPA B.COM



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UNDER PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS LEGISLATION

-2-

The financial report has been prepared for distribution to members for the purpose of fulfilling the Management's financial reporting requirement. We disclaim any assumption of responsibility for any reliance on this report or on the financial report to which it relates to any person other than the members, or for any purpose other than that for which it was prepared.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

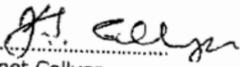
Independence

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the relevant independence requirements.

Auditor's Opinion

In our opinion the financial report of **YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEGAL RIGHTS CENTRE INC**

- (a) gives a true and fair view of **YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEGAL RIGHTS CENTRE INC's** financial position as at 30th June 2008 and of its performance for the year ended on that date in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Note 1.


.....
Janet Collyer
J L COLLYER & PARTNERS

5th September 2008

Young Peoples Legal Rights Centre
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