

youthlaw

ANNUAL REPORT

2018
- 2019

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HIGHLIGHTS 2018-19

This year we assisted over a 1,000 young people with advice and court representation and answered over 1700 legal questions.

At Frontyard Youth Services advice to **325 young people** and representation at court for 85.

Our Friday fines clinic team assisted **110 young people** to have their fines reduced or waived.

At a CBD detox unit we assisted **15 young people** with legal advice and with 5 court attendances.

Our RMIT student service answered **582 legal queries** and provided over **337 advices**.

Our outreach lawyer visiting **9 outreach locations** assisted **105 young people** and **20 at court**.

Our multidisciplinary Family Violence team provided **96 duty lawyer appearances** for **38 young people under 18**, advice to **34 young people** aged 18-25 years, **46 worker legal consultations**, non-legal risk assessment, planning and support to **85 young people** and secondary consultations to **139 workers**. We received a **grant of \$120,000** from RE ROSS Trust to support this program.

Our Legal Pod program partnered with **8 law firms** to assist **20 young people** for up to 3 years.

Our health justice partnership with Ballarat Community Health and Federation University provided a lawyer based at Ballarat Community Health, despite a gap in service and funding challenges **24 young people** were assisted, including 6 at court.

We obtained a **grant of \$45,000** from the Victorian Law Foundation. Health and community workers in the Ballarat region were trained up in youth legal issues and **50 secondary consultations** about young people being assisted were provided.

30 legal education sessions to groups of vulnerable young people

Led the Smart Justice for Young People Coalition.

52 volunteers. 66 new members. 13 outreach locations. 9 partnerships with corporate law firms.

\$1,500 fundraised by Ashurst staff (Run Melbourne) and **\$7,282.67** at a trivia night for Youthlaw.

Over \$6,000 in private donations.



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

This year, 2018 to 2019, saw the Victorian State election in November 2018 followed by the Federal election in May 2019. Both elections provided opportunities to campaign for better policy, legislation and service responses to vulnerable young people. We advocated to candidates and received many positive responses from across the political spectrum. There was great understanding of the experiences and needs of young people and a determination to make a difference.

This year was a mixed bag. We have seen a continuing reduction in youth crime across all industrialised countries, greater awareness and acceptance of gender diversity, cultural diversity and Indigenous self-determination and increased attention to mental health and family violence. At the same time we have high youth unemployment and increasing marginalisation experienced by many young people particularly in newly arrived and disadvantaged communities. There have been spikes in youth offending despite overall youth crime trending down.

Law enforcement and imprisonment were hot issues, particularly in the lead up to the state election with both major parties big on law and order and with the expectation for both of building a new youth justice facility. We continued to advocate along with others in the youth and community sectors for smarter and evidenced based approaches to crime and imprisonment. It is quite clear that all but the most serious crimes are more effectively dealt with in the community

through diversion and programs that address underlying reasons for offending, commonly trauma. Prison is extremely costly to the tax payer and a waste of the potential of those imprisoned. The service system has had increased investment in child protection, school engagement, youth justice, diversion and family violence however in many respects the gaps in services needed on the ground are unchanged from 10 years ago.

Recent Royal Commissions and state enquiries into sexual and institutional abuse and also the Royal Commission into Family Violence have revealed the staggering number of young people and children who have suffered abuse growing up. It has prompted youth services including our own to collect better data, advocate for funding for services and develop our responses to impacts of this abuse. This year we further developed our family violence program and we embarked on developing staff awareness of trauma and embedding a trauma informed approach to our work. Sadly but perhaps not unexpected

given our understanding now of the extent of abuse and trauma in childhood 4 clients of Youthlaw and Frontyard took their lives this year. We worked with Check-In, the wonderful new mental team that is a recent addition to Frontyard, to develop suicide prevention awareness and guidance for our staff.

We have been pleased that the Victorian government accepted all recommendations of the Ogloff & Armytage youth justice review, initiated a Royal Commission into Mental Health, repealed public drunkenness, introduced spent convictions legislation, and announced their intention to reform the corrections system to strengthen rehabilitation. More recently we have welcomed announcements to reduce the size of the new Cherry Creek youth justice facility, to retain Parkville for young boys and girls and to provide improved assessment of all young people entering youth justice facilities.

We welcomed the Sentencing Advisory Council Crossover Kids report about a small but

significant number of child protection kids overrepresented in the justice system. The report powerfully documents past and current failures to address childhood trauma and provide appropriate out of home care, and the consequences of this failure, as well as

the lack of consideration in sentencing. The report outlines very practical steps that can and need to be taken to reduce this progression.

We continued to advocate for greater investment in early service supports and intervention at key points of contact with police and the justice system including diversion, greater access to drug and mental health treatment and assessment and youth specific family violence services. This included our submission to the Royal Commission into Mental Health.

This year Youthlaw continued to develop and provide innovative and highly responsive legal services targeting vulnerable young people. Our strategy continues to focus on identifying and supporting vulnerable cohorts and delivering legal services through frontline services. This includes lawyers

based at Ballarat Community Health working with youth and health workers, our outreach lawyer delivering assistance through headspace centres, our drop in clinics at the homelessness focused Frontyard Youth Services and our family violence service comprising a lawyer and a social worker providing wrap around support.

We continued to develop our service for a highly vulnerable group of young people exiting child protection and transitioning to adulthood. We now have lawyers from 8 private law firms assisting young people for up to 3 years.

Our student legal service at RMIT continues to integrate seamlessly with other student services providing students with wrap around support. Many students at RMIT are on very low income and facing many life obstacles. Many have little knowledge of the legal system and are highly susceptible to mistreatment and exploitation.

This year we moved out of Frontyard Youth Services after a wonderful co-location over 17 years. This was due to Frontyard receiving money from government to establish a youth refuge inside Frontyard providing wrap around

and long-term support for highly vulnerable young people. We moved twice during the year and will shortly move in to a new hub of innovative legal practice at Pelham Street, Carlton. This has been made possible by RMIT and the leadership of former Victorian Attorney-General Rob Hulls, who heads up the RMIT Centre for Innovative Justice.

As always the work of Youthlaw would not be possible without the tireless, passionate and skilled contribution of staff, volunteers and our Board. I would also like to thank all the organisations and services that have collaborated so enthusiastically with us to respond to the needs of young people.

ARIEL COUCHMAN

DIRECTOR

OUR CLIENTS

A SNAPSHOT

51%

identified as male

86%

were experiencing financial disadvantage

45%

identified as female

29%

were a person with disability and/or mental illness

9%

identified as other gender

10%

spoke a language other than English at home

76%

were aged between 18-24 years

43%

had experienced family violence

12%

were aged 17 years and under

27%

were at risk of homelessness or were homeless

OUR LEGAL SERVICES

CLIENT STORIES

DAWN

22 YEARS OLD

First came to Youthlaw in 2018 after presenting to Frontyard for housing services. Dawn was several months pregnant and had been homeless for two years due to family violence. She had no income or family support.

Dawn had a substantial utility debt that was causing her a lot of stress. She didn't understand why she had a debt and had spent hours on the phone to debt collectors trying to sort it out.

Youthlaw was able to determine that the debt had arisen from an administrative error by the utility company. We wrote a letter to the company stating that the debt was a mistake and that payment of the debt would cause Dawn severe financial hardship. As a result of our letter, the company waived the whole debt and also refunded a significant amount of Dawn's previous utility charges.

Having the debt dealt with was a huge relief to Dawn. Since our assistance Dawn has secured stable, long-term housing and can focus her attention on her son's wellbeing without the worry of her credit being affected by debt.

At Youthlaw we talk to young people every day. We listen to their stories, help them deal with their legal issues and lobby for systemic change.

DROP IN LEGAL CLINIC AT FRONTYARD YOUTH SERVICES



Frontyard Youth Services is a co-location of youth services where homeless and vulnerable young people can obtain assistance.

Services include short and long term housing, a health service, youth friendly Centrelink staff, a mental health team, the Youthlaw legal clinic, education and training programs and on-going casework support. It's a one stop shop and all services aim to be as flexible and available as possible.

Youthlaw runs a drop in legal clinic at Frontyard most afternoons a week. Common legal issues experienced by the young people we see are fines, debts and criminal charges. Our family violence lawyer and youth worker also assist young people experiencing or using violence, addressing safety concerns and providing legal options and assistance.

Providing young people with the opportunity to deal with their legal issues is important. Ongoing legal problems can cause stress and ill-health, prevent young people from moving forward in their lives, increase their involvement with the criminal justice system and expose them to abuse.

ASK A LAWYER SERVICE



We have a daily phone and online advice service that operates every day from 9am to 5pm.

Every day we respond to calls and emails from young people with legal questions and adults or workers assisting a young person. This includes family members, youth workers, teachers, and other youth sector professionals.

We are often asked questions about urgent situations such as police interviews, prospective charges, and upcoming court hearings. We provide free answers with a quick turnaround. By promptly providing legal information we are able to assist young people to work out what to do and where to get further help.

The online service works well for young people who find it difficult to come in and see us in person, for instance, very young people who are experiencing abuse in the home.

INQUIRY FROM YOUNG PERSON, AGED 19 YEARS

HEY, WOULD YOU BE ABLE TO TELL ME IF ANY COURT HEARINGS OR CHARGES FROM WHEN I WAS UNDERAGE WOULD SHOW UP ON A CURRENT POLICE CHECK?

INQUIRY FROM PARENT

Hi, MY SON WAS CREATING FAKE FACEBOOK PROFILES AT SCHOOL. CAN HE GET IN TROUBLE?

INQUIRY FROM YOUNG PERSON, AGED 17 YEARS

HELLO, I'M THINKING ABOUT DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL BUT MY SCHOOL TELLS ME THAT I NEED TO HAVE SOME FORM OF EDUCATION PATHWAY OR AN APPROVED JOB ORGANISED BEFORE I CAN LEAVE. I THOUGHT I JUST HAD TO BE 17 YEARS OLD. IS THIS RIGHT?

CLIENT STORIES

JIA

21 YEARS OLD

First came to Youthlaw in 2018 referred by Frontyard. Jia had been in a violent relationship and was homeless as a result. Her experience of family violence had led to significant mental health issues and when we met Jia she was experiencing significant trauma exacerbated by a recent violent incident. She also had a new born baby.

Youthlaw assisted Jia to make an application for compensation to the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal. Jia's application was successful and she received compensation comprising a monetary sum for payment of child care fees and a laptop for educational use.

Thanks to Youthlaw's work securing this practical assistance Jia has been able to resume her studies and begin looking for work. She has also secured safe and stable housing.

CLIENT STORIES

KENNY

22 YEARS OLD

First came to Youthlaw when he was 20 years old. He had been in child protection since the age of 2 years old and became homeless when he turned 18. He had been physically, sexually and emotionally abused by his carers and had developed complex mental health issues.

He incurred a number of fines, including public transport fines, whilst he was homeless and mentally unwell. These fines were difficult for him to keep track of because a lot of fines were being sent to him via mail, and he could not get his mail because he was frequently moved between different emergency housing options.

Youthlaw were able to make several applications asking for his fines to be withdrawn, and for Fines Victoria to cancel enforcement of his fines, due to the special circumstances Kenny was experiencing.

Kenny was very happy that someone could finally tell him how many fines he had, and that Youthlaw could help with asking for his fines to be withdrawn. He is no longer homeless and is seeing a psychologist. He feels comfortable to ask Youthlaw for help with his legal needs. We are also helping him navigate court processes as his foster carer has now been charged with assaulting Kenny and his sister while they were in care.

FRIDAY FINES CLINIC



Some of our Friday Fines team of volunteers. Back Row from left to right: Sassy McKenzie, Renee Black, Justine Jaramillo, Constance Illiadis. Front Row: Olivia Moll

We have a drop-in Fines clinic every Friday. Many of the young people we see have trouble dealing with fines. Young people can incur fines due to experiencing homelessness, poor mental health, substance abuse or family violence. They often have no means to pay for fines that easily build up and increase in cost. It becomes extremely hard and stressful for the young person to deal with their fines.

Our Friday Fines clinic helps vulnerable young people navigate the complicated fines system. We support clients each step of the way – from an initial check for fines, to making applications to withdraw fines, to representing them in court. A dedicated group of law student volunteers undertake most of the fines work. The fantastic team comes in every Friday and have been trained to conduct interviews with clients and manage multiple client files. They are supervised by our wonderful and ever passionate lawyer Amala.

Youthlaw also engages in extensive policy work to advocate for systemic change of the fines system to efficiently exit vulnerable young people from the system.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAM



Family Violence Youth Worker, Hilary Glaisher.

Our Family Violence Program is based at Frontyard Youth Services (Frontyard) with a focus on improving the family violence response to young people presenting at Frontyard for assistance. The program comprises a multidisciplinary team of lawyer, Stephanie Pashias, (Joanne Ellis currently on maternity leave) and our specialist family violence youth worker, Hilary Glaisher. Together the team assists young people who are experiencing or using family violence. The team also works closely with youth workers providing them with information so that they can better assist the young people they are supporting.

Our specialist family violence youth worker provides immediate risk assessment, safety planning and specialist interim support including referrals to counselling and wellbeing services. If the young person requires legal advice and/or court representation they will be linked in with our Family Violence Lawyer.

The team provides a weekly court service at the Melbourne Children's Court for young people under 18 years whether they are the applicant or the respondent to a family violence intervention order. They work closely with Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) and the VLA private practitioner duty lawyer service.

We have developed an expertise in adolescents using violence in the home (also known as AVITH). AVITH was identified by the Royal Commission into Family Violence as an emerging issue requiring further research and a differentiated response to that used for adult perpetrators of violence. We inform our practice and understanding through strong collaboration with those active in this field and have contributed our data to the RMIT Centre for Innovative Justice research into AVITH (due for release November 2019).

CLIENT STORIES

STACEY 17 YEARS OLD

Contacted Youthlaw for assistance with an application for a family violence intervention order against her Dad.

Stacey had been subjected to physical and emotional violence by her Dad throughout her childhood. Her mother was also subjected to his abuse. Recently, her Dad had returned to the family home distressing Stacey to the extent that she had to be admitted for hospital care. While she was in hospital her Dad continued to send her abusive messages.

Youthlaw provided information to Stacey and supported her to obtain an intervention order at the Melbourne Children's Court restraining her Dad from contacting her. This made her feel much safer.

Stacey was supported to engage with Frontyard housing workers and workers from the Young Women's Crisis service. By the time of her discharge from hospital, the team had secured youth specific, supported accommodation for her. With the stability of her new accommodation Stacey has been able to look to education and employment options.

OUTREACH PROGRAM

CLIENT STORIES

RAMI

22 YEARS OLD

Sought assistance from Youthlaw for a criminal matter through one of our outreach sites. At that time, he had no fixed address, and was couch surfing and living out of his car after a falling out with his family. The incident leading to Rami's criminal matter was his first interaction with police and he had been affected by alcohol when it took place.

As a result of the incident, Rami self-referred himself to an Alcohol and Other Drug counsellor. Youthlaw initially linked Rami to a support worker to assist him to obtain safe and secure housing. Youthlaw also made referrals to mental health supports for Rami.

After engaging extremely well with all workers, Youthlaw was able to negotiate with police to recommend that Rami be placed on the Diversion program. The matter went before a Magistrate who commended Rami on his efforts and approved a Diversion order.

Rami has not used substances for over 12 months and continues to engage with his support workers. He has ambitions to become an Alcohol and Other Drug counsellor.



Outreach lawyer, Lisa Nguyen, at Headspace Bendigo

Our outreach lawyer (Lisa Nguyen) provides legal assistance across Victoria via frontline youth services. We provide legal assistance during site visits, by phone and by email, and also provide court representation. We also provide training and secondary consultations to staff at our partner sites so they are able to provide basic legal information to young people, identify legal issues and refer young people to our service.

Our current partners/locations are: Headspace centres in Bendigo, Dandenong/Narre Warren, Frankston, Glenroy, Warrnambool, and Wodonga, The Bridge Youth Services in Shepparton and Seymour, Mornington Peninsula Shire Youth Services and a Youth Residential Detox Unit in the Melbourne CBD.

LEGAL POD PROGRAM



Legal Pod
Lawyers by your side

Been in out-of-home care?

If you're aged 18-25, have left out-of-home care and have legal problems, you can get free legal help for up to 3 years from Youthlaw Legal Pod program.

CLIENT STORIES

Lucy

18 YEARS OLD

Had been in out of home care from the age of 12. She suffered from mental health concerns and relied on Youth Allowance as her source of income.

Lucy met with her Legal Pod lawyers, who provided Lucy with information about enrolling to vote, as well as her eligibility for the Transition to Independent Living Allowance. The Pod also provided some advice about unpaid medical bills. Lucy continues to receive ongoing help from the Legal Pod program and we are currently helping her with fines and tenancy issues.

For the past 12 months Youthlaw has been running the Legal Pod program. Overseen and guided by Managing Lawyer Fleur Hopkins, this program provides free long term legal services to young people aged 18-24 years who have had an out-of-home care experience.

The program uses pro bono resources to link no less than three volunteer lawyers to a young person. This 'Legal Pod' then provides wrap around legal services to the young person for up to three years. It is the first of its kind in Victoria.

We currently have 9 young people allocated to 'Legal Pods' and have capacity for more. 8 law firms have partnered with the program and over 70 lawyers have expressed interest in assisting the program.

On average each client has had 8 legal issues. Common issues are fines, debts, FOI requests for DHHS documents and tenancy. This highlights the complex needs of young people transitioning from care, and the importance of providing a comprehensive service to address these needs.

In the future we are setting up the program in the Geelong region to improve access to legal services for young people in regional Victoria.

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP – LEGAL SERVICE

In November 2017 Youthlaw joined the Health Justice Partnership (HJP) comprising Ballarat Community Health (BCH), Federation University Australia and Central Highlands Community Legal Centre in Ballarat.

HJPs recognise the strong connection between poor health and unresolved legal issues. Evaluation of the HJP model has found that embedding legal services within a health setting results in addressing legal issues earlier and achieving more positive legal outcomes.

The partnership established a legal service for young people with the lawyer sitting in a local community health service with youth and welfare workers. Our lawyer is Katrina Fanning. She works closely with agencies in the region. They refer young people to her. In 2019 with one-off project funding from the Victorian Law Foundation an additional part-time lawyer, Sophie Ellis, was also employed for 12 months. She trains up workers in the region in youth law so they are better able to identify legal issues when working with young people.

The service provides advice to young people by phone, online and in person including at outreach locations. They also represent young people at court.

In the first two years of the service, the service was accessed by 160 young people. Of these, 55 young people identified that a legal issue had an impact on health and wellbeing including their sleep, stress, concentration and confidence levels. Legal education sessions were delivered to 446 young people and 90 agency workers. 35 secondary consultations were provided to workers and 80% of staff reported an increase in their knowledge about legal-health issues.

CLIENT STORIES

EISHA
22 YEARS

Was referred to us by a local service. She had studied at a local secondary college a number of years ago but had left school due to what she felt was an unbearable situation with another student. Eisha described the other student repeatedly bullying and threatening and claiming that she was a bully.

Parents had become involved. The school attempted to manage the situation but incidents continued. Eisha and her mother sought assistance from the police and Eisha applied for a personal safety intervention order. The other student was represented by a private lawyer. Eisha had no-one to represent her and felt so intimidated by the situation that she dropped the application and left school feeling this was the only way to stop the bullying behaviour.

A few years later Eisha and the student met again at a social event. The same behaviour occurred. Following this Eisha was served with an intervention order application against her. The application was for four years.

Eisha was able to explain to the youth lawyer what had happened and was given advice about her options. Records from school were obtained. Following four court appearances an agreement was reached to sign a mutual undertaking that Eisha and the former student stay away from each other. There was greater understanding and acknowledgement of what had occurred.

Eisha felt heard, supported and respected. Previously with no legal representation and exhausting all apparent avenues she had felt leaving school was the only option. Her health had become poor with weight gain and depressive episodes. Eisha felt little prospect of a career in the future and was burdened by the prospect of having an order against her and consequences of this. After the case was finished she was clearly happier and was looking forward to study and a career.

CLIENT STORIES

NATHAN

17 YEARS

Was engaged with a local service and supported by his worker to speak with our lawyer. Nathan had been charged with theft from his employer.

That our lawyer works closely with the service Nathan was accessing meant that it was easy for him to access legal support and also obtain support material from his worker for his hearing.

Our lawyer outlined Nathan's options including that the police informant indicated support for diversion. Nathan attended court and supporting

documentation was provided. He was granted diversion and ordered to provide a written apology and undertake to be of good behaviour.

If Nathan had represented himself or not shown up it is likely this would have resulted in a criminal record and additional penalties. Nathan felt supported and that his circumstances were understood and taken into account. He is now attending TAFE and completing a trade.

CLIENT STORIES

LAURA

23 YEARS

A young mother of two was referred to our service. She had been subjected to violence by her ex-partner and was worried because he had recently been released from prison.

Laura initially missed many appointments. With the involvement of a youth worker at Ballarat Community Health we finally made contact. We also arranged to meet her where it was more convenient. She explained that she had moved, had been in hospital and also suffered from anxiety and depression. Domestic violence had been considerable including being held hostage by her ex-partner.

Laura was given legal advice about options to protect herself and her children. She was

also given advice about applying for victim compensation. The BCH worker followed up when she did not attend appointments and counselling was arranged. The BCH worker and lawyer worked together to gather the information needed to submit her crimes compensation application. The compensation was able to fund security features in her home and counselling.

Persistence and collaboration by both the lawyer and BCH staff was a very important and effective component of the service and undoubtedly contributed to Laura and her children being assisted in ways that will have a long term benefit.

FRIDAY FINES CLINIC CLIENT STORIES

GABBY

21 YEARS OLD

Sought help from Youthlaw after she was wrongly fined by police. She was accessing emergency housing support from Frontyard and had been asked to wait outside until Frontyard could give her an update about where she could sleep that night. Gabby was waiting outside and talking with some other young people when two police officers fined her \$534 for “Riotous behaviour in a public place” because they thought she had hit a tree. While she might have playfully hit a tree, it’s not “riotous” to hit a tree.

Gabby and Youthlaw thought this was really unfair because the police knew she was homeless and unable to afford to pay the fine.

Also, if the police had concerns about Gabby’s behaviour they could have chosen to talk to her like a human being or give her a warning rather than issue a fine.

Youthlaw were able to make an application asking for the fine to be withdrawn on the basis that Gabby’s actions were not “riotous” and the fine had been issued contrary to law. Victoria Police did not agree with our application but we still got the fine withdrawn because they made an administrative mistake when determining our application. Gabby was super happy she didn’t have to pay \$534 dollars for being young and boisterous.

OUTREACH PROGRAM CLIENT STORIES

SARAH

19 YEARS OLD

Referred to Youthlaw by her housing support worker. Sarah’s ex-partner had been controlling and emotionally and physically abusive towards her. This included taking Sarah’s car without her permission and committing traffic offences. He had incurred many fines in Sarah’s name but had destroyed the notices to hide them from her.

Youthlaw assisted Sarah with an application to have the fines withdrawn under the Family Violence Scheme.

We also referred Sarah to a family violence support worker and supported her to apply for a Family Violence Intervention Order. With our assistance, a final Family Violence Intervention Order was granted and Sarah’s ex-partner did not contact her again.

Sarah is now living in private rental and is studying at university.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAM CLIENT STORIES

BEN

14 YEARS OLD

Diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, was referred to Youthlaw at the Melbourne Children's Court. The police had applied for a family violence intervention order against him to protect his Mum and younger brother after several police call-outs to the home. It was alleged that Ben had used violence toward his Mum and caused property damage.

Our family violence lawyer explained the law to Ben and his options for dealing with the application. Our youth worker also met with Ben and undertook an assessment at court identifying that he would benefit from mental health support, school re-engagement assistance and opportunities for male mentoring. Our lawyer then obtained an adjournment of the application so that Ben could engage with supports to address the underlying causes of his use of violence in the home.

During the adjournment period our youth worker, in collaboration with staff from the Education Justice Initiative, developed a school reengagement plan for Ben. They also facilitated referrals for Ben to services and programs in his local community, including a support program for young men facilitated by male youth workers, and a 10-week course to address the young person's anti-social behaviours and personal difficulties. Ben was also linked in with headspace, a youth mental health service.

With support from our youth worker, Ben successfully engaged with services and reengaged with a school suited to his needs. Ben and his mother reported significant improvements at home as he developed strategies to manage his behaviour. When the matter returned to court, the police and the Magistrate were satisfied that no further court intervention was required and the intervention order against Ben was withdrawn.

LEGAL POD PROGRAM

CLIENT STORIES

DESTINY

18 YEARS OLD

Was referred to us by her caseworker for assistance with a superannuation dispute. Superannuation bequeathed to Destiny had been released to her mother, despite Destiny being removed from her mother's care as a young child. When Destiny met with her Pod lawyers, they conducted a Legal Health Check and discovered she had a number of other legal problems as well.

Since she first came to see us, Destiny's lawyers have given her advice about tenancy problems and issues with her employment, as well as information about enrolling to vote. Her lawyers have agreed to provide pro bono assistance to Destiny in relation to her superannuation dispute. The pod lawyers continue to help Destiny prepare a Victims of Crime application following abuse she suffered as a child.

RMIT STUDENT LEGAL SERVICE



Our RMIT Student Legal Service senior lawyer, James Tresise

We are contracted by RMIT University to provide a legal service to RMIT students.

Many students access the legal service online and receive legal information, advice and self-help options. Many also have face-to-face appointments, usually referred by the student hub and the many great student services available.

Our service assists with a wide range of legal issues. Students, particularly international students, often find themselves living in unregulated rooming houses and dealing with unscrupulous landlords, or experiencing exploitation at work. We also give advice to students about a range of other issues such as fines, safety, crime, being a victim of crime, debts, and consumer disputes.

This year our RMIT legal service was delivered by our lawyer James Tresise supported by other Youthlaw lawyers. In addition to delivering legal services, James has also trained many of the RMIT student service staff to be able to provide information and identify when to refer matters to the legal service. He has also supported RMIT in becoming a sponsor agency for the Work and Development Permit scheme and continued to work with RMIT in developing improved housing standards in purpose built student accommodation.

With a strong focus on self-help the legal service aims to empower students to resolve their own legal issues.

RMIT STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

THANKS SO MUCH JAMES!
ALSO FOR NOT MAKING
ME FEEL LIKE A COMPLETE
LOSER FOR ALL MY FINES

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP
AND DIRECTION! THIS
HAS BEEN VERY HELPFUL
AND HAS ALLOWED ME TO
ADVOCATE FOR MYSELF.

YOUR SUPPORT SO FAR
HAS BEEN MOST GRACIOUS
AND A MAJOR INFLUENCE
IN SURVIVING THROUGH
THESE HURDLES. I HOPE
WITH FURTHER STUDY I
CAN ALSO HELP PEOPLE
LIKE YOU DO.

LEGAL EDUCATION

YOUNG PEOPLE

Over the past year we have been all over Victoria delivering legal education sessions to groups of young people.

Some of the highlights included:

- Mornington Secondary College - Sexting and cyberbullying
- VCAL group, Inner Melbourne VET Cluster (IMVC) – Rights and responsibilities with police & Fines FAQs
- The Hester Hornbook Academy, Melbourne City Mission (MCM) – Police powers and PSOs
- Peter Laylor Vocational College – Rights in dealing with police, public service officers (PSOs) and authorised officers (AOs)
- Wallan Secondary College – Graffiti

We also provide sessions on a fee paying basis such as to students at St Michael's Grammar School on consent, sexting, cyberbullying and rights on the street.

WORKERS

One of the best ways to communicate legal information to young people is through the people they trust and seek help from, such as youth workers, teachers and counsellors.

We continued to provide legal training and workshops tailored to workers and other professionals who assist young people. Some of the sessions we provided this year include:

- Glenroy Headspace – consent, failure to disclose and failure to protect
- Youth Crime Forum, Victoria Legal Aid – Information sharing provisions affecting youth crime clients
- Ballarat Community Health, Forensic Mental Health team – referral options for clients and how to conduct a Legal Health Check

We also developed and maintained our online resources including easy-to-read fact sheets, apps and a booklet for youth workers.

POLICY & ADVOCACY

Youthlaw advocates for policy and law reform to address systemic issues impacting on children and young people in the justice system.

This year we have been focused on issues of current critical concern, including the increasing over representation of African & Pacifica youth and continued overrepresentation of Koori kids and young people with a child protection background. We also had a focus on the unacceptably high number of young people in youth prisons, especially those un-sentenced on remand, and the conditions and treatment of young people in these facilities.

In the lead up to the Victorian election and beyond there were a number law and order offences and laws flagged that were highly likely to pull more young people into the youth justice system & reduce fundamental legal protections. We responded to each, cautioning decision-makers to look at the evidence of what is needed and what works rather than what is popular but ineffective justice responses. Despite our and many others lobbying efforts, amendments to emergency services law was passed introducing a mandatory sentence of 6 months jail and removing consideration by the courts of psycho-social immaturity and the potential to rehabilitate 18 to 21 year olds.

This year prison numbers have increased to an all-time high and the Victorian government's May budget contained funding for further prison expansion. Along with other commentators, we advocated for a halt to prison expansion both for youth and adults and reinvestment in early intervention & prevention. We supported Jesuit Social Services advocacy for prisons to be rehabilitative and modelled on successful prisons overseas.

This year saw youth detention facilities under strain and scrutiny with report after report finding unacceptable treatment of detainees including use of solitary confinement and lockdowns. Other reports including that by the Victoria Auditor General (VAGO) found inadequate access to education and health services and a failure to provide adequate rehabilitation to stop young people in custody from reoffending.

We welcomed the government sought 'Ogaloff & Armytage' review of the Victorian youth justice system and following its release acceptance by the new government of all its recommendations. We are still concerned by the lack of qualifications of detention staff & their limited training. We still wait to be convinced that a high quality regime of assessment and care is put in place. Much could be learned by highly effective youth detention in Spain and Scandinavia but it seems we will continue to go down the well-worn path of penal systems in the UK & USA.

Encouragingly though, since the Victorian election, opportunities have presented to support Government to arrest populist policy making, and address the upward trajectory of the Victorian prison population by exploring bold, alternative and evidence based approaches to prevent crime and reduce re-offending

In this light Youthlaw submitted to the Royal Commission into Victoria's mental health system drawing attention to the inadequacy of mental health assessment and services at the many points of justice intervention and that young people are being sentenced and jailed in the context of undiagnosed, untreated mental health conditions, and calling for universal mental health services for young people and their families.

Along with our Smart Justice for Young People Coalition colleagues we collectively advocated for raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years, justice reinvestment, and support for ATSI and culturally diverse young people & their communities to be involved in solutions for overrepresentation in the youth justice system

We continue to work with government, Victoria Police and many other stakeholders in the juvenile justice system, always maintaining our strong independence, to raise hard questions and challenge that which is not in interests of young people.

Our work with government has included active participation in the development and design of key Victorian Government policy and law reform initiatives including:

- The development of a ten year Youth Justice strategic plan
- The development of a new Youth Justice Act
- Victoria's whole-of-government Crime Prevention Strategy

VOLUNTEERS



Vollies Justine Jaramillo (left) and Adele Palfreeman (right).

It is only through the hard work, talent and enthusiasm of our volunteers that Youthlaw is able to assist thousands of young people every year.

Our volunteer program was a great success again this year and we are proud of what staff and volunteers have achieved together. Currently, a team of 25 volunteers are trained up as paralegals to provide paralegal support and administrative assistance. We encourage our staff to mentor our volunteers by sharing their own career pathways and providing them with opportunities to observe all aspects of Youthlaw work.

In March 2019 we held our annual volunteer intake and selected 20 new enthusiastic volunteers to join the existing volunteer team and be trained up as skilled paralegals. A team of 6 volunteers also received additional training as Friday Fines clinic paralegals, learning to see clients and manage fines cases. In addition, we hosted a number of Deakin law students and Leo Cussen graduates.

Volunteer intake, induction, training and coordination was overseen by our Volunteer and Administration coordinators Hanna (finishing Nov 2018), Kaila (finishing Feb 2019) and Chloe. We commend them for their amazing work.

Thanks go to every volunteer who has generously given their time at Youthlaw.

DANIEL

VOLUNTEERING AT THE FRIDAY FINES CLINIC HAS GIVEN ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO LEGAL WORK THAT MAKES A REAL DIFFERENCE IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES. I NEVER IMAGINED I WOULD BE ABLE TO DO THIS WHILE STILL COMPLETING MY DEGREE

SARAH S

VOLUNTEERING AT YOUTHLAW HAS REALLY HELPED ME TO REALISE HOW THE LAW CAN BE USED TO CHANGE A PERSON'S LIFE.

OUR SUPPORTERS

We are a proudly independent organisation for young people and we rely on support from the community to keep our doors open and our programs running. A significant proportion of our income is from fundraising, self-generated income & philanthropic grants. We also receive much in kind support.



Two of our awesome vollies, Constance Iliadis (left) and Olivia Moll (right) having just participated in Run Melbourne.

We thank the following

FUNDRAISING

This year we received a donation of \$1,500 from Ashurst law firm staff who joined Run Melbourne to fundraise for Youthlaw.

Every year Ashurst law firm graduate lawyers organise a trivia night to raise funds for Youthlaw. This year \$7,282.67 was raised. It is a great evening bringing out fierce competition between the practice teams and great warmth and support for Youthlaw.

Streetsmart is an organisation that conducts fundraising for small not for profits that assist the homeless. This year they donated \$7,500 toward our legal clinics at Frontyard Youth Services.

The Criminal Law Governance and Resources team in the Victorian Department of Justice & Regulation contacted us to say they held a “Wear it Purple” morning tea and raised \$80 towards a worthy cause and would donate this amount to Youthlaw.

We receive a number of small donations often via court orders but also supportive individuals. This year we also received a donation from Nancy Klepper a past secondary teacher and educator who donated US\$5,000 to Youthlaw because she loves what we do.

IN KIND SUPPORT

- Ashurst law firm – secondee lawyer, access to rooms for meetings, stationery supplies
- Melbourne City Mission (relocation x 2, office equipment & much other expertise and support)
- Brian Carsons of Think Property – Pro bono assistance to find a CBD office
- Colin Biggers & Paisley - Lease/licensing advice and venue
- Konica Minolta – Providing a high quality second hand printer/fax/scanner
- Ballarat Community Health & Federation University Australia – support of the Ballarat service (hosting staff, evaluation & contributing to the partnership)

FUNDING

- Commonwealth and State Attorney-General's Departments funding for community legal centres
- Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety
- Victorian Legal Services Board
- Kimberley Foundation
- RMIT University
- RE Ross Trust
- Victoria Law Foundation

PRO BONO LEGAL SERVICES

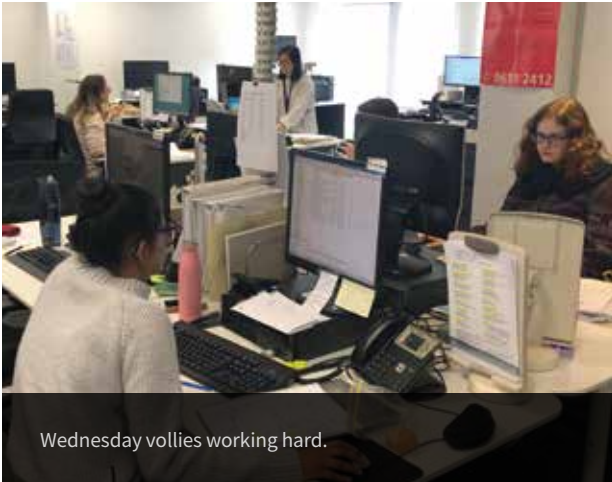
Members of the Victorian Bar and private legal practitioners who have provided free legal representation to clients of Youthlaw

- Members of the Victorian Bar and private practitioners who have provided free representation at court
- Aitken Partners
- Baker McKenzie
- Colin Biggers & Paisley
- DLA Piper
- Holding & Redlich
- K & L Gates
- Price Waterhouse Cooper
- Russell Kennedy
- Wisewould Mahony

COLLABORATION PARTNERS

- Melbourne City Mission & Frontyard Youth Services
- Federation of Community Legal Centres
- YSAS Fitzroy
- Our Headspace partners
- The Bridge Youth services in Shepparton & Seymour
- Mornington Peninsula Shire youth centres
- Federation University Australia
- Ballarat Community Health
- Referring agencies in the Central Highlands region
- Flemington Kensington Community Legal Centre and the Police Accountability Project
- Jesuit Social Services
- VCOSS
- YACVic
- Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
- CREATE Foundation
- Smart Justice for Young People Coalition Members
- The Legal Pod program reference group
- Victoria Legal Aid
- RMIT and the Centre for Innovative Justice
- Melbourne Children's Court staff, registrars and magistrates
- Merri Health

VOLUNTEERS



Wednesday vollies working hard.

Maisie Adams, Sarah Abell, Zeina Alhalabi, Ryan Arulrajah, Daniel Badov, Michelle Bazarskaya, Ari Bilotta, Renee Black, Walinda Bonne, Rachel Chew, Shardaye Clarke, Jakob Cobby, Leanne Cousinery, Dani D'Arienzo, Jennifer Diaz, Bethany Dwyer, Samu Elleperuma, Samantha Forrester, Cameron Grace, Romy Griffin, Daniel Gouthro-Dowling, Dona Hansani, Amy Hatfield, Ashleigh Hudson, Constance Iliadis, Justine Jaramillo, Safia Kamal Eddin, Matt Kearns, Storm Logan, Christina Loukos, Sassy McKenzie, Niren Menon, Olivia Moll, Nimaashaa Nimalachandran, James Ondari, Adele Palfreeman, Ashira Paraskevas, Rashini Perera, Ety Filosof, Sophie Pinkus, Chloe Stapleton, Patrick Stratmann, Sarah Sullivan, Jessica Szwarcbord, Zoe Tapp, Chelsey Tattersall, Cristiana Tomasino, Amelia Watters, Anabelle Weinberg, Maggie Wright, Indigo York, Juanlin Yip.

YOUTHLAW BOARD 2018-19

- Nicole Jee (Chair until 22 Nov 2018)
- Kathleen Sutton (Chair from 22 November 2018)
- Charlie Bell (Treasurer)
- Christopher Brydon (Secretary)
- Nizam Nijamudeen (until 22 Nov 2018)
- Karen Mak (until 22 Nov 2018)
- Helen Thomas
- Erica Contini
- Dan Fawcett
- Joanna Lawrence
- Bethany Stewart (until 17 July 2018)
- Shannon Jenkins
- Shelley Hemmings (From 22 Nov 2018)
- Monika Pilekic(From 22 Nov 2018)
- Lynette Dong (From 22 Nov 2018)
- Jacob Cripps (From 22 Nov 2018)



Youthlaw and WEst Justice lunch.

YOUTHLAW STAFF 2018–19

- Ariel Couchman
Director
- Anna Radonic
Principal Lawyer
- Tiffany Overall
Policy officer and Family Violence Program Coordinator
- Lisa Nguyen
Outreach Lawyer
- Amala Ramarathinam
Frontyard Lawyer
- Joanne Ellis
Family Violence Lawyer (on maternity leave from March 2019)
- Stephanie Pashias
Family Violence Lawyer (from March 2019)
- Hilary Glaisher
Specialist Family Violence Youth Worker
- James Tresise

RMIT Lawyer

- Tim Hutton & Rebecca Lew
Secondee lawyers from Ashurst
- Fleur Hopkins
Managing Lawyer Legal Pod Program
- Katrina Fanning
Central Highlands HJP youth lawyer (from 8 October 2018)
- Sophie Ellis
Central Highlands HJP project lawyer (from February 2019)
- Olivia Moll
Ballarat project administrator
- Kaila Glare, Hanna Lee & Chloe Stapleton
Volunteer and Administration Coordinators
- Noha Ghobrial
Financial services

And locums Etty Filosof and Cameron Horn.



The Youthlaw team at Run Melbourne 2019



FINANCIALS 2018-19

YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEGAL RIGHTS CENTRE INC
ABN 12 794 935 230
DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019

	2019 \$	2018 \$
INCOME		
CLC Recurrent Grant Funding		
Community Legal Centre (CLC) Recurrent - Commonwealth	174,284	169,068
Community Legal Centre (CLC) Recurrent - State	196,664	185,640
Community Legal Centre (CLC) Recurrent - Other VLA	-	24,788
	<u>370,948</u>	<u>379,496</u>
Grants - Non-Recurrent		
Kimberley Foundation	15,000	15,000
Ballarat Project	44,500	13,350
Department of Justice - Duty Lawyer	51,183	45,844
Department of Justice - Family Violence	51,183	58,339
Department of Justice - CLC Assist	51,183	50,911
Legal Pod Project	125,000	25,000
Victoria Legal Services Board	-	80,000
RE Ross Trust	20,000	-
RMIT	83,636	81,200
Smart Justice	-	12,000
Street Smart	-	17,000
Victoria Law Foundation	21,000	-
The Myer Foundation	-	10,000
Other grants	1,700	-
	<u>464,385</u>	<u>408,644</u>
Donations	14,133	5,914
Interest Received	9,537	11,916
Other Income		
Community legal education	3,182	1,270
Costs recovery and retained	8,993	3,086
Deakin placements	3,000	3,000
Fundraising	2,635	13,369
Management fees	-	-
Miscellaneous income	713	-
	<u>18,523</u>	<u>20,725</u>
TOTAL INCOME	877,526	826,695

YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEGAL RIGHTS CENTRE INC
ABN 12 794 935 230
DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019

	2019 \$	2018 \$
EXPENDITURE		
Staff Salaries, Wages and On-costs		
Salaries and wages	700,743	639,088
Superannuation contributions	68,623	60,775
Employee leave entitlements - annual leave	18,008	1,865
Employee leave entitlements - long service leave	29,384	3,946
WorkCover	-	475
	816,758	706,149
Premises Expenses		
Rent	44,208	39,037
Amenities	1,929	3,548
Meetings	47	270
	46,488	42,855
Staff Related Expenses		
Conference fees	2,020	1,677
Police checks	-	121
Staff training	648	663
Staff recruitment	-	600
	2,668	3,061
Communications Expenses		
Internet (ISP & website)	8,552	2,014
Mobile phones	2,843	2,773
Landline telephones	856	1,893
Communications Project	-	-
Website	-	920
	12,251	7,600
Office Overhead Expenses		
AGM expenses	-	-
Donations	500	-
Office equipment maintenance	-	2,839
Office equipment maintenance: IT support	9,729	7,570
Postage	421	660
Small equipment purchases	527	160
Stationery and photocopying	1,477	1,254
	12,654	12,483
Insurance	3,027	3,724
Finance, Audit and Accounting Fees		
Accounting fees	28,106	19,231
Audit fees	2,250	2,500
Bank charges	223	209
Lodgement fees	-	103
	30,579	22,043

YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEGAL RIGHTS CENTRE INC
ABN 12 794 935 230
DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019

	2019	2018
	\$	\$
EXPENDITURE (continued)		
Library, Resources and Subscriptions		
Library	381	440
Memberships and subscriptions	8,517	6,012
Practising certificates	314	3,974
	<u>9,212</u>	<u>10,426</u>
Programming and Planning		
Travel	3,936	5,109
Printing	3,613	1,470
Publicity	-	383
Strategic planning	298	367
Client disbursements	-	-
Forum & Workshops	-	2,000
Consultants	8,400	1,839
Evaluation	-	12,800
Fundraising expenses	-	-
Other expenses	1,644	-
	<u>17,891</u>	<u>23,968</u>
Depreciation and Amortisation Expenses	3,255	3,826
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u><u>954,783</u></u>	<u><u>836,135</u></u>
NET SURPLUS/ (DEFICIT) ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE ASSOCIATION	<u><u>(77,257)</u></u>	<u><u>(9,440)</u></u>

youthlaw

YOUNG PEOPLES LEGAL RIGHTS CENTRE

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FAX (03) 9620 3622
EMAIL ADMIN@YOUTHLAW.ASN.AU
WEB YOUTHLAW.ASN.AU

INC. No A0041616E
ABN 12794935230

*WE ARE MOVING TO 147-155 PELHAM ST, CARLTON VIC 3053, ON 21ST NOVEMBER

