



ANNUAL REPORT

2020/2021^{EDITION}

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Youthlaw's office is on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation in Naarm (Melbourne). We have team members working on the lands of the Wathaurung people in Ballarat and are lucky enough to visit many parts of Victoria through our outreach work. Youthlaw pays our deepest respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria, and stand in solidarity to pay respect to the ongoing culture and continued history of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations.

DISCLAIMER: All client stories in this report have been depersonalised and deidentified.

MESSAGE FROM YOUTHLAW CHAIR

Daniel Fawcett

CHAIR

The past year required us to work differently, and provide our services in different ways. It presented both professional and personal challenges.

As Ariel's report demonstrates, we navigated and tackled these challenges with aptitude and aplomb. We became ever more adaptable and used the time confined at home to develop innovative ways to deliver advice, champion important reform initiatives, and engage with the community. I am immensely proud of our efforts in this regard.

There are many initiative and developments worth mentioning. Here are some highlights:

- Providing three months of crisis legal outreach for university students without government support.
- Establishing two new collaborative networks: an Adolescent Violence in the Home network and a Community Legal Centres Youth law network, to help us share experience, collect data and advocate for change.
- Obtaining funding for a three-year residential care advocacy project in Ballarat that will empower and assist young people in residential care to protect and assert their rights.
- Developing a partnership with Heidelberg Orange Door to assist adolescents experiencing violence in the home.

In addition to the above, we've continued to retain a strong focus on the future. Our new, five-year strategic plan is a remarkable document that builds on what we have accomplished to date, and promotes our ambitions. I strongly encourage you to take a look.

I remain impressed and inspired by the tremendous work of our CEO, staff, volunteers and board members. All these people come together—most recently virtually!—to deliver for our clients and young people.

We have also had the benefit of generous assistance and funding from many of our supporters for which I am thankful. Those supporters include partner organisations, law firms, private donors and government. Their contribution is essential and never taken for granted.

On a personal note, 2021 will be my last year as the Chair, and a board member, of Youthlaw. It has been a real privilege. Youthlaw has a bright future ahead, and I look forward to remaining involved in other capacities in the future.

REPORT FROM THE CEO

Ariel Couchman

CEO

2020-21 was a challenging year for all who work with young people. COVID restrictions resulted in reduced and restricted walk-in services and a heavy reliance on phone and booked appointments. We have no doubt that these were barriers for many young people. Our own experience was that less young people have called us than in pre-COVID times.

We also rely heavily on assisted referral by frontline workers. Almost 60% of our clients come to come us referred by youth and community services.

Our outreach clinics at Frontyard Youth Services (in the Melbourne CBD) and at six Headspace centres and three local youth centres (in outer urban and regional Victoria) were not operating for much of the year. We did continue to offer advice over the phone.

We were unable to have volunteers in the office for much of the year. We rely heavily on them to take calls and assist the lawyers. Justin and Matt (our paralegals) filled this gap, funded through COVID assistance money from the Federal Government. Our Fines Clinic paralegal volunteers kept working online continuing to assist over 150 young people with their fines.

Despite these challenges as always Youthlaw was highly adaptable and positive. We used this as an opportunity to learn new ways to deliver legal services including court appearances online and legal information via Instagram. We welcomed babies, cats, dogs, budgies and stranded staff in holiday locations (so hard) into our many zoom meetings.

We continued to advocate for youth rights to be upheld even when it was unpopular, such as with COVID fines. We advocated for a fairer fines system, bail reform, smarter ways to do justice and reduce the cost and negative impacts of imprisonment, increasing the age of criminal responsibility and independent investigation of complaints about police. We welcomed the final report from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, confirming so much of what we had already heard from our clients.

As always, I am in awe of the commitment, passion and skills displayed by our wonderful staff, volunteers and board.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020/2021



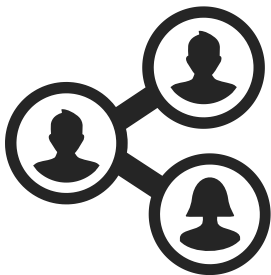
Continued through lockdowns

Despite COVID, we continued to provide legal services to young people throughout Victoria



RMIT Clinic Outreach

We provided three months of crisis legal outreach, alongside emergency relief provided by RMIT multi-faith network, for university students doing it hard and without government support



New collaborative networks

We established two new collaborative networks, an Adolescent Violence in the Home (AVITH) network and Community Legal Centres (CLC) Youth law network, to share experience, collect data and advocate for change



COVID advocacy

We spearheaded collaborative advocacy that resulted in a less punitive approach by police enforcing COVID fines in later lockdown

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020/2021



New project in Ballarat

We secured funding for a three-year residential care advocacy project in Ballarat that will empower and assist young people in residential care to protect and assert their rights



New program and partnerships

We commenced a pre-court pilot program in Melbourne's North East area in partnership with YSAS, Drummond Street and Orange Door to assist adolescents who use and experience violence in the home to access legal and non-legal supports



Youthlaw's extended families grew

We welcomed three babies and we are expecting two more



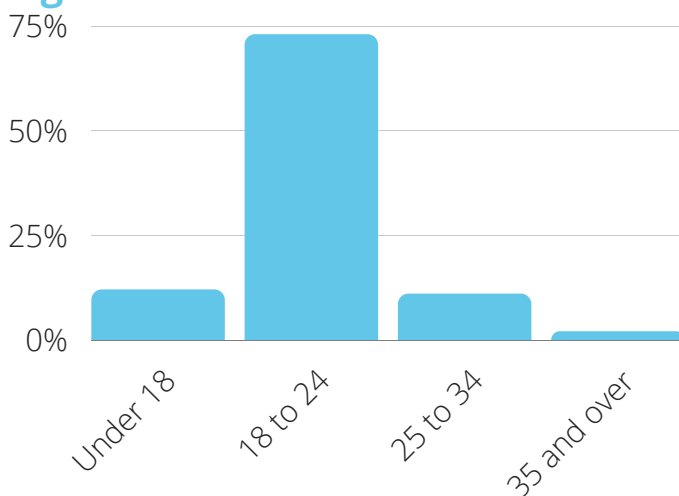
Anna conquered Tasmania*

Anna completed the Three Capes Walk in Tasmania, totaling nearly 50kms

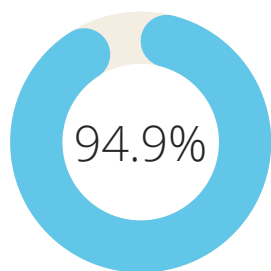
*Tasmania remains free

OUR CLIENTS IN 2020/2021

Age of Youthlaw's clients

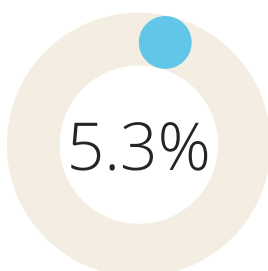


clients that are over the age of 25 were serviced through the RMIT Program



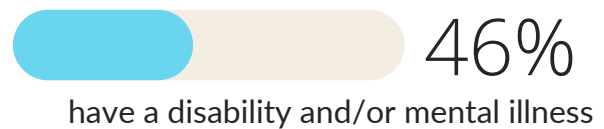
Experiencing Financial Disadvantage

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Clients

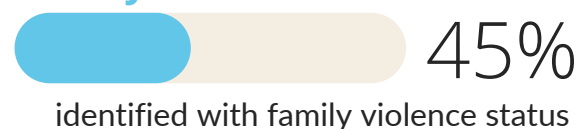


According to the 2016 census, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander represent 0.8% of the population

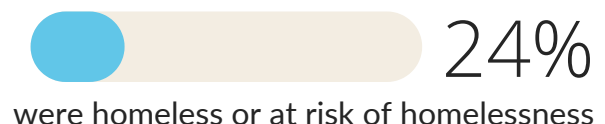
Disability and/or mental illness



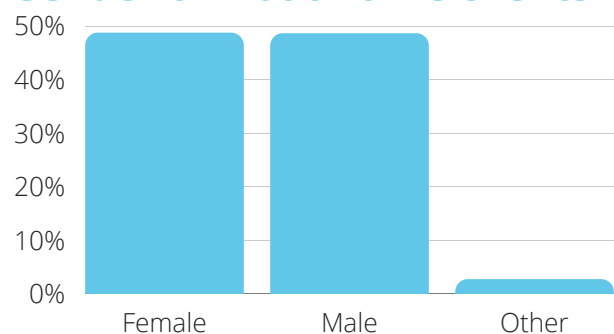
Family Violence Indicator



Homeless or at risk of

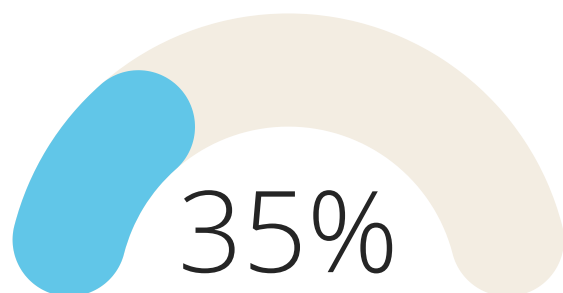


Gender of Youthlaw's clients



OUR CLIENTS IN 2020/2021

Percentage of clients born overseas



65% of Youthlaw's clients
were born in Australia

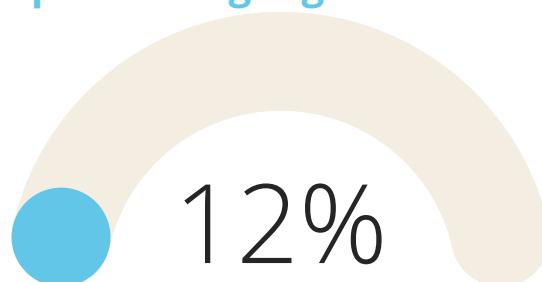
Top country of birth (after Australia)

1. Ethiopia
2. India
3. China
4. Sudan
5. New Zealand
6. Afghanistan
7. Kenya
8. Iran
9. England
10. Philippines

Main spoken language (after English)

1. Arabic
2. Mandarin
3. Amharic, Chinese & Hindi
Oromo & Persian
4. Dinka, Portuguese, Somali,
Spanish & Tamil

Percentage of clients where English is not the main spoken language at home



DAILY LEGAL HELP LINE

Anna Radonic

PRINCIPAL LAWYER (CRIME)

The Legal Help Line continues to be an essential service that Youthlaw provides to young people, especially those who we cannot meet in person due to location, lack of transport or safety concerns due to family violence. The Legal Help Line has become an increasingly important way for young people to get legal information when required to stay at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Young people, or their workers, can contact Youthlaw during business hours to speak with a lawyer. Our team of lawyers provide clear and prompt legal information via phone and email to empower young people to make decisions on their legal issues and understand where to go to get further help.

Our youth lawyers responded to

687

email and phone legal queries
in 2020/2021

I'm 20 but my girlfriend is 17, is it legal to have her nude pictures? Is it legal for me to send my nude pictures to her?

JESSICA, 20

I'm 16 and I want to leave home. Can I do that? Would the police get involved and would I get in trouble?

SAMANTHA, 16

My ex has said to everyone in a group chat that I raped her. Is there anything I can do? Should I contact the police to clear my name?

RAPHAEL, 24

My course provider says I have to get vaccinated to do my on-site placement. Can they make me get vaccinated?

MARK, 21

There were a reduced number of calls during the last 12 months. We believe that this was due to COVID factors (referral services closed or restricted, lockdowns and court adjournments).

Our lawyers continued to pick up the phone to young people currently being questioned, or about to be questioned, by the police and who want to know their rights.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAM

Tiffany Overall

FAMILY VIOLENCE COORDINATOR

Youthlaw's Family Violence Program continued its work supporting young people using and experiencing violence mainly in their homes. This year, the ongoing impact of COVID-19 was evident in the lives of these young people and their families.

Many of the young people presented with complex mental health issues, including acute suicidal ideations, and had limited supports. It was clear that their legal issues were not being experienced in isolation.

Our integrated team of lawyers Steph Pashias and Carmel Lohan and youth practitioners Caitlin Lester and Keren Leizerovitz continued to provide holistic services for young people experiencing complex and intersecting legal and social support issues.

Most young people who receive integrated support from the Youthlaw team avoided having a final intervention order made against them in court and many are linked in with relevant supports by program exit, which help them to move on with their lives in a safe and positive way.

104 young people assisted
68 duty lawyer services provided at the Melbourne Children's Court
32 young people received 1-5 months support from a youth practitioner
20 secondary consultations with workers from referring agencies/ organisations

More and more, the team is sharing their expertise and understanding of the issues and complexities of working with adolescents who use violence in the home ('AVITH') with colleagues across the service system. In early 2021, Youthlaw, in partnership with RMIT's Centre for Innovative Justice, set up the 'AVITH Collaborative' network as a forum to do this.

The system response to young people who are both using and experiencing violence remains flawed. Unfortunately, we are still seeing the misidentification of young people by police as the primary aggressor and a failure to explore multi-directional violence before initiating proceedings which bring young people and their families into contact with the justice system.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAM

Family Violence Duty Lawyer Service

Our Family Violence Duty Lawyer service at the Melbourne Children's Court ('MCC') has predominately been required to operate remotely during the pandemic, including negotiations with police and court appearances. There have been new challenges in working with young people remotely, and encouraging them to engage with the legal process in a meaningful and safe way. This way of working has also presented challenges in managing safety where both family members who experienced the violence and young people engaging in violence are at home together as court hearings proceed remotely. Where necessary Carmel and Caitlin have met physically with young people to manage safety and to provide them with age-appropriate legal advice and representation, non-legal support and referrals.

Young people who present at MCC have complex needs which often result in violence for the young person, either as user of violence or the victim of violence. If the additional needs can be managed, this will have a direct impact on the legal ramifications for the young person. If the young person can have some support, be linked in with services for them, be heard, followed through post court date, it can make all the difference for the young person.

STAKEHOLDER SURVEY 2021

...it was good to have them there representing me and it was good to have them explain everything and just sort of be there on my side

YOUNG PERSON, FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAM SURVEY 2021

AVITH Pilot Program

Early in 2021, Stephanie and Keren commenced Youthlaw's early support pilot program in the western metropolitan region. The service provides legal advice and social work support to young people under 18 years, especially adolescents using violence in the home. The program encourages early referrals, even if the young person has not had any engagement with police or does not have any family violence related court proceedings on foot. As part of this pilot we are developing early referral pathways and program collaboration across a range of local service providers, local police, courts, legal services and wellbeing providers.

PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH.COM

FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAM

Meet Jasmine, 17



PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH.COM

Jasmine, aged 17, lives at home with her mother and father. She is completing her VCE studies remotely during Melbourne's lockdown. The family moved to Victoria a few years ago, and have limited friends or family supports.

Following a verbal argument, Jasmine pushed her father into the wall, ran into her room and locked the door. Jasmine's father proceeded to bang on her door and threatened to call the police if she didn't come out of her room. Feeling scared, Jasmine called the police, who showed up thirty minutes later and made an application for a Family Violence Intervention Order ('FVIVO') protecting Jasmine's father and listing Jasmine as the respondent. Police indicated that they were considering laying assault charges against Jasmine.

Victoria Police completed an early referral to Youthlaw's AVITH program, allowing the Family Violence Lawyer and Youth Practitioner time to develop a rapport with Jasmine and ensure she felt supported, informed and empowered throughout the court process.

Over time, Jasmine disclosed that she and her mother had experienced ongoing family violence from her father. Court documents showed that a Magistrate had recently made a FVIVO protecting Jasmine from her father's use of violence.

The Family Violence lawyer spoke to Jasmine about the FVIVO process and gave advice about her legal options. The lawyer advised Jasmine she was protected by an Intervention Order and that she could report breaches of the order to police.

The lawyer made submissions to police prosecutions that Jasmine had been wrongfully identified as the primary aggressor by police. The Youth Practitioner worked with Jasmine to develop a safety plan and explored other supports Jasmine could access if things continued to escalate at home.

With Jasmine's consent, the Youth Practitioner and lawyer also spoke to Jasmine's mother about family violence services available to help her and her children stay safe and completed a referral to a community legal service where she could obtain independent legal advice.

Four months after the initial incident, Victoria Police withdrew the FVIVO application against Jasmine. Jasmine was relieved that she didn't have to attend court and that she could continue to focus on her VCE studies.

FRONTYARD AND PELHAM ST CLINICS

Georgia Zomer

SENIOR CRIMINAL LAWYER

Youthlaw continues to run clinics from Frontyard Youth Services and Pelham Street. During periods where lockdown restrictions eased, our lawyers provided services in person at these sites. During periods where the clinics were disrupted by COVID-19 restrictions, they continued to meet with clients via phone and Zoom.

Meet Sienna, 23



PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH.COM

We assisted Sienna with an application to vary a family violence intervention order against her ex-partner, which increased her safety. We also worked with our pro bono partners at Colin Biggers Paisley Lawyers to assist Sienna to make an application to the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal for compensation to help her to recover from the violence she had experienced.

306 young people assisted
175 legal advice given
160 legal information
80 on-going casework
76 court representation
44 secondary consultations
with Frontyard youth workers

Meet Abdul, 24



PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH.COM

Abdul was charged with reckless driving during a period when he was experiencing significant mental health issues, which were compounded by the isolation of living alone during COVID. He had no priors. Anna contacted the prosecutor to request Diversion. The prosecutor agreed, as did the Magistrate. This was a great result, which not only allowed Abdul to avoid a criminal record, but importantly allowed him to focus on his counselling and treatment.

LEGAL POD PROGRAM

Paula Hughes

MANAGING LAWYER | LEGAL POD PROGRAM

Turning 18 is a milestone most young people look forward to, but this is not necessarily the case for the approximately 600 young people leaving Out of Home Care services in Victoria each year. Youthlaw recognises that for these young people, transitioning from out-of-home care can be a difficult and uncertain time. 30% of care-leavers will become homeless within 3 years of leaving care. A very high percentage will be admitted to hospital, including for acute mental health issues. Some will come into contact with the criminal justice system and many will end up with a number of unaddressed legal problems. To help address these legal needs, Youthlaw established the Legal Pod Program in 2018.

The Legal Pod Program is a free legal service for care leavers aged 18 to 25. Young people are generally referred by housing or other support workers to Youthlaw. We connect the young person with a pod, or a small team, of lawyers from private law firms who work pro-bono and who will provide on-going legal assistance for up to three years.

78 new and on-going legal cases

18 legal pods

7 pro-bono law firms

70+ pro-bono lawyers

Each young person in the program has an average of seven legal problems at intake, and usually several other legal issues will arise during the three years they are engaged. Commonly, young people present with debts (usually for rent and utilities), fines, tenancy issues, family violence, sexual abuse, employment disputes and for help accessing care records.

While COVID-19 seriously compounded the difficulties faced by our clients, the assistance provided by the Legal Pod program this year helped young people to: stay safe from family violence, reduce crippling debts, avoid criminal records, retain housing, access compensation needed to recover from violent crimes, combat unfair situations in the workplace, address mistreatment from their childhood and deal with COVID fines.

LEGAL POD PROGRAM

This year we welcomed Ashurst to the Legal Pod Program and offer our thanks to them and to all of the participating firms for their ongoing and meaningful pro bono work for young care leavers.

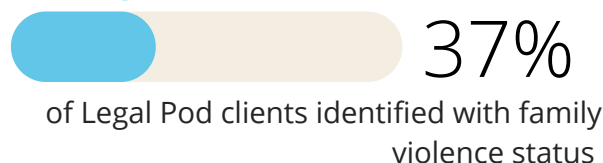
Thank you to our participating firms

Thank you to participating firms: Baker McKenzie, Gilbert + Tobin, Holding Redlich, DLA Piper, Wisewould Mahony, Colin Biggers & Paisley, PwC, Russell Kennedy and Ashurst.

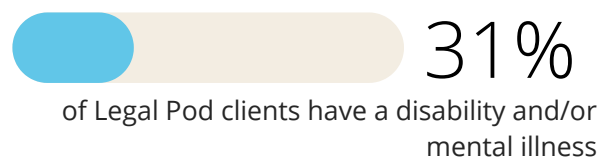
Managing Lawyer

The Managing Lawyer of the Legal Pod program is Paula Hughes. Lawyers Justin Jaramillo and Jo Ellis have also managed the program whilst Paula has been on parental leave this year. Youthlaw is currently seeking further funding to continue the program

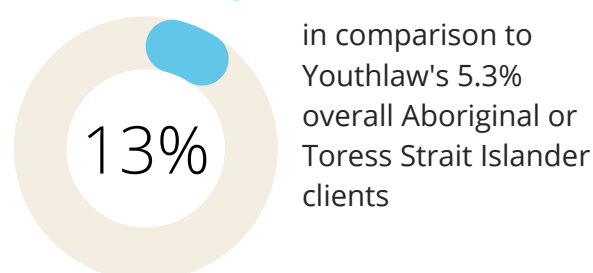
Family Violence Indicator



Disability and/or mental illness



Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Legal Pod Clients



Legal Pod achieved an **average** of

\$6000

worth of fines withdrawn and debts waived per client

LEGAL POD PROGRAM

Meet Olivia, 20



PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH.COM

Olivia had recently started studying to work in childcare, but was having trouble getting her Working With Children Check (WWCC) due to a charge when she was a minor. This was affecting her ability to complete placements and potentially work in the sector. With advocacy from her Legal Pod lawyers, she obtained her WWCC and is continuing her study.

Olivia was referred by an inner city housing worker. She had entered the out-of-care system at the age of 5 due to violence at home. When she turned 16, Olivia transitioned from out-of-home care straight into homelessness. She was working casually and was on Centrelink.

When we met Olivia, she had over \$2,700 in debts to a number of creditors. Her Legal Pod lawyers contacted all creditors and negotiated on her behalf until all 7 creditors confirmed they would not pursue Olivia for the debts.

Olivia also had a number of fines for not having money on her Myki and a fine for being out during curfew when the COVID-19 Stay-At-Home-Directions were in place. Her Legal Pod lawyers helped Olivia to get her fines waived on the basis of her special circumstances.

Olivia had been the victim of a violent crime since leaving care. Her Legal Pod lawyers supported her through the prosecution of the offender and assisted her to apply for compensation to assist her recovery. There were many delays in the prosecution and this caused Olivia significant distress. Her Legal Pod lawyers were mindful to help her access other supports when needed.

FRIDAY FINES CLINIC

Justin Jaramillo

SUPERVISING LAWYER | FRIDAY FINES CLINIC

Youthlaw continues to deliver our successful Friday Fines Clinic. A majority of young people who approach Youthlaw for help with fines each year will be assisted by our dedicated Friday Fines team.

The young people we assist overwhelmingly incur fines due to their homelessness, poor mental health, substance use or because of family violence. A majority of the young people we see are on Centrelink or have no income. To young people, these fines add extra stress and hardship during already difficult times in their lives. Young people have felt this particularly during the pandemic. Fines which are not dealt with at an early stage can spiral out of control, which in turn exacerbates the difficulties experienced by these young people. Resolving fines is an important way to assist young people to improve their overall legal health.

Our Friday Fines clinic provides legal advice to all young people, however we prioritise casework to those most vulnerable. We also provide secondary consultations to parents and support workers.

133 young people assisted
84 existing cases closed
62 new cases opened
3-5 fines per client
\$150-\$10,000 total amount of fines per client

Our assistance doesn't stop at casework. The Friday Fines Clinic continues to engage in extensive policy work to advocate for systemic change and efficiently exit vulnerable young people from the fines system.

The Friday Fines Clinic is managed by 1-2 Youthlaw lawyers who are assisted by 5-9 volunteer paralegals. The volunteer paralegals undertake a majority of the fines work under the supervision of our experienced lawyers.

Under this arrangement, our volunteer paralegals are getting invaluable casework experience and Youthlaw is able to increase its fines casework capacity. We are extremely grateful to the 13 paralegals who volunteered their time to assist young people over the last year.

FRIDAY FINES CLINIC

Over the year, our paralegals were supervised by our passionate and wonderful lawyers Amala Ramarathinam, Lisa Nguyen, Tiarne Wadley and Nick Mills. Currently, the Friday Fines Clinic is being managed by Ferdous Bahar and me, Justin Jaramillo, under the guidance of James Tresise.

Meet Jackson, 19



PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH.COM

Jackson left home just after the COVID-19 lockdown started last year. At the same time he lost his job. This meant that in some cases, he would sleep on the streets and on public transport. Prioritising food and trying to find a new job, he often used public transport without a ticket. He was fined a number of times within the few months that he was homeless. Because he was homeless, he missed the letters about his fines. Due to inaction, these fines were turned into charges.

Jackson was worried about these charges because a criminal record would be detrimental to his employment prospects in the career he wants to work in. Jackson then came to us for help.

When Jackson came to us, he was doing much better. We contacted his support workers who were able to provide support letters stating that he was homeless at the time of the offences and that due to his homelessness, Jackson was unable to prioritise getting a ticket.

We then advocated for Jackson and spoke to the prosecution on his behalf. We requested that they withdraw the charges for a few reasons.

In particular, these fines should have progressed to Fines Victoria for enforcement rather than being taken to court. Under the infringement system, the fines would have been withdrawn due to Jackson's circumstances. Jackson also didn't receive the letters about the fines because he was homeless.

Prosecution eventually withdrew the charges, and Jackson was very grateful that he was able to focus on rebuilding his life and move on from this difficult time in his life.

OUTREACH PROGRAM

Tim Hutton

OUTREACH LAWYER

Our Outreach Program meets and assists young people in a safe and familiar space.

This means delivering legal services to young people through ten different partner sites – six Headspace centres, three youth spaces in outer urban and regional Victoria and a detox unit.

2020-21 has been a challenging year for the Outreach Program. I began in this role at the end of 2020, taking over from Lisa Nguyen, and it has been somewhat difficult to establish a strong relationship with each of our outreach centres, with COVID lockdowns significantly limiting physical site visits. Nonetheless, by adopting a flexible approach to the program, Lisa and I were able to provide casework and representation services to 80 clients across the year. We gave advice across 100 different legal issues and represented young people to resolve 40 court matters. In addition, we gave legal information to a further 96 young people to help them address their legal problems at an early stage.

My plan is to resume regular site visits in 2022, and build on our critical relationships with our outreach partners. It is through these relationships and site visits that the value of the Outreach Program can be realised.

130 young people assisted
42 secondary consultations to workers and clinicians in host/partner organisations
8 training sessions to staff/clinicians
5 CLE sessions delivered to young people

It makes such a difference to young, vulnerable people to be able to meet with me and discuss their issues somewhere they feel comfortable. Further, often if it weren't for the workers at these youth centres making referrals to me, these young people would continue to have their legal issues unaddressed, causing them to snowball and become more serious.

In addition to providing legal services to young people, the Outreach Program delivers legal education to both young people and youth workers. While in-person sessions have been limited due to COVID, I have been able to run a number of online sessions. Most notably, during Law Week in May this year, I delivered a single session on consent laws and cyberbullying to 100+ youth workers and 700+ students.

OUTREACH PROGRAM

After realising the incredible reach such sessions could have, I have begun discussing with the Youthlaw team and other stakeholders the potentially of making such sessions a more regular Youthlaw offering.

Meet Sam, 19



PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH.COM

Sam is a current client. He was referred from one of our rural partner services. Sam lives in a small rural town. He suffers from severe social anxiety, ADHD, depression and has a mild cognitive impairment. This is compounded by a severe drug addiction.

Because Sam lives more than two hours from Melbourne, I would usually only offer legal advice and refer him elsewhere. However, I learned that because of his location, Sam's nearest free criminal law service is more than two hours by public transport (or one hour by car and Sam doesn't have his licence). Almost immediately, I could tell that Sam needed more than the duty lawyer service at court. He needed a lawyer that could cater for his needs and meet with him in his local area. For this reason, I took on his case. One of the first things Sam said to me was "I just want you to be able to meet me face to face so that you can see I'm not a bad person". It was quite upsetting to hear this because all of Sam's offences are extremely circumstantial.

However, it is clear that Sam is someone who has been targeted by police on a number of occasions. No wonder why he has begun to worry what people might think of him.

While COVID has not yet allowed it, my plan is to travel to meet Sam near his home once I can. For now, despite challenges, we have been able to make some progress remotely. Due to his circumstances, Sam's engagement with me is quite erratic. Most recently, Sam explained that "the reason [he hasn't] gotten back to [me was] because there has been a lot going on and [he] guess [he] just didn't want to think about it". A couple days before the last hearing, I hadn't heard from Sam for a couple of months.

However, we were able to organise a call at the last minute which gave me just enough time to act quickly and negotiate and resolve one of the matters with police. This particular matter involved driving charges and finalising it in court (by Webex) meant that Sam is now eligible to get his licence back. Sam's mum said that "being able to get his licence back is huge for Sam... it helped him see a future and gives him something to work towards... he can now start saving for a car". Had it not been for my willingness to continue following Sam up over and over again, we wouldn't have been able to resolve this matter and it would have been pushed back until later in the year, meaning Sam would remain unlicensed for longer.

Sam still has three outstanding court matters. However, he is beginning to trust me more and feel comfortable with discussing his matters and giving me instructions over the phone. I will continue to build rapport with Sam and try and help him move forward and see a more positive future for himself.

RMIT CLINIC

James Tresise

SENIOR COMMUNITY LAWYER

We have seen the RMIT Clinic be an absolutely integral service for students who are hard hit by the effects of COVID this year.

We have continued to assist RMIT students with legal issues ranging from tenancy, debt and credit issues. We have also seen a significant increase in the number of international students who have needed our service.

In order to assist these vulnerable students, who were cut off from friends and family overseas, not eligible for financial support from the government, and struggling to navigate a foreign legal system, Youthlaw decided to offer an outreach service at the St Peter's food bank from November 2020 to February 2021.

Our lawyers James Tresise and Justin Jaramillo, and our paralegal Matt Kearns took our services on location to reach these young people, and saw a steady stream of clients through these months at 230 LaTrobe Street, Melbourne.

...without Youthlaw I wouldn't have been able to have help. There was nothing for me.

CASSANDRA, 24

425 RMIT students assisted
277 legal information provided
host/partner organisations
351 legal advice provided
559 referrals made to other
services
313 international students
assisted through outreach

Meet Moon, 22



PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH.COM

Moon was an international student who was having difficulty paying rent because he had lost his job due to COVID. Our lawyer James advised him he could negotiate with his landlord to lower his rent, and told him he should register any rent reduction with Consumer Affairs Victoria.

RMIT CLINIC

Meet Lucy, 19



PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH.COM

Lucy was an international student who was worried she had been the victim of a scam. She applied to rent a room, and the person she was corresponding with asked for a picture of her passport. They also pushed her to pay the bond before she viewed the room. She didn't pay because she realized the photos of the room didn't match the supposed location, but was worried she had sent a picture of her passport.

We advised her to report the scam to ACSC, who would pass in on to the relevant police department. We also informed her that police might contact her for more information.

Meet Nasifa, 20



PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH.COM

Nasifa was an international student with no income who came to see our lawyers at St Peter's food bank. She had been the victim of an online employment scam. We supported Nasifa with reporting the crime to authorities and her bank. We also assisted her with taking steps to protect herself from further scams. Given her extreme financial hardship, we also triaged her legal needs and further assisted her with the negotiation of a rent reduction and accessing the bond relief grant from the state government.

Meet Jack, 20

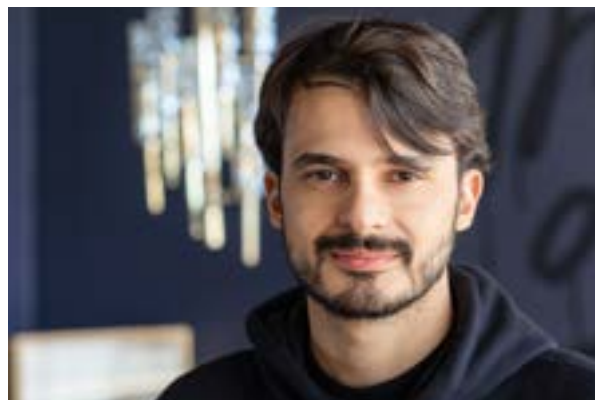


PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH.COM

Jack was referred to us by RMIT Student Services. He was having trouble getting his bond back at the end of his lease. His former landlord had informed him that he would be keeping his bond. We advised Jack that his landlord was required to lodge his bond with the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority ('RTBA') and held by RTBA until the end of his tenancy.

As Jack was a vulnerable young person with a significant history of mental illness, we assisted him to report his former landlord to Consumer Affairs Victoria.

YOUTHLAW BALLARAT

Katrina Fanning

BALLARAT LAWYER

Youthlaw Ballarat is part of a health-justice partnership with Ballarat Community Health and Federation University.

I work in Ballarat Community Health's Youth Team, which contains youth specialist crime, housing, education and parent-support practitioners. In turn, the Youth Team sits alongside a range of other specialist teams, including AOD (alcohol & other drugs), Counselling, NDIS and Health (GP, Specialist & Allied Health clinicians).

The theory behind health-justice partnerships is that embedding legal services into health providers assists people by providing an accessible, 'one-stop-shop' for vulnerable clients, many of whom are experiencing complex, inter-connected social, health and legal challenges.

This has certainly been Youthlaw Ballarat's experience. The service receives referrals from a variety of Ballarat Community Health workers – ranging from members of the Youth Team to dietitians. We also receive referrals from external organisations.

74 young people assisted
36 secondary consultations to workers and clinicians in host/partner organisations
8 training sessions to staff/clinicians
13 CLE sessions delivered to young people

Sometimes these arise from Youthlaw legal education presentations to workers and sometimes (pleasingly!) through word of mouth recommendation.

The vast majority of our clients face significant, multiple life challenges. Homelessness, family violence and financial stress are common experiences amongst our Ballarat clients. Many clients also live with mental illness and addiction. Common legal problems Youthlaw Ballarat assists with are summary crime charges, fines, debt and family violence.

Importantly, health-justice partnerships are not a one-way street. Youthlaw Ballarat regularly links clients in with non-legal support services offered or suggested by Ballarat Community Health workers. In a sign of the times, this year Youthlaw Ballarat referred several clients to a Ballarat Community Health transport service for a youth pop-up Covid 19 vaccination clinic.

YOUTHLAW BALLARAT

Over the past two years, many of Youthlaw Ballarat's clients were unable to progress their legal issue during times when community support workers were prevented from in-person meetings with clients due to covid-19 restrictions. Tasks such as attending virtual appointments, collating relevant materials, printing, signing and scanning documents are insurmountable for vulnerable clients. Despite these challenges, we strived to engage and assist our vulnerable clients.

The above experience caused us to reflect that arguably the greatest benefit of Youthlaw Ballarat's health-justice partnership is that it provides clients with a comprehensive, wrap-around service that enables them to address their legal issues more efficiently, more effectively and with less stress than would otherwise be the case.

Meet Emily, 18



PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH.COM

A social worker from our partner service, Ballarat Community Health (BCH), asked us to help a young person with an unfair COVID fine. Emily was 19 and about to have her first baby.

Emily had a history of trauma in her childhood, had lived in residential care growing up, and had past experiences of youth detention. Her only income was Centrelink and she could not afford to pay the excessive \$1,652 fine.

When we met Emily, she was experiencing family violence perpetrated by her then partner and finding it difficult to engage with mainstream services. Utilising the health-justice partnership model, we were able to work with Emily's social worker from BCH to join outreach appointments at Emily's home, which Emily found really useful – particularly after her baby arrived. Over several months, we were able to build a relationship with Emily, which meant she felt safe to tell us about her experience of violence. On this basis, we were able to get Emily's COVID fine waived, whilst Emily's other workers were able to support her, and her baby, to stay safe from family violence.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Tiffany Overall

POLICY, ADVOCACY AND
HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER

Family Violence

Lockdowns have, unquestionably, heightened mental health issues and compounded family violence risk within families. Vulnerable children and young people are less visible and have less access to support.

Youthlaw has been advocating for early support for young people through pre-court and multidisciplinary responses addressing legal, safety, health, housing and other needs.

We have elevated the call for coordinated family violence responses for adolescents engaging in or experiencing family violence (AVITH). In early 2021 we set up the AVITH Collaborative Network to contribute to improved understandings of, and ways to work with, AVITH across the service system.

COVID-19 and the “shadow pandemic” has heightened the need for our advocacy - exposing and tackling - the many risks facing many children and young people, the lack of specialised service system responses, and the many systemic biases that pull young people into the legal system

COVID fines

This year Youthlaw and the COVID-19 Fines CLC Working Group continued to monitor and advocate around the impacts of COVID 19 fines issued to vulnerable young people. Together we called on Victoria Police to use their discretion not to fine, asked Fines Victoria to ensure fair review processes of COVID fines and asked the Government to consider solutions to deal with unaffordable and crippling COVID infringements.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Criminalisation of young people

In its tenth year, Smart Justice for Young People (SJ4YP) sharpened its focus on tackling the criminalisation and overrepresentation of groups of young people in the criminal justice system, especially young people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal young people, and those with out-of-home-care backgrounds.

After years of lobbying, this year we welcomed the introduction of the Victorian spent conviction scheme, which will remove discriminatory barriers impacting on vulnerable young people seeking employment.

Over this last year Youthlaw and SJ4YP members have made a number of collective submissions, including on the new Youth Justice Bill, the Victorian Youth Strategy and the Parliamentary Inquiry into Criminal Justice System. We have continued our call for the Victorian Government to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14, adopt a justice reinvestment approach to crime, legislate child specific reform to our bail laws to keep more young people out of prison and adequately fund independent oversight of police misconduct.

FUNDING, PARTNERSHIPS AND IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Ariel Couchman

CEO

Government Funding

About half of our revenue is from the Commonwealth government and the Victorian state government through the National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-25 agreement funding (ie Community Legal Service Program 'CLSP' funding).

In addition, from time to time, we receive additional one-off grants from the Federal and Victorian state governments. In 2020-2021, we received:

- COVID assistance funding (Federal and Victorian Government) (\$321,500 over 3 years (2019 – 2022))
- Victorian Government, Department of Justice (DOJCS) funding to enhance our family violence response and contribute to our frontline clinics (\$171k per annum, 2-year contract (2020 – 2022))
- Victorian Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet funding for international student outreach (three months)

Non-government Funding

About 40% of our revenue is from philanthropic and private sector sources as well as fundraising, donations and self-generated income.

In the year 2020-2021, we received funding from the following:

- Victorian Legal Services Board of Victoria (two project grants to deliver our Legal pod program & our adolescent pre-court family violence service)
- Victoria Law Foundation grant (to train up referring community workers in Ballarat)
- Kimberley Foundation grant (to coordinate the Smart Justice for Young People Coalition)
- RE Ross Trust grant (to coordinate and evaluate our Family Violence Program)
- StreetSmart donations (to contribute to or Ballarat legal service, with a focus on assisting young people impacted by COVID)
- RMIT (tendered contract) (for our RMIT Clinic)
- Central Highlands Health-Justice Partnership (CHHJP) (partner contributions to provide the Youthlaw Ballarat)

Law Partnerships

Youthlaw has partnerships with a number of law firms including our longstanding partnership with Ashurst. These firms provide pro bono legal assistance as well as many other forms of assistance. There are 9 firms which provide legal assistance through our Legal Pod program (with over 70 lawyers participating).

Current firms are:

- Ashurst (a full-time secondee, two Board members, pro bono assistance to Youthlaw & clients, use of facilities, stationary, archive storage, printing of annual report and legal research)

FUNDING, PARTNERSHIPS AND IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION

- Colins Biggers Paisley (Legal Pod participant, substantial legal assistance to victims of crime, meeting facilities, facilitating property search expertise, legal advice on our lease and liaising with Konica Minolta to provide a printer)
- K&L Gates (updating of Youthlaw online fact sheets)
- Baker McKenzie (Legal Pod participant)
- DLA Piper (Legal Pod participant)
- Gilbert & Tobin (Legal Pod participant)
- Holding & Redlich (Legal Pod participant and on reference group)
- Price Waterhouse Cooper (Legal Pod participant)
- Russell Kennedy (Legal Pod participant)
- Wisewould Mahoney (Legal Pod participant)
- Headspace , Peninsula Youth Services and the Bridge (Seymour and Shepparton) (hosting our outreach service)
- Konica Minolta (donation of multiplex printers to Youthlaw)

In-kind contribution

Youthlaw has many in-kind contributors. These contributions are invaluable and crucial to maintaining our office & delivering our services across Victoria.

Over the past year, this includes:

- RMIT and Centre for Innovative Justice (a rent-free office, access to events facilities and coordination and supervision of placement students)
- RMIT University (office facilities for our RMIT clinic)
- Melbourne City Mission ('MCM') and Frontyard Youth Services (MCM has generously supported Youthlaw in many ways - currently this includes providing desks and investing in integration of Youthlaw into the Frontyard service delivery)
- Ballarat Community Health and Federation University of Australia (health-justice partners – hosting staff, evaluation and partnership governance)

BOARD AND STAFF

Board

Youthlaw is governed by a board consisting of 12 members, including 2 designated youth positions and 2 board members nominated by Ashurst.

Current board members:

- Daniel Fawcett (Chair)
- Charlie Bell (Treasurer)
- Ariel Couchman (CEO | Secretary)
- Helen Thomas
- Joanna Lawrence
- Linda Le
- Kelly Phan
- Sam Whitney
- Lynette Dong
- Erin Byrt
- Scott Myers
- Monique Hurley
- Rebecca Lew

Previous board members in 2020/2021:

- Erica Contini
- Shelley Hemmings
- Monika Pilekic

Staff

Current staff:

- Ariel Couchman (CEO)
- Anna Radonic (Principal Lawyer - Crime)
- Joanne Ellis (Principal Lawyer - Civil | Deputy CEO)
- Georgia Zomer (Senior Lawyer)
- Tim Hutton (Outreach Lawyer)

- Tiffany Overall (Policy, Advocacy & Human Rights Officer | Family Violence Coordinator)
- Carmel Lohan (Family Violence Lawyer)
- Stephanie Pashias (Family Violence Lawyer)
- Caitlin Lester (Family Violence Youth Practitioner)
- Keren Leizerovitz (Family Violence Youth Practitioner)
- James Tresise (RMIT Lawyer)
- Paula Hughes (Managing Lawyer - Legal Pod Program)
- Katrina Fanning (Ballarat Lawyer)
- Justin Jaramillo (Supervising Lawyer - Friday Fines Lawyer)
- Noha Ghobrial (Finance Officer)
- Steph Morley (Paralegal | Admin and Volunteer Coordinator)

Previous staff in 2020/2021

- Amala Ramarathinam (Senior Lawyer)
- Lisa Nguyen (Senior Lawyer)
- Hilary Glaisher (Family Violence Youth Practitioner)
- Chloe Stapleton (Admin and Volunteer Coordinator)
- Matt Kearns (Paralegal)
- Emily Smith (Seconded Lawyer)
- Tiarne Wadey (Seconded Lawyer)
- Nick Mills (Seconded Lawyer)

Volunteers

We are, and will continue to be, grateful to the hours our volunteer paralegals have given in supporting Youthlaw's work.

FINANCIALS

YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEGAL RIGHTS CENTRE INC
ABN 12 794 935 230

DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

	2021 \$	2020 \$
INCOME		
CLC Recurrent Grant Funding		
Community Legal Centre (CLC) Recurrent - Commonwealth	184,372	179,732
Community Legal Centre (CLC) Recurrent - State	211,572	208,463
	<u>395,944</u>	<u>388,195</u>
Grants - Non-Recurrent		
Kimberley Foundation	15,000	15,000
Ballarat Health Justice Partnership	19,450	41,384
Victorian Department of Justice & CS - Duty Lawyer	51,872	68,278
Victorian Department of Justice & CS - Family Violence	51,872	53,021
Victorian Department of Justice & CS - CLC Assist	51,872	60,478
Victorian Legal Services Board Grant - Legal Pod Project	83,333	66,667
Victoria Legal Services Board	100,000	-
Community Legal Service Program - COVID-19 Funding	-	80,000
RE Ross Trust	73,333	26,667
RMIT	91,230	88,645
St Peter's COVID Outreach	11,000	-
Street Smart	-	7,500
Victoria Law Foundation	12,000	12,000
Other grants	-	1,000
	<u>560,962</u>	<u>520,640</u>
Donations	8,500	12,889
COVID-19 Government Assistance Payments		
ATO Cash Flow Boost Stimulus Payment	49,980	50,000
JobKeeper Assistance Payments	282,050	117,000
	<u>332,030</u>	<u>167,000</u>
Interest Received	4,357	-
Other Income		
Community legal education	-	1,150
Costs recovery and retained	9,776	3,405
Deakin placements	-	1,000
Fundraising	3,767	9,911
Management fees	-	7,768
Miscellaneous income	402	-
	<u>13,945</u>	<u>23,234</u>
TOTAL INCOME	<u>1,315,738</u>	<u>1,111,958</u>

FINANCIALS

	2021 \$	2020 \$
EXPENDITURE		
Staff Salaries, Wages and On-costs		
Salaries and wages	1,075,258	798,875
Salaries and wages - JobKeeper top up payments	8,922	8,307
Superannuation contributions	105,490	76,626
Employee leave entitlements - annual leave	14,815	34,473
Employee leave entitlements - long service leave	21,052	(3,407)
Portable long service benefits scheme levies	17,811	13,323
WorkCover	1,908	1,804
	<u>1,245,056</u>	<u>930,001</u>
Premises Expenses		
Rent	-	48,090
Amenities	2,696	2,451
Electricity, gas and fuel	-	2,067
Meetings	1	-
	<u>2,697</u>	<u>52,608</u>
Staff Related Expenses		
Conference fees	4,410	2,469
Staff training	1,508	204
Staff recruitment	520	260
	<u>6,438</u>	<u>2,933</u>
Communications Expenses		
IT Support	9,215	8,304
Mobile phones	5,962	3,998
Landline telephones	-	1,201
	<u>15,177</u>	<u>13,503</u>
Office Overhead Expenses		
General expenses	-	1,700
Office equipment maintenance	1,157	39
Office equipment maintenance: IT support	14,943	22,113
Postage	431	524
Small equipment purchases	1,808	3,109
Stationery and photocopying	657	1,469
	<u>18,996</u>	<u>28,954</u>
Insurance	<u>1,865</u>	<u>3,039</u>
Finance, Audit and Accounting Fees		
Accounting fees	6	28,949
Audit fees	3,315	2,775
Bank charges	209	267
Lodgement fees	-	185
	<u>3,530</u>	<u>32,176</u>

FINANCIALS

	2021 \$	2020 \$
EXPENDITURE (continued)		
Library, Resources and Subscriptions		
Library	358	385
Memberships and subscriptions	8,541	10,425
Practising certificates	2,538	1,860
	<u>11,437</u>	<u>12,670</u>
Programming and Planning		
Travel	691	2,392
Printing	376	2,029
Publicity	456	632
Client disbursements	41	-
Consultants	15,092	1,830
Evaluation	29,153	33,409
	<u>45,809</u>	<u>40,292</u>
Depreciation and Amortisation Expenses	7,774	5,969
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>1,358,779</u>	<u>1,122,145</u>
NET DEFICIT ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE ASSOCIATION	<u>(43,041)</u>	<u>(10,187)</u>



Young People's Legal Rights Centre

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