



ANNUAL REPORT

2021/2022

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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

Linda Le

CHAIR

It has been another busy year for Youthlaw. We continue to act as fearless advocates for young people, focusing on responding to the unmet needs of vulnerable young Victorians through our legal services, education and advocacy work.

We started this year strong with a new five-year strategic plan which outlines our vision, our purpose and our priorities amongst other things. The introduction of this new plan also marked a time of significant change for Youthlaw, especially at a board level. Following the previous AGM, several board members completed their maximum possible term and could no longer stand for further re-election. As sad as we were to see them go, this presented a valuable opportunity to bring new perspectives and skills onto the board, and we were delighted to be joined by some wonderful new board members. We continue to reflect on our performance and where we can improve, both as a board and as an organisation more broadly.

Beyond this, and as elaborated upon in the CEO's report, Youthlaw continues to serve our community and champion multidisciplinary, holistic and accessible legal services and education.

We also continue to advocate strongly for reform on key issues relating to law enforcement, youth imprisonment and the need to #RaiseTheAge of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years of age. Legal advocacy and reform continues to be an integral part of Youthlaw's work towards improving the lives of young people in Victoria.

However, none of this work would have been possible without the efforts and generosity of our many wonderful staff and volunteers, under the leadership of our CEO, Ariel Couchman, and Deputy CEO, Jo Ellis. I also acknowledge and thank our Board members, secondee lawyers from a number of law firms including Ashurst, Colin Biggers & Paisley and Wisewould Mahony, as well as funders and partner organisations who we regularly work with in tandem to protect, defend and support our clients.

Quite frankly, we could not do the work that we do without your support.

As a young person myself, I want to take a moment to express my gratitude – quite genuinely, thank you for believing in us and our shared vision for a more just and equitable society where young people can truly thrive. On behalf of the board, I would like to convey my sincere thanks for your commitment to assisting young people in need, as well as my sincere hope that you will continue to share this journey with us as we seek to build a better world for young people.

REPORT FROM YOUTHLAW CEO

Ariel Couchman

CEO

July 2021 to June 2022 was a challenging but also productive year for Youthlaw. With Joanne Ellis back from parental leave, she stepped into a new position as deputy CEO and together with senior staff, we embarked on developing our vision for Youthlaw and major funding advocacy. I am proud that as always we kept our vision firmly focused on delivering services to vulnerable young people who are least able to assert and protect their rights.

Toward the very end of this year, the news came thick and fast of our funding successes and we commenced negotiations and planning to roll this out. We also received welcome news of additional secondee lawyers from Colin Biggers & Paisley and Wisewould Mahony adding to our existing secondee lawyer from Ashurst.

We continued to be impacted by COVID-19 but also learnt many new ways to deliver our legal services and advocate for change, including by online court representation and more effective advocacy through online meetings and platforms. We welcomed back and then had to send home many of our volunteers due to COVID-19 related safety. Many learnt to assist us remotely with fines cases and research work.

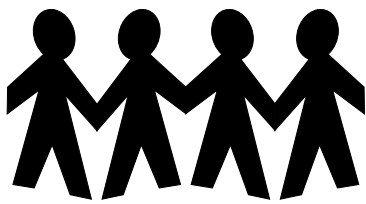
From January 2022, we began our new project in Ballarat, Stand Up for Our Rights that will empower young people in out of home residential care to have more say and control and make informed decisions. Some of the long-term outcomes include reducing victimisation and criminalisation, both significant issues for young people in care.

It's been a roller coaster of a year for all staff with great uncertainty about the future, both at Youthlaw and externally. But as always, I was amazed at the passion and care our staff, our secondee lawyers and our volunteers demonstrated every day in assisting young people.

We continued to advocate for a roll back of Victorian bail and mandatory sentencing laws that have accelerated young adult's engagement with the criminal justice system. We joined campaigning nationally to raise the age of criminal responsibility and we continue as always to advocate for smart justice solutions including early intervention, diversion and justice reinvestment.

Thanks to everyone for a great year of achievement. Thank you also to the board for their continued support over this difficult period.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021/2022



Adolescent family violence service

Youthlaw had a successful pilot of our innovative adolescent family violence service



New project launch

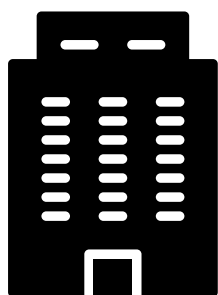
Youthlaw received funding to start up our 'Stand up for our Rights' project - a 3 year project based in Ballarat empowering young people in residential care



Welcomed two secondees lawyers

Youthlaw welcomed two secondees lawyers from Colin Biggers & Paisley and Wisewould Mahony

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021/2022



Secured our office

Youthlaw secured our office at the RMIT Pelham Street Innovation Hub for another 2 years



RMIT Student Legal Service

Youthlaw secured 3 more years of funding to deliver our RMIT student legal service



Strategic plan

Youthlaw developed a new 5 year strategic plan

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021/2022



Diversity and inclusion

Youthlaw developed a new diversity and inclusion strategy



Funding

A funding bid and advocacy that contributed to securing \$1,623,000 of new funding

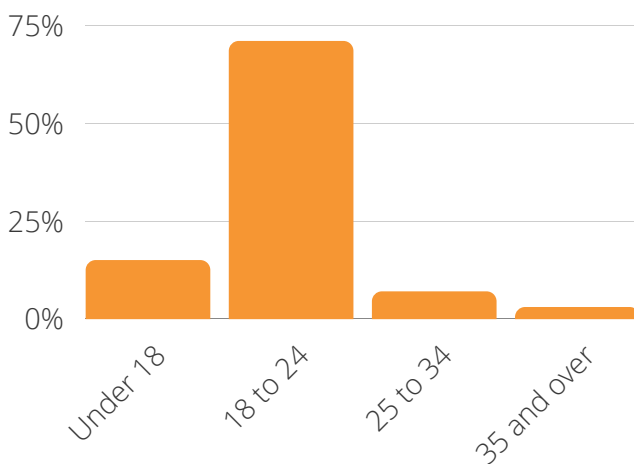


More babies

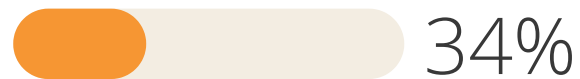
We provided a flexible and family friendly workplace welcoming more babies (both human and fur babies) this year

A SNAPSHOT OF OUR CLIENTS

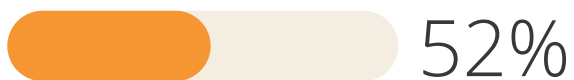
Age Range



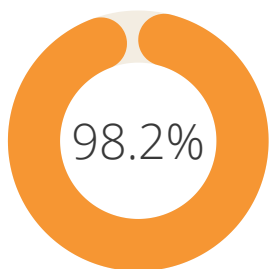
Disability and/or Mental Illness



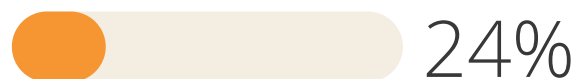
Used or Experienced Family Violence



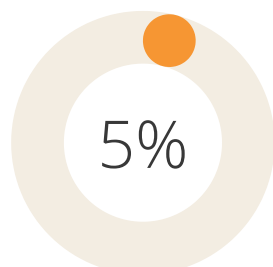
Experiencing Financial Disadvantage



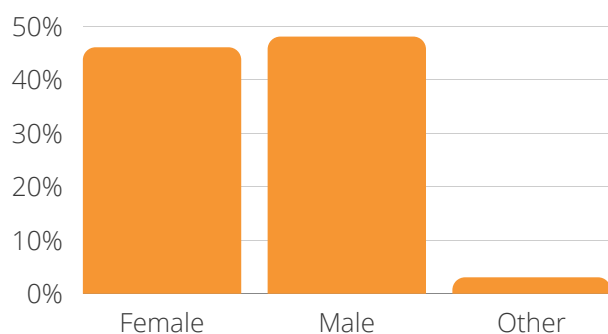
Experiencing or at Risk of Homelessness



Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Clients

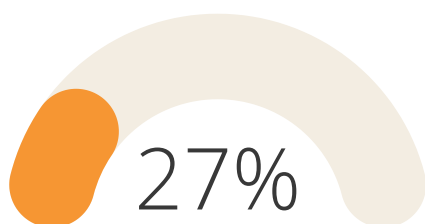


Gender



A SNAPSHOT OF OUR CLIENTS

Clients born overseas



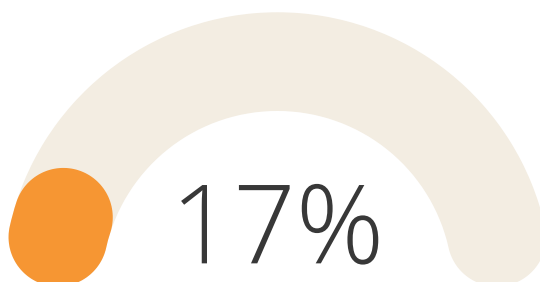
Top country of birth (after Australia)

-
- A large orange circle containing a list of countries.
1. Ethiopia
 2. India
 3. Sudan
 4. Iran
 5. Egypt
 6. New Zealand
 7. England
 8. Philippines
 9. South Sudan

Main spoken language (after English)

-
- A large orange circle containing a list of languages.
1. Arabic
 2. Persian
 3. Oromo
 4. Hindi
 5. Punjabi
 6. Somali

Clients where English is not their main spoken language



DAILY LEGAL INFO HELP LINE

TIM HUTTON

MANAGING LAWYER (CRIME)

Our Daily 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.

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 advice via phone and email to empower young people to make decisions on their legal issues and understand where to go to get further help.

We prioritise responding to those matters that are time critical, such as where a young person is about to be questioned by police, has an imminent court date or is experiencing safety risks. Depending on the matter, we might offer to provide ongoing casework, or otherwise assist the young people with a warm referral to a service that can help.

MEET OMAR, 20

Omar's support worker from Salvation Army called us to enquire about Omar's current situation with police, including that he had an appointment to go in for an interview at the police station the following day. We provided some basic information to the worker and then obtained Omar's phone number and called him shortly after. We provided Omar with advice about his rights and options in relation to police interviews, and what to do going forward after the interview. This was critical for Omar so that he was aware of his rights, but also because it gave him some insight into what to expect from this process and how it might play out.

MEET RANA, 19

Rana called us looking for family law advice and representation. She presented as extremely distressed on the phone. Unfortunately, we do not practice in family law, which we explained to Rana. We would generally provide a few names and phone numbers for Rana to go off and seek family law services on her own, but our lawyer assessed that Rana would struggle greatly with this. Instead, the lawyer made a few calls on Rana's behalf and was able to set up an appointment for Rana with a family lawyer in her area in the coming weeks.

OUR LAWYERS RESPONDED TO

706

EMAIL AND PHONE QUERIES
THROUGHOUT 2021/2022

FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAM

TIFFANY OVERALL

FAMILY VIOLENCE COORDINATOR

Youthlaw's Family Violence program team strengthened our unique response to young people using and experiencing violence and helping them with intersecting legal and social support needs.

The success of the program is attributable to a dedicated and passionate team. This past year we welcomed lawyer Aly Butchers as Stephanie Pashias went on parental leave. In 2022, we farewelled lawyer Carmel Lohan and youth practitioners Caitlin Lester and Keren Leizerovitz.

The team shared its expertise and understanding of the issues and complexities of working with adolescents who use violence in the home. By contributing to the AVITH Collaborative network, the team also delivered over 40 meetings and presentations to agencies, provided over 40 secondary consultations to agency staff, and ran two webinars highlighting how facilitating early access to support can make a difference to young people and their families.

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

...I felt no judgment. I really felt like you guys took what I was saying as the truth and you didn't assume that I was twisting anything."

YOUNG PERSON, FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAM SURVEY 2022

When I asked questions, answers were always easy to understand. If I didn't understand anything [you] explained everything really clearly.

YOUNG PERSON, FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAM SURVEY 2022

FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAM

DUTY LAWYER SERVICE

We continued our Family Violence service at the Melbourne Children's Court improving outcomes of young people appearing before the court responding to intervention orders. Like the previous year, our service at the Melbourne Children's Court, was mostly conducted remotely. Our lawyers represented young people over sixty times, and our Youth practitioner assisted at least twenty young people for a period of between one and five months.

AVITH PILOT PROGRAM

This year, Youthlaw completed a successful pilot of our innovative pre-court Support for Adolescents Who Use Violence In The Home (AVITH) program, which ran from January 2021 to June 2022 across western metropolitan Melbourne. The service encourages early referrals and provides legal advice and social work support to young people under 18 years, especially adolescents using violence in the home. In July 2021 the pilot extended to The Orange Door North East Melbourne Area.

RMIT's Centre for Innovative Justice evaluated the pilot. Their report highlighted that early, specialist legal and non-legal support and pre-court negotiations, often results in timely and effective outcomes for young people.

The evaluation report found:

- 10 young people had criminal related matters
- 6 resolved by way of caution
- 2 resolved by way of diversion
- 1 was referred to Victoria Legal Aid
- 1 had their charges withdrawn
- 100% were able to access legal assistance prior to their court proceedings
- 94% resolved without the need for a final IVO
- 39% of these withdrawn prior to first court date

MEET RONNIE

Ronnie had recently moved from interstate to live with his grandmother following experiences of family violence from his step-dad.

Following an incident with his step-dad, police applied for an intervention order against Ronnie.

Ronnie's grandmother was referred to Youthlaw by Victoria Legal Aid. The Youth Practitioner conducted risk assessment and safety planning, and with Ronnie's consent worked with his grandmother to follow up referrals to acute mental health service, local AVITH Service, Orange Door, Child Protection and Family Services.

The lawyer checked Ronnie's capacity, provided legal advice, assisted him to understand the legal process. With Ronnie's consent they referred his grandmother to get her own legal support. The lawyer negotiated with police to withdraw the intervention order against Ronnie.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAM



MEET AMEER

Ameer, 17, lives at home with mum, dad and two older sisters, has significant mental health issues and a difficult family dynamic.

Following an incident, police applied for an intervention order against Ameer to protect his mother. Ameer continued to live at the family home.

Two weeks later, there was another incident where police applied for orders to protect Ameer's dad and one of the sisters. This time, Ameer was excluded from the family home and went into crisis accommodation. Criminal charges were also laid against Ameer.

The Youth Practitioner worked with Orygen youth specialist mental health service and followed up on housing and employment supports. They checked in regularly with Ameer and had conversations about the relationships amongst the family members, the family dynamic, and his desire to have or not to have a future relationship. They also had discussions with Ameer's mental health support team.

The lawyer conducted a capacity assessment with Ameer, provided him with legal advice and obtained his instructions. They advocated for Ameer in relation to applications to vary the intervention order filed by the dad and sister and liaised with the family's lawyer. They assisted Ameer in understanding the intervention order and the criminal process. The lawyer negotiated with police to withdraw the intervention order and the criminal charges and issue a caution instead.

FRONTYARD AND PELHAM ST CLINICS

211 young people assisted
148 legal advice given
68 legal information services
65 on-going casework
53 court representation
33 secondary consultations

Youthlaw continues to run clinics two afternoons a week at Frontyard Youth Services. This relationship with Frontyard is critical to Youthlaw as it allows us to target and assist a very vulnerable subsection of our community, being young people experiencing homelessness and other issues. This clinic is currently serviced by our lawyers Tim Hutton and Matt Kearns, as well as our secondee lawyer Jess Apel from Ashurst.

For large portions of the past financial year, we have been unable to run the Pelham Clinic on Monday afternoons at our office due to the unforeseen impacts of COVID-19. Fortunately though, this has been able to resume in recent times. The Pelham Clinic allows us to assist young people who are not engaged with Frontyard/Melbourne City Mission but otherwise meet our criteria and have legal issues where we can provide in person advice and possible ongoing casework and representation.

MEET ASHLEY, 22

Ashley came to us through the Frontyard Clinic, where at the time she was living in the Circuit Breaker accommodation on site. She had been the victim of extreme and long-term abuse and family violence, from a young age. She had multiple criminal matters which were strongly linked to her experience of family violence and trauma history. We represented her at court for these matters and the Magistrate was extremely compassionate and responsive to our submissions. Despite having priors, all of Ashley's matters were proven and dismissed by the court. This was a huge step forward for Ashley, who can now focus on her education and future aspirations.

MEET JOSH, 20

Josh was also referred to us by staff at the Circuit Breaker accommodation at Frontyard.

Josh was initially reluctant to talk to us. Further, due to his vulnerabilities, being a young person with a history of trauma and homelessness, and ongoing mental health and drug and alcohol issues, he was difficult to engage with. We persevered on a number of occasions, checking in physically with Josh at the Circuit Breaker accommodation on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons when we were on site. We were eventually able to gain Josh's trust and get instructions from him to submit a special circumstances review for a number of outstanding fines he had.

LEGAL POD PROGRAM

57 young people assisted
25 legal pods
9 pro bono law firms
70+ pro bono law firms

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 made up of a small team of lawyers from private law firms who work on a pro bono basis to provide on-going legal assistance for up to three years.

The Managing lawyer of the Legal Pod program was Justin Jaramillo. In 2022, we welcomed Tayla Crump, who joined Youthlaw on secondment from Colin Bigger & Paisley.

The young people in this program often present with complex and multifaceted legal and non-legal issues. Common legal trends documented over the past year include debts, fines and tenancy issues. The program also assists young people with several other issues such as employment disputes and assistance accessing care records.

While the COVID-19 pandemic eased, our young people were still compounded by the effects of the pandemic. However, the assistance provided by the Legal Pod program helped ease these effects and help young people stay safe from family violence, reduce or eliminate 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-19 fines.

Over 2021/2022 the program offered 2033 hours of advice on 163 legal issues. Our pro-bono lawyers provided \$872 000 worth of advice. Through this program, \$52,000 of debts and fines were waived or withdrawn and a further \$74 000 of fines and debts are in the process of being negotiated.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to our participating firms, Baker McKenzie, Gilbert + Tobin, Holding Redlich, DLA Piper, Wisewould Mahony, Colin Biggers & Paisley, PwC, Russell Kennedy and Ashurst.

FRIDAY FINES WEEKLY CLINIC

MATT KEARNS

SUPERVISING LAWYER | FINES CLINIC

Our Friday Fines Clinic provides legal advice to young people under the age of 25, and is dedicated to advocating for young people's legal rights and providing practical legal assistance with fines.

The overwhelming majority of young people who seek help from the Fines Clinic are experiencing, or have experienced, homelessness, mental illness, substance addiction and family violence. Fines are often a legal symptom of these underlying circumstances. Many of the young people who approach Youthlaw are already enduring financial hardship. Fines can add an extra financial and emotional burden that exacerbates what is already a difficult period in their lives.

We understand that the circumstances young people experience make it difficult for them to deal with their fines at an early stage. We are able to assist young people in navigating through what is often a confusing and frustrating system. Many of the young people we assist in the Fines Clinic are also receiving support from Youthlaw with other legal problems.

31 legal information services
36 secondary consults
103 legal advices
108 other representation
59 referrals to non-legal supports

181
young people
assisted



FRIDAY FINES WEEKLY CLINIC

EVA LAZZARO & SONJA BOON

VOLUNTEERS | FINES CLINIC

The clinic is run by 1-3 Youthlaw lawyers, with the assistance of 5-10 volunteer paralegals. They work closely together, and provide mutual support to maximise casework capacity. Recently, Youthlaw has been moving towards incorporating more integrative practice techniques in the fines clinic. This decision reflects the understanding that young people who engage with Youthlaw often require both legal and non-legal assistance.

Studying law can often be an alienating experience. The volunteers at Youthlaw are passionate about legal rights and advocacy, but in our day to day lives as university students, it can be easy to forget why we may have chosen to study law in the first place. Typically, the university environment is competitive and intense, and it can be hard to find a sense of community among other law students.

Volunteering gives us an opportunity to connect with each other, and with the other social work volunteers and staff at the Centre. We are offered the chance to conduct real, substantive casework that allows us to get a genuine insight into what working in public law community legal centres looks like. This is enriching, invaluable experience and enables us to understand what lawyers we might want to be in the future, as well as providing purpose to tertiary legal study.

MEET SUZIE

Suzie, 19, was experiencing homelessness when she approached Youthlaw last year with a number of driving and parking fines. She experienced severe financial hardship due to being unsure of her work rights under her visa since moving to Australia as a teenager. Due to amazing advocacy from our social work team, Youthlaw was able to secure \$850 worth in immediate grants for this young person. We were also able to set up a referral for her to gain immigration-specific legal advice. We were also able to assist her with a successful review of her fines due to her circumstances.

OUTREACH PROGRAM

Tim Hutton

OUTREACH LAWYER

Meeting and assisting young people in a safe and familiar space

Our outreach program involves 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.

2021-22 has seen quite a bit of progress in the outreach program after a challenging period during the pandemic. Regular site visits resumed for a number of the sites and referrals began to increase. It is through these relationships and site visits that the value of the outreach program can be realised. It makes such a difference to young, vulnerable people to be able to meet with our outreach lawyer and discuss their issues in a safe and familiar space. Further, often if it isn't for the workers at these youth centres identifying the legal issues and making referrals, these young people would continue to leave their legal issues unaddressed, causing them to snowball and become more serious.

Tim was able to take on 75 clients across the year with ongoing casework, including 47 separate court files. Tim was able to utilise online court hearings to provide a greater level of court representation than is usually possible in the role.

112 legal advice services
91 secondary consultations to workers and clinicians in host/partner organisations
47 court services

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 were still limited due to the pandemic, Tim was able to run a number of online sessions partnering with the Victoria Law Foundation. Most notably, during Law Week in May this year, Tim delivered a session on consent and sexting laws which is believed to have reached over 200 young people.

Tim has recently moved out of the role to cover Anna's position of Managing Criminal Lawyer while she is on long service leave. We have a new lawyer in the role as of July 2022, Sam Coleman.

OUTREACH PROGRAM

“Tim helped me sort out my problem very promptly. Youthlaw has done a great job and I am very grateful for all they have done for me.

YOUNG PERSON, CLIENT FEEDBACK SURVEY 2022



Yousif was referred to Tim by one of the outreach partners, presenting with a court matter and fines. Yousif had experienced severe mental illness around the time of the criminal offending and incurring the fines. Yousif faced multiple criminal charges in the context of alleged family violence. Tim was able to advocate for Yousif and contest these charges and eventually persuade the prosecution to withdraw all charges, which took multiple court hearings to achieve.

In relation to Yousif's fines, Tim submitted an application for review based on Yousif's special circumstances, being primarily his mental illness. This application was successful and Tim was also able to secure a refund for Yousif of the amount he had already paid towards his fines. Had it not been for Yousif's mental health support worker identifying Yousif's legal needs and referring to Youthlaw, it is likely that at least Yousif's fines would have gone unaddressed, and he would have continued on his payment plan, despite experiencing financial hardship. This outcome shows the great power of the outreach program to reach and assist the most vulnerable young people in our community, and achieve just outcomes for them.

RMIT STUDENT LEGAL SERVICE

James Tresise

SENIOR COMMUNITY LAWYER

With the Australian borders opening up there was some hope of a new “normal” and an end to COVID-19. Unfortunately, for students this new normal appears to be skyrocketing rents, higher costs of living, and a return of students seeking help with workplace exploitation and underpayment claims.

The new normal is starting to feel more of the same for young Victorians. We’re seeing students seeking legal help with e-scooters, car share agreements and car-hire disputes, from those working in the gig economy, those who are victims of increasingly sophisticated online scams, online abuse and intimate partner violence continues to be prevalent in our casework. Technology continues to shape and form the life of young Victorians – but not always in beneficial ways.

Despite the challenges we’re proud of our partnership with RMIT and being a part of a number of supports offered to students while they study in Victoria.

We’ve tried to make ourselves accessible to students through collaboration with peer outreach workers, with youth friendly comms and targeted community education.

We’re proud to be fearless advocates for young people.

MEET NIKKI, 18

Nikki had arrived in Melbourne 2 weeks before seeing us. She was incredibly unhappy and felt unsafe in her student accommodation. The provider would not let her leave without seeing some “official” documentation about her mental health. We advised Nikki that as she was in a shared room she could give much shorter notice than the agreement provided for. We assisted Nikki to vacate her property, guided her through the process of applying for a new rental and facilitated warm referrals to counselling and student support.

MEET LANIE, 21

Lanie presented with some infringements. We assisted Lanie, who was also previously engaged with RMIT Counselling, to sidestep a complex and potentially expensive legal issue by getting the student engaged on a work and development permit (WDP) with RMIT. As an added benefit the student re-engaged with mental health support as part of the WDP.

507 RMIT students assisted
184 legal information provided
host/partner organisations
272 legal advice provided
402 referrals made to other
services

YOUTHLAW BALLARAT

Katrina Fanning

BALLARAT LAWYER

Over the past 2 years, the impact of COVID-19 on Ballarat has been a 'tale of two cities'. One city – *Boom Ballarat* – has experienced a population and real-estate boom on the back of Melbournians escaping extended lockdowns by 'pivoting' to remote working and a regional lifestyle. The other city – *Bust Ballarat* – has experienced record levels of homelessness, family violence and mental illness, including addiction.

My role as the lawyer in Youthlaw's health justice partnership with Ballarat Community Health, involves working closely with specialist youth support workers to identify, assist and empower young people who have legal issues. My overwhelming impressions of the past 12 months helping young people in *Bust Ballarat* are that:

- the young people we assisted were much more likely to have multiple, complex legal and social problems, than those who had accessed our service in previous years;
- a single, 'untreated' source of disadvantage in a young person's life, can (and usually does) rapidly escalate into numerous social, health and legal problems;

- because Youthlaw Ballarat specialises in assisting young people, and because we are embedded in a team of specialist youth support workers (housing, addiction, parenting, youth crime etc.), our service has a unique ability in the region to identify, engage and empower highly disadvantaged young people who otherwise would not have the capacity to engage with a legal service.

97 young people assisted
40 legal advices
9 court services
34 secondary consultations to workers and clinicians in host/partner organisations
10 training sessions to staff/clinicians

Tanayah's experience, presented below, encapsulates Youthlaw Ballarat's work and our clients' experiences in the past year. We hope it enhances your understanding of the disadvantage and associated challenges so many young people in Australia face and demonstrates the multi-faceted benefits of our service.

YOUTHLAW BALLARAT

MEET TANAYAH

Tanayah is an 18 year old woman who was referred to Youthlaw Ballarat in July 2021. She was facing more than 20 criminal charges which had arisen from multiple, unrelated situations. Tanayah's housing worker advised the referral was his last support action for her. After 10 months of couch-surfing, Tanayah had reluctantly decided to move to Maryborough to live with her mother because there was no prospect of her getting any housing in Ballarat.

In the 3 months following her referral, we attempted to contact Tanayah 9 times by telephone and text to arrange an intake appointment. Eventually, we got through to Tanayah and were able to commence assisting her.

At intake we learnt that Tanayah was a very vulnerable young woman. She presented with substantial mental health, drug and alcohol issues.

Tanayah had not worked or undergone any training since leaving school. At the time we met Tanayah, she was extremely socially isolated. She reported spending a lot of time in her room smoking cannabis because she had no friends and nothing to do in Maryborough. Tanayah said she did have friends in Ballarat, but COVID lockdowns meant she didn't get to see them.

Throughout our time assisting Tanayah, we instituted a range of strategies to keep her engaged with the Youthlaw Ballarat service. For example, meetings or conversations with Tanayah were held at regular, agreed times and we would limit each discussion to 1 or 2 matters, so she would not feel overwhelmed.

Youthlaw also arranged addiction counselling for Tanayah through our Ballarat Community Health Service colleagues – keeping her committed to engaging with these services by regularly seeking updates about her position in each service's waiting list and communicating this information to Tanayah.

Of course, in parallel to our work supporting Tanayah, we were liaising with multiple informants, prosecutors and courts to achieve the best possible legal outcome for her. It was critical to achieving a good outcome to have several of Tanayah's charges downgraded from indictable to summary offences. This was ultimately achieved thanks to the expert advice and enormous support provided to Youthlaw Ballarat by Anna and Tim from the Melbourne Youthlaw Office.

Eleven months after Tanayah was referred to Youthlaw Ballarat and 8 months after securing her engagement with our service through our determination to make contact with her, Tanayah's charges were finalised. She was sentenced to an adjourned undertaking (also known as a good behaviour bond) with the condition that she continue to engage in the counselling which we had arranged for her.

At the conclusion of her matters, we referred Tanayah for additional employment support

YOUTHLAW BALLARAT

Stand up for Our Rights (SUFOR) Project

Youthlaw Ballarat (SUFOR) is a new youth empowerment service for children and young people living in residential care in the Ballarat region that commenced in August 2022. Residential care is a model of support for young people living in out-of-home care. Most of these children and young people are known to child protection at early ages.

Stephanie Tutnjevic, the youth lawyer, and Rosie Mullany, the project officer, work closely with Victoria Legal Aid, Out of Home Care providers and a number of local community organisations including Ballarat Community Health, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and Central Highlands Family and Care Services Alliances.

The service aims to deliver personalised, consistent and accessible legal and non-legal support to build the capacity, knowledge, confidence and skills of children and young people in residential care to assert themselves, protect their rights, make informed decisions and know where to get help, now and in the future.

Legal support will include access to information, advice and representation for a wide variety of legal issues, such as intervention orders, fines, debt and criminal matters.

Non-legal support and advocacy will include assisting children and young people to navigate the care system, improving dispute resolution processes, providing legal education to providers on issues that will assist them to support the children and young people in their care and work towards addressing some of the systemic issues raised by children and young people in residential care.

The theory behind the service is to improve the outcomes of children and young people in residential care who often experience poorer outcomes than their peers without experience Out of Home Care, including higher rates of criminalisation and victimisation and lower rates of higher education attainment, mental health wellbeing and stable housing.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Tiffany Overall

POLICY, ADVOCACY AND
HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER

Family Violence

Youthlaw continues to pilot and advocate for a family violence service response for young people who, in addition to using violence, have experienced (and continue to experience) family violence. The response is premised on the provision of early support for young people through pre-court and multidisciplinary interventions addressing legal, safety, health, housing and other needs, as an offering in Victoria's family violence response.

Our lawyers and youth practitioners continue to provide this response to intervention orders matters referred via the Melbourne Children's Court and in early 2021 we commenced a Pre-court Support for Adolescents using violence in the home (AVITH) Pilot, which ran until the end of June 2022 in the Western suburbs of Melbourne.

The Pilot clearly demonstrated the difference that earlier engagement with this specialist legal and non-legal supports makes to young people. Youthlaw pre-court advocacy and negotiation

with Victoria Police and the Court resulted in the young people's cases resolving sooner and mostly without the imposition of a court order, thereby reducing risk of harmful contact with the justice system.

COVID-19 fines

Again this year, Youthlaw and the COVID-19 Fines Community Lawyer Working Group advocated to Fines Victoria around the impacts of COVID-19 fines on vulnerable young people, encouraged fair reviews of these fines, the introduction of a new concession scheme for COVID-19 fines, and a new threshold test for special circumstances.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Smart Justice for Young People (SJ4YP)

Youthlaw in partnership with WestJustice, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Inner Melbourne Legal Centre and Human Rights Law Centre facilitated the advocacy of Smart Justice for Young People which continues to provide a coordinated expert voice of over 50 member organisations on youth justice initiatives and reforms, particularly in the lead up to the 2022 Victorian State election.

The Report on the Inquiry into Victoria's Criminal Justice System fully or partially adopted a range of the recommendations made by Smart Justice for Young people through its submission.



The coalition advances a number of key advocacy positions that seeks to end the over-representation in the criminal legal system of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children and young people from multicultural backgrounds, girls and young women with complex needs, and children in residential care.

Pivotal to this advocacy is the campaign seeking a commitment from the Victorian Government to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 years to at least 14 years.

This year, advocacy culminated in members of the coalition handing over a petition at Parliament signed by 65,799 Victorian residents backing calls for the Victorian government to raise the age of criminal responsibility.



During 2021–2022, Smart Justice for Young People also advocated for actions that need to take place to ensure the humane treatment of young people in youth detention. This includes prohibiting the use of solitary confinement and strengthening oversight of youth detention centres by implementing and monitoring the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT).

FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

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, we receive from time to time additional one-off grants from the Federal and Victorian state governments. Related to the 2021-2022 year we received:

- COVID-19 assistance funding (Federal and Victorian Gov't) - \$321,500 over 3 years (2019 – 2022)
- Victorian Department of Justice (DOJCS) funding to enhance our Family violence response and contribute to our frontline clinics; - \$171K per annum (2016 – 2022)

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 2021-2022, we received funding from the following:

- Out of Home care (OOHC) Funding network members, Barr Family Foundation, RM Ansett Trust, Gandel Foundation, Jack Brockhoff Foundation and Sydney Myer Fund
- Victorian Legal Services Board & Commissioner: Funding of our Adolescent pre-court family violence pilot project.

- Kimberley Foundation and Humanists Victoria gave grants to co-ordinate the Smart Justice for Young People Coalition.
- RE Ross Trust grant to co-ordinate and evaluate our family violence program
- Streetsmart donations to assist young people having difficulty maintaining their rental, and a grant to assist young people in regional areas impacted by COVID-19.
- RMIT (tendered contract) for our RMIT student Legal service
- Ballarat Community Health contribution to Ballarat Youth Law
- Donations included the following:
- CBP law firm – A donation of \$4,063 from the firm and workplace giving Individual donations through our website
- Run Melbourne (event was cancelled but donations accepted)
- End of Financial Year donations

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. 9 firms provide legal assistance through our Legal Pod program (over 70 lawyers)

Current firms are:

- Ashurst – a full-time secondee, Legal Pod Program participant, 2 Board members, pro bono assistance to Youthlaw and clients, governance and policy reviews, use of facilities, stationary, archive storage, printing of annual report and legal research.

FUNDING, PARTNERSHIPS AND IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

- Colin Biggers & Paisley (Seconded lawyer (0.6FTE), member of reference group, Legal Pod Program participant, substantial legal assistance to Youthlaw for victims of crime, meeting facilities, facilitating donation by Konica Minolta of second-hand printer/scanner)
- K&L Gates (Updating of Youthlaw online fact sheets)
- Baker McKenzie (Legal Pod Program participant)
- DLA Piper (Legal Pod Program participant)
- Gilbert & Tobin (Legal Pod Program participant)
- Holding Redlich (Facilitating pro bono design and content production from a communications company, Legal Pod Program participant, member of reference group)
- Price Waterhouse Coopers (Legal Pod Program participant)
- Russell Kennedy (Legal Pod Program participant)
- Wisewould Mahony (Full-time seconded lawyer and Legal Pod Program participant)

In-kind contributions

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

Over the past year, this includes:

- 180 degrees (Monash University student group) consultancy on Diversity & Inclusion

- RMIT and Centre for Innovative Justice (CIJ) - a rent-free office, access to event facilities, co-ordination and supervision of placement students
- RMIT university - office facilities for our RMIT Student Legal Service
- 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 Frontyard service delivery
- Ballarat Community Health and Federation University of Australia (FUA) - partners in delivering our health justice legal service in Ballarat. FUA also evaluates the service
- Headspace, YSAS and The Bridge (Seymour and Shepparton) - hosting our visiting outreach service
- Konica Minolta - donation of multiplex printer to Youthlaw
- Ballarat Community Health (BCH) - hosting our Stand Up for Your Rights staff, and providing all office facilities
- KPMG - donation of speaker headsets

YOUTHLAW 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.

- Linda Le (Chair)
- Charlie Bell (Treasurer)
- Ariel Couchman (CEO)
- Joanne Ellis (Deputy CEO)
- Kelly Phan (Secretary)
- Lynette Dong
- Erin Byrt
- Monique Hurley
- Rebecca Lew
- Sam Whitney
- Jeremie Nguyen
- Christina Cushen
- Jo Slater (Ashurst member)
- James MacDonald (Ashurst member)

Previous board members (2021/2022)

- Daniel Fawcett (Chair - Ashurst member)
- Joanna Lawrence (Ashurst member)
- Helen Thomas
- Scott Myers

Staff

- Ariel Couchman (CEO)
- Joanne Ellis (Principal Lawyer - Civil | Deputy CEO)
- Anna Radonic (Principal Lawyer - Crime)
- Tim Hutton (Outreach Lawyer)
- Sam Coleman (Outreach Lawyer)

- Matt Kearns (General Lawyer | Supervising Lawyer - Friday Fines Clinic)
- Tiffany Overall (Policy, Advocacy Human Rights Officer | Family Violence Coordinator)
- Aly Butchers (Family Violence Lawyer)
- Noemi Garcia (Family Violence Youth Practitioner)
- Katrina Fanning (Ballarat Lawyer)
- Stephanie Tutnjevich (Ballarat Lawyer - OOHHC Project)
- Rosie Mullany (Ballarat Project Officer - OOHHC Project)
- Justin Jaramillo (Legal Pod Managing Lawyer)
- Siobhan Parker (Seconded Lawyer - Ashurst)
- Nick Mills (Seconded Lawyer - Ashurst)
- Ferdous Bahar (Seconded Lawyer - Ashurst)
- Bridget Krake (Seconded Lawyer - Wisewould Mahony)
- Bernice Beaucaine (Family Violence Youth Practitioner)
- Caitlin Lester (Family Violence Youth Practitioner)
- Noha Ghobrial (Finance Officer)
- Raneem Ebaid (Admin Officer and Volunteer Coordinator)
- Stephanie Morley (Admin Officer and Volunteer Coordinator)

Volunteers

We sincerely appreciate the hard work and dedication each and every one of our volunteers bring to their role.

FINANCIALS

2021/2022

YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEGAL RIGHTS CENTRE INC
ABN 12 794 935 230
DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
INCOME		
CLC Recurrent Grant Funding		
Community Legal Centre (CLC) Recurrent - Commonwealth	186,948	184,372
Community Legal Centre (CLC) Recurrent - State	<u>267,681</u>	<u>211,572</u>
	<u>454,629</u>	<u>395,944</u>
Grants - Non-Recurrent		
Kimberley Foundation	15,000	15,000
Ballarat Health Justice Partnership	20,000	19,450
Victorian Department of Justice & CS - Duty Lawyer	51,864	51,872
Victorian Department of Justice & CS - Family Violence	51,864	51,872
Victorian Department of Justice & CS - CLC Assist	-	51,872
Victorian Legal Services Board Grant - Legal Pod Project	-	83,333
Victoria Legal Services Board	256,000	100,000
Ashurst	2,040	-
Community Legal Service Program - COVID-19 Funding	241,500	-
RE Ross Trust	-	73,333
RMIT	94,583	91,230
St Peter's COVID Outreach	-	11,000
Street Smart	9,250	-
Victoria Law Foundation	-	12,000
	<u>742,101</u>	<u>560,962</u>
Donations	8,563	8,500
COVID-19 Government Assistance Payments		
ATO Cash Flow Boost Stimulus Payment	-	49,980
JobKeeper Assistance Payments	-	<u>282,050</u>
	-	<u>332,030</u>
Interest Received	1,198	4,357
Other Income		
Costs recovery and retained	1,950	9,776
Fundraising	2,127	3,767
Miscellaneous income	<u>39,666</u>	<u>402</u>
	<u>43,743</u>	<u>13,945</u>
TOTAL INCOME	<u>1,250,234</u>	<u>1,315,738</u>

FINANCIALS 2021/2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
EXPENDITURE		
Staff Salaries, Wages and On-costs		
Salaries and wages	1,032,465	1,075,258
Salaries and wages - JobKeeper top up payments	-	8,922
Superannuation contributions	99,224	105,490
Employee leave entitlements - annual leave	(3,591)	14,615
Employee leave entitlements - long service leave	6,757	17,013
Portable long service benefits scheme levies	13,379	17,811
WorkCover	1,405	1,908
	<u>1,149,639</u>	<u>1,241,017</u>
Premises Expenses		
Rent	-	-
Amenities	3,458	2,696
Electricity, gas and fuel	-	-
Meetings	-	1
	<u>3,458</u>	<u>2,697</u>
Staff Related Expenses		
Conference fees	-	4,410
Staff training	3,345	1,508
Staff recruitment	660	520
	<u>4,005</u>	<u>6,438</u>
Communications Expenses		
IT Support	27,320	9,215
Mobile phones	7,816	5,962
	<u>35,136</u>	<u>15,177</u>
Office Overhead Expenses		
General expenses	-	-
Office equipment maintenance	532	1,157
Office equipment maintenance: IT support	-	14,943
Postage	900	431
Small equipment purchases	-	1,808
Stationery and photocopying	1,284	657
	<u>2,716</u>	<u>18,996</u>
Insurance	1,104	1,865
Finance, Audit and Accounting Fees		
Accounting fees	4,300	6
Audit fees	-	3,315
Bank charges	204	209
	<u>4,504</u>	<u>3,530</u>

FINANCIALS 2021/2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
EXPENDITURE (continued)		
Library, Resources and Subscriptions		
Library	1,500	358
Memberships and subscriptions	14,417	8,541
Practising certificates	<u>2,035</u>	<u>2,538</u>
	<u>17,952</u>	<u>11,437</u>
Programming and Planning		
Travel	2,020	691
Printing	-	376
Publicity	-	458
Client disbursements	-	41
Consultants	75,822	15,082
Evaluation	<u>-</u>	<u>29,153</u>
	<u>77,842</u>	<u>45,809</u>
Depreciation and Amortisation Expenses	9,589	7,774
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>1,305,945</u>	<u>1,354,740</u>
NET DEFICIT ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE ASSOCIATION	<u>(55,711)</u>	<u>(39,002)</u>



Young People's Legal Rights Centre Inc..

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