

ANNUAL REPORT

1 JULY 2024 TO 30 JUNE 2025



youthlaw

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands where we work, live, and learn. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have cared for these lands, waters, and communities for countless generations. We pay our deep respects to Elders past and present, and honour the enduring

connection of Aboriginal peoples to Country, culture, and community. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded, and are committed to walking alongside First Nations peoples in the ongoing journey towards truth, justice and Treaty in Victoria. Always ways, always will be, Aboriginal land.

ABOUT YOUTHLAW

Youthlaw is Victoria's specialist community legal centre for young people under 25. We support children and young people most impacted by unfair laws and systems – those facing homelessness, family violence, discrimination, criminalisation and mistreatment.

As a multidisciplinary practice, we provide legal-social help, education, and outreach that meets young people where they're at.

PURPOSE

To provide accessible legal services to young people under the age of 25 and their advocates, focusing on unmet legal needs and addressing systemic legal and social justice challenges.

STRATEGIC PILLARS

- Multidisciplinary and accessible legal services
- Leadership and innovation
- Systemic advocacy and law reform
- Human rights centred culture
- Financial and organisational sustainability

VALUES

- Fearless advocacy
 - Human rights
 - Collaboration
 - Youth voice
-

VISION

A just and equitable society for and shaped by young people.

ANNUAL REPORT

1 JULY 2024 TO 30 JUNE 2025

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We thank the young people who have consented to Youthlaw sharing their stories in this annual report, for the purposes of others understanding the barriers they faced to resolving their legal problems. We have de-identified our clients' stories in this report to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

FOREWORD

2025 has been a big year of change and growth for Youthlaw.

Early in the year, we farewelled our long-time CEO, Ariel Couchman, who led Youthlaw for nearly 18 years and helped shape us into Victoria's leading – and only – specialist youth CLC. On behalf of the Board and everyone at Youthlaw, I thank Ariel for her leadership and commitment to young people and the community legal sector.

We are also deeply grateful to Jo Ellis, who stepped up as Acting CEO and guided Youthlaw with care and steady leadership through this transition. Thank you to all our staff and volunteers for their trust, support and hard work throughout 2025. Our team continues to grow and make a real difference every day by delivering core programs like the Friday Fines Clinic and Legal Helpline, while expanding our impact through our growing civil and criminal casework practice, community legal education and our social work practice.

In August, we were thrilled to welcome Lee Carnie as our new CEO. Lee brings a wealth of experience in policy advocacy, youth engagement, and social justice, along with a deep passion for Youthlaw's mission. It has been wonderful to witness the warm welcome Lee has received from the sector and our partners.

Lee's arrival comes at a pivotal time as we enter the final year of our current Strategic Plan and begin shaping Youthlaw's next chapter. With ongoing justice reforms continuing to impact vulnerable young people, Youthlaw remains committed to driving change through strong advocacy, collaboration and practical, evidence-based solutions.



Kelly Phan (She/Her)
Youthlaw Board Chair

CEO MESSAGE

This year has been one of growth, impact and long-awaited law reform. As Victoria's only specialist youth legal service, Youthlaw continues to stand beside young people too often left out or left behind – breaking down barriers to justice through wraparound legal-social supports, fearless advocacy, and an unwavering belief in young people's rights, voices and potential.

In the past year, we have supported 900 young people through more than 4,300 legal and social work services across critical challenges such as housing, family violence, child protection and criminal law. Behind these numbers are stories of young people returning to school, finding safe homes to live in, and reconnecting with their communities.

Through Youthlaw's work, young people are heard – not silenced – in systems that can be overwhelming and unjust.

Through our integrated practice and outreach, we reached young people across 25 locations including youth homelessness refuges, detox clinics and residential care, ensuring young people experiencing poverty, family violence, homelessness and mental health problems can access the support they deserve. Every week, our duty lawyer services in the Melbourne and Broadmeadows Children's Courts meant over 200 children accessed immediate, expert help to understand their rights, navigate the court system, and access protections and services that keep them safe, supported and avoid criminalisation.

We achieved major milestones. We launched our Early Intervention Crime Program which supported 70 young people with 169 legal and social work services in its first 3 months. We successfully completed our Informed and Empowered project which delivered affirmative consent education to 2,000 young people and workers. And we wrapped up Stand Up for Our Rights after 3 years of holistic supports for children in residential care in Ballarat.

Strong partnerships with RMIT University and pro bono law firms opened powerful pathways to justice – enabling young people to access free, high-quality legal help every day through our Legal Helpline, have thousands of dollars in fines and debts wiped through our Fines Clinic, and connect young care leavers with long-term legal support to resolve complex issues through our Legal Pod program.

We saw long-fought-for reforms become reality. Through persistent advocacy by Youthlaw and our Smart Justice for Young People coalition partners, the Victorian Government passed landmark reforms to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12, ban solitary confinement and spithoods for children, expand youth diversion, and make public transport free from 2026.

With the vital support of the Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner and Victorian Government, we grew our passionate, youth-centred team by 40% - from 17 to 24 staff - to meet increasing demand for our services.

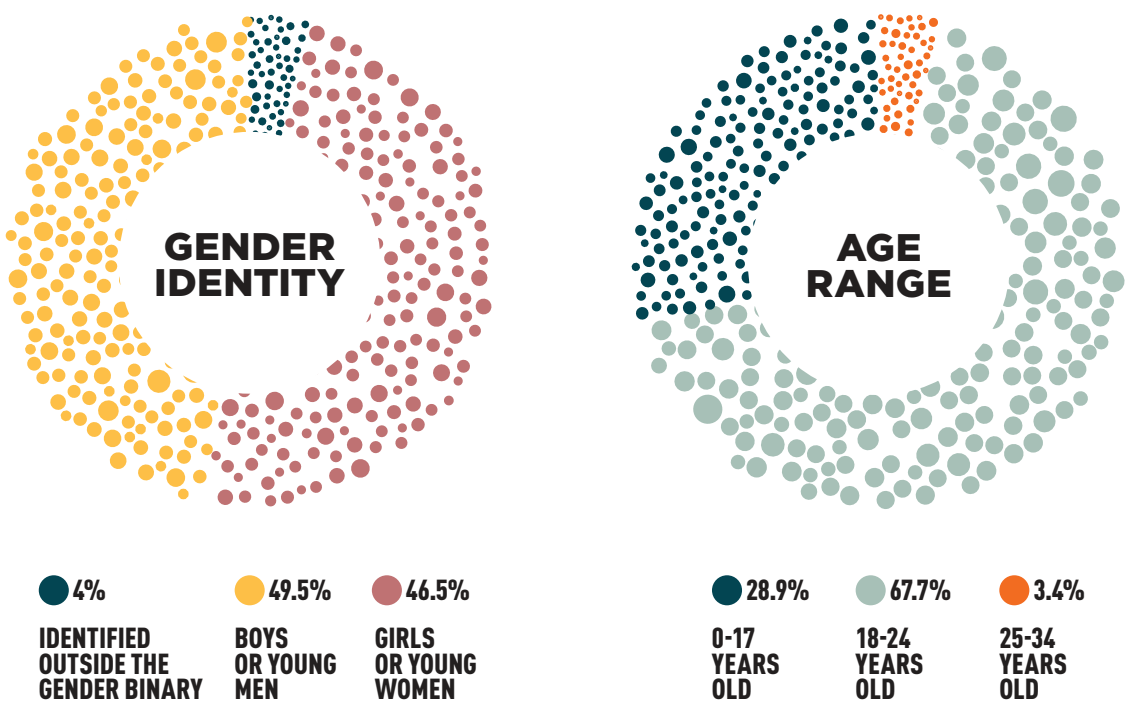
At the heart of everything we do is our shared vision for a fair, inclusive and compassionate legal system where every young person is heard, respected and supported to thrive.

Lee Carnie (They/Them)
CEO, Youthlaw

REACH & IMPACT

The data below shines a light on the reach and impact of Youthlaw’s work, and the complex challenges faced by the young people we support. Too often, the voices and challenges of young people are ignored, overlooked, or silenced. Our dedicated lawyers and social workers take action early, build real connections, and deliver wraparound support through programs designed to create lasting change in young people’s lives.

WHO WE HELPED



Clients who disclosed experiencing or at risk of experiencing Family Violence, Homelessness, Mental Health and/or Disability, Financial Disadvantage.

42% FAMILY VIOLENCE

39% HOMELESSNESS

35% MENTAL HEALTH AND/OR DISABILITY

88% FINANCIAL DISADVANTAGE

7%

Clients who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

COMMON LEGAL NEEDS

The most common legal problems Youthlaw provided help with in 2024/25 were:

- 1 Housing and tenancy
- 2 Family violence
- 3 Child protection
- 4 Road, traffic and driving offences
- 5 Minor drug offences

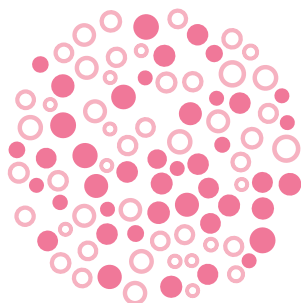
OUR SERVICES

4,339
SERVICES PROVIDED

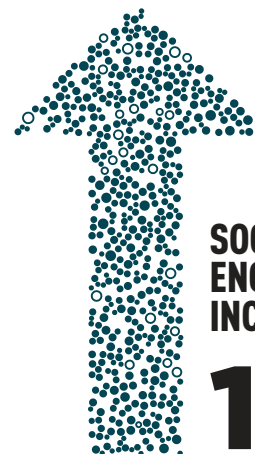
894
TO 894 YOUNG PEOPLE

We saw an increase in demand in 2024/25. The most notable increases in demand for housing and tenancy help.

MEMBERSHIP AND SOCIAL MEDIA REACH



YOUTHLAW
MEMBERSHIP
NUMBERS
INCREASED BY
43%



SOCIAL MEDIA
ENGAGEMENT
INCREASED BY
155%

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION

Youthlaw's community legal education program continues to play a vital preventative role, empowering young people and their support networks with the skills, confidence and knowledge to navigate legal systems. Through early education and engagement, Youthlaw helps young people to make informed decisions, identify issues before they escalate, and access the support they need sooner – preventing legal problems and promoting young people's long-term wellbeing.

YOUTH LEGAL EDUCATION

Youthlaw delivered 43 legal education workshops to 517 young people experiencing disadvantage tackling real issues they face – from consent and cyberbullying to police powers and road rules. Across flexible learning centres, residential rehab and community youth hubs, we supported young people to understand their legal rights to make safer, more informed decisions.

WORKER TRAININGS

When young people need help, they often turn to those they trust most – teachers, youth workers, and counsellors. We delivered 81 targeted workshops to equip 436 workers with the legal knowledge and tools to respond confidently.

Through engaging, practical workshops, we unpack the real-world legal issues young people face, from dealing with police and PSOs to workers' legal obligations, navigating the

justice system and supporting clients to deal with unpaid fines. By building legal knowledge across Victoria's youth sector, we're creating a stronger network of informed advocates who can guide young people through the legal system with care and confidence.

This year, we developed and delivered a new national legal training course in collaboration with headspace. Through engaging, practical workshops, we unpack the real-world legal issues young people face, and build the capacity of social workers, psychologists, youth mental health clinicians and allied health professionals with the foundational legal knowledge and tools to identify common legal issues, uphold young people's privacy and confidentiality, understand obligations to report child abuse, and assess young people's capacity to consent to medical treatment.

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN LEGAL SERVICES

In 2025, Youthlaw facilitated a panel at the Community Development and Community Legal Education Working Group's annual professional development forum on strategies for effectively engaging young people in community legal centre projects. Alongside Barwon Community Legal Service, the School Lawyer Reference Group, The Man Cave, and Northern Community Legal Centre, Youthlaw highlighted innovative and collaborative approaches to youth engagement across the community legal sector.



ACROSS FLEXIBLE LEARNING CENTRES, RESIDENTIAL REHAB AND COMMUNITY YOUTH HUBS, WE SUPPORTED YOUNG PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS.

2000 **YOUNG PEOPLE &
WORKERS INFORMED
AND EMPOWERED**

Over the last 3 years, Youthlaw has delivered targeted legal education on affirmative consent to nearly 2,000 young people and workers. Developed with young people with lived experience of sexual assault and harassment, our resources, workshops, fact sheets and posters cover topics such as sexual consent, age of consent, affirmative consent, sexual violence, and related issues of sexting and online interactions (find them on our website).

70%

**70% OF WORKERS
STRONGLY AGREED THAT
OUR TRAINING SESSIONS
INCREASED THEIR
CONFIDENCE TO TALK
TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE
THEY WORK WITH ABOUT
AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT.**

75%

**75% OF YOUNG PEOPLE
STRONGLY AGREED
THAT OUR TRAINING
SESSIONS HELPED
THEM TO UNDERSTAND
WHAT RESPECTFUL
RELATIONSHIPS AND
SEXUAL VIOLENCE ARE.**

YOUTH CRIME

EARLY INTERVENTION CRIME PROGRAM

This year, we proudly expanded our crime practice with the launch of the groundbreaking Early Intervention Crime Program. The program provides integrated legal and social work support to young people at the early stages of police involvement to re-direct them away from criminalisation by advocating for cautions, diversion or non-conviction orders, while offering vital support to help them turn their lives around.

In our first three months, we had already provided 169 services to 70 young people, highlighting the crucial need, impact, and early success of integrated early intervention criminal law programs for young people in Victoria. Youthlaw is stepping in where other services don't reach – bridging service gaps and opening doors to fairer, more hopeful futures for young people early. Our lawyers and social

workers have helped dozens of young people access diversion and supportive pathways away from further offending. Too often, young people without criminal records miss out on legal help and fall through the cracks. Our early, personalised interventions make sure that doesn't happen.

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS & DRUG OUTREACH PARTNERSHIPS

We continued to provide criminal law outreach services at youth homelessness refuges and services, and youth detox clinics. We strengthened our partnerships with youth residential rehab services and expanded our referral networks to other legal services to reach at-risk young people with their legal problems when they're seeking housing or health treatment for alcohol or drug issues.

552

**WE DELIVERED 552 FREE,
HIGH QUALITY CRIMINAL
LAW SERVICES**

182

**TO 182 YOUNG PEOPLE
EXPERIENCING
DISADVANTAGE.**

YOUTH CRIME CLIENT STORY

ANITA'S STORY – YOUNG MUM HELPED TO REPORT FAMILY VIOLENCE AND AVOID A CRIMINAL CONVICTION

When Anita was 23, expecting her first child and working casually, she reached out Youthlaw's Legal Helpline for assistance with an upcoming criminal court case. Anita was charged with assault and property damage and named in an interim Family Violence Intervention Order when her ex-partner called the police as they were breaking up.

Before this happened, Anita had already experienced homelessness, family violence, and child abuse. With support, she left her ex-partner who was using violence against her and started working hard to recover from the trauma of this relationship. The Court granted Anita a five-year Family Violence Intervention Order protecting her from her ex-partner.

Anita's youth lawyer reviewed the brief of evidence and obtained support materials from family violence services Anita had engaged with. Anita's Youthlaw social worker connected her with supports and advocacy to the court to help Anita explain her experiences as a relevant factor in her legal cases. Anita's Youthlaw lawyer

negotiated with Victoria Police to withdraw three of Anita's four charges on the basis that she had been misidentified as the primary aggressor, instead of as a victim-survivor of family violence and had the summary of facts amended to remove prejudicial content.

While her criminal charges were progressing through the courts, Anita was six months into her pregnancy, she was evicted from her rental property. Youthlaw's social worker connected Anita to financial assistance to move into a new home, as well as essentials for her baby.

Youthlaw's specialist criminal lawyer convinced the Magistrate that Anita had been misidentified as the primary aggressor and was a victim of family violence. Anita's final criminal charge was finalised without conviction, with a three-month good behaviour bond. At the end of proceedings, Anita bravely reported her experiences of family violence to the police.

Anita is about to welcome her first child, and her future is looking bright.

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**WHILE HER CRIMINAL CHARGES
WERE PROGRESSING THROUGH
THE COURTS, ANITA WAS SIX
MONTHS INTO HER PREGNANCY,
SHE WAS EVICTED FROM HER
RENTAL PROPERTY.**

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Our Family Violence integrated legal and social work model supports young people with complex needs to address both causes and impacts of family violence. Every week, Youthlaw's lawyers and social workers provide free duty lawyer intervention order help for children under 18 at Melbourne and Broadmeadows Children's Courts. We ensure young people's voices are heard, preventing criminalisation and driving meaningful legal and social change for hundreds of children each year using violence at home who have themselves experienced family violence.

ADOLESCENTS USING VIOLENCE IN THE HOME

Youthlaw's Adolescents using violence in the home program is the only specialist community legal service program in Victoria for this cohort of 10 to 17 year old children. By engaging with young people at the earliest possible stage, the AVITH Program sees positive resolutions that foster long-term change and promote overall well-being for young people. Youthlaw is currently partnering with the Centre for Innovative Justice on action research – speaking directly with young people supported with family violence services.

204

**OVER THE PAST YEAR,
YOUTHLAW HAS HELPED
204 YOUNG PEOPLE**

756

**WITH 756 LEGAL
AND SOCIAL WORK
SERVICES.**

FAMILY VIOLENCE CLIENT STORIES

Sally and Tom's stories show the complex experiences of children facing police and court involvement due to their use of violence at home. These stories show how early, specialist integrated legal-social supports help young people to stay connected to family, school, and community supports, and steer clear of Victoria's criminal legal system.

SALLY'S STORY - 15 YEAR OLD CONNECTED WITH SCHOOL AND SUPPORTS TO AVOID COURT ORDERS

We met Sally at the Children's Court to deal with family violence intervention order applications filed by Victoria Police on her parents' behalf. Sally was 15 years old, was struggling with complex mental health issues, had disengagement from school and was dealing with escalating conflict with her parents. Sally's parents regretted calling the police to their home and that Sally was now facing court intervention orders but were overwhelmed and didn't know where to go for help.

Our social worker supported Sally with safety planning to help her de-escalate conflicts with her parents at home and connected her with mental health supports. Youthlaw's social worker supported Sally to feel more empowered to make her own decisions about her health and helped Sally to enrol in a more flexible school that worked better for Sally.

Our lawyer negotiated with Victoria Police, providing evidence of Sally's engagement with support services. As a result, the police withdrew the intervention order applications against Sally. Sally and her parents have moved forward with their lives in a safe, supported way.

TOM'S STORY - HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SUPPORTED TO BE HEARD AND STAY SAFE

Tom was referred to us a couple of days before his intervention order court date, where Victoria Police was applying for an order against him to protect his dad and siblings. By the court date we had been able to identify that the police had also applied for an intervention order against Tom's dad to protect Tom, his mum, and his siblings.

Tom was struggling with a range of problems made worse by the family violence he was experiencing at home. Our social worker helped Tom to enrol at a more supportive and flexible school, connect with mental health supports, navigate high conflict personal relationships and engage in safety planning so Tom was empowered with how to keep himself safe in future conflicts. Child Protection was involved in Tom's life, and Youthlaw's social worker advocated with Child Protection to make sure Tom's needs were being properly considered and not lost in the mix of a large family needing support.

Youthlaw's lawyer advocated to the police prosecutor to withdraw their application against Tom and continue with their application protecting Tom from his dad. Tom had some other ongoing intervention order issues, and our lawyer was able to offer ongoing legal support to Tom.

“

**OUR SOCIAL WORKER HELPED
TOM TO ENROL AT A MORE
SUPPORTIVE AND FLEXIBLE
SCHOOL, CONNECT WITH
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS.**

FRIDAY FINES CLINIC

The Clinic is a thriving ecosystem of collaboration with internal referrals from our brilliant lawyers and social workers across Youthlaw's outreach and practice areas. Every week we celebrate impactful victories – helping young people experiencing poverty and financial hardship to have their fines waived, debts erased, and broader issues solved with precision and care from our team.

Our Friday Fines Clinic is an educational partnership with the RMIT Graduate School of Business and Law. This year, Youthlaw hosted 26 law students for internships. Many of these students continue to volunteer with Youthlaw - seeing the impact of using their law degree to help young people to deal with their unpaid fines fuels their commitment to making a difference. Together with RMIT's School of Social Work, we've pioneered social work student placements

in our clinic model to train up the next generation of lawyers and social workers on how to work together to provide legal-social supports. Our Friday Fines Clinic is vibrant and inspiring, where the young people we assist often enjoy their engagement with our students – who can engage with them as peers while applying the legal and social work skills they're learning through their studies.

Every week, we celebrate impactful victories, such as fines being dismissed, debts erased, and legal and social issues solved with precision and care from our team.

Beyond our clinic work, we share our insights and best practices with the broader sector. Through the Infringement Working Group we are leaders of change, assisting with complaints and advocating for justice and fairer systems for young Victorians.

677

THIS YEAR, OUR FRIDAY FINES CLINIC DELIVERED 677 LEGAL SERVICES TO 223 YOUNG PEOPLE, SUPPORTING THEM TO EASE THEIR FINANCIAL AND LEGAL BURDENS.

233

THESE NUMBERS ARE A TESTAMENT TO THE POWER OF HOLISTIC SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE TRANSFORMATIVE NATURE OF TEACHING CLINICS FOR LAW AND SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS.

FRIDAY FINES CLINIC CLIENT STORIES

Melanie's and Matty's stories highlight the impact of tailored programs such as Youthlaw's Friday Fines Clinic and how we continually advocate for young people going through tough times to reclaim control and move on with their lives.

MELANIE'S STORY – YOUNG FAMILY VIOLENCE SURVIVOR SUPPORTED TO RESOLVE EX-PARTNER'S DRIVING FINES IN HER NAME

Melanie was experiencing homelessness and referred to Youthlaw from her temporary accommodation provider. Melanie had experienced severe family violence both from her ex-partner and her family, leaving her homeless and alone. Her ex-partner had access to a car registered in her name and racked up numerous speeding, parking, and red-light fines.

Unfortunately, the window to nominate Melanie's ex-partner for the fines had closed. We helped Melanie to file a family violence scheme application with Fines Victoria. We liaised with her clinician to write Melanie a support letter, explaining her experiences of family violence that led to her not being able to nominate her ex-partner earlier. With Youthlaw's help, Fines Victoria withdrew thousands of dollars of driving fines Melanie was facing, accepting that they had been incurred by her ex-partner while she was experiencing family violence from him.

MATTY'S STORY – 19 YEAR OLD EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS EMPOWERED TO RESOLVE UNPAID FINES AND DEBTS

Matty was referred to our Friday Fines Clinic from our Crime team. Matty was dealing with several compounding issues, including homelessness and the weight of thousands of dollars in unpaid fines and debts owed to a gym and phone company.

Matty received the fines over 2 years when he was experiencing homelessness, including when he had been under 18. Our criminal lawyers helped Matty to avoid a criminal record for his criminal charges to divert him away from the courts. Our social worker supported Matty to find crisis accommodation.

We supported Matty to demonstrate how hundreds of dollars of parking fines were connected to him sleeping in his car while homeless, and not having anywhere safe to park his car at night. Our clinic negotiated with the gym to reduce Matty's debt and put him on a manageable payment plan, and successfully advocated for Telstra to waive his unpaid phone bills and debts.

“

**WITH YOUTHLAW'S HELP,
FINES VICTORIA WITHDREW
THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS OF
DRIVING FINES MELANIE WAS
FACING.**

LEGAL HELPLINE

Our Legal Helpline acts as the entry point for Youthlaw's services for young people and those who support them, including parents and support workers. Designed with ease and accessibility in mind, our service allows those seeking help to reach us not only via phone but also through email, and social media. This year, we've revamped our intake processes to make them more friendly, clear and accessible for young people who contact Youthlaw for help.

Our helpline is usually the first contact young people have with a lawyer. Our holistic 'no wrong door' approach means every young

person who reaches out receives timely and relevant legal information, and referrals to Youthlaw programs or other support services. Often, young people are experiencing heightened emotions and stress about the legal issues they're facing. At Youthlaw, we make sure young people understand their rights, legal options and who to reach out to for support.

We thank Ashurst and HWLE for their unwavering support to help Youthlaw provide this invaluable service and meet rising demand for our services.

3410

**THIS YEAR, YOUTHLAW'S LEGAL
HELPLINE ANSWERED 3,410
PHONE CALLS, EMAILS AND
SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES,
AND DELIVERED 759 LEGAL
SERVICES TO YOUNG PEOPLE.**

759

**AS GROWING NUMBERS OF YOUNG PEOPLE
ARE FACING FINANCIAL HARDSHIP AND
HOUSING INSECURITY, YOUTHLAW PRIDES
ITSELF ON BEING ACCESSIBLE AND
WELCOMING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO
NEED FREE, HIGH QUALITY LEGAL HELP.**

LEGAL HELPLINE CLIENT STORIES

Angela, Blake and Charlie's stories highlight how Youthlaw ensures young people are connected with the help they need, and empowered to stand up for their rights.

ANGELA'S STORY - YOUNG SURVIVOR OF FAMILY VIOLENCE EMPOWERED TO ASSERT HER LEGAL RIGHTS

Angela contacted the Legal Helpline for advice about a family violence intervention order that they had applied for to protect her from a family member. The court had asked Angela to provide more detailed allegations of the family violence she had experienced, and Angela had contacted multiple services who had been unable to help her. Angela was worried as the deadline to submit this court document was fast approaching.

Our Legal Helpline lawyer gave Angela detailed advice about what she needed to do, how to fill out the court document, what to include/not include, and how to follow court procedures to make sure her paperwork was completed correctly. Angela was grateful for our advice and said she now felt confident enough to fill out the court document herself.

BLAKE'S STORY - 19 YEAR OLD ADVISED TO ADDRESS DRIVING CHARGES AND BRING POLICE COMPLAINT

Blake was pulled over by police and charged with several minor driving offences. Blake was concerned about the way they were treated by

police during the pullover. Youthlaw provided Blake with comprehensive legal advice about going to court and how to prepare for their hearing. Blake was also referred to speak to a duty lawyer on the day of their hearing.

Blake was referred to one of our youth crime lawyers who gave them advice about a potential police complaint, including their legal rights and options. This example demonstrates how Youthlaw works collaboratively to ensure young people receive prompt, holistic and targeted assistance.

CHARLIE'S STORY - 17 YEAR OLD REFERRED TO PRO BONO HELP TO ACCESS HIS BIRTH CERTIFICATE

Charlie's cousin supported them to contact Youthlaw. Charlie was born interstate, left home and lost contact with their family at a young age due to ongoing family violence. Charlie was about to turn 18 and wanted to apply for a driver's licence, but couldn't because they didn't have their birth certificate.

Charlie contacted our Legal Helpline and we supported them with a warm referral to a free specialist clinic run by a private law firm assisting vulnerable people to apply for their birth certificate. The firm agreed to help Charlie with their application.

“

**ANGELA CONTACTED THE
LEGAL HELPLINE FOR ADVICE
ABOUT A FAMILY VIOLENCE
INTERVENTION ORDER.**

SPOTLIGHT: YOUTHLAW'S SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Since 2016, Youthlaw has embraced integrating our lawyers and social workers to create a holistic support system for young people going through daunting legal processes. This year, our social workers have supported hundreds of young people in countless ways, including providing a much-needed sense of security and guidance for young people, coordination and collaboration with their care teams, case coordination, advocacy, safety planning, and referrals to specialist services.

Our social workers are what enables Youthlaw to extend our help beyond the courtroom by identifying underlying needs and preventing future legal issues.

For example, our social workers partner with our lawyers at courts to support children and young people to deal with their criminal and intervention order matters.

This year, we strengthened our partnerships with RMIT's Social Work Department and the Centre for Innovative Justice, which enables Youthlaw to place social work students in a community legal centre setting to enhance social work supports for young people.

CLIENT STORY

MOHAMMED'S STORY - 19 YEARS OLD CONNECTED WITH YOUTH HOUSING WORKER AND HOUSING

Mohammed contacted Youthlaw's Friday Fines clinic requesting support with parking and driving fines he couldn't afford to pay. During intake, Mohammed shared with a lawyer that he had no income at all and had become homeless, so was sleeping in his car. Mohammed told the lawyer he had tried to access housing services but hadn't received any support.

He was referred to a social work student who, with support from a senior social worker, helped

Mohammed to navigate the housing service system and connect with a specialist youth housing service.

A few days later, Mohammed was offered a bed in a youth refuge and linked in with a case manager to connect him with longer-term housing options. Mohammed is now living in safe and secure accommodation, and his likelihood of more parking and driving fines has reduced as he is no longer experiencing homelessness and sleeping in his car. Mohammed is feeling positive about getting back to study or finding a job now that he has a stable place to live.

STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

YUTONG'S EXPERIENCE - RMIT SOCIAL WORK STUDENT INTERN

"I completed my first social work placement with the social work team at Youthlaw. Working in an integrated setting alongside both social workers and lawyers was a powerful example of theory coming to life. It gave me the chance to see how interdisciplinary collaboration can support young people more holistically. Throughout my placement, I had the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities. I joined the NAIDOC Week March, visited the Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC), and attended the Children's Court, where I observed how social workers and lawyers used different approaches but worked toward the same goal supporting young people. I also had the chance to connect with the Law and Advocacy Centre for Women and attend a "Come and Try" session through the Women's SupPORT program, which resonated with my interest in using sport as a tool for youth engagement and development."

"Witnessing social workers operating in such diverse sectors was eye-opening. It deepened my understanding of the varied and impactful roles social workers can play across different fields. A highlight of my placement was working on a scoping project focused on preventing youth crime through sport-based programs. This gave me the opportunity to explore how social work can contribute to innovative, strengths-based approaches to youth justice. My conversations with the Smart Justice for Young People campaign manager further expanded my understanding of progressive strategies to support young people involved in the legal system. Overall, my placement at Youthlaw was an invaluable and a one-of-a-kind learning experience. It broadened my perspective on social work practice and inspired me as an emerging social worker. I have grown both personally and professionally and feel more confident in my future career path. Youthlaw was incredibly welcoming and made me feel like a valued member of their amazing team. This placement experience is something I will carry with me into my future work and beyond."

LEGAL POD

Youthlaw's Legal Pod program partners with private law firms to connect young people who have been removed from their families and homes by Child Protection and are now being transitioned out of state care to independent living with wraparound, long-term legal help. This innovative collaboration bridges critical justice gaps by merging private sector expertise with Youthlaw's youth focused approach and guidance, proving that a holistic and integrated approach can transform the lives of young people experiencing disadvantage.

At this stage in their lives, young care leavers encounter myriad challenges that leave them at higher risk of police interactions and

criminal charges. Each young person has their own "Legal Pod" – a dedicated team of pro bono lawyers who provide comprehensive legal support for up to three years to help young people navigate the difficult journey of leaving care to live on their own.

We thank our partner private law firms Ashurst, Baker McKenzie, CBP, DLA Piper, Gilbert & Tobin, Holding Redlich, PwC, Russell Kennedy, and Wisewould Mahony.

This year, the Legal Pod Program has assisted 36 young people through 332 services. This high service-to-client ratio highlights the program's dedication to addressing the multifaceted and complex challenges faced by young care leavers.

36

**THIS YEAR, OUR LEGAL
POD PROGRAM HELPED 36
YOUNG PEOPLE WITH 332
SERVICES.**

332

**THIS HIGH SERVICE-TO-
CLIENT RATIO HIGHLIGHTS
OUR PROGRAM'S DEDICATION
TO ADDRESSING THE
MULTIFACETED AND COMPLEX
CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG
CARE LEAVES.**

LEGAL POD CLIENT STORIES

Mason's story highlights the critical role of integrated legal and non-legal support for care leavers and the importance of long-term funding and support to build trust and restore young people's confidence to ask for help. Viola's journey from sleeping rough to studying at university shows the real impact of Legal Pod and the positive flow-on effects for young people supported when transitioning out of state care.

MASON'S STORY – 18 YEARS OLD CARE LEAVER SUPPORTED TO STAY SAFE AND BE HEARD AT COURT

Mason came to Youthlaw as a victim-survivor of serious family violence, carrying the trauma of past interactions that left lasting scars. Mason had a lifetime of reasons to mistrust new adults and services in his life and was reluctant to engage with yet another service. Over time, through consistent and trauma-informed support, Mason developed a strong sense of trust with Youthlaw lawyers through our Legal Pod program.

We helped Mason to deal with an urgent family violence intervention order, helping them to stabilise immediate safety concerns while empowering Mason to understand their rights and, importantly, ensuring voice was amplified and respected at court. We also supported Mason to navigate interactions with police officers and prosecutors, making sure they felt genuinely heard and supported through a stressful legal process.

Mason's case underscores the critical role of integrated legal and non-legal support for care leavers facing intersecting challenges. It demonstrates how building trust through holistic service delivery can repair broken relationships with systems and restore a young person's confidence to seek out and engage with necessary support.

VIOLA'S STORY – 21 YEAR OLD CARE LEAVER NOW AT UNIVERSITY AFTER RECEIVING LEGAL-SOCIAL SUPPORTS

Viola was referred to Legal Pod by workers at a youth homelessness refuge access point, facing a range of escalating legal issues. After experiencing family violence from an ex-partner, she began living in her car for her safety which led to multiple fines and frequent interactions with police while she was at her most vulnerable.

Exacerbating Viola's financial and emotional stress, her ex-partner had taken out several "buy now, pay later" loans in her name. Debt collectors began contacting Viola for repayments on debts she knew nothing about, leaving her too scared to answer her phone, and had a negative impact on her mental health.

We successfully advocated for Viola's debts to be waived, and her fines withdrawn. We helped Viola to understand her rights with police, so that she felt confident to self-advocate when talking with police officers in the future.

Youthlaw also connected Viola with housing and victim-survivor support services.

Viola is now living in stable, long-term accommodation and studying to become a youth worker, using her lived experience to support other young people facing similar situations.



VIOLA'S JOURNEY FROM SLEEPING ROUGH TO STUDYING AT UNIVERSITY SHOWS THE REAL IMPACT OF LEGAL POD.

OUTREACH

Our outreach program ensures our lawyers are connecting with hard-to-reach young people accessing other services, and that workers supporting young people can identify legal problems and connect young people with legal help.

OUTREACH LOCATIONS

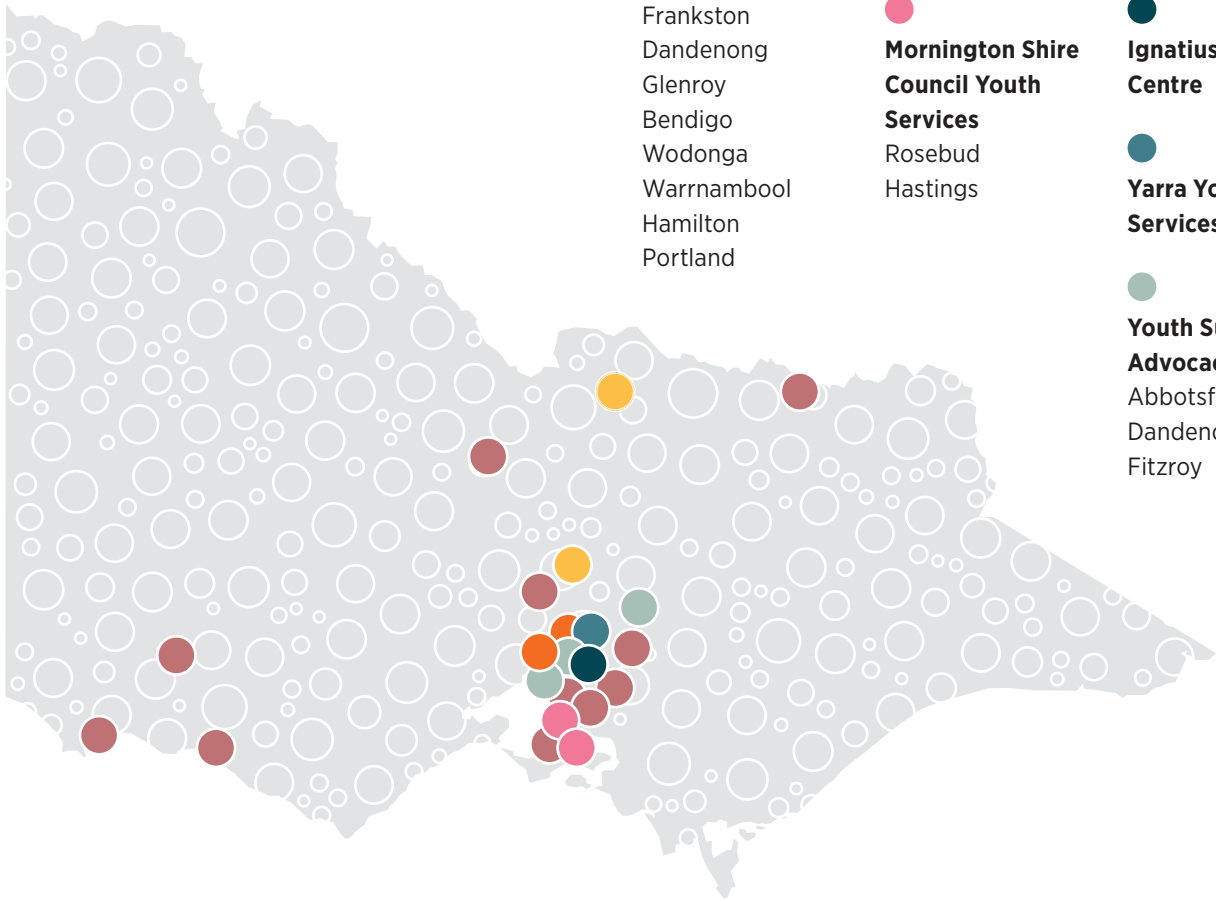
- **Headspace centres**
Bentleigh
Rosebud
Narre Warren
Frankston
Dandenong
Glenroy
Bendigo
Wodonga
Warrnambool
Hamilton
Portland
- **The Bridge Youth Service**
Shepparton
Wallan

● **Mornington Shire Council Youth Services**
Rosebud
Hastings
- **The Drum Youth Services**
Collingwood
Richmond

● **Ignatius Learning Centre**

● **Yarra Youth Services**

● **Youth Support + Advocacy Service**
Abbotsford
Dandenong
Fitzroy



409
YOUTHLAW PROVIDED 409 LEGAL OUTREACH SERVICES

95
TO 95 YOUNG PEOPLE, WHILE

3
EXPANDING TO THREE NEW SITES,

22
NOW TOTALING 22 LOCATIONS.

OUTREACH CLIENT STORY

Jane's story is a snapshot of the transformative power of our work to help young people to deal with their legal problems, so they can move on to focus on their wellbeing and futures.

JANE'S STORY - 22 YEAR OLD FINDS WORK AFTER BEING HELPED TO RESOLVE UNPAID FINES AND DEBTS

Jane was referred to Youthlaw from one of our youth mental health service organisations. Jane was battling homelessness and substance abuse, connected with her experiences of family violence. Youthlaw's lawyers worked with her

social workers to support Jane to deal with thousands of dollars in unpaid fines and debts that were hanging over her head. With our help, Jane's fines were withdrawn and we advocated for all of her debts to be waived.

Without the pressure of financial stress and impending legal cases, Jane's mental health improved. Jane is now working at a job she has told us is "mid but chill".

Jane's story is just a snapshot of the transformative work we're doing, helping young people navigate legal issues and focus on their wellbeing and futures.

“

**YOUTHLAW'S LAWYERS
WORKED WITH HER SOCIAL
WORKERS TO SUPPORT JANE
TO DEAL WITH THOUSANDS
OF DOLLARS IN UNPAID FINES
AND DEBTS.**

RMIT STUDENT LEGAL SERVICE

Our RMIT Student Legal Service has ensured hundreds of RMIT university students understand their legal rights and are empowered to resolve them. Our service has been busy all year helping students navigate common legal challenges including bond disputes with landlords, dealing with unpaid fines, advocating to real estate agents about homes they're renting falling well below minimum standards for safe living conditions. Housing problems students face as young renters and dealing with unpaid fines are the most common legal problems we support students to resolve.

Partnership and collaboration are key to the success of our RMIT Legal Service. This year, we strengthened our partnerships with RMIT counselling staff, which led to a surge in young people reaching out for legal help and worker advice. This collaboration enables a holistic support system for students by Youthlaw's legal help and RMIT's psychological help. We also supported the RMIT Student Union's Let's Get Consensual Week by empowering university students with legal education and insights into their rights and responsibilities on sexual consent and relationships.

219

**YOUTHLAW'S RMIT
STUDENT LEGAL SERVICE
PROVIDED LEGAL
INFORMATION AND ADVICE
TO 219 RMIT STUDENTS
THIS YEAR.**

759

SERVICES PROVIDED

RMIT STUDENT LEGAL SERVICE CLIENT STORIES

JO'S STORY – 19 YEAR OLD INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORTED TO ACCESS UNPAID WAGES AND SUPER

Jo is an international student who worked at a cafe for a few weeks before deciding it wasn't for them. The café refused to pay Jo for the weeks of work they had done. When Jo raised the issue with the owner, they were told the shifts were a trial and Jo wouldn't be paid.

Youthlaw's RMIT Student Legal Service lawyer helped Jo to understand their work rights under the relevant Modern Award they were classified under, and supported Jo to advocate for wages for their shifts. We worked with Jo to calculate how much they were owed in unpaid wages including superannuation in a clear spreadsheet for Jo to email to their employer demanding the wages they were entitled to.

After receiving this email, the café paid Jo their wages and entitlements in full.

MARIA'S STORY – 20 YEAR OLD INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORTED TO GET HER BOND BACK

For international PhD student Maria, arriving in Melbourne was meant to be an exciting new chapter. But things quickly took a turn when the room she had rented was nothing like what had been promised.

"My room had spiders everywhere, and the mattress had insect larvae," Maria said.

"Other tenants were watching me, and I was told I couldn't use certain parts of the house. I felt unsafe from the moment I arrived."

After quickly finding new accommodation, Maria contacted the team at RMIT Student Legal Service to find out if she had any rights regarding the bond she had already paid.

"The process was super good and quick," Maria said.

"I prepared a letter for the landlord, and the lawyer, Stephanie, helped me strengthen it with legal statements."

Thanks to the support she received, Maria successfully recovered her bond.

"I got my bond back with no problems. The advice gave me confidence and security about what I was doing, don't be shy to ask for help – you can always look for a solution." she said.

“

**WE WORKED WITH JO TO
CALCULATE HOW MUCH THEY
WERE OWED IN UNPAID WAGES
INCLUDING SUPERANNUATION IN
A CLEAR SPREADSHEET FOR JO
TO EMAIL TO THEIR EMPLOYER
DEMANDING THE WAGES THEY
WERE ENTITLED TO.**

YOUTHLAW BALLARAT

The Ballarat Health Justice Partnership ensures young people in the Ballarat and Central Highlands area can access free, high quality legal advice and representation as part of holistic legal-health supports. This year, Youthlaw's Ballarat Health Justice Partnership team provided 250 services to 101 young people. These numbers demonstrate the high need for collaborative support services for vulnerable and marginalised young people in Ballarat and Central Highlands and surrounding areas.

Our Youthlaw Ballarat office is co-located at Ballarat Community Health, which enables quick referrals for young people from their healthcare providers to our youth lawyer. At the same time, young people receive the non-legal support they need in housing, mental health, substance use and family violence safety planning. This partnership also builds our community health partners' understanding of legal processes, enhancing their ability to aid young people through worker advice and community legal education.

250

**THIS YEAR,
YOUTHLAW'S BALLARAT
HEALTH JUSTICE
PARTNERSHIP TEAM**

101

**PROVIDED 250
SERVICES TO 101
YOUNG PEOPLE.**

YOUTHLAW BALLARAT CLIENT STORIES

Yala and Ben's stories showcase the profound impact of our co-location model within a health justice partnership to secure young people's safety, stability and legal rights.

BEN'S STORY – SINGLE DAD SUPPORTED TO KEEP HIS DRIVER'S LICENSE

Ben is a 23-year-old single father who overcame a turbulent childhood marked by family violence and homelessness. Ben was facing driving charges at the Magistrates' Court. If Ben lost his driver's license, he would have lost his job and wouldn't have a way to legally transport his children to and from school each day.

With Youthlaw's legal help and representation at court and the backing of Ballarat Community Health's allied workers, Ben was supported to treat and manage his anxiety. Ben received supportive letters highlighting the critical importance of his license for his rehabilitation and family welfare. As a result, Ben kept his driver's license, his job and can keep driving his kids to and from school.

YALA'S STORY – SUPPORT TOWARDS STABLE HOUSING AND AWAY FROM CRIMINALISATION AND FINANCIAL STRESS

19 year old Yala was referred to Youthlaw by her AOD worker from Ballarat Community Health. Yala was facing serious criminal offences after she was charged by Victoria Police when trying to escape family violence from her ex-partner. The police officers who attended the incident listened to her ex-partner's account and misidentified Yala as a perpetrator of family violence. Facing serious criminal penalties and a criminal record, Youthlaw intervened.

Our lawyer negotiated with Victoria Police to withdraw the charges against Yala, and alongside Yala's allied health workers, we convinced Victoria Police to protect Yala by putting a family violence protection order in place.

We helped Yala to be connected with a team of legal and health professionals working together and sharing information provided to them with Yala's consent, sparing her from repeatedly being retraumatized by retelling her story. This collaboration enabled us to work together to support Yala to find stable housing and waive thousands of dollars in unpaid debts that were hanging over her head and causing her financial stress.

“

YALA WAS FACING SERIOUS CRIMINAL OFFENCES AFTER SHE WAS CHARGED BY VICTORIA POLICE WHEN TRYING TO ESCAPE FAMILY VIOLENCE FROM HER EX-PARTNER.

SPOTLIGHT: STAND UP FOR OUR RIGHTS

For three years, our Stand Up for Our Rights program in Ballarat has provided innovative wraparound supports for children and young people who are living in Out of Home Care after being removed by Child Protection from their families and homes.

This collaborative partnership between Youthlaw, Central Highlands Care Alliance, Ballarat Community Health, Better Street Child and Family Services - Better Futures, and Ballarat Group Training has underscored the critical need for comprehensive, therapeutic legal services for young people in regional parts of Victoria, including Ballarat.

In November 2025, Youthlaw will release an independent evaluation report showing the enduring impact of Stand Up for Our Rights, which has sadly come to an end without ongoing funding.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- Partnering with and empowering workers to enhance young people to transition safely out of care, including ensuring young care leavers can access secure housing and ongoing support services.
- Celebrating legal wins including advocating to Victoria Police to withdraw criminal charges against young care leavers, lodging complaints about police mistreatment, securing waivers of thousands of dollars young people have faced in unpaid debts, securing stable and safe housing after leaving care, and overall improved care leaving outcomes.
- Receiving heartfelt thanks from young people who felt truly heard and supported.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM YOUNG PEOPLE ON STAND UP FOR OUR RIGHTS

“One of the best things I reckon was they actually explained things rather than rushing through the process. I got a better understanding of the process.”

“I don’t understand the justice system and I couldn’t understand what was happening because I was so stressed out. Sophie explained it really well. She listened a lot and took on a lot of stress and worries. She was practical. She was non-judgemental. She made me feel ok and listened to. She was on the ball about everything.”

“Because [the lawyer] helped I kept my licence. This allowed me to go back to work and get my life back on track. I only got a fine.”

“Rosie improved a lot of things, especially my confidence and self-esteem. Youthlaw helped me to feel more confident to speak up when I’m worried about something – Felt confident speaking up to Rosie and felt confident about Rosie talking on my behalf to DHS because DHS simply weren’t listening to me. As it went on, Rosie gave me confidence to talk to DHS again.”

“[Youthlaw’s legal help] made me not get charges on my record so I can keep my job.”

SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY AND LAW REFORM

RAISE
THE
AGE

YOUTH
JUSTICE
BILL

PERSONAL
ADULT
USE OF
CANNABIS
BILL

ANTI-
BULLYING
RAPID
REVIEW

THIS YEAR, YOUTHLAW HAS BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF CRITICAL ISSUES IMPACTING YOUNG PEOPLE, INCLUDING WORKING IN COALITION WITH OTHER YOUTH SERVICES TO ADVOCATE FOR LEGISLATED YOUTH DIVERSION ACROSS VICTORIA, RAISING THE AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY FROM 10 TO 12 YEARS OF AGE, AGAINST REGRESSIVE BAIL CHANGES, AND ENSURING FAIR ACCESS TO EDUCATION, AMONG OTHER CAUSES.

YOUTH JUSTICE ACT REFORMS

Every child should be free to go to school, have a safe home to live in and be supported to learn from their mistakes. After more than a decade of advocacy, the Victorian Government passed the Youth Justice Act to reform Victoria's youth justice system with a range of historic changes, including:

- Raising the age that children can be charged with crimes by police from 10 to 12 years old
- Codifying the presumption of doli incapax and a presumption against prison sentences for 12 and 13 year old children
- Legislating youth diversion across the state, including introducing a sentencing hierarchy

to guide decision-making aimed at diverting children away from criminalisation towards community supports

- Prohibiting the use of solitary confinement and spithoods on children in youth prisons, and
- Strengthening restrictions on use of force, isolation and searches on children in youth prisons.

Youthlaw is proud of the work we have done establishing and collaborating with the Smart Justice for Young People coalition to see these critical reforms become a reality.

SMART JUSTICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Youthlaw stepped up our resourcing to co-convene and coordinate the Smart Justice for Young People coalition of over 50 community services, organisations and academics advocating for evidenced-based justice responses to children and young people. This year, we worked with Smart Justice for Young People to develop and implement our new coalition strategy to:

- 1 Empower communities:** Build relationships with lived experience advocacy groups.
- 2 Decentre police:** Advocate to the Victorian Department of Education to support early intervention and reduce schools calling Victoria Police as first responders to address challenging behaviours, and lodge policy submissions on Australia's youth justice and incarceration system, the redevelopment of Melbourne's public housing towers, new models of youth mental health care, and the Anti-Bullying Rapid Review.

3 Build public support: Present at the Reintegration Puzzle Conference in Mparntwe (Alice Springs), draft a timeline of youth justice developments and Shared Messaging Guide to equip partner organisations to talk to journalists and decision-makers about the problems caused by the overrepresentation and underserving of distinct cohorts of young people which drives high rates of criminalisation.

4 Shift funder practices: Draft a Data Snapshot compiling key ABS, CSI, Productivity Commission and Youth Parole Board data to highlight how current economic decisions are part of the problem (e.g. imprisoning a child in a youth prison costs \$7,775 per day, compared to \$18.40 per day which is being spent on educating a public school student in Victoria).

THEO'S EXPERIENCE (SMART JUSTICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE – CRIMINOLOGY INTERNSHIP)

"The Smart Justice for Young people internship has been an exhilarating learning experience where I have gained an extensive understanding of how a diverse coalition of organisations can collaborate together to create community-led change for young people. The team has been extremely welcoming sharing their knowledge and expertise in policy and advocacy.

As a criminology and politics student, the internship has also been a great way

of practically applying my learning. I first reached out to Smart Justice for Young People as I was inspired by the innovation of the Working Together Action Plan to address the overrepresentation of young people and was keen to learn how to apply its understandings into my own coursework. I am grateful for the many opportunities to expand my knowledge by assisting hands-on with projects and attending various educational events."

FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FOR VICTORIAN CHILDREN

After years of Youthlaw tirelessly campaigning for free public transport for children in Victoria, this year we celebrated the Victorian Government announcement that every child will be able to travel on a train, tram or bus across the state for free (with a new \$5 Youth myki card). This welcome change will reduce inequality and cost-of-living pressures on families, boost school attendance and community participation, promote environmentally friendly transport. It's a win for Victoria's young people, families and the planet we're proud to have played a part in creating.

DECRIMINALISATION OF CANNABIS ADVOCACY

A standout of Youthlaw's policy work has been advocating for the Victorian Government to stop criminalising children and young people for having a small amount of cannabis / marijuana in their possession. Many young people we support face criminal charges for using or having a small

amount of cannabis in their possession. Youthlaw gave evidence to the Victorian parliamentary hearing on the impact of our clients being charged with minor personal possession or use of cannabis. We highlighted the human suffering caused by current punitive drug policies and overwhelming public support for decriminalising minor cannabis possession.

POLICY SUBMISSIONS

Our team has provided expert policy analysis and recommendations to policy inquiries to address systemic barriers to justice young people face, including the Anti-Bullying Rapid Review, proposed new protest laws in Victoria, Victoria's youth mental health system, the Commission for Children and Young People's inquiry into children's experiences in the criminal justice system, family violence reforms, rural and regional housing, public housing.

Advocating for fairer systems is critical to achieving our strategic vision for a just and equitable society for and shaped by young people.



ADVOCATING FOR FAIRER SYSTEMS IS CRITICAL TO ACHIEVING OUR STRATEGIC VISION FOR A JUST AND EQUITABLE SOCIETY FOR AND SHAPED BY YOUNG PEOPLE.

SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY AND LAW REFORM

CLIENT STORIES

Sean's story shows how laws criminalising minor drug use discourage young people from talking to adults about how they're struggling using drugs to cope with mental health problems, out of fear of being reported to police, resulting in facing further criminal charges and harsher penalties.

SEAN'S STORY – 18 YEARS OLD

Youthlaw represented Sean, an 18-year-old with no prior criminal record. He had previously been cautioned by police when he was a child under 18 years of age. Sean was in Year 11 during the worst of Victoria's COVID-19 lockdowns. He found remote learning near impossible and dropped out of school. He started working full time at Officeworks but found that his mental health declined significantly as he attempted to come to terms with his decision to leave

school during the pandemic. Sean increased his cannabis intake as a form of self-medication for his mental health problems.

Sean was charged with two minor counts of possess cannabis. There were delays in Sean's charges being brought before the court. By the time the matters were heard, Sean was engaging consistently with his AOD worker at YSAS. Victoria Police would not consent to a diversion for Sean because he had cautions from when he was underage.

Youthlaw advocated for Sean with the police prosecutors and represented him at court. Sean's criminal charges for possession of a drug of dependence (cannabis) were found proven and dismissed at court, but will remain on Sean's criminal and police record for the next 10 years.

“

SEAN'S STORY SHOWS HOW LAWS CRIMINALISING MINOR DRUG USE DISCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE FROM TALKING TO ADULTS.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS RMIT UNIVERSITY AND THE CENTRE FOR INNOVATIVE JUSTICE

We thank RMIT University and the Centre for Innovative Justice for their ongoing and unwavering support, partnership and commitment to Youthlaw's integrated service model, high quality service delivery, and ongoing financial and organisational sustainability.

Our strong two-way partnership builds Youthlaw's capacity to deliver holistic services through tailored clinical student placement programs. The Centre for Innovative Justice's collaborative partnership approach on joint research, services and evaluations, external supervision for social work students, multidisciplinary practice support, and facilitation of access event facilities, has been invaluable. **Access to facilities and legal service funding enables Youthlaw to provide the free RMIT Student Legal Service to hundreds of university students each year.**

OFFICE AND WORKSPACE PARTNERSHIPS

We thank the following organisations for their office and facilities support for Youthlaw this year:

- **RMIT University and the Centre for Innovative Justice** – our ongoing agreement which enables Youthlaw to access centralised office space on peppercorn rent, including access to communal spaces, is critical to our successful service delivery, and ensures occupational health and safety support for our organisation.
- **Ballarat Community Health** – office workspaces for our Youthlaw staff in Ballarat enables us to build close partnerships and provide high quality legal services to young people in Ballarat.
- **Melbourne City Mission and Frontyard Youth Services** – access to client meeting rooms and work stations at Frontyard enables Youthlaw to continue to provide legal information and advice services to young people experiencing homelessness every week.

LAW FIRM PARTNERSHIPS

Youthlaw has established partnerships with several law firms who offer pro-bono legal support, secondment arrangements, and invaluable assistance for Youthlaw's work. We would like to thank the following law firms for their generous and ongoing support.

Ashurst

- Full-time secondee lawyers
- Legal Pod Program Partner
- Youthlaw Board Members
- Pro-bono assistance to Youthlaw and clients of Youthlaw
- Use of facilities, stationery supplies, archival storage, legal research

HWL Ebsworth

- Graduate lawyers that support our team by operating our phone line and client intake.

Colin Biggers & Paisley (CBP)

- Legal Pod Program Partner
- Pro-bono assistance to Youthlaw and clients of Youthlaw

Wisewould Mahony

- A part-time secondee
- Legal Pod Program Partner

Maddocks

- Pro-bono support

Wotton + Kearney

- Pro-bono support

Legal Pod Program Partners

- Ashurst
- Baker McKenzie
- Colin Biggers & Paisley
- DLA Piper
- Gilbert & Tobin
- Holding Redlich
- PwC
- Russell Kennedy
- Wisewould Mahony

OUR YEAR IN PICTURES

Youthlaw's inaugural CEO, Ariel Couchman, speaking at her farewell event »



Youthlaw lawyer, Aly Butchers on the panel on the Adolescent Violence in the Home (AVITH) Symposium »



Youthlaw stand at the CLC Expo, Parliament House »



Youthlaw team members Aly Butchers and Noemi Garcia in accidentally matching outfits «

Youthlaw lawyers Sam Coleman and Beth King speaking with young people and workers at two outreach events »



Youthlaw trivia team at the Trivia Night hosted by Ashurst »



Gratitude wall of RMIT students wellbeing week which mentioned Youthlaw's RMIT Student Legal Service »



Youthlaw CEO Lee Carnie, lawyer Zara Adlington and social worker Anna Agostinelli at the National CLC Conference »



Youthlaw lawyers, Beth King and Dani Pallister, hosting and part of the panel of the CD and CLE Forum 2025 »



Youthlaw lawyer Dani Pallister and social workers Noemi Garcia and Anna Agostinelli at the Bail Saves Lives rally »

Youthlaw lawyer, Sophie Ellis, speaking at the Bail Saves Lives rally »

DONATIONS

Ashurst, Run Melbourne donations
Ashurst, Trivia Night fundraising event
Colin Biggers & Paisley Lawyers, End of Year Donations
StreetSmart, StreetSmart Campaign
Tiffany Overall, Donated Tim McCoy Award to Youthlaw
Community members, Donations through Youthlaw website

YOUTHLAW BOARD, CURRENT MEMBERS

Kelly Phan, Board Chair
Ashlyn Ryan, Deputy Chair
Linda Le, Youth Board Member
Beau Arnfield, Board Member (appointed by Ashurst)
James MacDonald, Board Member (appointed by Ashurst)
Sam Whitney, Board Member
Jessica Ginberg, Board Member
Elly van Praag, Youth Board Member
Georgia Zomer, Board Member
Lindsey Stacey, Treasurer
Abbie Wiltshire, Board Member

YOUTHLAW BOARD, PREVIOUS MEMBERS 2024/2025

Jo Slater
Siobhan Parker
Ariel Couchman
Ben Gray

YOUTHLAW STAFF, CURRENT TEAM MEMBERS

Aly Butchers	Johanna Yee	Scarlett Trewavis
Anna Agostinelli	Kara Beckmann	Sophie Ellis
Beth King	Katie Fraser	Stamatia Guicas
Bridget Dunne	Katrina Fanning	Stephanie Pashias
Charlie Williams	Lee Carnie	Tegan Moore
Dani Pallister	Lisa Nguyen	Tina Pugliese
Denise Dogan	Mallika Murthy	Zara Adlington
James Tresise	Noemi Garcia	
Joanne Ellis	Noha Ghobrial	

YOUTHLAW STAFF, PREVIOUS TEAM MEMBERS 2024/2025

Ariel Couchman	Lauren Pannell	Rosie Mullany
Elyce Sandri	Philippa Dixon	Sam Coleman

SECONDEES, VOLUNTEERS, STUDENTS AND INTERNS

YOUTHLAW SECONDEES

Tammy Kamil, Wisewould Mahony
Hanna McLean, Ashurst
Jade Rice, Ashurst

YOUTHLAW HELP LINE SECONDEES

Krystal La, HWL Ebsworth	Juliette Capomolla, HWL Ebsworth
Lachlan Christie, HWL Ebsworth	Shea Williams, HWL Ebsworth
Lachlan Spriggs, HWL Ebsworth	Caitlin Littler, HWL Ebsworth
Miranda Eglezos, HWL Ebsworth	Natalie Toft, HWL Ebsworth
Nathan Jasper, HWL Ebsworth	Paige Kakolyris, HWL Ebsworth
Campbell Dawes, HWL Ebsworth	Victoria Sdralis, HWL Ebsworth
Gabriel Takac, HWL Ebsworth	

LEGAL POD LAWYERS

Ashlyn, Ashurst
Abbie, Ashurst
Melissa, Ashurst
Stephanie, Ashurst
David, Ashurst
Po, Baker McKenzie
Jedd, Baker McKenzie
Calvin, Baker McKenzie
Tiana, CBP
Dilusha, CBP
Tamara, CBP
Hugh, DLA Piper
Joely, DLA Piper
Laura, DLA Piper
Amanda, Gilbert & Tobin
Ebony, Gilbert & Tobin
Sachini, Gilbert & Tobin
Jordan, Holding Redlich
Georgeana, Holding Redlich
Jenny, Holding Redlich
Kylie, Holding Redlich

Annabelle, PwC
Adam, PwC
Isobel, PwC
Harry, PwC
Ilya, PwC
Chloe, PwC
Daniel, PwC
Harrison, Russell Kennedy
Angus, Russell Kennedy
Zoe, Russell Kennedy
Patrick, Russell Kennedy
Andrew, Wisewould Mahony
Victoria, Wisewould Mahony
Anna, Wisewould Mahony
Daniella, Wisewould Mahony
Olivia, Wisewould Mahony
Rebecca, Wisewould Mahony
Dominic, Wisewould Mahony
Jourdain, Wisewould Mahony
Stacey, Wisewould Mahony
Trent, Wisewould Mahony

YOUTHLAW VOLUNTEERS 2024/25

Khadija Khurram	Olivia Walker
Erin Brown	Aarya Kulhar
Dragana Nikolis	Michael Harry Sabljak
Heidi Leeman	Emily Macdonald
Justin Yang	Nina Spriggs
Binyamin Mai	Olivia Sarina Vraca
Lucy Johanna Bice	

RMIT LEGAL STUDENTS 2024/25

Michael Harry Sabljak
Teresa Ilas
Aarya Kulhar
Abby Grace Baker
Lilyana Dayoub
Molly Farrer
Asna Asad
Liam Tanner
Naomi Ordano
Rubeca Qadir
Olivia Sarina Vraca
Nina Spriggs
Neha Daya
Lachlan Hayter
Emily Macdonald
Souad Tono
Ali Amer Sultan
Ibraheem El-sayed
Makayla Mastromauro
Joshua Fricke
Rocco Lai
Elizabeth Heyblom
Emily Carr

RMIT SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS 2024/25

Lee Tsourvakas
Yutong Dai
Caitlin Grima
Kezia Srikandi
Pavani Kankanamalage

SMART JUSTICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE INTERN

Theo Purchase

RMIT STUDENT LEGAL SERVICE INTERN

Jacquelyn Zhou

FINANCIAL REPORTS

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

Detailed income and expenditure statement
for the year ended 30 June 2025

INCOME	2025 \$	2024 \$
CLC RECURRENT GRANT FUNDING		
Community Legal Centre (CLC) Recurrent - Commonwealth	195,588	256,140
Community Legal Centre (CLC) Recurrent - State	296,492	216,060
Community Legal Centre (CLC) Recurrent - NLAP Mental Health	236,700	229,800
	728,780	702,000
GRANTS - NON-RECURRENT		
Kimberley Foundation	-	15,000
Ballarat Health Justice Partnership	-	112,667
Victorian Department of Justice & CS - Duty Lawyer	52,737	52,320
Victorian Department of Justice & CS - Family Violence	52,740	52,320
Victorian Department of Justice & CS - CLC Assist	52,740	-
Victorian Department of Justice & CS	760,834	400,000
Affirmative Consent Education	132,000	112,008
OHCC Project	167,000	163,044
RMIT	109,358	105,152
	1,327,409	1,012,511
DONATIONS	12,040	11,627
INTEREST RECEIVED	14,627	12,160
OTHER INCOME		
Costs recovery and retained	14,117	2,520
Fundraising	15,817	13,254
Miscellaneous income	5,363	12,851
	35,297	28,625
TOTAL INCOME	2,118,153	1,766,923

EXPENDITURE	2025 \$	2024 \$
STAFF SALARIES, WAGES AND ON-COSTS		
Salaries and wages	1,655,021	1,304,335
Superannuation contributions	183,301	147,900
Employee leave entitlements - annual leave	40,126	10,129
Employee leave entitlements - long service leave	(29,969)	17,792
Portable long service benefits scheme levies	24,777	22,081
WorkCover	7,684	8,508
	1,880,940	1,510,745

PREMISES EXPENSES		
Amenities	9,184	4,873
	9,184	4,873

STAFF RELATED EXPENSES		
Conference fees	-	192
Staff training	4,208	1,674
Staff recruitment	19,258	910
	23,466	2,776

COMMUNICATIONS EXPENSES		
IT Support	68,801	37,593
Mobile phones	10,667	9,815
Communications Project	-	859
	79,468	48,267

EXPENDITURE	2025 \$	2024 \$
OFFICE OVERHEAD EXPENSES		
General expenses	-	-
Office equipment maintenance	1,593	2,023
Postage	291	601
	79,468	48,267

INSURANCE	1,696	791
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FINANCE, AUDIT AND ACCOUNTING FEES		
Accounting and audit fees	5,161	2,983
Bank charges	589	298
	5,750	3,281

LIBRARY, RESOURCES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS		
Memberships and subscriptions	40,260	33,209
Practising certificates	5,655	1,704
	45,915	34,913

PROGRAMMING AND PLANNING		
Travel	6,075	5,882
Printing	1,971	21
Client disbursements	-	413
Consultants	31,210	11,162
Evaluation	-	196
Other expenses	-	1,774
	39,256	19,448

DEPRECIATION AND AMORTISATION EXPENSES	25,099	6,042
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TOTAL EXPENDITURE	2,112,658	1,633,760
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NET SURPLUS ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE ASSOCIATION	5,495	133,163
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THANK YOU - OUR SUPPORTERS

YOUTHLAW WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING
ORGANISATIONS FOR THEIR SUPPORT.

Ashurst

Baker
McKenzie.

Ballarat
Community
HEALTH

BARR FAMILY
FOUNDATION

Centre for
Innovative
Justice

COLIN
BIGGERS
& PAISLEY
LAWYERS

DLA PIPER

FEDERATION
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