

# Annual Report 2024-25



YouthLaw Aotearoa



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Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

At last year's AGM, Simon Judd stepped down as Chair after many years of incredible leadership, though he remains on the Board. We are honoured to now serve as Co-Chairs. We are excited about the direction YouthLaw has been taking over the past financial year, and are enjoying working with the YouthLaw whānau to see this vision start to come to life. In early 2024, the staff and Board discussed Youthlaw's direction for the next five years. These discussions shaped our new strategic plan, which the team began implementing during this financial year.

Our strategic intent is for YouthLaw to be nationally recognised as an innovative specialist in children's and young people's rights, driving systemic change and providing accessible information, advice, training and support to empower children and young people under 25, and those working with them. As part of this, we have made several key promises. Fundamentally, aspire to embed young people and Te Tiriti o Waitangi into our organisation, ensuring stewardship is shared in partnership. We will work with courage and bring accountability where the rights of children and young people are systematically breached. We have committed to using our resources wisely and developing as an organisation sustainably, in a way that is affordable and protects our staff.

While we are moving forward with our new strategic plan, we are also looking back and recognising that YouthLaw is nearly 40 years old and has a legacy to continue. Two of our long-serving Board members are leaving at this year's AGM. **Piers Davies (left)**, has served on the Board since YouthLaw started. His involvement with community law goes back even further, as he helped set up the first Community Law

Centre in Grey Lynn in 1977 (now the Auckland CLC). While an incredible loss to the Board, we and the rest of the YouthLaw whānau give Piers heartfelt thanks for his long service and significant impact. **David Sutton (right)** is also departing after 12 years of dedicated service.



David has a keen interest in education law and has taken on numerous Board of Trustees and related cases since first becoming involved. We greatly appreciate David's mahi over all those years. We are also losing **Coral Linstead-Panoho** and **Leiu Yeng Tung**, who have made a wonderful contribution to our Board. We hope that they all stay involved and wish them well.

We thank the staff and many volunteers, including our fellow Board members who give their time and expertise freely, for their hard work this year. Congratulations to the team for not only meeting, but exceeding, the Ministry of Justice's targets! A special mention to Darryn for leading the team throughout.

*Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini.* (My strength is not as an individual, but as a collective.) Together, we have achieved much, and it is through our shared efforts that YouthLaw continues to thrive and serve our communities.

*Kia kaha, kia māia, kia manawanui*

Be strong, be brave, be steadfast,

Nive Sharat Chandran and Harvena Cherrington

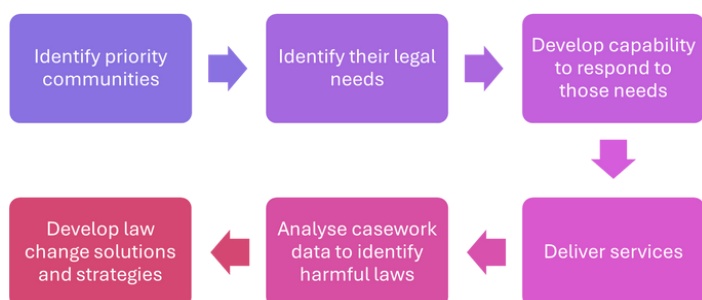


Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa. Firstly, I would like to thank our amazing staff – I greatly appreciate their dedication to our mahi. Naturally, over the course of a year, we have farewelled and welcomed team members. Thank you to the core team of Natalie Andrews, Velda Chan, Sarah Guy, Suivaaia Pritchard, Gretchen Carroll, Paul Paek, Andrew Fermor, Cole Peters, Amelia Campbell, Ryan Brown-Haysom and Stevie Hoesel. Thank you also to Anja Shearer-Sonier, Veisiaia Maka, Sophia Malthus, Elijah Tiatia, and Victoria Lu for their contribution this financial year. Thank you also to our wonderful Board, our Youth Project Team, the Waha stakeholder groups, and legal team volunteers, who have all given their time and commitment.

In the previous annual report, I detailed our new strategic direction, and here I'd like to give you a picture of where we are now. I liken the approach that YouthLaw is taking to "The Flow of the Awa", depicted below.

It has been a busy but ultimately fulfilling year embarking on this journey. One of the most exciting developments has been seeing our civics in school programme, Waha, come to fruition. The Waha programme is detailed on page 8, and we are now looking forward to its formal launch in term one of 2026, as well as investigating how we can fund it long term.

In the legal advice team, we have reviewed and updated our website's legal information; and are streamlining our processes so that we can



**The Flow of the Awa**

prioritise areas of need. The high frequency matters we will focus on at first are education, employment, leaving home and minor criminal matters.

Another important development this year has been our work to establish a Kaupapa Māori Legal Service. This work is connected to a pilot being run by our national body, Community Law Centres Aotearoa. We were funded as a foundational centre in January, and have spent the rest of the year developing our cultural capability. This involves Te Tiriti, Te Reo, and Tikanga training; a review of internal policies; and research into the legal needs of young people to inform how we operate our services. We are delighted to have received further funding for a small KMLS pilot in the first quarter of 2026.

Our Education and Engagement Team has continued to deliver our law related education in their usual outstanding way, and is starting to explore how they can further meet the needs of young people, and those professionals working with priority groups. Our Youth Project Team (page 7) continues to be an important part of our whānau, and we are starting to integrate them into our law reform work.

I'm excited about the next financial year that we are now in, and hope that you will join us on this journey.

Ngā mihi,  
Darryn Aitchison





## 1,170

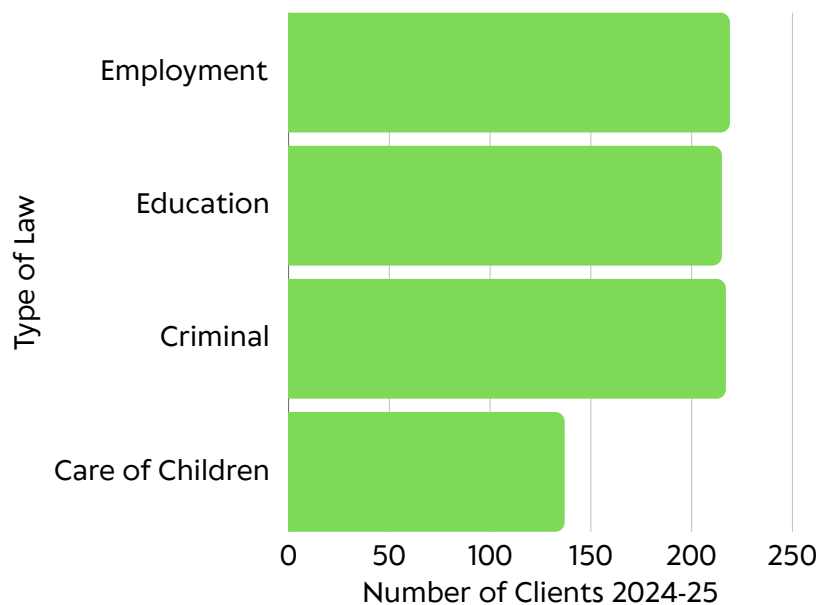
Clients in 2024-25, exceeding the Ministry of Justice annual target.



## 98%

Of clients said we helped them understand their legal options.

## Top four legal issues by category



## Feedback from clients

*"This advice is so supportive of me and affirmative to give me the strength and keep going under caution. Your service is such a gift to the community."*

*"Super empathetic and professional. Huge thanks to the lawyer and the team at YouthLaw for all you have done"*

*"Thank you soooo much for all that you did... I will be, and have already told others about how amazing you are."*

*"You guys offer a really great service. It is so useful for youth understanding things and very efficient."*

*"A huge thankyou to YouthLaw Aotearoa. This is a truly amazing service. From first contact, right through the process, the support was invaluable. A truly amazing charity and well worth supporting."*



# Education and Engagement Team 6



Our Education and Engagement Team visited many schools and community groups throughout the year, as well as hosting high school students at our offices and taking them to Manukau District Court to show what law could offer as a career. Thanks to everyone who hosted us – it was a privilege and fun to spend time with you!

 **4,301**

Participants in law related education sessions in 2024-25, exceeding the Ministry of Justice's annual target by more than 1700.

 **100%**

Of participants said the session improved their understanding of the topic, and would recommend the session to friends or whānau.

 **113**

Law related education sessions around the motu, from Northland to Southland.



## Feedback from sessions

*"One thing that stands out to me is how passionate people are with helping youth! This is what I plan to do in the future too,"*  
High school student.

*"The perspectives shared by YouthLaw have prompted me to reflect on the importance of questioning certain practices and boundaries,"*  
Youth sector worker.

*"Your sessions were not just informative; they were vibrant and engaging too! Your professionalism, punctuality, and willingness to go above and beyond ensured the success of each session—and your genuine concern for the well-being of our young people came through in every interaction,"*  
Nazreen Shaban - Senior Advisor Community Partnerships, Te Pae Aronui.



# Education and Engagement Team 7

YouthLaw's Community and Policy Advisor Stevie Hoesel (pictured right, foreground) was thrilled that the Youth Project Team (YPT) grew in 2025 and continued to make a real impact. The YPT is made up of a dynamic group of 15 young people aged 16-24, based in Auckland, who are dedicated to protecting the rights of their peers, expanding access to justice and enriching their communities. They have fortnightly meetings (pictured below) which are a combination of workshops and upskilling; group updates; project check-ins and planning. YPT also wrote a stand-alone submission on the Regulatory Standards Bill (see page 10).



Many thanks to the YPT crew of Mary, Kat, Stella, Matakoama, Jeri, Micah, Vivienne, Mysha, Jackson, Behrad, Serena, Elijah, Lau, Risa and Louella.



*"My experience in YPT has been majorly positive, it has broadened my experience in more professional spaces as a high school student, and I have been able to work in kaupapa which can genuinely make a difference which I am grateful for,"*  
Jackson



A major goal of our new strategic direction is to help prepare young people for the journey into adulthood and to be active citizens. With this in mind, we have been developing a civics education programme for high schools, which we named *Your Voice. Our Voice. Waha*. We felt this name has multiple meanings, perfectly expressed by one of the young people, who consulted on the programme's development, "waha is a small word with lots of layers and depth to be explored." Before we could even start on the development process, we needed financial support to make it possible and were delighted to receive funding from The Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation to create and pilot Waha.

We wanted to make a programme that met both young people's and teachers' needs. To ensure this, we established several working groups to co-design Waha with us. Most significantly a young people group; as well as an educators' group; and a stakeholders' group, with Mana Mokopuna, the Electoral Commission and the Chief Justice Office represented, to name a few.

We held multiple workshop days, where we sought input and ideas, and these were fundamental in shaping Waha (pictured below).

Through this process, we have created a programme that builds understanding of citizenship, civics, and change. Structured over three segments, the course supports young people to find their civic voice; join this with the voice of the collective; and work together to create a more caring and inclusive Aotearoa.

During the 2025-26 financial year, we will pilot Waha with a group of high schools – ideal timing with a general election approaching. Teachers will receive a content guide and a classroom activity per topic; curriculum-aligned content; and training, support and reference materials and resources.

Following the pilot, we hope to take the programme to high schools nationwide. There will also be a Waha website to help students, their families and teachers to make the most of Waha and understand its purpose. [www.waha.org.nz](http://www.waha.org.nz)



We are thankful to everyone who contributed their time and valuable insights into the development of Waha. Shown here are some of the meetings held with the stakeholder and young people groups.





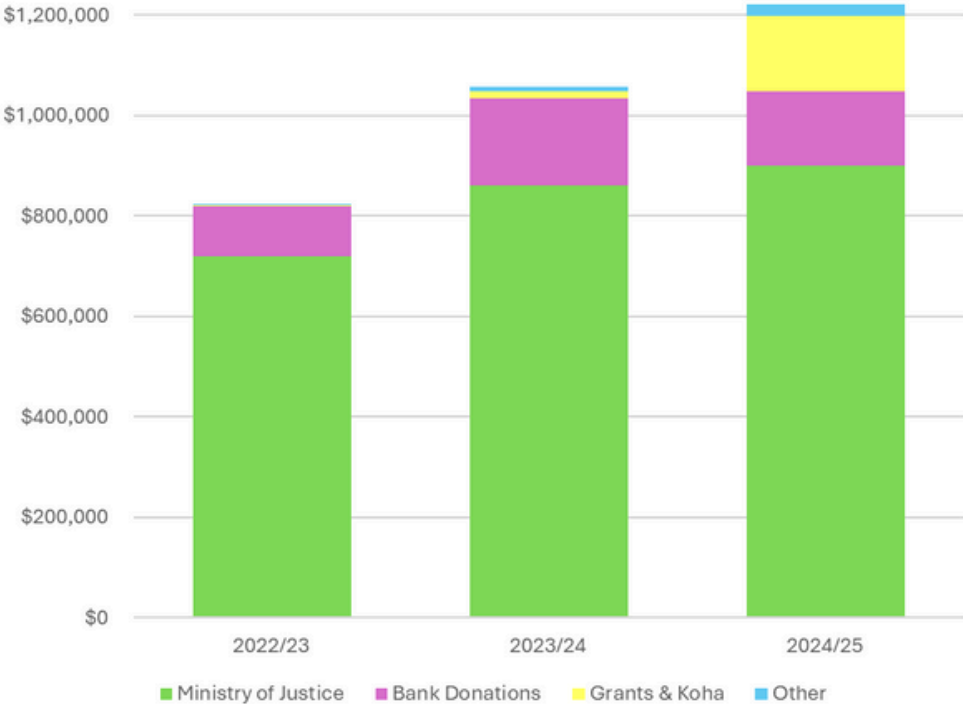
This is a summary of our law reform activity for the year. You can read our full written submissions on our website <http://youthlaw.co.nz/resources/>

DATE	BILLS/REVIEWS/ACTIVITY
July, 2025	We made two written submissions on the Regulatory Standards Bill - one from our Youth Project Team, and a general one from YouthLaw. Both submissions strongly opposed the Bill. General Manager Darryn Aitchison was invited to present on YouthLaw's submission – watch <a href="https://vimeo.com/showcase/10758103?video=1099220312">https://vimeo.com/showcase/10758103?video=1099220312</a> from approx. 10 minutes in.
April, 2025	We contributed to a document that Community Law Centres Aotearoa (CLCA) put together identifying the key areas of law reform that CLCA considers require attention by political parties leading into next year's general election. YouthLaw added issues of importance for youth which led to further in-person meetings.
January, 2025	We made a submission and were part of a joint media campaign with other organisations opposing the Oranga Tamariki (Responding to Serious Youth Offending) Amendment Bill 2024. We believe it was designed to address a policy problem that has been significantly overstated. To watch Darryn give an oral submission on this, visit <a href="https://vimeo.com/showcase/10758270?video=1051341162">https://vimeo.com/showcase/10758270?video=1051341162</a> he is the last speaker in this video.
January, 2025	We supported the CLCA submission on the Treaty of Waitangi Principles Bill, as well as making a separate submission. Our submission kept a reasonably narrow focus, as we wanted to add value and have a point of difference among the thousands of submissions. Therefore, we focused on the high legal needs of rangatahi Māori, and the fact those needs are high because of colonisation in general but, more specifically, persistent breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (of which this Bill was an example). Watch our oral submission at this link, Darryn is the first speaker. <a href="https://vimeo.com/showcase/10758261?video=1050628821">https://vimeo.com/showcase/10758261?video=1050628821</a> .
2024-2025	We built our law reform capacity by working with some of our Youth Project Team on the Duty to Assist campaign. This campaign is calling for government agencies to prevent homelessness; provide support to those experiencing homelessness; and support people into secure and permanent housing. It would also place responsibility on health professionals and other government agencies to refer whānau who are at-risk of homelessness to the appropriate agency.

YouthLaw ended the 2024/25 financial year in a stable position with accumulated funds of \$487,516. We have ended the year with a deficit of \$18,711 after committing to spending a portion of our reserves on strategic development this year. Two years of significant surpluses have allowed us to implement strategic changes without significant financial risk to the organisation.

Assets	\$770,435
Liabilities	\$282,919
Accumulated Funds	\$487,516

2024/25 FY	
Revenue	\$1,222,551
Expenses	\$1,241,262
Deficit	\$18,711

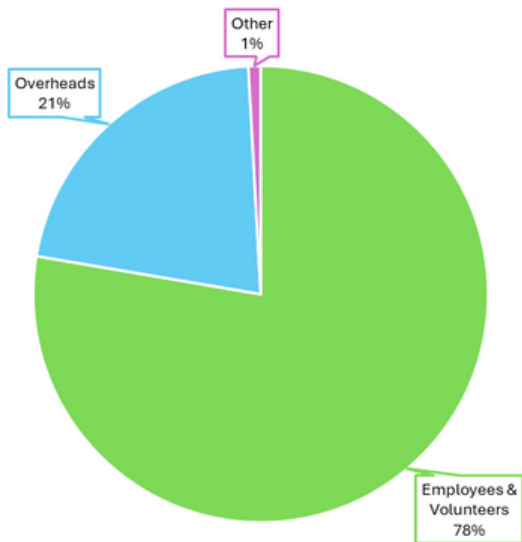


### Revenue

Our main source of funding is the Ministry of Justice, who contracts YouthLaw to provide free legal services for young people across the motu. As well as our service delivery funding, we received additional funding to mitigate the increasing cost of living and to maintain equitable wages for our staff.

The bank donation funding we receive comes from interest earned on lawyers’ trade accounts. This funding fluctuates based on interest rates, so the high interest rates in 2024 saw a significant increase to our funding. Interest rates have been falling throughout 2025, so our bank donation funding decreased.

We received a generous grant from the Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation to develop the Waha programme, and foundational funding from CLCA to develop a Kaupapa Māori Legal Service. The remainder of our funding came from public donations and interest on term deposits.



### Expenses

The majority of YouthLaw’s expenses go towards our staff and volunteers. We have grown our team to manage projects like Waha and to build capacity for service delivery.

Overheads include rent, power, accounting, IT, insurance, communications, travel, and various other costs.

Other costs account for all over expenses, such as bank fees and depreciation.

**YouthLaw Aotearoa wishes to thank the many organisations and individuals who have provided their kind support and invaluable assistance to our ongoing achievements and success.**

*In particular we are grateful to our funders for enabling the work we do:*

The Ministry of Justice

ASB, ANZ, BNZ, Westpac and TSB

One Good Kiwi (One NZ)

Vavasour Charitable Trust Board

The Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation

*We would also like to thank the following organisations:*

Amnesty International	Expert IT	Office of the Chief Justice
Ara Taiohi	Friendship House	Office of the Privacy Commissioner
AUT University Law School	Kick Back and The Front Door	Pillars Ka Pou Whakahou
Barnardos	Laidlaw Law & Consultancy	Praxis
BetterCo Accountants	Manukau Jobs and Skills Hub	Te Ara Ture
Chapman Tripp	Mana Inc	Thomson Reuters
Children's Rights Alliance Aotearoa	Mana Mokopuna	Save the Children
Community Law Centres Aotearoa	Mana Taiohi	South Auckland Youth Network
Community Law Centres nationwide	The Ministry of Education	University of Auckland Law School
Curative agency	The Malosi Project	VOYCE Whakarongo mai
Electoral Commission	Nils Accounting & Audit	VXT
	NZ Law Society	
	NZ Law Society Youth Justice Committee	

*As well as these individuals:*

Aaliyah Peterson-Tamakehu	Elin Harris	Kelly Peterson-Teariki
Courtney Abernethy	Maira Hintz	Maria Perreau
Jackson Atutahi	Liz Kennedy	Simulata Pope
Louella Billington	Briar Kingston	Juliann Porea-Desai
Katarena Bisset	Maiava Leitu Samaseia	Marlene Raumati
Aimee Bryant	Victoria Lu	Matt Renata
Christine Cammell	Wi Pere Mita	Chillion Sanerivi
Danielle Dakanay	Maddison Morell	Maiava Samaseia
Darlene Evans	Prisca Mudwanga	Elijah Tiatia
Anahera Gildea	Ruby Papalii-Curtin	Harry Toleafoa
Deborah Godsmark	Taitosauawilliam Peace	Matakorama Waipouri



We have a Givealittle page where you can donate to support our mahi.  
Visit this QR code!