



YOUTH  
ADVOCACY  
CENTRE INC

Annual  
Report  
**2023/24**



# Acknowledgement

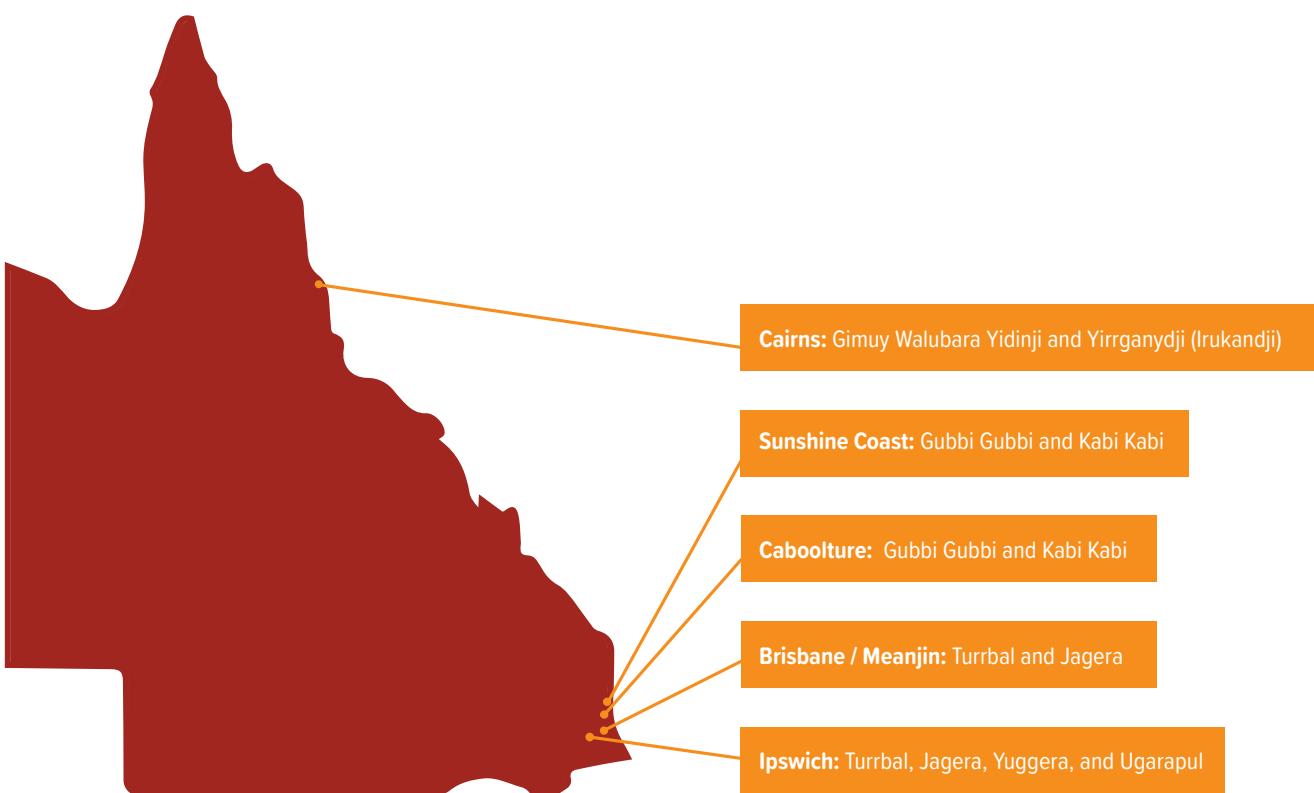
YAC affirms that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the Traditional Owners of Australia and acknowledges their unique relationship with their ancestral Country.

In particular, we acknowledge the Turrbal and Jagera peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the land in and around Brisbane, and pay our respects to their Elders, past, and present. We acknowledge our Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff and the insight they bring to YAC and their support for it to continue to develop as a culturally competent organisation.

We would also like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of our regional office locations:

- Caboolture: Gubbi Gubbi and Kabi Kabi,
- Sunshine Coast: Gubbi Gubbi and Kabi Kabi,
- Cairns: Gimuy Walubara Yidinji and Yirrganydji (Irukandji)
- Ipswich: Turrbal, Jagera, Yuggera, and Ugarapul

YAC is proud to support its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and staff, its LGBTIQ+ clients and staff, and welcomes diversity in all its forms.



# Contents

- 4 The Youth Advocacy Centre
- 5 2024-26 Strategy Overview
- 6 Our Impact 2023-24
- 8 Message from the CEO
- 9 Message from the Chair
- 10 Arina's story
- 11 Make an impact!
- 12 Community Projects & Events
- 13 Youth Ambassador Program
- 13 Reconciliation Action Plan
- 14 Legal Support
- 18 Bail Support
- 20 Community Legal Education
- 22 Youth Support
- 24 Youth Court Support
- 26 Positive Moves
- 28 Family Support
- 30 Family Partnership
- 32 Funders & Supporters
- 33 Volunteers
- 34 Advocacy
- 35 Vale James Benjamin





# YOUTH ADVOCACY CENTRE INC

## The Youth Advocacy Centre

The Youth Advocacy Centre provides a holistic program of youth services in Brisbane, including social, legal, bail, homelessness, and family support.

YAC also advocates for young people on system and policy reforms in pursuit of justice and equality.

### Our services:

#### Legal Support

YAC's specialist youth lawyers represent young people in the courts and provide legal information and advice about the law, legal and court processes, and young people's legal rights.

#### Bail Support

We support young people to stay out of court, out of custody, and reduce reoffending. This includes working with young people on bail or a Youth Justice Order.

#### Community Connector

For young people waiting on court appearances or worried about getting involved with the youth justice system, this service connects young people to services who can help.

#### Youth Support (YASS)

We support young people who have housing issues and require support for their legal issues (such as conflict with the law, court, exiting the justice or child protection systems, victim support) to transition to independence. This program can help young people's make their views heard, find somewhere to live, learn to live independently, be supported at court, and work towards goals.

#### Youth Court Assistance

We support young people with court related social support needs and connecting young people to other services.

#### Positive Moves

We support young people who have no stable housing to transition to and/or sustain housing, particularly by providing support when exiting detention and by addressing emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

#### Family Support

This program works with young people and their families – but only with the agreement of the young person. We help rebuild relationships and put strategies in place at home, and assist with other goals and needs.

The more intensive **Family Partnership** service works with families of young people on bail or a Youth Justice Order within Brisbane North.

#### Community Legal Education

We attend schools, youth agencies and organisations to provide information so that young people better understand the law, and how it applies to them. The CLE service also provides training to youth workers, teachers, and others working with young people.



# 2024–26 Strategy Overview

## Our Vision

All young people in Queensland are empowered to overcome adversity and enjoy fulfilling lives.

## Our Mission

We support and advocate for young people by empowering them with services and resources and encouraging positive systemic change across Queensland.

## Our Values

- Young-person-centered
- Professional and committed
- Vocal, frank and fearless
- Rights-based

## Our Philosophy

Our philosophy is to engage honestly with young people, listen to them, and allow them to be at the centre of their own decision-making.

We adhere unconditionally to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and promote community support for children's rights. We work respectfully as a team and with external stakeholders towards our mission.

## Our Goals

### Sustainability

We will ensure our operations are sustainable long-term, and we will increase our capacity and capability.

### Advocacy

YAC will be a key advocate for young people in Queensland, effecting systemic change.

### Profile

YAC's profile will continue to grow, and our influence and connectivity will increase.

### Services & Operation

Our services exceed client expectations and uphold our values and philosophy whilst maintaining a healthy organisational culture.

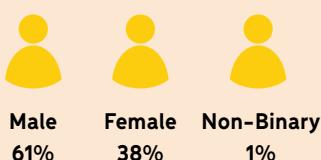


# Our Impact 2023-24

## Legal Support

- 474** Young people represented in Duty lawyers service
- 162** Legal cases completed
- 102** Legal advices provided to young people

- 402** Legal information provided
- 50** Duty lawyer sessions



Aboriginal and/or  
Torres Strait Islander  
**13%**

## Community Legal Education

- 46** Education sessions delivered
- 27** Resources developed/updated
- 13** TikTok videos produced

- Most popular website pages:**
- #1 When can I?
  - #2 Moving out
  - #3 Getting my stuff back

### How our training assists workers, in their words:

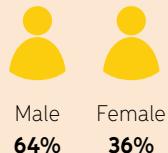
"I now feel more confident to support YP in YJ and legal matters"  
"Improved my knowledge of working with young people"  
"Assist to support YP to understand their rights and responsibilities"

## Bail Support

	Clients	Male	Female	Non-binary	10-13yrs	14-15yrs	16-17yrs	18+	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
Bail Support	<b>143</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>39%</b>
Community Connector	<b>90</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>22%</b>

## Positive Moves

- 14** Case managed clients
- 16%** Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



### Self-identified barriers to accessing stable accommodation:

- 93%** Family conflict
- 71%** Mental health

## Family Support

**21** Case managed families  
**1375** Hours worked with families  
**29%** Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander  
**351** Face-to-face interactions

### Young People



**Male**  
81%

**Female**  
19%



## Intensive Family Partnership

**19** Case managed families  
**1337** Hours worked with families  
**32%** Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander  
**729** Face-to-face interactions

### Young People



**Male**  
68%

**Female**  
32%

**49.5%** of all contacts contributed to either family connections or health/mental health connections.

**42.2%** of all brokerage spent was on therapeutic services

## Caboolture Watchhouse Support

Young people	Male	Female	10-13yrs	14-15yrs	16-17yrs	Aboriginal	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
<b>190</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>

## Youth Support Brisbane

**45** Case managed clients  
**102** Short term clients  
**827** Casual court outreach clients  
**62%** Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (case managed clients)



**Male**  
**38%**

**Female**  
**62%**

**70%** of clients were in stable housing by the time they left YAC's services

### Duration of support period:

- 0%** Less than 2 weeks
- 28%** 2 - 14 weeks
- 10%** 14 - 26 weeks
- 28%** 26 - 52 weeks
- 34%** More than 52 weeks

## Youth Support Caboolture

**49** Case managed clients  
**139** Short term clients  
**446** Casual court outreach clients  
**39%** Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (case managed clients)



**Male**  
**43%**

**Female**  
**57%**

**71%** of clients were in stable housing by the time they left YAC's services

### Duration of support period:

- 5%** Less than 2 weeks
- 32%** 2 - 14 weeks
- 18%** 14 - 26 weeks
- 24%** 26 - 52 weeks
- 21%** More than 52 weeks

These are occasions when we attended court or detention locations to assist any young people needing support on the day, broken down by funding stream.

## Youth Court Assist Program

### YASS (Brisbane & Moreton Bay)

	Visits	Young People
<b>Brisbane court outreach</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>827</b>
<b>Moreton Bay court outreach</b> (Redcliffe, Caboolture, Pine Rivers Children's Courts)	<b>109</b>	<b>446</b>

### SWAP(South-West)

	Visits	Young People
<b>Ipswich</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>627</b>
<b>Richlands*</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>395</b>

\*Includes some virtual

### CYYBSS (Cairns)

	Visits	Young People
<b>Watchhouse*</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>1298</b>
<b>Court outreach</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>964</b>

\*Includes when other CYYBSS staff have done watchhouse visits.

### IBI

Brisbane court outreach	Young People
<b>27</b>	<b>342</b>

# Message from the CEO

This year YAC will finalise its first ever Reconciliation Action Plan which contains the actions that YAC has committed to over the next few years, such as strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations, observing cultural protocols and improving employment outcomes for our Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers. YAC is particularly committed to its reconciliation journey, and we are focussed on embedding respect for culture and support for truth-telling in our daily lives. YAC's wonderful Communications and Advocacy Officer Josh Higgins has been instrumental in this process, along with the Reconciliation Action Group - please see page 13 for further details.

The public debate around youth crime in Queensland, stoked by media and Facebook neighbourhood groups, feeds off fear and misinformation rather than facts and evidence. The terrible tragedies that have unfolded in recent years require us as a community to do our best to prevent such events from happening again. But the polarised debate, pitting victims against young people, has been a significant obstacle, resulting in a strong cry from the community to lock up children for longer periods of time, despite the fact that detention does not meaningfully reduce re-offending. We end up with bad laws that don't keep the community safe, and which further harm some of Queensland's most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people, many of whom do not have a safe place to live and are often the invisible victims of the homelessness crisis that continues into 2025, as well as the ongoing domestic and family violence crisis.

As young people are at the centre of this debate, it is important that we hear what they have to say. YAC is delighted to continue to work with Hand Heart Pocket, an organisation with integrity and ambition, in putting together a Youth Ambassador Program which will involve up to 25 young people coming together to provide advice and feedback to HHP, YAC, and other organisations, on services and programs, while receiving support and access to education and training. We can't wait to hear what they have to say!

Finally, thank you to everyone who has been involved in YAC this year – it has been a period of further change and growth as we took on additional programs and more great staff. Without our workers there is no YAC, and we are so grateful to have such a generous, humble and selfless group of people coming together to support the young people who need us.

**- Katherine Hayes, CEO**



# Message from the Chair

Mario Cuomo, a former governor of New York, famously said that “*We campaign in poetry, but we govern in prose*”. That’s one of those aphorisms which seems so wise but, when you read it again, you’re not entirely sure what it means. On reflection, I think Governor Cuomo was saying that it’s all very well to have pithy messages before an election but, afterwards, there needs to be some cold, careful consideration as to how goals and policies might be achieved.

I would hesitate to describe phrases like “*Adult Crime, Adult Time*” as poetry. The resort to slogans like that one seems a rather glib, skinny way to deal with a complicated issue. Unless we’re careful, it may be the way of the future. I was speaking recently with a friend who is an editor at a national newspaper and she told me that, in the media, one of the most coveted resources nowadays is “*attention*”: it is exceptionally difficult to maintain the interest of listeners and readers when they have such a wealth of distractions. The result seems to be that the level of debate in youth justice is becoming increasingly brief and emotive. We don’t get poems so much as bumper stickers, and the challenge for YAC is to ensure a richer, more informed public discourse.

For all the talk about the “*Youth Crime Crisis*”, the reality is that, whilst offences against the person have been on the rise (mostly in regional areas), there has been a decrease since 2012 of around 18% in the number of unique youth offenders in Queensland. I suspect in this election, however, there have been a number of key seats more affected by crime, and aspiring politicians have been concerned that any perceived empathy regarding young offenders (let alone innovative or non-penal solutions) will be fatal to their prospects. Instead, we have seen candidates vying to show that they are the toughest on crime. One party introduced a bill for “*Castle law*”, in effect permitting home-owners to use lethal force on intruders, whatever the circumstance. The Labor Government took steps to remove detention as a last resort, and to remove the protections of the Human Rights Act 2019 for young Queenslanders, as well as continuing with bail laws which make youth detention much more likely. And there has been a series of policy announcements by the LNP. Some of the more alarming ideas are that there be mandatory minimum periods in isolation for young people who assault detention centre staff, schools for “*at-risk young people*” (who, it seems, may not have committed any offences), and a persistent reference to offenders as “*untouchables*” which appears to be the very worst kind of dog whistling.



But the news is not all bad. The focus on youth justice has made for a more vibrant public debate. It has been very heartening to see YAC and its allies – Katherine Hayes, Genevieve Sinclair, Kevin Yow-Yeh, Deb Kilroy, Keith Hamburger and John Robertson – all working vigorously to keep the narrative on its proper course. There have been, as well, some policies which might prove effective (such as the exotically named Spanish Diagrama model, and a proposal to increase support of young people for at least 12 months after a period of detention). We would hope, also, that the renewed focus on youth justice will lead to more funding for YAC services and more consideration of diversionary programs.

YAC remains passionate about offering the very best choices to young people and the best information and policies to Government. I heard one of our staff speaking on a panel recently. He cited the staggering rates of incarceration in this state compared to others and said that, if youth detention was the answer to increasing the contribution of young people, Queensland should be the national winner. YAC has so much to offer in terms of knowledge, lived experience and rapport. We fervently hope that, when the new Minister comes to writing prose, our people have a seat at the table.

**- Damien Atkinson OAM KC, Chairperson**



# Arina's story

Arina first met YAC workers when she was attending court. She saw a friendly looking face and asked "Who are you?".

"I'm from YAC" explained the YAC Court Support Worker, "We support young people".

YAC's workers spoke with Arina and heard that she was having trouble finding safe accommodation and had begun to interact with the youth justice system. Her worker offered to support her with these difficulties, both legal and social.

The first step was attending a police interview with Arina as her support person and being there for her throughout the court process.

**"They got me out of trouble"**

Through YAC's Youth Support Program, Arina was able to complete her court matters and begin to focus on the other aspects of her life and, importantly, maintaining safe accommodation.

After talking with her family, she was able to move back in to a safe family house.

YAC assisted Arina to access Housing Essentials through which she received a bed and other furniture for her room and a washing machine for the family home.

Meanwhile, YAC supported her with phone credit so she could make calls, getting her learner's licence, and start applying for jobs.

**"If I didn't have Ji or Anna then I wouldn't be where I am. That's just the truth."**

**"Because I wouldn't be able to do it on my own."**

Now Arina is making plans for her future.

**"I want to be a chef because I'm a really good cook. I want to own a restaurant. I just like cooking – I love it."**

Arina's story reflects how many young people are trying to take proactive steps to make their lives better, but without support can often find it difficult or impossible to overcome barriers in the system.

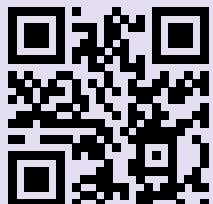
You can support young people like Arina by making a donation to our services.



# Make an impact!

Young people like Arina need support from our community.

You can make an impact through a donation to our support services – every dollar counts!



Scan here!

## How your donation might help:



**\$25**  
Birthday cake



**\$100**  
Groceries



**\$250**  
School uniform pack



**\$1000**  
30 hours of support



# Community Projects & Events

Each year, we are glad to participate in many informative, insightful, and exciting events held by organisations and individuals in the youth sector. Listed here are some events from the past year.

## Homeless Connect

YAC attended the annual Homeless Connect event at the Brisbane Showgrounds which was an opportunity for those experiencing homelessness to connect with various services. YAC was also able to provide legal information to those who visited our stall.

## Youth Week at Bibie

In April we joined celebrations at Bibie Island Big Arvo for Qld Youth Week with Pumicestone Indigenous Education and Employment Council.

## Musgrave Park Family Fun Day

YAC again joined one of Australia's biggest NAIDOC Week events at Musgrave Park, celebrating and providing legal information to young people and families who visited our stall.

## Art Workshops with Tervo

Our staff organised some art workshops for our clients to attend, run by talented Brisbane artist Tervo who is also a high school teacher. The workshops are an opportunity to learn about art techniques as well as having discussions in a safe and relaxed environment. One of the workshops even involved painting a beautiful wall mural for staff to enjoy in the YAC office!

## Team Day 2024

Team Day is a chance for our staff from across Queensland to come together to learn, discuss, and have fun. This year, special guests Father Wally Dethlefs and Debbie Kilroy OAM provided an inspiring discussion about their experiences and delivered a powerful message about how we can best advocate for young people and systemic change. We finished the day at Vanilla Zulu cooking classes, working together to make some delicious gnocchi and cannoli.

## Animation Project

Through a Legal Aid Community Legal Education grant, we have been able to work on a project creating an animated legal information video about things you should know before attending Childrens Court. Young people can often be nervous about attending court, as well as unsure of the rules and expectations they will experience. YAC captured feedback from young people and other legal centres to inform the content of the animation which is expected to be published soon.

## Wunya

Some of our incredible staff were glad to attend Wunya again in 2024. Wunya is an event for Community Legal Centres Queensland's First Nations Employee Network. First Nations employees from community legal centres around the state gathered in Meanjin for two days of cultural self-care, connection with communities across the state, and yarning.

## United Nations Visit

YAC was visited by Philip D. Jaffé, a Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, who spoke to staff and young people at the YAC office.

## Help Way Earlier Report Launch

YAC supported a young person with lived experience to attend the launch of the National Children's Commissioner's 'Help Way Earlier' report at Parliament House, co-hosted by Justice Reform Initiative and the Commissioner. The launch included a panel of young people and youth advocates speaking to other sector stakeholders about the need to improve support for children across Australia.



# Youth Ambassador Program

Thanks to funding from Hand Heart Pocket, YAC will be launching a Youth Ambassador Program (YAP) in the coming months.

The aim of the YAP is to establish a forum for a diverse group of youth ambassadors to influence Hand Heart Pocket, YAC, and partner organisations to make better decisions informed by young people's voices. It is envisioned that young people with lived experience participating in the program will have meaningful impact on the lives of young people particularly those experiencing vulnerabilities.

The program will work with partners from across Queensland and also support participants with their personal development, education, and career goals.

**Young people...**



## Reconciliation Action Plan

We are glad to have developed our first ever Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) through Reconciliation Australia. Our RAP journey has been led by our RAP Working Group, a group of staff members who have met periodically to discuss and develop the plan. Our RAP will allow us to take strategic and meaningful action towards reconciliation and we look forward to launching the RAP in the coming months.

One of our talented Youth Support Workers at the Sunshine Coast, Mack Muckan, created a beautiful artwork to compliment our RAP which is now displayed at our Brisbane office reception.

### Artwork by Mack Muckan

This painting was created by Mack Muckan, a Youth Support Worker at YAC's Sunshine Coast office. Mack is Undumbi, Kabi Kabi, Yuru, Birri Gubba, and Kanaka-Southsea Islander.

The symbols on the bottom right represent the YAC team all working together as one. The totems represent the four office locations. Kangaroo and emu prints are seen walking through the middle of the artwork. These footprints are significant because these two animals cannot walk backwards and can only move forwards - something Mack references when speaking with young people as he encourages them to always move forward to bigger and better things in life, leaving the bad things in the past one step at a time.





# Legal Support

## About our legal support service:

YAC's specialist youth lawyers work with young people aged 10 to 18 years. They provide:

- legal information and advice about the law, legal and court processes, and young people's legal rights
- referrals to legal and other services where appropriate
- representation in court and tribunals for youth justice, domestic violence, child protection and other matters
- advocacy for young people with the police and other authorities they may conflict with.

As specialists in working with vulnerable and disadvantaged children, YAC's lawyers:

- have expertise in the law as it applies to children
- can engage with children, particularly those who are vulnerable
- have a good understanding about child/ youth development and neuroscience and the impact of trauma and other challenges which underlie youth offending
- have good working relationships with the social welfare staff at YAC so they can work together as seamlessly as possible for the benefit of the young person.

YAC's lawyers attend all the Childrens Courts across the greater Brisbane area and deliver the Duty Lawyer service at Brisbane Childrens Court on alternate Tuesdays and Fridays.

## Why Legal Support is critical

The inclusion of legal support in a multidisciplinary agency recognises that young people's legal issues generally result from or contribute to social welfare challenges or barriers. Free and confidential legal support has been a core service since YAC's conception and is a crucial part of enabling young people to have a voice in their legal matters and bring fair representation to legal proceedings.

## Year in review

Utilising an increase in funding, our legal team grew this year, now comprising four specialist youth lawyers and a Community Legal Education (CLE) Officer.

YAC's two youth lawyers provided advice and assistance to young people across a range of legal issues including youth justice, human rights, education, victim of crime and child protection. Youth justice matters continue to account for the majority of YAC's legal work. In the context of the ongoing perceived

"youth justice crisis" in Queensland, our lawyers keep abreast of significant changes in legislation and associated policy reviews and innovations.

YAC's Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) lawyer continued to work with young people in the domestic and family violence system. This includes young people of all genders; aggrieved, respondent, and named person parties; young people involved in breach proceedings; and young people experiencing or perpetrating family violence. Court representation is provided to young people within the jurisdiction of Southeast Queensland Magistrates Courts, from Caboolture to Southport. This year YAC commenced a unique program at the Brisbane Magistrates Court, with the aim of ensuring young people have access to legal representation or advice from a specialised youth lawyer in all matters before that court.

With funding from Youth Justice Services, in 2024 YAC has established a Fast Track Lawyer position to quickly resolve matters and bail applications for young people in detention and in the Brisbane, Caboolture and Southport watchhouses.

YAC identified courts where young people are appearing after arrest and there is not an allocated Childrens Court duty lawyer. In those cases, the adult duty lawyer is required to deal with the children in addition to the many other matters. This would often necessitate adjournment of the children's matters without a bail application at the first mention.

The YAC fast-track lawyer can appear and provide a specialised service aiming to resolve matters or make bail applications as soon possible after arrest, preferably on the day. The position has also made a number of successful Childrens Court of Queensland bail applications, particularly for First Nations young people from regional areas.

YAC's advice lawyer focussed on assisting young people who contacted YAC for legal advice in relation to a range of issues including youth justice, family law, child protection and education. This lawyer also assisted young people who had been victims of crime, helping them understand police and court processes, the intricacies of the law, especially around consent, and their right to financial compensation. These young people were also supported by YAC's Youth Support team.

The legal team had a busy year, assisting many clients across all domains of the legal support service. YAC's client cohort typically face serious and intersecting challenges: homelessness or insecure housing, mental health issues, substance misuse, and family breakdown. Incessant and sensational media reporting on youth crime fails to discern the vulnerabilities of these young people and serve to perpetuate negative stereotypes. This often has a compounding effect on the challenges faced by YAC's client cohort, reinforcing their sense of isolation, hopelessness and lack of belonging.

Queensland has the highest number of children in detention and many of these are on remand. 2023-24 saw further changes to Queensland's youth justice laws which impact young people's human rights. Some of these changes included amendments to legitimise the practice of holding children in watchhouses until beds become available in youth detention centres, necessitating an override of the Queensland Human Rights Act.

Watchhouses are harmful and traumatising. YAC workers see first-hand the devastating impact on young people held in watchhouses and continue to be confronted by the disturbing numbers and lengths of stays of young people in watchhouses. The frequency and lengths of lockdowns in detention centres are also of great concern.

YAC is alarmed that, again, Queensland's Human Rights Act has been overridden in regard to the detention of children and that the only overrides to the Human Rights Act in Queensland are in relation to the state's treatment of children.

In November 2023, we welcomed our renewed Community Legal Centres Australia (CLCA) Accreditation for the next three years.

### Law reform

An important aspect of the legal team's work is systemic advocacy, informed by the 'front-line' work we undertake with our clients. This year, we lodged multiple submissions in response to proposed legislative changes impacting young people in Queensland.

YAC lawyers also appeared at Parliamentary Committee hearings in relation to some of these submissions.

### Partnerships and stakeholder engagement

Our lawyers participate in many regular meetings and forums, to advance systemic reform for young people in Queensland, including:

- Brisbane Childrens Court Stakeholder meeting
- Childrens Court Stakeholder meeting
- Brisbane Local Operational Working Group for the Fast Track Pilot
- The Judicial Council on Diversity and Inclusion (with a particular focus on improving access to justice for people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and young people).
- Pacifica Lawyers Association QLD
- Office of the Victim's Commissioner - Information Product Working Group (Victim's of Sexual Violence)
- Queensland Law Society Childrens Committee
- Heads of Jurisdiction with the legal profession
- Domestic and Family Violence Operational Working Group Brisbane

## Goals for the future

In the forthcoming 12 months the legal team will:

- Continue to provide trauma-informed, rights-based advocacy for our clients. We will strive to ensure young people understand their rights, including as victims of crime under the Victims Charter in Queensland. We will continue to develop our relationship with the new Office of the Victims Commissioner, and ensure our clients, many of whom were victims of crime before they engaged in the youth justice system, understand their rights and are supported to exercise them.
- In the current youth justice environment, ensure we undertake systemic advocacy in response to proposed legislative amendments, and ensure our lawyers quickly adapt and familiarise themselves as laws change.
- Continue to enhance the representation and advice for young people in the DFV system.
- Continue to advocate for young people in relation to recognition and understanding of neurodiversity and neurodevelopment of young people and its connection to offending and endeavour to ensure there is an effective and efficient interface of young people in the youth justice system to NDIS and other appropriate supports.
- Continue to ensure cultural awareness both within the team and the youth justice system including maintaining advocacy for a youth Murri court in Brisbane. The legal team will embed YAC's RAP into our practice.
- Support and expand YAC's legal volunteer program to enhance service delivery and research capacity.
- Participate in the fast tracking project and its evaluation as required in the Brisbane Children's Court and other initiative to reduce remand time.
- Refine our practice to better assist young people facing issues at school, especially school disciplinary absences. Against the constraints of a lack of specific funding for this purpose, we will find ways of assisting these young people, including networking with other CLCs and organisations who provide assistance in this area.
- Implement a new case management and data collection system necessitated by the cessation of the CLASS system.
- Exploring the possible impact and use of AI in our sector for greater efficiencies

## Client Survey

**Over 90% of clients surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that:**

- YAC legal staff listened to their problem in a friendly and respectful manner
- they were confident of YAC's ability to help them with their legal matters
- they knew where to get help if they had another legal problem in the future
- they would recommend YAC to other people

## Sarah's story

Young people who are victims of offences often find the court process confusing and isolating and are often traumatised by it. They are often challenged in obtaining resources to ensure their voice is heard and understood in the court and subsequent processes, and to assist their recovery.

Sarah (a pseudonym) contacted YAC when she was 16 years old, seeking legal advice and assistance as a victim of sexual violence. Sarah identifies as Aboriginal. When Sarah was 13 years old, she was a victim of sexual offences committed by a man in his mid-thirties over a lengthy period. The perpetrator had been committed to stand trial in the District Court in Brisbane on seven charges. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) had attempted to explain to Sarah that the perpetrator had indicated a plea of guilty to amended facts and substituted charges. The ODPP considered the amendments were appropriate, given complexities in the evidence in the matter. Sarah and others were also concerned about her giving evidence in the court process. Sarah found her meetings with the ODPP confusing, and sometimes highly distressing. As a potential witness, Sarah's mother was unable to support her in the meetings with the ODPP. This compounded Sarah's feelings of invalidation and isolation.

Sarah had been referred to another agency for support in court, but that agency was unable to assist Sarah to understand the legal issues involved and her rights as a victim. As Sarah's Victim Liaison Officer at the ODPP had limited time and considering the skills required to relay legal information to young people, Sarah sought additional support. Sarah was referred to YAC by ATSILS for legal advice in relation to the court process and to assist Sarah with an application for financial assistance. Sarah had unsuccessfully attempted to obtain legal advice from other legal service providers. YAC was the only service Sarah could find to assist her.

Over months, a YAC lawyer engaged Sarah to explain to her the court process, and her rights as a victim of crime. The lawyer also supported Sarah in her discussions with the ODPP, to assist her to understand the reason the charges were amended. Due to the YAC lawyer's experience in dealing with young people and having undertaken extensive cultural awareness training, the lawyer was able to provide an explanation in simple and appropriate language, using diagrams and allowing time for breaks and access to other supports. The lawyer also provided advice in relation to Sarah's eligibility for compensation, her potential civil claim and supported Sarah to make an application for financial assistance through Victim Assist to help facilitate her recovery. YAC's multidisciplinary model of practice supported Sarah - Sarah also engaged with YAC's Youth Support Service (YASS). Sarah's YASS worker supported Sarah to attend appointments, supported her in meeting with her YAC lawyer, and assisted Sarah in writing her Victim Impact Statement.

The perpetrator was sentenced without Sarah being required to give evidence. The YAC lawyer has subsequently also assisted Sarah with her submissions regarding the perpetrator's application for parole.

Sarah was pleased she had her YAC lawyer to assist her to understand the court process, and relieved that the perpetrator's plea of guilty meant she would not need to give evidence at trial. Sarah was also pleased the lawyer helped her secure financial compensation to support her recovery from the impact of the offences and to assist her to make submissions regarding the perpetrator's parole. The resources Sarah obtained have helped her to engage with professional support on her healing journey.

The ODPP was also appreciative of the assistance provided to Sarah. In an email to the YAC lawyer, the ODPP Crown Prosecutor in the matter said: "Thank you again for all your assistance, it was so helpful having you there to explain things to (Sarah). I am not sure we would have gotten the matter to finalisation without you".

YAC's engagement with Sarah has helped inform our systemic advocacy for young people who are the victims of sexual violence. YAC lawyer participates in the Office of the Victim's Commissioner's Working Group - Sexual Violence Victim's Journey.

*My experience with (lawyer) was so valuable and life changing. knowing she had my back and having her guidance is something I will always remember.*

- Sarah



## Tim's story

The Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) matters are often heard in the same manner as adults. Grants of Legal Aid are limited.

Not all regional courts offer duty lawyer service for domestic violence matters. Many young people do not have the capacity to represent themselves in court. This issue becomes more problematic if the young person seeks to contest an order. Even if there is a duty lawyer service, that service is unable to provide representation at a hearing which may require the filing of affidavits, cross examination of witnesses, and making submissions. Many young people elect not to attend court for DFV matters which prevents their views, wishes and story from being heard and considered. Significantly this approach may result in young people not understanding the content or seriousness of DFV proceedings.

Tim is 17. He lives in a regional town over 200km from Brisbane with a population of less than 15,000.

The police brought an application for a domestic violence order. The other party was his former girlfriend who was an adult. The application contained allegations of potentially criminal behaviour. Tim attended court twice with his mother. Tim was advised by the magistrate he should obtain legal advice. His mother tried to help him obtain assistance. The matter was adjourned twice without Tim obtaining legal assistance. After two adjournments the court indicated that it wanted Tim to advise his position at the next mention. Tim considered he may consent to the order without representation or advice.

Tim's nearest community legal centre was over an hour's drive from his town, and he had just started work. Tim was worried about taking time off. Legal Aid referred Tim to YAC.

Tim contacted YAC's DFV lawyer. Due to the nature of the allegations and Tim's age it was difficult to provide telephone advice. The matter was to be mentioned in court within a week. Although the YAC lawyer tried to obtain assistance for Tim close to his town it was apparent this was not able to be done in the time frame.

The YAC lawyer drove over 200km to see Tim and provide him with advice the day before court and then stayed overnight in the town to provide representation in court for Tim. YAC's DFV lawyer was able to provide Tim with advice about both DFV and potential criminal implications. The YAC lawyer was also able to provide information about DFV and outlined counselling services and programs that might be available to him. The DFV lawyer liaised with the Police about the alleged criminal allegation and no charges were brought. The DFV matter was negotiated for resolution.

No criminal charges were brought against Tim. Tim was represented in the DFV matter. Tim now appreciates the serious consequences of domestic violence and is aware of the services that are available to assist young people about the issue.

*Good service*

*Deadly hey 😊*

*Really helped us. Very us.*

*Very helpful, supportive, and provided clarity about my legal problem.*

*Overall great assistance especially (lawyer) has been a life changing support to me".*

*"(lawyer) has been amazing. She has put a huge amount of work into helping me and has made a big difference in my life and my family's life. We are very lucky to have her helping us."*

*It has been amazing and has helped so much. Questions get answered quickly and the lawyer has helped navigate police stuff. 10/10 very slay.*



# Bail Support

## About Bail Support

The Bail support team in 2023–2024 included two services, both funded under the Intensive Bail Initiative (IBI). The IBI includes a third component at YAC – the Family Partnership service, which is Coordinated by Leah McInnes along with YAC’s other family-centered programs.

The first service is Community Connector (CC), which is funded to run in the Brisbane North Youth Justice catchment area. CC acts as an early intervention service aimed at providing short term practical assistance to young people as well as facilitating referrals and warm introductions to specialist support services to target a young person’s individual needs. CC provides support during business hours on weekdays and after hours support on weekends and public holidays through a sub-contracted partner, Craig Carson through Jarjum Dreamings.

The second is the Bail Support Service (BOSS), which offers individualised case management and support to young people to help them meet the conditions of their court orders or bail conditions and to reduce their offending and time spent in detention. This is facilitated through a client-led, rights-focussed model, providing advocacy and individualised casework to young people engaged with BOSS.

The Community Connector and Bail Support Services hold an important role in supporting young people who are in the youth justice system or at risk of entering into the youth justice system. The workers in these teams focus on making young people’s views and wishes heard in their approach to case-management and work alongside clients to come up with solutions informed by the young person’s lived experience and driven by their own motivations to change. Both services have seen positive outcomes in clients in increased compliance with court orders and bail, and successful diversion away from further engagement with police, the courts and Youth Justice.

## Year in review

In the 2023–2024 financial year, there were four BOSS caseworkers and two BOSS youth workers covering the Sunshine Coast, Brisbane North, Brisbane South and Redland Bay regions, and 143 clients were provided support by the service. The Community Connector service was funded to provide support only in the Brisbane North region for Financial year 2023–2024, there were two Community Connector workers and they serviced 90 clients. There have been a few significant developments in the last financial year that are worthy of note:

- Towards the end of June 2024, YAC was offered the opportunity to extend the existing IBI services into the Brisbane South and Redlands areas, this included funding for one new BOSS

caseworker and two new Community Connector Youth Workers, for service delivery to begin in the new financial year.

- Bail Support’s previous Coordinator Jaclyn Sullivan sadly concluded her time at YAC in February 2024, with Sam Pearce assuming the role of Coordinator for the Bail Support team.
- June 2024 saw the conclusion of a long-standing partnership with KYC for delivery of the weekend support component of the IBI. The key worker associated with delivery of this project was interested in continuing this work through a new business arrangement, allowing service delivery to continue uninterrupted through this period of change.

## Partnerships and Projects

The Bail Support and Community Connector teams had many fruitful connections and partnerships with a range of government and community based services, working collaboratively in all instances towards effective and appropriate support for clients of our shared programs.

BOSS has maintained ongoing positive working relationships with the Youth Justice service centers in our catchment areas by necessity of our role in supporting young people within the Youth Justice System. These working relationships have been mutually respectful and always in service of the needs of the clients we share with the department. Similarly we have maintained a strong connection to the Brisbane North and Brisbane South Co-Responder Teams, who have continued to identify young people at the very early stages of disengagement from community and engagement with the Courts, or the Youth Justice system, and refer them on to our services for diversion and support. Our partners in the Investment and Commissioning team have continued to assist service delivery through strong communication channels regarding service delivery and data collection.

In the non-government sector, we have worked closely with a range of stakeholders supporting the diverse needs of our clients and communities through shared case management in some instances, and warm introduction and handover in others. Some of these include identified services, such as KYC, Kurbungui, and the ATSICHS outreach team, and into 2024 and beyond, the BOSS team are committed to developing and maintaining mutually beneficial stakeholder partnerships with identified organisations in line with the Youth Advocacy Centre’s Reconciliation Action Plan.

We have also worked closely with education providers such as Arethusa College, Queensland Pathways State College; Alcohol and Other Drug support services, including Ted Noffs Foundation and Clarence Street from the Mater Young Adult Health Center; and psychological supports such as the Childrens and Youth Mental Health Service and various private psychologists and practitioners.

## Goals for the Future

In the coming year, the BOSS team aims to continue to explore new ways of working and being with young people, fostering a spirit of resilience and creativity and ongoing, unconditional commitment to the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We are committed to advocacy for best practice and trauma-informed responses to young people in the Youth Justice System. We look forward to building and expanding mutually beneficial partnerships with other youth services, to ensure collaborative, holistic, community-based responses to the needs of our clients, which build upon their existing strengths and resiliency.

## Melissa's story

Melissa is sixteen years old and was incarcerated at the time she became a YAC client. She was unable to get bail because she had no parent willing/able to provide a residence for her and Child Safety had not organised an alternative. She was also experiencing mental distress including anxiety and insomnia, and did not have access to her personal ID.

With YAC's support, Melissa finally secured stable accommodation for the first time since she was eleven years old. She was supported to access housing support services and is now living independently in shared accommodation. Her youth workers also helped her to get her original Birth Certificate and Medicare Card.

Importantly, her Youth Worker also supported her to attend medical appointments and she has received a mental health plan and a referral to see a psychologist. She was also supported to get her learner's licence and book her first driving lesson.

## Lachlan's story

When Lachlan became a YAC client he was fifteen and living at his girlfriend's place due to a fractured relationship with his father. He had some aspirations for his career after school, but was struggling with drug use, antisocial behaviour, and offending.

Over the almost two-year period he worked with YAC, he began to repair his relationship with his father and moved back home.

He was supported to attend court and was able to meet his bail conditions and stopped offending. He was supported to make healthier choices including going to the gym and reducing drug use. He secured work experience at a car dealership and was eventually offered a casual position on weekends.





# Community Legal Education

## About CLE

YAC is a go-to organisation to provide legal information to young people and to those who work with young people. YAC's Community Legal Education (CLE) Officer delivers this service.

The CLE Officer works with young people aged 10 to 18 years, while also providing training to youth workers. The CLE team:

- attends schools, detention centres, youth agencies, and organisations across Brisbane to provide information so that young people better understand the law, and how it applies to them
- provide those working with young people, such as youth workers and teachers, with information and training about legal issues relevant to their work
- assists in developing YAC's policy submissions
- creates and revises online published materials

## How CLE supports young people

By informing young of the law and their rights, they can make decisions which are in their interests and can avoid unnecessary charges. The CLE officer recognises the importance of reaching those young people who are in contact with the youth justice system.

Empowering young people with greater knowledge about the law allows them to engage more effectively with police and other law enforcement officials.

CLE also functions as a myth-busting exercise, helping to combat misinformation that may be present within the community, or passed on from friends and family.

Similarly, given how closely youth workers work with their young clients, it is essential for them to have a comprehensive understanding of the key laws and responsibilities that affect their work, allowing them to provide the best support possible.

## Partnerships & projects

Our Community Legal Educator works with many youth services and centres in an ongoing capacity, including:

- regular educational sessions delivered at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre
- fortnightly visits to the Clarence Street Mater Young Adult Health Centre
- assisting the Blue Edge program in schools

- regular school visits
- regular talks with youth organisations
- assisting youth workers who contact YAC for information

## Responding to legislative changes

One of the duties of the CLE officer is to assist with submissions to parliament and to review and create published legal materials. 2023-2024 saw several legislative changes that the CLE officer commented on and responded to.



## Laying Down the Law – Online Youth Worker Training

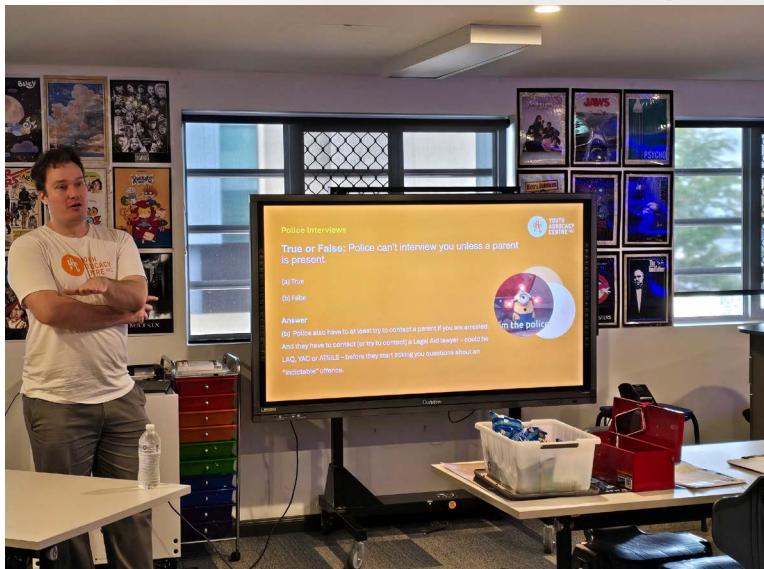
YAC is often contacted by professionals with questions about children's rights and their roles and responsibilities when supporting their young people. The in-depth Laying Down the Law workshop, set over two days, is designed to respond to this need.

The course is an educational workshop on the most important laws which affect those who work with young people and how they may approach the professional dilemmas that they face.

This training is also offered online to accommodate the workforce's time restraints.

### Book a session

If you would like to book a CLE session for your school or youth space, you can do so using the QR code below, or visit our website!



Family, school,  
legal or housing  
issues?

Under 18?  
Get free and  
confidential support.

\*some housing support services may be provided to  
people aged up to 25 in some areas



Ph 07 3356 1002 (9am - 5pm)  
[www.yac.net.au](http://www.yac.net.au)



# Youth Support

## About our Youth Support

YAC delivers two Youth Support Services (YASS) that support young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and/or have legal issues (such as exiting the justice system or child protection systems or being a victim of a crime) to transition to independence.

YASS provides advocacy, casework support, and housing assistance to support young people with securing, maintaining and sustaining tenancies. YASS provides both centre-based and mobile support across Brisbane, Caboolture, Beenleigh, Ipswich and Moreton Bay.

### **YASS provides:**

- Information to young people about their options and rights
- Referrals to appropriate support services as required
- Short-term intervention through supportive and flexible engagement at various outreach locations to young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Advocacy based casework to ensure young people are heard and their wishes taken into account when decisions are being made about them
- Focused and proactive support for young people to develop the skills they need to live independently, access and sustain housing (particularly those who are transitioning from homelessness, custody, youth justice and the child protection systems)
- Individual court support, including when young people are the victim of a crime, and responding to young people's court related social welfare matters
- Community development, to provide opportunities to young people and workers for information and skill sharing, living skills workshops, which provide information specific to accommodation and tenancy issues and legal information and resources for young people

## Why Youth Support is critical

Research provides evidence of a clear link between homelessness and risk of interaction with the criminal justice system – both as cause and effect.

YASS' person-centred approach for working with young people operates within a human rights framework. This model of engagement works from the basis that homelessness is a human rights issue. YASS advocates for young people to access the support they need to improve their wellbeing, and transition to independence, sustain safe and secure housing and become positive members of society.

YASS receives a high number of referrals for young people

requiring support who are at risk of homelessness upon leaving detention, or who are experiencing other legal issues which may put their tenancies at risk. There is a very high demand for specialist information and advocacy, assessment, facilitated referrals and short-term practical and tailored support. For example, YAC works closely with PIEC at weekly outreach at Bribie Island in providing access and outreach.

## Dee-Anne's story

Dee-Anne was 23 years old when she self-referred to YASS. Dee-Anne had had legal matters involving her family (domestic and family violence) which significantly limited her accommodation options. Dee-Anne had been sleeping rough in the Redcliffe area and sometimes in parks in Brisbane.

Dee-Anne experienced violence in an unsafe environment and often had her safety compromised and her belongings stolen.

When she started with YAC, her worker undertook assessments and case planning in relation to her housing and support needs. Initially, YAC provided brokerage for necessities like food, public transport, and charging devices while sleeping rough, as well as supporting her with accessing mental health services.

YAC then supported Dee-Anne to attend Department of Housing regularly as well as housing providers closer to Brisbane. YAC also liaised with other stakeholders to support her housing applications.

Eventually, Dee-Anne was about to secure accommodation through the Department of Housing. At this point, YAC assisted her to furnish the place with household and kitchen items and white goods.

YAC continued to provide support to ensure that Dee-Anne was able to maintain her housing by providing information and support for local organisations such as food banks. After 5 months of successfully maintaining a long-term tenancy, she also had no further legal matters.

This story spans a period of 7 months with 55 hours of support provided.



## Partnerships

### Bribie Outreach

YASS is very proud to provide continuing weekly outreach to young people and community on Bribie Island during school terms to engage young people, their parents and community. Workers provide a range of activities for young people including sport, craft and cultural activities at the Bribie Lions Hall and skate park. The program has partnered with the Pumicestone Indigenous Education & Employment Council Inc (PIEEC) and the number of young people attending continues to grow each week.

Aboriginal Elders, parents/mentors and community members attend to connect and share. At this outreach, workers and mentors support young people, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and provide information, support and facilitated referrals to them and/or their families to appropriate services. Guests to the outreach program have included Youth Justice, City of Moreton Bay Representatives, Local and Federal MP's, Headspace, TAFE QLD, Bio Blitz, local Elders running art workshops, Maori Games with Jean Yern, YAC Community Legal Education session, Children's Rights Ambassador Aunty Sharron Bell, Refocus, ANTAR, NIAA, local School Principals and Community Education Counsellors.

As part of the outreach partnership, several events were held, including:

- Elders Luncheon at Bribie Island Bowls Club (funding sourced from PIEEC)
- NAIDOC event (with cultural facilitators Aunty Sharron Bell, Gabrielle Quakawoot & Aunty Melinda Serico)
- Bribie Big Arvo (collaborative event – held in Youth Week)

### Outreach sessions held:

**26** Sessions at Bribie Lions Hall

**1** Session at Brennan's Park where we celebrated local Aunty Flo Watson's National NAIDOC Elder of the Year nomination

**731** Occasions of support to young people

### Walking on Yarun project

YAC has partnered with Pumicestone Indigenous Education and Employment Council (PIEEC) to engage young people who are engaged with or at risk of engagement in the youth justice system with a culturally safe, educational and socially supportive program. The program has been funded for 12 months through the Department of Youth Justice and commenced in June 2023.

Sessions take young people to various culturally significant sites on Bribie Island and are led by local elders and cultural facilitators. Cultural facilitator Bruce Phillips from Murri Tukka supports young people learn about native food and their uses and some of the foods are harvested and used in a healthy cook up. Other cultural facilitators then provide hands on activities such as clapstick making, string making, yidaki playing or weaving.

## Acknowledgments

YAC would like to acknowledge the following volunteers and Elders:

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| • Aunty Flo Watson     | • Michelle Watson      |
| • Uncle Ron Watson     | • Rachel Bywaters      |
| • Uncle Ivan Pickering | • Julian Ellis         |
| • Uncle Ron Powell     | • Nicole Gulwell       |
| • Aunty Leisha Krause  | • Aunty Melinda Serico |
| • Uncle Phil Moxham    | • Gabrielle Quakawoot  |
| • Uncle Phil Krause    | • Belinda Clarke       |

### Year in Review

There continues to be an increasing unmet demand for this service, with high numbers of young people requiring advocacy and support to navigate the housing and homelessness system. This relates to a severe lack of housing options and support for young people, particularly those who are aged under 18, and the injustice these young people face.

Throughout the year, our YASS team worked passionately to support these young people as much as possible and were once again impressed by the resilience of our clients.



*I wasn't in a good place when I first started working with YAC, my dad was in jail for murder, and I was using a lot. Since working with Kristine, she helped me get my first house I stopped using and I was able to start doing better.*

*I have been housed ever since, I moved from Nundah to a Department house in Stafford*

*I'm ahead in my rent and power. I never miss a payment and try to pay extra*

- Former YASS Caboolture client



# Youth Court Support

## About YCAP

YCAP (Youth Court Assistance Program) provides a specialised legal advocacy and court support worker at Childrens Courts to assist young people and their families who attend court or are in custody. This support is provided before, during, and after the court process.

Due to the correlation of homelessness and other welfare-related barriers with increased contact with the youth justice system, the Childrens Court is a valuable location to engage with young people. Having a consistent presence at court provides an opportunity to engage, identify needs and undertake brief intervention and support. We also facilitate referrals to associated bail programs and other relevant agencies for longer term responses.

Court Support workers attend as part of YAC's Youth Support program (YASS), South-West Brisbane Bail Support Service (SWAP), Intensive Bail Initiative (IBI), or Cairns and Yarrabah Bail Support Service (CYYBSS).

Youth Court Support is a specific program within YAC and it is coordinated under the Youth & Court Support Coordinator to ensure that there is consistency in service delivery practice and peer support due to court support workers operating autonomously.

## About CYYBSS

Cairns and Yarrabah Bail Support Service (CYYBSS) is a collaborative partnership led by Youth Empowered Towards Independence (YETI) with YAC and Gindaja Treatment and Healing Centre. As well as providing information, referral and support pre and post court, the role provides support to young people who may be in the Cairns watchhouse and has provided support young people to Cleveland Youth Detention Centre in Townsville when required.

CYYBSS enables seamless support to maintain connections with young people in a consistent and coordinated way throughout the legal process.

In these settings, the YCAP worker can continue to provide short term assistance to young people to ensure they understand the court process and are maintaining contact with their lawyer, facilitate referrals to local support agencies, check on the young person's social and emotional well-being, support the young person with future goal setting and play a pivotal role in enabling the young person to remain connected to their family and community.

The YCAP role has played a pivotal part in providing support to young people within the watchhouse by:

- offering daily visits
- checking in with young people around their mental and physical health and referring to mental health services for

additional support

- advocating for young people to have contact with family via phone calls and visits
- providing clothing and hygiene products
- providing books, playing cards and balls
- referring young people to local support services
- liaising with external services on behalf of young people through collaboration with external stakeholders.

## About SWAP

SWAP (South-West Advocacy and Pathways) Bail Support Service is a collaborative partnership led by Inspire Youth Service with YAC and Inala Wangarra. SWAP services the Inala, Richlands, and Ipswich regions.

Through SWAP, YAC provides the court support program at Ipswich and Richlands Childrens Courts. As part of the collaborative response, the role also provides advocacy and social welfare support in Ipswich and Richlands Watchhouses.

## Courtney's Story

Courtney has been under a long-term care order for most of her life. She has been known to the South West Advocacy and Pathways (SWAP) service for 4 years (approximately) and has received varying levels of support over those years; from intensive case management to court support/advocacy. Courtney has significant MH concerns and a long history of trauma. Her parents have been in and out of custody throughout her life. She has witnessed significant traumatic events and has been the victim of various crimes. This history and her mental health challenges mean that she can escalate quickly, and therefore some services have been unable to engage with her. However, Courtney is currently well-supported by another community service and the YCAP worker supports her in court.

One example of this court support was in March 2024. Courtney needed a support person in court; however, she was experiencing extreme stress and her behaviour was escalating. Her legal representative was unsure whether she could go ahead with Courtney's matters that day due to this. The YCAP worker feared that Courtney may not come back to court if her matters were not addressed that day. The YCAP worker de-escalated Courtney so that she was able to meet with her lawyer. The YCAP worker, at Courtney's request, supported her in liaising with her lawyer. The YCAP worker, with Courtney's permission, connected with Courtney's support service at regular intervals to update them on her progress at court. Courtney's appearance at court on this occasion was successful.

## Luci's story

Luci was 14 years of age when she met the YCAP worker at Cairns Children's Court. Luci attended on three separate occasions, before she engaged for further supports. Luci was engaging in anti-social behaviours and her offending began to significantly increase. Luci was then excluded from school, her AOD use escalated and her relationships with her family were deteriorating.

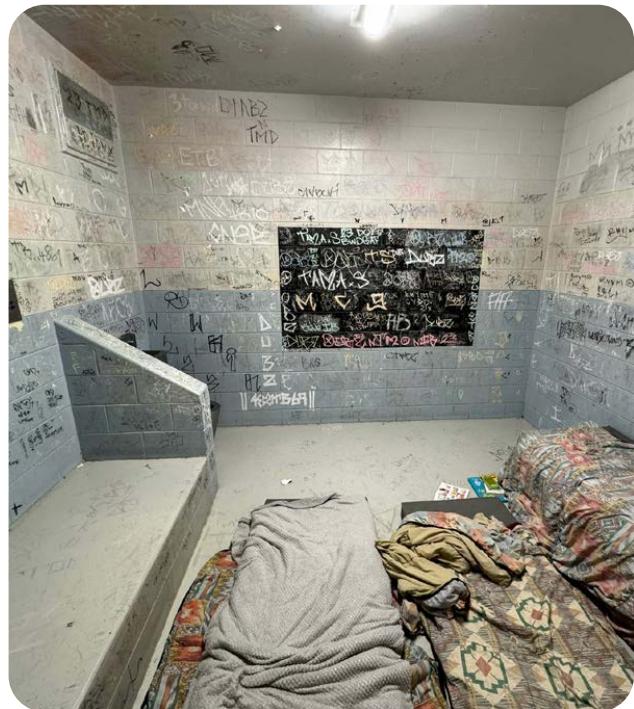
The YCAP worker used Luci's three occasions attending court to build rapport and provide court support and education. During these three appearances, it became apparent that Luci and her mother were reluctant to engage in services, however, through continued rapport building, both became open to supports via the YCAP worker.

A self-directed case plan was developed with the young person through outreach outside the court setting. Short term support was provided to re-engage in school, health checks, AOD harm minimisation and engage in pro-social activities.

Since Luci has been open to engaging in support, she has made significant progress. She has connected with a counsellor and engages with Youth Justice. Luci has developed a sound understanding of the court process, has decreased her risk-taking behaviours, is aware of other supports she can access if needed and has grown into a young woman with a purpose and goals as well as being connected positively with her family.

## Cairns Watchhouse Report

The Queensland Ombudsman Report of Cairns Watchhouse was recently released and included photos of cells and other areas where children are held. Our support workers often visit watchhouses to provide support.



## Arina's story

You can read about Arina, one of our Court Support clients, on page 10.





# Positive Moves

## About our Positive Moves program

The Positive Moves Project is a 3-year pilot program to assist young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and/or experiencing mental health concerns to transition into stable housing and access positive community supports. This includes collaboration between the young person and their family to support managing relationships within this dynamic.

It consists of two part time workers: one Youth and Family Support Advocate, and one Youth and Mental Health Support Advocate. These workers are respectively supported by the Families Coordinator and the Youth & Court Support Coordinator, combining a richness of knowledge and practice wisdom to bring a well-rounded team for such a new project.

## Why we provide a Positive Moves program

The Positive Moves Project has been funded through the Brisbane City Council Pathways out of Homelessness Grant Program to address the growing number of young people experiencing homelessness in Brisbane.

## Year in review

The program commenced in November 2023 and a number of resources were developed alongside the start of formal case management of young people, including:

- The development of youth friendly legal information with Tenants Qld in relation to starting, maintaining and ending a tenancy.
- Legal information resources developed for young people to access simplified tenancy information. Resources to be published and distributed in next financial year including:
  - A folding card with simplified legal info sheets
  - Branded key rings and power banks with QR codes that includes useful services
  - A TikTok developed, published and distributed on young people leaving home
- A peer advocacy workshop for young people on legal information and tenancy rights has been developed in preparation for delivery at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre in the next financial year. This workshop will be delivered in collaboration with YAC's Community Legal Education Officer.

Casework staff were employed January 2024 with the full complement of staff employed in March 2024. Since then, 14 young people and families have already been supported; this is 40% more than projected, highlighting the need for youth homelessness services. As part of the intake and assessment phase, a survey is completed by the young person.

Of these 14 young people, family conflict (93%) and mental health (71%) were stated as their main barrier to stable accommodation.

11 group events with stakeholders were held during this period, totalling over 40 hours and involving 219 participants. This included the groups such as: Brisbane South Interagency, REIQ, Real estates, QCOSS conference on HR Act, QYHC conference, QShelter, Tenants Qld and a legal and tenancy advocacy information workshop with Brisbane Youth Detention Centre.

## Looking ahead

The Positive Moves team developed a survey seeking feedback from real estate agents about their preferred method for the delivery of information. The results of this survey indicated that the preference was for information to be delivered in hard copy or digital form rather than in a workshop format. As a result of this, Positive Moves are developing a range of resources including information sheets and online resources on key topics identified through the survey.

Now that the Positive Moves program is well underway, we intend to increase our reach to young people and families by supporting 25 families in the next year as it will be a full year of service.



Young people from our Positive Moves and Family Support services took part in an art workshop, led by local artist Tervo, which involved painting a large mural in the YAC office.

## Felix's Story

Felix was 15 years of age when he self-referred to YAC for support around housing, finances and education. Felix was enrolled in education attended irregularly due to the instability of housing and available finances. Felix struggled with a number of mental health issues, including trauma and an ADHD diagnosis, as well as anxiety. There were significant barriers for Felix to access finances and housing services due to his age.

At the time of his referral, Felix was squatting in an apartment with some adult friends. The situation was very stressful as they had no long-term certainty for their accommodation. Only one member of the group of four had an income, so they had limited ability to purchase essential items, as well as clothing, bedding etc.

Felix had left home several months prior to approaching YAC, due to a breakdown in a relationship with his parents.

YAC provided a range of supports for Felix, including:

- Transport assistance
- Emergency relief assistance (food vouchers, clothing)
- Mentoring
- Support with Centrelink applications
- Information for accessible services

The ultimate goal was to support Felix to find stable housing. After successive discussions with his YAC workers, Felix decided he was ready to participate in family conferencing. After several meetings with his parents, significant reconciliation took place and Felix felt comfortable to return home. YAC continues to support Felix's goals around education and mental health.





# Family Support

## About our Family Support Service

Our Family Support service works with young people aged 10 to 18 and their family – but only with the agreement of the young person. The service works with families experiencing relational difficulties within the home as an early intervention strategy to avoid the need for statutory intervention. The service includes just one Family Support Advocate plus coordination.

Family Support help:

- young people to repair ruptured relationships within their families and communities
- put strategies in place to make things better at home for the young person, their parents and siblings
- parents to better understand, support, and advocate for, their young person
- at court, by going with the young person and their family and providing a report for the court where appropriate

Family Support work is varied and responsive to the needs and situation of the young person. Often our young clients, and/or their parents, have experienced high levels of trauma, which is a significant factor in their presenting issues. Sometimes, after seeing how Family Support is working with their sibling, a sister or brother will self-refer.

"Family" can include a variety of situations and relationships, not uncommonly grandparents, aunts/uncles and sometimes older siblings. Family Support works with the person or people who are willing and able to provide the young person with the home environment or support they need.

Family Support funding only allows for one worker to cover the greater Brisbane and South Moreton Bay regions. Consequently, not all referrals can be taken up. YAC is doing what it can to address this need by self-funding additional hours, increasing the capacity to 1.4 full-time equivalent.

## Why we provide a Family Support Service

Family is important in young people's lives. The Preamble to the Convention on the Rights of the Child notes:

*Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community.*

However, families and family relationships can be problematic. In Qld, over 80% of young people in the Youth Justice system are

known to Child Safety services. Through Family Support YAC seeks to help parents to be better able to help and support their child and re-establish positive relationships with them. It also aims to educate young people to their parent's perspective and assist to comprehend why parents can be so confusing and opposing to their views.

## Year in review

YAC sought approval to have the Family Support Coordinator oversee both the Family Support and Family Partnership programs, which was granted. The objective being to enrich both programs by having a larger pool of practitioners to collaborate through de-identified case reviews and planning sessions.

Again, there was an excessive number of families in need with the phenomenal work of a very small team to support 21 young people and their families. This demonstrated the unrelenting determination of the small program of two part-time workers. Due to the high volume and complexities of families in need and ongoing inadequate funding to service these families, YAC has continued to privately fund an additional portion to help lessen the gap. YAC received a Religious of Queensland grant for adventure-based therapy and the Family Support team has been able to have 5 young people attend sessions run by My Summit. This involved completing high-ropes courses and mountain hikes. This renewed energy for keeping active then encouraged some of these young people to access gym memberships paid for by YAC.

## Looking ahead

There continues to be an unmet demand for family support, particularly in the early intervention space. The consolidation of Family Support and Family Partnership to be overseen by the same coordinator has proved to be very successful in streamlining many family-related processes and frameworks. This has been further complemented with the addition of overseeing the Youth and Family Support Advocate within the Positive Moves program. While this does not address the issues of insufficient funding for an adequate number of Family Support workers, it has decreased the amount of administrative time, which translates to more hours out in the community with families. YAC continues to advocate for additional funding to expand this essential early intervention service.

*I knew this day was gonna come, but didn't think it would be as unsettling as it is though.....Aw thank you for your help always, really appreciate you 🌟*

- A mother anxious about a childrens court sentencing date approaching for her child and feeling supported by the case worker.

# Jessica's story

## Family history

Jessica has experienced complex trauma throughout her entire life. She experienced significant DFV in the home. Her (then) older brother passed away from a swift illness when he was in primary school, and Jessica a small child. Her mother passed away in 2017. Her father was already caring for the 5 remaining children at this time. Jessica's father parented in the best way he knew how; however, he lacked appropriate parenting skills to provide a safe and supported environment. Jessica had parented her younger brother over the years as the older children moved away as soon as they were able to be independent. Jessica and her younger brother are the youngest in the sibling group.

## Accommodation growing up

Both Jessica and her brother have lived in out of home care (residential care) previously. While not an appropriate option, Jessica has self-placed with her father when there was no suitable alternative for her over the years. She has been on a waitlist for Department of Housing for over 2 years. She has been homeless multiple times between the ages of 14 – 18 and at times, been forced to sleep in parks and city streets within the CBD.

## Working with Family Support

Jessica has been a Family Support client on and off for over 4 years. She has had the consistency of the same worker over this time and this worker has also worked with several of her siblings and her father, creating a comprehensive case management for the family. YAC were very appreciative when our request to have special consideration for a young person who was 'aging out' (18yo) of our service within weeks of giving birth, was approved by Child Safety. They granted us an extension to her care for 6 months so Family Support could continue to support post-birth and attempt to help secure permanent, stable housing for her and baby. This was a highly vulnerable young person who deserved the right to continuity of support. She and her family were truly grateful for the extension of support to help her navigate parenthood while being a teenager herself.

This young person was supported by Family Support in completing a young mother's live-in program and YAC has worked tirelessly to transition her into permanent housing for her and her baby. There has not been a single offer from Department of Housing for housing while she has had an application for over 2 years and even with the addition of now having a baby. When her 12-week program was completed, it was necessary for her to move out (part of the program's requirements). Due to multiple community housing referrals not having availability of suitable accommodation, the young person was supported to move to temporary accommodation with a young family friend. While living there, Family Support continued to support her and baby with all associated medical appointments post-birth (health checks and immunisations). Family Support has also continued to advocate with Department of Housing and community housing (multiple organisations) to support a transition to a secure, safe and permanent home. Family Support continues to help the young person with budgeting and parenting skills. Family Support also has worked towards having sibling family days, which several have been facilitated.

## Kicking goals

Even with these barriers, Jessica took her pregnancy-related care extremely seriously and diligently and has carried this determination through to her new born. She was up to date with all medical appointments and medical procedures pending the

birth and post-birth. She was constantly upskilling her knowledge on pregnancy and birth, and although this was not a planned pregnancy, she was confident she could parent her baby with the right kind of supports around her. She has her Learners and is linked in with Braking the Cycle, doing lessons and has been doing paid driving lessons. She has reached out and coordinated these lessons independently without assistance. She's well into her 100 hrs logbook now. Jessica was looking into some certificate courses, but this has been paused to care for her newborn. Jessica has previously been employed casually at a greengrocer.

Jessica is able to care for herself in a practical sense, eg cook, clean, grocery shop, access public transport, book appointments and diarise reminders. Most importantly, Jessica will seek support when it's needed.

Despite all the barriers this young person has encountered in her young life, she is becoming an exceptional young mother and is showing signs of the potential to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma so that her daughter can grow up free from the need of community and statutory services.

As Jessica comes to the end of her journey with Family Support, she had this to say:

*"Yac have supported me and continue to support me in more ways than one, they have offered me emotional and physical support and nothing is ever too much."*

*"If they can help they definitely will. I am so grateful to be a part of this program, and have their ongoing support now my daughter [baby] is here".*





# Family Partnership

## About our Family Partnership program

The Intensive Bail Initiative (IBI) responds to the needs of young people in the Youth Justice system who have bail conditions that must be met and who require support. Support may range from regular and high frequency contact to occasional case work assistance to meet their bail conditions. It includes the Bail Support, Community Connector, and Family Partnership programs.

Family Partnership is intensive case work program to support young people and their families to identify practical supports that will keep young people out of custody. Case workers make an active effort with family members to aid young person's compliance with bail including Conditional Bail Program and Electronic Monitoring conditions.

## Why we provide a Family Partnership program

Research suggests that working with young people with practice skills that promote problem solving and pro-social modelling is effective in reducing recidivism of young offenders. Additionally, young people are more likely to comply with bail conditions if a parent/carer is available and committed to supporting compliance with the conditions. If this support is not available, Family Partnership practitioners will work in partnership with young people, families and within community to promote the family and young person's capacity and motivation to practically meet conditions set by the court, police or youth justice.

Improving the living conditions at home or where a young person resides will contribute to the young person meeting their bail conditions. Family Partnership offers practical support to the young person's parents or guardian at home (place of residence) to improve safety conditions, develop parenting strengths and promote healing and stability within the family.

## Year in review

Family Partnership's two full-time case workers had a very busy year, remaining at capacity but managing referrals without a waitlist for support.

A large component of case management for Family Partnership is partnering with therapeutic service. We partnered with a number of therapeutic services such as adventure-based therapy organisation, My Summit and carpentry-based therapy, Timber Therapy. We have also expanded our more traditional talk-therapy through Family Counsellor, Julie Kelly. Family Partnership has also started working closely with Brave Hearts. We continued our partnership with therapy, training and clinical consultancy, Complex Care. Family Partnership also continues to work heavily with Youth Justice (case workers, ICM case workers, and

Co-Responders) as well as the supplementary IBI programs within YAC, BOSS and Community Connector.

## Looking ahead

The year ahead looks to continue with the level of need in the community. IBI was enhanced for a 12 month period to expand Family Partnership to South and Redlands Youth Justice catchments at the end of the financial year. This has previously been a large gap in service delivery as Family Partnership has only been available in North Youth Justice catchment, making many suitable referrals ineligible due to catchment. While these referrals have been serviced by other family programs within YAC, they are less intensive to what Family Partnership can deliver. The expansion will deliver two more full time case workers, increasing the number to four, and will cover the areas of North, South and Redlands Youth Justice catchments.

*Thank you so much (coordinator), I really appreciate this so much. I know it's a lot of money and I never would have been able to afford this. So please know I am so appreciative and thankful for YAC ongoing support for my family and I. Honestly, there really aren't any words I could use to express my deepest gratitude 🙏*

- Mother's response to Family Partnership being able to fund a cognitive and psychoeducational assessment for her son who was starting to disengage from school due to not keeping up in class and behavioural issues starting to present which were being misinterpreted as 'misbehaving in class'.

*The story was great, heart break all over again, but very powerful. Thank you (coordinator).*

- Mother's response after watching a report she had participated in about young people being mistreated in watchhouses (including her child). YAC was instrumental in bringing this issue to light in the media.

## Joseph's story

Joseph has been engaged with Family Partnership for 12 months and engagement is ongoing. Joseph is 14 years old and lives with his mother. They are estranged from extended family. They have both experienced recent grief and loss due to sudden passing of his maternal grandmother who had been a key support person in his life.

Joseph and his mother endure ongoing exposure to DFV perpetrated by his father who does not live with the family, but frequents the family home despite current orders of protection in place. Additionally, Joseph was experiencing social anxiety and isolation due to being excluded from school.

Through their unrelenting persistent work, Joseph's case worker has supported Joseph to re-engage with education (enrolment and attending a flexi-school), in pro-social activities (adventure therapy and wood-working therapy) and mental health support.

Through this support, Joseph has increased pro-social interactions outside of the home. He has attended a Timber Therapy group with other young people (in addition to his usual one-on-one sessions) which has increased his social skills and confidence amongst peers.

With his case worker's help, Joseph is enrolled to commence TAFE in 2025 and is seeking to pursue a career in carpentry or construction due to the skills and confidence he developed through attending Timber Therapy and building a relationship with the facilitator. Joseph requires ongoing support from his case worker for legal matters, attending legal appointments, and attending court. This is not only as a support for Joseph, but also his mother who has experienced complex trauma throughout her life (including as a child) where the current charges have been triggering for her own trauma history.



# Funders & Supporters

YAC is grateful for our national and state government funding bodies and non-government supporters for the legal and social justice programs that deliver support and advocacy to young people and their families.

## Government Funders

- National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020–25 (NLAP): a national partnership agreement between the Australian Government and all states and territories.
- The Queensland Department of Housing, Local Government, Planning and Public Works
- The Queensland Department of Youth Justice
- The Queensland Department of Justice & Attorney-General
- Moreton Bay Regional Council
- Brisbane City Council
- Queensland Gambling Community Benefit Fund
- Legal Aid (CLE Grant)

## Non-government Funders

- Hand Heart Pocket – Youth Ambassador Program
- Queensland Presentation Sisters
- Lady Bowen Trust
- Kedron-Wavell
- Religious of Queensland – Adventure Therapy
- Murri Watch Aboriginal and TSI Corporation
- Wesley Mission

## Sponsors & Donors

- Presentation Congregation Queensland (PCQ)
- Colin Biggers Paisley
- Private donors
- Queensland Container Refund Scheme - Containers for Change
- Atradius Australia
- James Benjamin family and friends
- Bridge to Brisbane fundraisers
- Share the Dignity

## Pro Bono Support

- MinterEllison
- Allens
- Gilbert & Tobin

## Partners

- Bond University
- Kids Youth Community
- Inspire Youth Services
- Inala Wangarra
- Youth Empowerment Through Independence (YETI)
- Gindaja
- Pumicestone Indigenous Education and Employment Council Inc (PIEEC)
- UQ Pro Bono Centre
- Hand Heart Pocket
- Murri Tukka

## Networks

- Community Legal Centres Queensland (CLCQ)
- Community Legal Centres Australia (CLCA)
- Youth Justice Oversight meeting
- Queensland Legal Service Children's Committee
- Brisbane Childrens Court Stakeholder meeting
- Childrens Court Committee
- Child Protection Practitioners Association of Queensland
- Inner Urban Youth Interagency
- Queensland Youth Housing Coalition
- Brisbane South Youth Interagency
- Police Ethnic Advisory Group (PEAG)
- Human Rights Lawyers Network
- National Child Rights Taskforce
- National Raise the Age Campaign
- Queensland Youth Housing Coalition (QYHC)
- QUT Centre for Justice (DV project)
- Queensland Council of Social Services
- PeakCare
- Pacifica Lawyers Association QLD
- Queensland Law Society Childrens Committee
- Heads of Jurisdiction with the legal profession
- Domestic and Family Violence Operational Working Group Brisbane
- Moreton Bay North Care Co-ordination
- Murri Network
- Queensland Community Legal Centres First Nations Network
- Bribie Project (Moreton Bay City Council)
- Youth Matters (Moreton Bay City Council)

# Volunteers

YAC was very grateful to receive support from a number of superb volunteers.

## Court Support and Youth Support Volunteers

YAC thanks Romina Lau Diaz and Sonia Brinckman for generously spending time volunteering in support of young people.



## UQ Pro Bono Centre students:

YAC thanks volunteer students from the UQ Pro Bono centre who were instrumental in creating new legal information videos for young people to access via TikTok. YAC also thanks the UQ Pro Bono Centre for their ongoing and proactive support.

- Josephine Wye Mun Chan
- Shiina Oiwa
- Charlotte Picker
- Brooke Goston
- Jerica Nieva
- Jieun Ha



## Allens Graduate Solicitors

YAC thanks Georgia Sands and the Allens graduate solicitors who volunteered a day to write and film legal information videos for our TikTok channel. These video are a valuable resource for young people and for our staff to use in education sessions.



## Legal Support volunteers:

We thank our Legal Support volunteers who generously supported our legal team in 2023/24.

- Luke Roberts
- Shoshoni Barker
- Sarah Clarke
- Raj Gowda
- Anna Reynolds
- Richard Brooking
- Briony Coward
- Vanessa Boitchenko



## Bribie Island outreach volunteers:

YAC thanks the volunteers from our Bribie Islander outreach delivered in partnership with PIEEC – a full list is available on page 23 of this report.

## JMC Academy students

We were once again grateful to receive volunteer support from JMC Academy staff and students who recorded and edited the voiceover for our animation project.

# Advocacy

## About Our Advocacy

YAC has been advocating for change regarding youth justice issues for over 40 years.

YAC engages in discussions on issues affecting young people, and provides expert opinions and experiences of young people to Government and the community in order to bring about positive change.

Our research and policy work are informed by our casework, and by young people's experiences, and we actively encourage young people to provide feedback on the services and systems that affect them to help inform this work.

## Advocacy events and campaigns

YAC takes part in advocacy events, interviews, and campaigns each week. Some of the key engagements from this year include:

- frequent interviews in major and local media outlets
- co-hosting a Youth Justice Roundtable with Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS) and Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP)
- appearing before the Queensland Parliament's Youth Justice Reform Select Committee
- facilitating media engagements to promote the voices of young people, including through a story on Triple J's 'Hack' program
- being a supporting organisation of the 'Raise the Age' campaign which advocates to raise the age of criminal responsibility in Queensland and nationally - YAC remains alert to the inadequacy of the doli incapax provisions to address Queensland's very young age of criminal responsibility
- being a coalition organisation of the 'A Right to Learn' campaign which advocates for young people's right to education and against disproportionate suspensions and exclusions



## Miles lashed as 'political' detention move

# VOTE RETENTION AS A LAST RESORT



EXCLUSIVE  
Hayden Johnson  
Madura McCormack

Premier Steven Miles has faced widespread criticism over his "political" decision to change the detention of a last resort with the LNP claiming it won't help fight crime and stakeholders argue more kids will end up in jail.

Mr Miles buckled to pressure on Tuesday night and agreed to replace detention as a last resort in the South Justice Act, but legislation introduced one day later noted rewriting the clause was "not intended to change the intent".

It prompted a furious response from the LNP, which accused the premiers of misleading Queenslanders by calling an "utterly political" move to pretend they had removed detention as a last resort.

The changes were Tuesday caved to mounting pressure and moved to replace the clause with one that was clearer and closer to the public and to the courts' safety was a priority.

But Mr Miles is unavailable to advise on what the changes would affect incarceration rates.

"The modelling assured me that the system will continue to be able to deal with anticipated detention numbers," he said. "We've heard from Queenslanders that concerns about that particular wording was undermining confidence in the law and the courts and the government has responded to that feedback by changing what was always our intention – that community safety should and must come first."

Opposition Leader David Crisafulli said the LNP's commitment to remove detention as a last resort for community safety is "just our wannabe macho men having a fight over who can be the toughest when what we need are cool heads".

Queensland Council of Social Services executive Almee McVeigh slammed Labor for an "absurd" decision to remove detention as a last resort for community safety.

"This is just our wannabe macho men having a fight over who can be the toughest when actually what we need are some cool heads who are going to listen to the community the facts about what's happening in our society and the things that will actually go towards addressing that instead."

Youth Advocacy Centre chief executive Katherine Hayes said both sides were "pushing responsibility to the other side".

"I have seen no evidence of any integrity or moral guidance provided by the government to solve the crime situation," she said.

Justice Reform Initiative executive director Linda Soltani smashed Labor's "pushy approach" to address crime.

"Removing detention as a last resort is ineffective at deterring crime and does nothing to improve community safety in the long term," she said. "It is only that the current approach of the two sides of politics in Queensland which already



# Vale James Benjamin

In March 2024 children's law in Queensland suffered an extraordinary loss with the death of esteemed barrister and good friend to YAC, James Benjamin.

James' legal career, both at Legal Aid Queensland and at the private bar, was characterized by his work for the most vulnerable and no more evidently than his amazing advocacy for children in the youth justice and child protection systems. James' passion for justice for young people was unbridled and crossed almost every jurisdiction from the Court of Appeal, the Mental Health Court and all levels of the Childrens Court. James was a formidable representative of the Bar Association in parliamentary hearings on legislative reform on issues pertaining to children. He was the most generous of colleagues, always offering support and sharing his vast wisdom.

Testament to his passion for supporting young people, James and his family generously requested that donations be made in his memory to YAC. YAC was humbled with the generosity of those who contributed in memory of James and the very moving messages that accompanied those donations.

YAC subsequently used some of these funds to brief counsel to resist a subpoena in a Domestic and Family Violence matter that sought disclosure of a child's complete youth justice record and associated correspondence and files. YAC challenged the subpoena maintaining that releasing this information would not only breach the Youth Justice Act but also unfairly prejudice the child , who was also dealing with mental health issues. Thanks to James, despite a lack of Legal Aid funding YAC was able to instruct a barrister to contest the subpoena. This gave the child the confidence that they were heard and supported. It assisted the client to manage the stress of the lengthy legal process. Ultimately, the applications were withdrawn from court, with an agreement in place. This ensured the child's information remained protected. This resolution spared both parties the trauma of a trial, allowing for a fair and less damaging outcome.

Thank you, James - we honour your memory.





**YOUTH  
ADVOCACY  
CENTRE INC**

(07) 3356 1002

[www.yac.net.au](http://www.yac.net.au)

[admin@yac.net.au](mailto:admin@yac.net.au)

or scan this QR code:



**Make a donation!**



Scan here!