

**YOUTH
ADVOCACY
CENTRE** INC

Annual Report
2022/23

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.



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Youth Advocacy Centre

The Youth Advocacy Centre provides a holistic program of youth services in South-East Queensland and Cairns including social, legal, bail, homelessness, and family support.

YAC also advocates on behalf of and in support of young people on systemic and policy reforms in pursuit of justice and equality.

YAC support services include:



Legal Support



Bail Support



Court Support



Family Support



Youth Support



**Community
Legal Education**



Advocacy

Our Vision

Young people achieve their full potential through the community accepting collective responsibility for their importance, empowerment, rights, well-being and humanity.

Our Mission

To increase young people's access to legal and social justice by actively supporting and speaking out, with and for young people.

Our Approach

YAC seeks to provide an holistic response to the issues a young person is facing and, where appropriate, we use a multidisciplinary approach whereby YAC's legal and social welfare staff work collaboratively to assist with the diverse needs of the young person.



Our Impact 2022-23

37 families supported through our Family Support & Intensive Family Partnership services.

592 children represented through our duty lawyer service.

1,014 Face to face meetings organised with young people through our bail support service.

1,377 Casual court outreach clients through our Brisbane and Caboolture Youth Support teams.

1,959 Phone calls made through our Bail Support Service.

120,000 TikTok legal video views

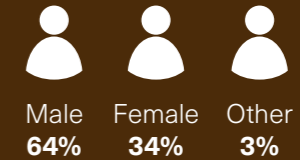


Stats not recorded:

- hearts touched
- difficult moments
- laughs shared
- love given

Legal Support

592 Young people represented in Duty lawyers service
265 Legal cases completed
96 Legal advices provided to young people
154 Legal information provided
50 Duty lawyer sessions
7 Young people assisted with dispute resolution



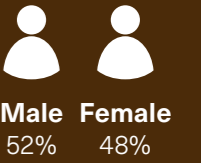
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
15%

Community Legal Education

69 Education sessions delivered
14 TikTok videos developed
 Most popular website pages:
#1 When can I?
#2 Moving out
#3 Getting my stuff back

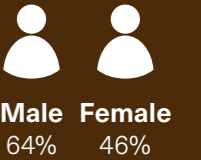
Family Support

23 Case managed families
1652 Hours worked with families
30% Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander



Intensive Family Partnership

14 Case managed families
36% Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander
 Some clients work with us for a number of years.

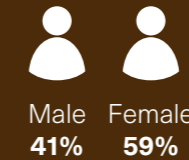


Bail Support

	Clients	Male	Female	Age					Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
				<9yrs	10-13yrs	14-15yrs	16-17yrs	18+	
Bail Support	123	73%	27%	0%	9%	39%	49%	3%	39%
Community Connector	113	58%	42%	0%	12%	51%	36%	1%	29%

YASS Brisbane

49 Case managed clients
107 Short term clients
984 Casual court outreach clients
31% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (case managed clients)



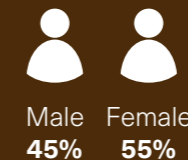
88% of clients were in stable housing by the time they left YAC's services.

Duration of support period

Less than 6 weeks **4%**
 6 to 13 weeks **40%**
 More than 13 weeks **56%**

YASS Caboolture

44 Case managed clients
101 Short term clients
393 Casual court outreach clients
45% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (case managed clients)



52% of clients were in stable housing by the time they left YAC's services.

Duration of support period

Less than 6 weeks **24%**
 6 to 13 weeks **12%**
 More than 13 weeks **64%**

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

	YASS		SWAP		CYYBSS (Cairns)	
	Visits	Young People	Visits	Young People	Visits	Young People
Brisbane Court Outreach	91	984	Ipswich 84	648	Cleveland DC 2	43
Moreton Bay Court Outreach (Redcliffe, Caboolture and Pine Rivers Children's Courts)	115	393	Richlands 40	286	Watch House* 206	1103
			WM YDC 17	63	Court Outreach 107	850

*Includes when other CYYBSS staff have done watch house visits.

Our Objectives

1 To support and advocate for the legal needs and rights of disadvantaged and/or vulnerable young people.

2 To support and advocate for the social welfare needs of disadvantaged and/or vulnerable young people involved in, or at risk of involvement in, legal systems.

3 To enable young people, families, and workers with young people, to better understand the law and the legal system as it is relevant to them.

4 To support the development of a socio-legal system that is more responsive and appropriate to the needs of young people and which takes account of their developmental and situational issues and Australia's international obligations.

5 To provide and maintain high quality support and advocacy services to young people.



Our Strategic Intent 2022-23

Advocacy

To be strong advocates with and for individual young people in need and/or in conflict with legal and other systems across south east Queensland.

To be a strong voice, informed by research and evidence and the experiences of our clients, to influence and achieve better outcomes for children and young people in Queensland collectively.

Profile

To be considered a significant contributor to discussion and decisions about legal and social welfare systems and processes which can have an impact on children and young people at a local and state level.

Sustainability

To maintain the model of the Youth Advocacy Centre as an effective and appropriate response to disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, particularly for those with legal as well as social welfare issues.

To develop the current model/services, in particular to have at least two staff per program and an education/training support program, and identify innovative ways to deliver services to ensure the model is contemporary.

Message from the CEO

In another turbulent year in youth justice, YAC has managed to steady its path and focus on supporting our young people.

In 2022-2023 the Queensland Labor Government overrode its own human rights laws not once, but twice, so that young people could be lawfully locked up for longer periods of time. Our bail support team works tirelessly to help those young people on bail not fall foul of Queensland's increasingly unjust youth justice laws, which include an offence for breach of bail conditions. This offence can result in the innocuous conduct of young people being criminalised, for example, breaching a 24 hour curfew, or having to stay at a particular address, even though the address may be unsafe for the young person. Our family support workers continue to support a very high number of families needing help to navigate their difficulties so that they are not caught up in the increasingly punitive youth justice regime. YAC remains firm that early intervention and diversion is the only real solution to the perceived youth crime crises.

In what was YAC's 42nd year we have focused on maximising the organisation's financial health and staff stability so that our front-line workers can continue to do their essential work. The rising number of young people experiencing homelessness is an unfolding tragedy, and our youth homelessness workers assist young people every day who do not have a safe place to call home

Our legal team continued its essential work representing young people in the youth justice system, advocating in disputes about school disciplinary absences, and supporting young people who are complainants in criminal proceedings. In addition to our general advice work, the legal team continues to carry a very high workload which is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

To that end, we are continuing our systemic advocacy for those vulnerable young people experiencing housing issues, trouble with family, or are in the youth justice system. We are cementing strong and productive relationships with the government stakeholders so that we can influence policy as much as possible. The excellent relationships we have with other community organisations have helped us join together to magnify our voices in promoting the interests of the most disadvantaged young people in Queensland.

At the end of 2023/24 we will be strongly encouraging the state government to develop a coherent youth justice policy which addresses the underlying causes of offending: family violence, housing issues, substance abuse, involvement with child safety and disengagement in education. This requires a coherent whole-of-government response. We remain optimistic!

Katherine Hayes, CEO



Message from the Chair

Cops and Cages. That is how the CEO of a sister organisation describes the recent legislative trend for Youth Justice in Queensland. And as a simple unifying theme, it does well to explain the current position in this State.

There have been a series of changes in the last three years, and, taken together, they have had the effect of seeing more police detaining more children. In September 2020, the Government announced that it would deliver 2025 additional police personnel over five years. In February 2021, the Government announced laws that reversed the onus on bail for a wide range of offences, with the result that many more children are now being kept on remand. In March 2023, the Government introduced the "Strengthening Community Safety Act 2023" which, amongst other things, introduced new offences and tougher penalties, contemplated something called "preventative detention" and, for the very first time in this State, permitted an over-ride of the Human Rights Act 2019. More recently, YETI had an outstanding success in the Supreme Court, where Burns J ordered that certain young people in watch-houses be delivered immediately to a youth detention centre. But in response, Parliament passed legislation that effectively nullified the outcome by deeming watch-houses to be detention centres so that children could be held there for extended periods, over-riding the Human Rights Act 2019 for the second time. While other jurisdictions close their detention centres, our Government is building two more, plus a 'youth remand facility'. Cops and Cages.

We have to say, with some bitterness, that the policy is likely to be self-fulfilling. Our case-workers are seeing young people kept in "separation" for very long periods, and denied access to education, exercise and family, especially in Cleveland and in the watch houses. When those children are eventually released, I am told, they are afflicted with a palpable anger and a deep sense that, from now on, it will be them against the world. We can only anticipate that the approach will lead to more offending and more charging, and, in turn, a need for even more police and more detention centres so that the policy, in effect, chases its own tail.

The Government brags that it has the toughest laws in Australia but, as Keith Hamburger has said, it is clutching for the wrong trophy. What they should strive to say is that Queensland has the most effective laws in Australia. But that is patently untrue. Over the last four years, rates of detention in Queensland have increased by 40%, whilst in New South Wales and Victoria, they have reduced by over 20%. In absolute numbers, we lock up more young people

here – on average 275 per day – than any other state. And of those that have been detained, more than 86% re-offend within six months of being released.

In the face of all the pain generated by a reactive policy (which is very far removed from the "Working Together, Changing the Story" strategy, and the "four pillars", developed carefully by Bob Atkinson and his team in 2018), YAC wants to shout out a simple message: It's not working!

But there is some cause for optimism. There has been a very public and very intense community debate about youth justice, in which many organisations have participated, and in which there is now a deeper level of consideration. It seems to me that there has been a clear turning point where the community has come to seriously question whether keeping young people in adult watch-houses is acceptable. And then the community started to reflect very seriously on the wider issues. There has been a host of progressive voices that have informed the debate: the Justice Reform Initiative, the Queensland Family and Child Commission, Queensland Council of Social Service, and Sisters Inside, to name a few. There have been some surprising allies too like Senator Lambie in Tasmania, Robbie Katter in Central Queensland, and victims' groups, each asking whether the current approach in Queensland is actually serving anyone's interests. Indeed, at least in relation to the new position on watch-houses (and their staff), even the Queensland Police Commissioner has declared that this is far from the best use of those resources.

To my mind, the challenge for YAC in the coming 12 months is to harness the community's interest in doing things differently. We need to be informing the debate with solutions that create paths, not cul-de-sacs. And we can do that, with so many ideas: maternal health, better accommodation options, substance abuse facilities, fast-tracking sentencing, proper bail support, on-community programs, re-integration services following detention. There are no end of answers coming from the sector generally, and from YAC in particular, if the Government cares to look to a whole-of-government plan, rather than reacting to those who make the loudest complaints.

YAC is in a fantastic position. We have passionate staff, an excellent CEO, a committed board and - not to be underestimated - a prudent and talented treasurer. We are working closely with the officers of the Department to ensure that, whatever politics populate our shared landscape, we provide young people with the very best services, and allow them all the choices and the dignity they deserve.

Damien Atkinson OAM KC, Chairperson

A new start for Sam

A Youth Advocacy Centre Youth Support client.

Sam had a tougher childhood than most and ended up in the Queensland youth justice system. When Sam left detention, she was surprised by the lack of support offered to young people like herself by the system.

"They just lock people up but.. they just let them out to nothing, then you have nothing to go back to ... so you just get locked up again because free bed, y'know. I think the reason most people do crime is because of money and housing."

It's easy to understand why some young people quickly return to the justice system when they are in such a volatile situation. However, Sam re-linked with YAC who were able to provide support.

"That's why the support is good because the justice system doesn't really do that ... like help you find housing or like food."

When asked in what way YAC were able to help, she will tell you a long list:

"Everything. Food vouchers, lifts to court, lifts to appointments, support at appointments, like victims assist, doctors appointments, heaps of stuff for my house when I moved in and had nothing. Court support. Whenever I need information I call YAC. Whenever I need to go somewhere

they'll help. Pretty much everything honestly."

"Because I've got support now ... I don't have nothing, so I'm not like I'm going to go do crimes to like get food or something because I've got support that helps. If I need to get somewhere I've got support."

Now Sam has big plans for her future:

"I'm in housing so I'm stable but I'm looking for long term housing. I've got a job now... maybe start studying something, not at uni, but just a course or something. I want to go to the mines but I have to wait until I get my licence back. Because then you're stable and you don't need anything else."

Providing this support seems logical and necessary to Youth Workers, but it can feel rare for young people who are stuck in a system focused on punitive action.

YAC is extremely proud of young people like Sam and our Youth Workers who deliver this crucial support.

Unfortunately, our services continue to be limited by financial costs. You can support young people like Sam through a donation to our services.

Would you recommend YAC?

Yeah, 100%

They just lock people up but.. they just let them out to nothing.

”



Together, we can create a better future for our children.

The children we work with are often victims of abuse or neglect and deserve an opportunity to turn a page in their life.

Will you join us in supporting them to get their lives back on track?

Choose your impact:



\$25
Birthday cake



\$100
Groceries



\$250
School uniform pack



\$1000
30 hours of support



Donate here





Legal Support

YAC has seen many changes to Queensland's youth justice laws, but in 2022-23 the changes represent significant challenges to the human rights of children. These changes include:

- the introduction of the application of the offence of breach of bail to children,
- a presumption against bail (show cause) provisions for young people ,
- declarations that a child is a serious repeat offender, which removes detention as last resort as primary consideration in sentencing those children,
- allowing the use of electronic monitoring devices on fifteen year old young people and ,
- increasing maximum sentences.

Sadly many of these provisions specifically over ride Queensland's Human Rights Act. YAC has weathered many changes to the youth justice laws, and our expectation is that these harsh laws will not reduce youth crime.

About our Legal Support

YAC's specialist youth lawyers work with young people aged 10 to up 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
- advocating 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 a specialist knowledgeable 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.

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.

YAC's Domestic and Family Violence solicitor has 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, as well as 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. Rika Wani, who was very capably undertaking the role, commenced maternity leave in late April 2023 shortly before the birth of her daughter. Our generalist casework lawyer Vai Leavaiseeta, who is an accredited domestic and family violence duty lawyer and well experienced in the domestic and family violence jurisdiction, has undertaken the locum in Rika's absence.

Year in review

YAC has ably responded to the perceived "crisis" in Youth Justice with the lawyers quickly adapting to and familiarising themselves with the significant changes in legislation and associated policy reviews and innovations. YAC has also participated in the weekly meetings of the local Fast-Track Sentencing Pilot -a pilot program across 5 locations in Queensland to expedite resolution of children's matters before a magistrate to reduce remand time.

In March 2023 YAC welcomed Vai Leavaiseeta as our generalist lawyer. Vai, an experienced practitioner both in Australia and New Zealand, joined YAC from our fellow CLC, YFS Legal. Vai's much valued predecessor, Divina De Leon has now moved into the CLE role. Vai kindly agreed to fill the maternity -leave locum in the domestic and family violence position so in June 2023 we welcomed Alzena Mariani to the team. Alzena has significant experience in CLCs and indigenous legal services, working on youth justice matters and in criminal law generally across Victoria, the Northern Territory and Queensland (including in Mount Isa) and is also well experienced in child protection matters.

Bess Howard has maintained a large proportion of the advice work despite her part time role and, with the Youth Support Team, has been involved with complex support for young people who have been victims of crime. Bess has assisted young people to apply for compensation and to understand the intricacies of the law and its processes on occasion using her considerable skill to appreciate the nuances of the law around consent and its ramifications. Bess has also assisted in in co-ordinating YAC's legal volunteer program to enhance service delivery and research capacity. Bess is currently taking a well-earned long break with our much-valued volunteers assisting to cope with the workload in her absence.

The legal team continued a high volume of clients, defending young people in trials, bail applications and sentences in the Childrens Court of Queensland and in the Childrens Courts constituted by a magistrate. Mental health, substance misuse, and family breakdown remain significant challenges for our client group with recent media saturation on youth crime often reenforcing our client's sense of isolation and lack of belonging. Queensland's remand numbers remain the highest in the country unassisted by the changes to the bail laws. The legal team remain alert to the inadequacy of the doli incapax provisions to address Queensland's very young 16

age of criminal responsibility. The legal staff continue to be confronted by the disturbing numbers and length of stays of young people in the watch house and in lockdown whilst in detention and the disproportionate rate of first nation's young people in the youth justice system- particularly those incarcerated. Damian was grateful to have attended the AIJA Indigenous Youth Justice Conference in Sydney in October 2022 to learn about initiatives to assist and empower First Nation's young people and their families. YAC is delighted that Vai has been invited to be part Judicial Council on Diversity and Inclusion as community member with a particular focus on improving access to justice for people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and young people.

Goals for the future

In the forthcoming 12 months the legal team:

- will continue to enhance the representation and advice for young people in the DFV system.
- monitor the operation of the bail law amendments including the use of electronic monitoring for children;
- will 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 ;
- will continue to ensure cultural awareness both within the team and the youth justice system including maintaining advocacy for a youth Murri court in Brisbane.

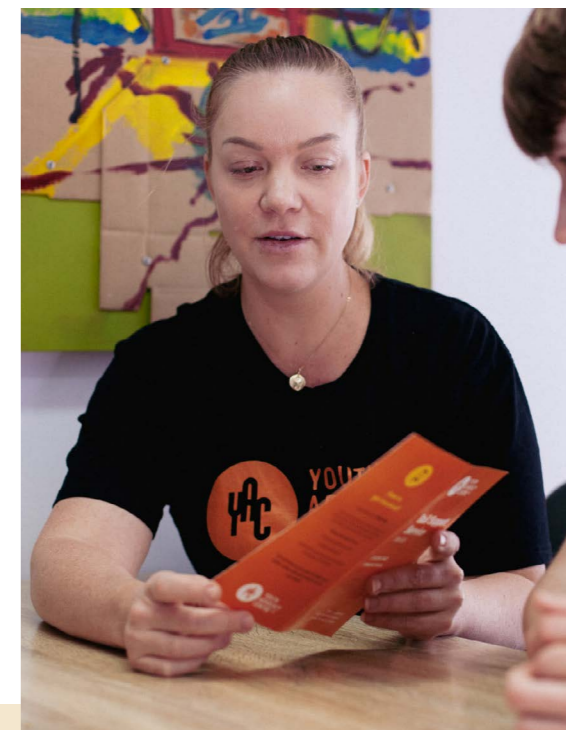
Youth Advocacy Centre (YAC) assisted a young person, aged 15, who was charged with numerous charges before the Childrens Court. The young person was denied bailed and was remanded in custody.

During this time a referral was made to have a "Fitness for Trial" assessment done. The young person was found unfit to stand trial. As result of this information numerous charges were discontinued but other more serious charges were referred to the Mental Health Court. A second bail application was advanced and was refused, and the young person was remanded in custody.

The young person had spent a substantial amount of time in pre court custody. Should the young person have pleaded guilty to the charges that were referred to the Mental Health Court, they were highly unlikely to receive a custodial sentence. Matters in the Mental Health Court can take up to two years to resolve. Without bail the young person could be in custody until then.

It was YAC's priority to get the young person out of detention and ensure that when they were released with appropriate access to services and assessments to promote their rehabilitation. The report provided that the young person had multiple and complex cognitive impairment and disabilities.

- will 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



As a multidisciplinary organisation that assists young people with both their unmet legal needs and social needs the YAC lawyer and the Family Support Co-ordinator collaborated to ensure the needs of this young person were met.

A YAC lawyer filed a bail application for them in the Childrens Court of Queensland, and they were granted bail. When the young person was released, the Family Support Co-ordinator ensured they had access to appropriate assistance.

The Family Support Co-ordinator maintained contact with all relevant stakeholders including the Child Safety Officer, Youth Justice Co-ordinator, their Doctor, Residential Support worker, and their family, ensuring that everyone was properly informed and that the young person's needs were met. YAC assisted with securing a suitable placement for the young person, the commencement of their NDIS application, and providing the young person with hope.

Now the problem is resolved as the young person has built a better relationship with people in authority, is motivated to re-engage back in school, is a more open with their support workers, acknowledging to their support team when they are struggling and need help.

YAC assisted a young person who had charges committed as child and had turned 18. Due to their age this young person was required to provide additional financial and other documentation to Legal Aid to be considered for legal representation. Due to issues with homelessness the young person was unable to provide this in a timely way.

The young person had left their home in regional Queensland due to the high-level conflict in their parents' relationship (the parents separated after the young person moved out) and moved to Brisbane to reside with a sibling. The rental the siblings shared with another person was sold and the older sibling arranged another property. Due to the increasing demand in the rental market this was more expensive. The young person was unable to move far due to their desire to complete their educational commitments. The older sibling was demanding of the young person to contribute to the rent and utility costs and when discussing the financial strain the sibling became overbearing and violent towards the young person. The young person was working two casual positions and studying fulltime. Ultimately the young person could only maintain one job due their educational and other logistical issues.

Under this pressure the young person resorted to unsophisticated property offending. The precise period of offending was unclear but was initially alleged to involve offending as an adult that could have resulted in a significant period of imprisonment. The young person eventually left the sibling's home on the advice of police responding to the reports of violence and was thereafter homeless, sleeping in a vehicle and using publicly accessible showering and laundry facilities.

Despite these challenges the young person finished their education and applied for a paid training position that provided

accommodation in a well-respected organisation.

The Youth Support Service team were able to assist the young person with referrals for assistance and completion of the necessary documents to fulfil the traineeship application. The young person was concerned that the pending court process and a court history may affect their capacity to attend the traineeship.

The YAC lawyer was able to represent the young person in their criminal matters, negotiate with the police to remove the allegation of the adult offending and then resolve the matters before the traineeship commenced with a consequence that did not result in a court history. The young person then received confirmation of a placement in the training program and was able to commence their traineeship with accommodation. The young person has successfully now completed the course and been offered a contract of employment for an initial period of 18 months.



Client Survey

Over 98% of legal support clients either agreed or strongly agreed that YAC legal staff listened to their problem in a friendly and respectful manner.

Over 90% of clients either agreed or strongly agreed;

- the YAC was easy to access when they needed help;
- YAC legal staff helped the client to understand their legal matter and provided them with options;
- they felt confident in the ability of the legal staff to assist them;
- they were satisfied with the resolution of their matter.

"Very helpful information. Nice to know there is access to free legal help".

"Thank the service for all their help".

"Clears up a lot of things, legal questions + options of what can and can't be done, which is really helpful! Hope more people can get help from YAC"





Community Legal Education

About Community Legal Education

YAC is widely recognised in the sector as the go-to organisation to provide legal information to young people. YAC's resources, expertise and capability around youth work and the law are also seen as critical support for those working with young people.

YAC's community legal education (CLE) officer works with young people aged 10 to 18 years, while also providing training to youth workers. The CLE team can:

- attend 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 youth workers, teachers, school guidance officers, etc - with information and training about legal issues relevant to their work
- Assist with submissions to government and other bodies regarding youth issues

In particular, the CLE officer delivers an in-depth 2-day workshop together with YAC's Youth and Court Support Coordinator.

Whether YAC is working with young people or youth workers, the message underpinning all CLE programs is simple: knowledge is power.

Why we provide Community Legal Education

YAC understands that it can be difficult to avoid getting into trouble with the law when you don't know what the law is. Making the law more accessible by educating young people about their legal rights and responsibilities is therefore a key priority for YAC.

Empowering young people with greater knowledge about the law allows them to make more informed decisions. It will also aid in their ability 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

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
- Collaborating with UQ students on the YAC TikTok project



69
Community Legal Education sessions delivered

4
New resources developed

120,000
TikTok video views

Goals for the future

There has been an increased demand from schools, youth agencies, Government and non-government organisations for the in-person delivery of CLE sessions.

There is a definite need in the community for an increase, not only in physical education sessions, but also through other platforms such as social media, website content, and online training.

The demand is not limited to the inner Brisbane city with the requests for CLE delivery extending from the Gold Coast, Caboolture and the Sunshine Coast.

With our current capacity, it is difficult to keep up with the demand from schools and youth agencies for visits from our CLE officer. Youth workers understand the importance of educating young people and request this service on an ongoing basis.

With additional funding for this service, we would be able to increase our educational interactions with young people and continue to inform them of laws, rights, and other information relevant and helpful to them.

UQ TikTok Project

In 2023, our CLE officer has maintained their collaboration with the UQ Pro Bono Centre to undertake an educational project to be delivered on TikTok. Given that TikTok is one of the biggest social media platforms among young people, it is important for YAC to reach out to young people through the medium they most prefer and trust as an information source.

This resource has proven to be particularly valuable in educating young people about changes in the law that occurred early this year. A passionate group of UQ law students have been working with our CLE team to translate valuable legal information into engaging and accessible TikTok videos.

In 2022-23 our videos had over 120,000 views! Due to the success of the project, we are hopeful to continue the partnership next year and provide timely information to young people.



Laying Down the Law Online

Our 'Laying Down the Law' crash course for those working with young people has continued to be popular in our sector.

The course educates learners on the most important laws affecting youth workers and what their responsibilities are.

The training also provides participants with a decision making framework that will allow them to make decisions that are child centered, human rights compliant, and consistent with the law.

We have recently moved to a new online platform to improve and expand our online learning offering.

For more information, visit learn.yac.net.au



Bail Support

About our Bail Support

Across the Bail Support and Community Connector services, the BoSS team worked with 236 young people in this financial year.

The Bail Support team is made up of two services, both funded under the Intensive Bail Initiative (IBI). The first is the Bail Support Service (BOSS), which offers individualised 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 second service is Community Connector (CC) service, 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 our sub-contracted partners, KYC.

Partnerships & Projects

As a necessity of working with young people in the Youth Justice System, we have ongoing partnerships with YJ Service centres in Brisbane North and Brisbane South, the Sunshine Coast and Redlands. The collaborative work we engage in with each service centre takes on a unique focus depending on the needs of our shared clients, but these relationships are always mutually respectful, collaborative and focussed on ensuring that young people's voices are heard and choices are respected.

Our partnership with the Brisbane North Youth Co-Responder Team (CRT) has continued to demonstrate its value in identifying and engaging with young people at the early stages of involvement with the Youth Justice system. Clear, regular communication with CRT additionally enables any trends, events or risks in the community to be identified so that our workers are able to practice effectively and safely, and YAC hopes to continue providing services through the Bail Support team as an appropriate early intervention service and referral pathway for young people in the Brisbane North Area.

The Bail Support program maintains a regular presence at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre (BYDC), supporting young people to transition effectively from their period of time in custody into the community. Collaboration with the casework team has been efficient and supportive, and the leadership at BYDC have streamlined access to Visits Beyond Visits (VBV) training for YAC staff this year, which has enabled us access to engage with young people in custody more frequently to build rapport and explore motivation to change during their time on remand. Additionally, Youth Justice has facilitated a connection with the Brisbane City



127
Bail Support clients

54
Community Connector clients

Watchhouse enabling us to make contact with young people who are freshly arrested to canvas available supports and explore referral pathways at the early stage of their time in custody to assist a smooth transition back into community.

Our partners from the Department of Investment and Commissioning have continued to assist in the implementation of the IBI through the provision of updated service agreements, and feedback regarding data collection and recording processes, allowing us to accurately record the excellent work our team has completed.

YAC's arrangement with KYC to implement the after-hours weekend support component of the IBI has continued to be a reliable and valuable partnership – KYC's consistency and flexibility in coming up with creative solutions to support our clients being of note.

Year in review

BoSS has experienced a number of significant changes in the past 12 months. These have included:

December 2022 saw the conclusion of a long-standing partnership with 54 Reasons (previously Save the Children Australia). As a direct result of this, Bail Support has been able to employ an additional Case worker and Youth worker to assist in the implementation of BOSS.

Bail Support's previous Coordinator Tanya Turrell sadly concluded her time with YAC, with Jaclyn Sullivan assuming the role of Coordinator for the Bail Support team. Jaclyn is currently on Maternity leave and will return in 2024, with her role being backfilled in the interim period.

The Community Connector (CC) program was renamed (previously known as Community Co-Responder or CC-R) in order to reduce confusion with Youth Justice Co-Responder Team. Additionally, the provision of after hours contact was adjusted to include only weekend support, rather than

weekdays after-hours.

The Family Partnership (FP) element of the IBI was moved to be under the Coordination of Leah McInnes, the coordinator of YAC's existing Family Support program, in order to ensure consistent practice and framework across YAC's different family programs. FP remains an important element of the IBI, and Bail Support will continue to work closely with the FP practitioners to support mutual clients and refer families for additional support.

Goals for the future

With another year of delivery of the IBI, YAC looks to the future with optimism. Community Connector has cemented its utility in the community as a new program and referrals in have increased accordingly. It is hoped that this valuable pilot program may be expanded to work in other catchment areas in time.

An ongoing working group between the various client-facing teams of YAC hopes to create a streamlined process for referrals in, so that young people are rapidly connected to the best fitted service to meet their needs on referral to our organisation.

We hope to continue the excellent client work we have always provided in the community and further cement pathways with various government and non-government organisations such as NDIS, Education and Employment providers in order to facilitate warm introductions with clients of our program and continuum of safe, culturally capable and trauma-informed practice.

Alice's Story



Alice was referred to BoSS while on remand in the watchhouse for some charges at court. Prior to her arrest, Alice's relationship with her mother broke down and as a result she had become homeless, and was couch surfing at friend's houses. Alice had been denied bail due to not having a stable bail address or having any stable adults in her life who could support her to uphold any bail conditions that they might impose. Alice was held in the watchhouse for some time as there were no beds available at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre for her to be transferred.

The magistrate made a decision to grant Alice bail at her next appearance because BoSS had accepted her referral, and were able to support her bail conditions.

BoSS was able to support Alice to report while she was subject to bail, and additionally supported her to gain ID so that she was able to obtain her learner's licence. BoSS supported Alice to make reports to Child Safety about her situation so that residential accommodation options could be explored, and Alice has recently been successful in securing supported accommodation, having been transported to appointments and supported by BoSS.

Alice has successfully gotten copies of her own ID and now has her learner's licence, and has accessed a mental health plan with an active referral to see a psychologist to support her with her trauma, related to her family and upbringing.

Alice's court matters were recently all successfully finalised and BoSS will continue to support Alice to complete her orders.



Family Support

About our Family Support

YAC's Family Support worker works with young people aged 10 to 18 and their family – but only with the agreement of the young person. They help:

- young people to re-build 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

YAC 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 significant 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 and sometimes older siblings. YAC 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 from our legal team 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. 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

Family Support had an excessively busy year with up to 15 families supported at any one time. 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 was also successful in gaining a grant for supporting young people



Feedback from our clients

“Thank you Family Support so much for coming to support my family & I. And actually always just being that phone call away. Appreciate all your support.”
- Parent after court support

“(YP) came home & we supported him. He was very upset. But on a positive note his relationship with (father) & myself is good. (YP) is staying home, definitely a good time to reach out. Thanks for your help.”
- Parent after young person has a negative experience with Police and taken to the watch house.

“I'm very very glad (father) is with him. I really appreciate it your effort in this”
- Parents after young person reconnected with his father after being estranged for several months.

“Thankyou so much ur honestly a amazing gem” “Have a good one (worker). I'll miss you. It was so good to see you yesterday”
- Recently exited young person.

“Thanks it really has been a journey I'll be keen for a pub feed soon and thanks for the support (worker) appreciate it”
- Young person finalising court

“Thank you (worker). You are the closest thing I have to a parent”
- Young person who is currently being supported through her pregnancy. Her mother passed away 6 years ago, and her father has struggled to come to terms with her pregnancy thus far and is currently not communicating with her. Family Support is working independently with both young person and father to overcome this barrier to their relationship.

returning to school/training. Family Support were able to provide 12 young people up to \$850 worth of school supplies such as books, bags, uniforms, shoes, laptop, school fees, food vouchers for school lunches, GoCards for transport.

Looking ahead

There continues to be an unmet demand for family support. YAC has sought approval to have the Family Support Coordinator oversee both the Family Support and Family Partnership programs. This aims to enrich both programs by having a larger pool of practitioners to collaborate through de-identified case reviews and planning sessions. The current quarter has been the first quarter of this change and while early days, feedback from both program workers has indicated it has improved

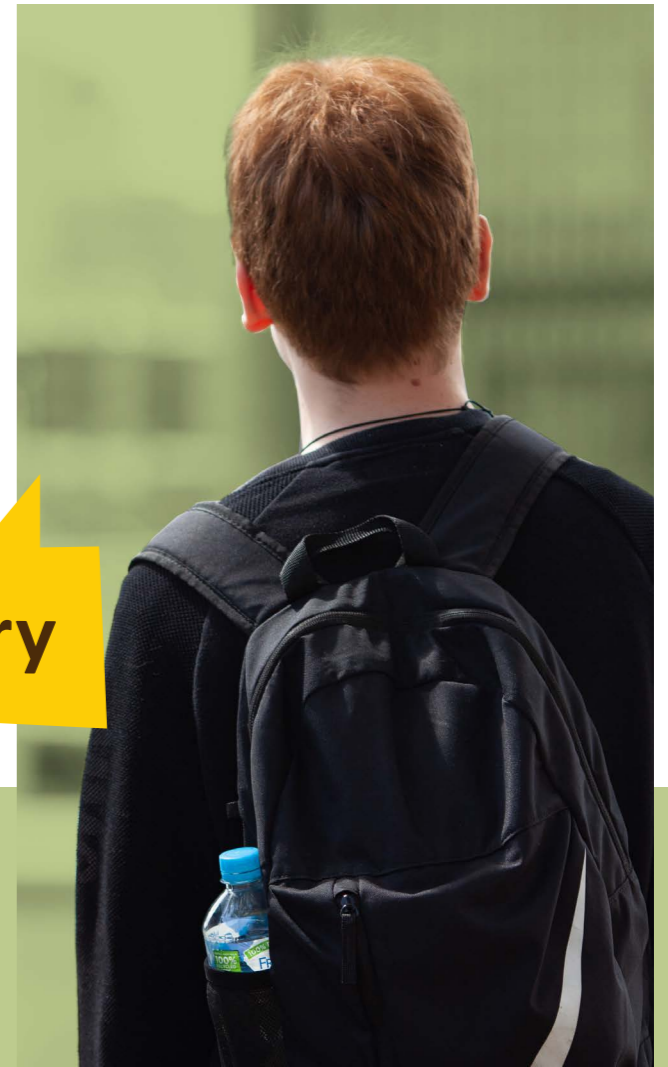
Michael's Story

Michael had been a client of the Youth Advocacy Centre Family Support program since March 2019 until he 'aged out' at 18 late 2023. He was initially referred by YAC Legal after representing him at court. He remains one of the longest supported young people by Family Support. Michael has experienced a history of serious, ongoing trauma. Michael's childhood was severely impacted by domestic violence, Child Safety involvement and periods in out-of-home care. Michael was greatly impacted by his mother's alcoholism and erratic, conflictual parenting. It seems that from Michael's upbringing, he learnt unhealthy ways of dealing with conflict and difficult emotions, often resorting to substance use.

Michael has been using illegal and prescription drugs from the age of approximately 12 years old. Drug use has continuously impacted almost every facet of Michael's life from school to family, health, relationships, accommodation, employment, and involvement with Youth Justice and Child Safety systems.

Over the years, Family Support program has sought to assist Michael to understand the impact of his history on his present behaviours and consider and adopt alternative ways of responding. During the time we have been working with Michael, he has struggled with unemployment, substance misuse, family conflict, stressful life events, social isolation, ill-health, bereavement, domestic violence, financial problems and at times, homelessness.

The person closest and most significant to Michael was his mother, Sarah. Sarah passed away mid-July 2021 after many years struggling with alcoholism and emphysema. This loss devastated Michael.



Michael's 4 siblings (all older) have found his behaviour (predominantly stemming from drug use) hard to deal with for the last few years and have felt the need to cut off contact with Michael for periods of time. Michael's father, Brian, is terminally ill with stage 4 cancer. Brian also concedes he has played a part in Michael's behaviour and drug use due to his parenting of Michael in early childhood. There have been large periods of time where he has not been involved in Michael's life. Family Support has worked closely with all these family members. Michael tells us that he expects and anticipates rejection and abandonment. In turn, this causes him to struggle in seeking out prosocial peers and maintaining positive relationships. This has left Michael with very few trusted adults in his life.

Despite his traumatic history, with the support of Family Support Michael has had periods of coping well, for example, returning to school, securing stable accommodation, sustaining employment, completing a certificate in construction and recently purchased his first car. His worker still checks in with Michael from time to time, even though he is no longer a client, due to Michael's strong connection to YAC.



Youth Support

About our Youth Support

YAC delivers two youth support programs (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, victim of a crime) to transition to independence.

YASS provides advocacy, casework support and housing assistance to assist young people with securing, maintaining and sustaining tenancies. YASS provides both centre-based and mobile support across Brisbane, Caboolture, Beenleigh, Ipswich and Moreton Bay. The programs provide tailored support to address young people's homelessness, legal and other support needs with a view to future positive pathways through referrals, supportive and flexible engagement, advocacy-based case work and proactive support.

YASS also delivers the Youth Court Assistance Program (YCAP) at Brisbane, Caboolture, Redcliffe and Pine Rivers Childrens Courts as a component of its mobile support service, discussed further below.

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 Pumicestone Indigenous Education & Employment Council Inc (PIEEC) at weekly outreach at Bribie Island in providing access and outreach.

Partnerships

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.

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.

YASS focuses on engaging young people with culture and community, while also connecting with educators from local schools who are wanting to improve their Indigenous programs. The program has linked with the PIEEC and the number of young people attending continues to grow each week.

It attracts a diverse range of facilitators wanting to share including singers, dancers, artists, archeologist and also local community who want to connect with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people to build inclusive environments / workplaces. One such person who is Aunty Sharron Mirii Bell recorded some young people singing and dancing for her song, 'I am me'. This song was released for Children's Rights Week earlier this week.

Acknowledgements

- Aunty Flo Watson
- Uncle Ivan Pickering
- Uncle Ron Powell
- Uncle Phil Moxham
- Uncle Ted Crockett
- Aunty Karen Crockett

- David Gibson
- Julian Ellis
- Uncle Ron Watson
- Michelle Watson
- Madonna Gibson
- Aunty Fran Visini

This year we have also been visited by Cultural Facilitators:

- Aunty Melinda Serico
- Aunty Sharron Bell
- Uncle Tais Muckan
- Uncle Bob Robinson
- Rachel Bywaters
- Nicole Gulwell
- Sherrie Bruce

This year we farewelled Bec Strong (Youth Support Advocate) and Sophie Marshall (casual) who were both valued members of our team.

Isla's Story



Isla was 16 years of age when she accessed YASS (Caboolture). Isla was in custody for youth justice matters and was unable to return to her mother's home.

Support was provided to Isla to secure a range of housing solutions including emergency, transitional and Social Housing (with a new-born baby), then to a private rental share house. Due to Domestic Violence, Isla had to be re-referred to transitional housing, and further support and advocacy was provided for Isla to transfer into a long-term property.

Support to sustain Isla's tenancy included liaising with the tenancy manager to advocate for Isla around some vexatious complaints that were received. Support to link Isla in with other support agencies such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Health Service (wellbeing team) and Australian Nurse Family Partnership Program for parenting support was also provided.

Other support included arranging baby items via GIVIT, transport to medical appointments, assistance to complete applications, support to finish school, attending her high school graduation, and more.

Aaron's Story

Aaron was 17 when he was referred by a specialist counseling service as he was in youth detention and was to be released with nowhere to live. Aaron was unable to return home to his family or community due to the nature of his charges being of a sexual nature.

Aaron was also in the care of Child Safety and due to him turning 18 in less than 6 months had no housing solution for him. Aaron also had moderate disabilities, however, was not assessed through NDIS to be eligible for housing support through SILS (disability).

YAC supported Aaron through:

- Assessment and planning for support needs
- Visits to youth detention to support his transition plan from custody
- Support to complete housing application
- Assistance to attend stakeholder meetings
- Support to maintain tenancy with disability support service

Through this support, Aaron is now living in long term supported housing, is continuing to develop living skills, has no further legal matters, and is employed.



Bribie Outreach - NAIDOC Week

The Youth Advocacy Centre was elated to co-host community NAIDOC celebrations alongside the Pumicestone Indigenous Education and Employment Council (PIEEC) at Bribie Island in 2023.

The event was an opportunity to say thank you to the Elders who volunteer their time at youth outreach events, as well as offer mentoring and support to the community. It was also a chance to thank the many volunteers who have taken part in the youth outreach events over the past year that aim to support young people, foster cultural connection, and grow community relationships. And last, but by no means least, we celebrated Bribie Island Elder Aunty Flo Watson on her National NAIDOC Elder of the Year 2023 award. Aunty Flo has been instrumental in bringing together this community.

The program began after workers saw many disengaged young people facing barriers including unemployment, lack of support services tailored to young people, lack of accessible housing, and lack of training opportunities. Each Thursday during the school term, YAC workers run activities out of the Bribie Lions Hall. Young people are welcomed to free activities, healthy afternoon tea, and to engage with Elders and cultural mentors who visit the space.

The program also allows Youth Workers to engage with young people and provide a local response to housing or homelessness matters, legal issues, and other information about training or educational opportunities. It is also an

opportunity to link young people with Elders and provide early intervention support in a culturally safe environment.

The superb work of the program was acknowledged at the NAIDOC event, with organisation and community leaders speaking about the success of the program and their vision for further growth. Aunty Sharron Mirii Bell led a dance and smoking ceremony with many local young people, thoroughly entertaining Elders and people who attended.

The Bribie outreach program had 843 participants over 42 occasions in 2022-23. (This includes instances of engagement, not unique participants)





Youth Court Assistance

About YCAP

YCAP (Youth Court Assistance Program) provides a specialised legal advocacy and court support worker at the Childrens Court to assist young people and their families who attend court or are in custody.

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) response, South-West Brisbane Bail Support Service (SWAP) or Cairns and Yarrabah Bail Support Service (CYYBSS).

YCAP is seen as a specific program within YAC and it is coordinated under the Youth Court and 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 also provides support to young people who may be in the Cairns watchhouse and has provided support to young people in the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre in Townsville when required.

CYYBSS enables seamless support to maintain connections with young people in a consistent and coordinated way by supporting young people at court or while in custody at the watch house and in CYDC.

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.

In the last year, Cairns has experienced high numbers of young people attending court and being processed through the watch house. Unfortunately, some young people have experienced significant periods of time in the watch house, while awaiting transfer to a youth detention centre.

It is well documented that lengthy periods of time in a watchhouse can be detrimental to a young person's mental

and physical health. The YCAP role has played a pivotal part in providing support to young people within the watch house 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, Richland and Ipswich regions. SWAP provide the YCAP program at Ipswich and Richlands Childrens Courts.

The role includes providing information, supportive referrals and support before, during, and after court. As part of the collaborative response, the service also provides advocacy and social welfare support at West Moreton Youth Detention Centre and Ipswich and Richlands Watch Houses, and in the community.

"Just wanted to say a big thank you for your work at court each week. We always appreciate you but just wanted to acknowledge what an amazing job you do! Lots of young people today asking where you were and I could tell your presence is really valued by our young people and their families – as well as all of us."

- Youth Justice Court Worker

Alex's Story

Alex was 14 years of age when he accessed the Cairns and Yarrabah Youth Bail Support Service (CYYBSS) through the YCAP component of the service. The YCAP worker met with Alex when he appeared at Court for the first time. Alex had limited understanding of the court process and identified the impact of being at court had on his anxiety.

Alex was on a long-term Guardianship order and had recently begun self-placing with his mother in her mobile home. Alex reported concerning deterioration in his mental health since self-placing with his mother and not taking his medication for his anxiety. This resulted in thoughts of self-harm and self-medicating. Alex was not receiving any support from any services and had limited family support.

The YCAP worker provided information to Alex and his mother about the court process, facilitated a referral for ongoing case work support to CYYBSS and provided

follow up support at court with CYFOS and CYMHS. With Alex's consent, the YCAP worker also liaised with Child Safety around concerns of the YP's presentation at court; ATSILS around Alex's court appearance and supported him through the court process.

Alex was provided with support throughout his engagement in the court system and his offending has reduced significantly. Alex was supported to access supports where his general wellbeing and safety have increased since initial engagement and risk has decreased significantly. Alex is now willing to access a residential care house with the support of medication for his anxiety. Alex continues to actively engage with supports.



Ella's Story

The YCAP worker attended court and met with Ella at the watchhouse. Ella advised she was unable to return home and had no bail address, leaving her homeless if released. Ella had no professional community supports and needed comprehensive support. The YCAP worker supported Ella in Court and bail was granted with no fixed address and she was released into the community. During the week, the YCAP worker provided follow up support and spoke with Ella and her mother and established that she was couch surfing.

A QHIP (Queensland Homelessness Information Platform) referral was completed, and accommodation was identified, and a referral sent. The accommodation service was concerned about the offences with which Ella had been charged with and initially rejected the referral. The YCAP worker liaised with the accommodation service, Ella's lawyer, and Ella over the following few weeks to ensure that the charges before the court were explained in context. The YCAP worker advocated for Ella to successfully secure accommodation and Ella was offered case management support and accommodation at the service.

The YCAP worker provided court advocacy and emotional support throughout Ella's court appearances and support to her mother under the parameters set by Ella. She was housed in supportive housing and received ongoing case management. After Ella was housed, the YCAP worker continued to check in with her until her matters were finalised. Ella has had no further youth justice matters.

Zandi's Story

Zandi was 17 years of age when she accessed support at Redcliffe Children's Court. Zandi was supporting her partner and did not have legal issues. Zandi was 26 weeks pregnant and was experiencing homelessness and couch surfing with friends for periods of time.

Support was provided to Zandi to explore all housing options including private rental. Zandi and her partner later became carers of her partner's 14-year-old sister. Later support was provided to Zandi with attending parenting appointments, driving lessons and provide referrals for financial support regarding outstanding bills that she accrued.

Other support included sourcing second hand furniture, assistance when speaking with Child Safety, and more.

Zandi has since completed an online course in Community Services and sustained her tenancy in her transitional property for over 12 months. She is resourced on where to obtain financial assistance and has obtained her provisional licence.

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.

 2100 followers

 1150 followers

 120,000 views

 90,000 website sessions



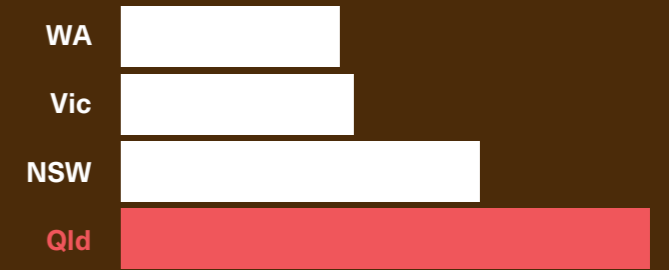
Advocates say children are being held in adult watch houses in Queensland for weeks at a time

By state political reporters Rachel Riga and Kate McKenna
Posted Tue 7 Feb 2023 at 5:37am, updated Tue 7 Feb 2023 at 2:14pm



Queensland Youth Justice Snapshot

Queensland has the most children in detention of all Australian states and territories, with an average of 275 each day.

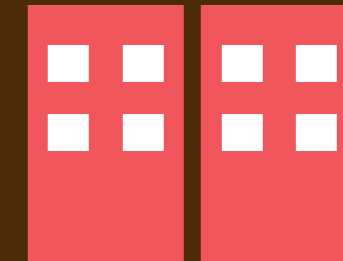


~~Human Rights~~

The Queensland Government overrode the *Human Rights Act 2019* twice in 2023.

The Queensland Government is building two more youth detention centres.

Detention of children costs over \$2,000.00/day per child.



The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being incarcerated has increased 10% from 2021/22 to 2022/23.

There were 8000 instances of children being held in adult watchhouses & police stations in 2021/22.

Conditions in the watchhouse may include: no sunlight, lack of sanitary products, limited privacy when using the toilet or shower, degrading treatment, high mental stress, and more.



Community Projects & Events

Bribie Outreach

In partnership with Pumicestone Indigenous Education and Employment Council Inc (PIEEC), our Moreton Bay Youth Support team have been hosting regular community events at Bribie Island. The events are an opportunity for young people in the area to come together to learn, play, and connect with Elders. Santa even made a special visit to hand out presents to children.



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.

Inala First Nations Festival

YAC attended the Inala First Nations Festival which was a great opportunity to speak with many local young people, families, and services.



Bribie Big Arvo Youth Week

YAC workers had a wonderful time at Bribie Big Arvo for Youth Week, also in partnership with PIEEC.

BayWave Youth Festival

YAC staff attended BayWave Youth Festival at Wynnum. The festival, organised by BABI Youth & Family Service, shows appreciation for the diversity and creative passions of young people whether it is through music, performances, sports or competitions.



F45 Beenleigh Fundraiser

The wonderful team at F45 Beenleigh did a massive 10 high intensity fitness classes in 1 day to raise funds for YAC, with a few YAC staff joining in also! A special thanks to the F45 team for their support.

Musgrave Park Family Fun Day

YAC joined one of Australia's biggest NAIDOC Week events, the Musgrave Park Family Fun Day. The event saw a huge amount of community members join together to celebrate NAIDOC.



What's the Story? - Advocacy Event

In March, supporters of YAC joined us to hear Trent Dalton and Craig Silvey interviewed by Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO at our 'What's the Story' event.

The discussion provided some wonderful insights into the writing process of both authors, the people that inspired their stories, and how their stories remind us of how important it is to support vulnerable young people in our communities. We were moved by how honest both authors were in sharing their experiences and calling us into action to be the supporters that will help young people flourish.

A special thank you to MinterEllison for hosting the event in support of YAC.

David Hinchliffe also donated an incredible artwork for auction, with David Holmes conducting the auction. Aunty Dawn Daylight performed the Welcome to Country. The event was also supported by JMC Academy and Avid Reader Bookshop.



Partnerships & Supporters

Funders

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

- National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020–25 (NLAP): a national partnership agreement between the Australian Government and all states and territories.
- The Queensland Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy (formerly the Department of Housing and Public Works)
- Queensland Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (formerly Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women)
- Department of Justice & Attorney-General
- Moreton Bay Regional Council
- Brisbane City Council

Non-government

- Lady Bowen Trust
- Queensland Presentation Sisters
- Hand Heart Pocket

Sponsors & Donors

- Presentation Congregation Queensland (PCQ)
- Colin Biggers Paisley
- Private donors

Pro Bono Support

- MinterEllison
- CBP Lawyers

Partners

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

Networks

- Community Legal Centres Queensland (CLCQ)
- Community Legal Centres Australia (CLCA)
- Community Legal Education Advocates meeting
- 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
- GForce (Create Foundation)
- 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)
- Bond University (student placements)
- QUT School of Justice (student placements)
- Queensland Council of Social Services
- Moreton Bay Murri Network (MBMN)

Volunteers & Students

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

UQ Pro Bono Centre students:

James, Ruby, Bella, Zoe, and Will.

Legal Support volunteers:

- Tilley Thomas-Earle
- Kate Hynes
- Luke Roberts
- Vanessa Boitchenko
- Richard Brooking
- Bri Coward
- Damian Hauff

Bribie Island outreach volunteers:

- Aunty Flo Watson
- Uncle Ivan Pickering
- Uncle Ron Powell
- Uncle Phil Moxham
- Uncle Ted Crockett
- Aunty Karen Crockett
- David Gibson
- Julian Ellis
- Uncle Ron Watson

- Michelle Watson
- Madonna Gibson
- Aunty Fran Visini

This year we have also been visited by Cultural Facilitators:

- Aunty Melinda Serico
- Aunty Sharron Bell
- Uncle Tais Muckan
- Uncle Bob Robinson

Students

Bond University (Law):

- Timothy Middleton
- Amelia Ridley
- Yi-an (Carol) Chen

Other volunteers

- Nayibe Jimenez-Perez

We thank all volunteers and students for their time and support.

Management Committee

The members of the Management Committee, who are listed below, volunteer their time and expertise in the governance of YAC and have overall responsibility for the organisation.

This is not a small responsibility and some members have undertaken this role for a significant period of time. YAC is fortunate to have the support of this group of dedicated and skilled people.

Damien Atkinson KC - Chairperson

Beth Toon - Deputy Chairperson

Nathan Robertson - Treasurer

Ruth Sharp - Secretary

Claire Marchesi - Committee Member

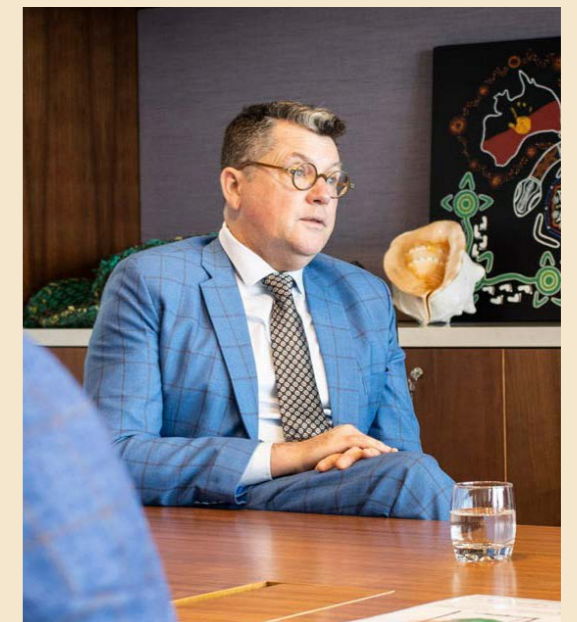
Tarryn McMullen - Committee Member

Ashleigh Larkin - Committee Member

Dr Terry Hutchinson - Committee Member

Elizabeth Howard - Staff Representative

Katherine Hayes - CEO





Contact

Youth Advocacy Centre
Level 4, 16 Peel Street,
South Brisbane QLD 4101
(07) 3356 1002

www.yac.net.au
admin@yac.net.au



**YOUTH
ADVOCACY
CENTRE** INC

Free, confidential
legal and social support
services for young people