

**Young
Workers
Centre**

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2020 –
JUNE 2021

YOUNG WORKERS CENTRE

TRADES HALL

Young Workers Centre
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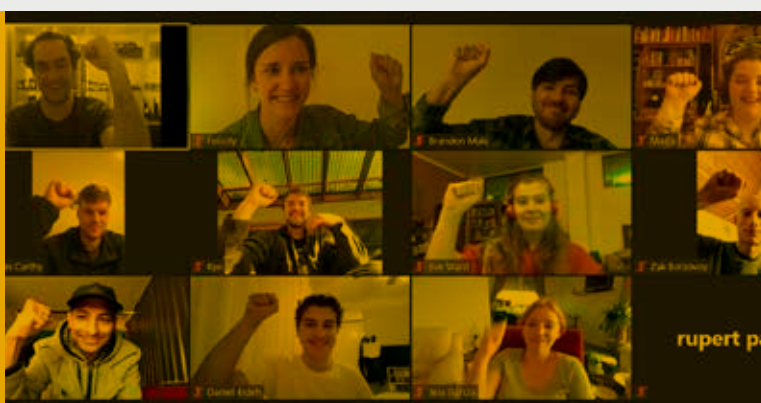
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The Young Workers Centre was established by the Victorian Trades Hall Council and affiliated unions in 2015 as a mechanism for creating safer, fairer workplaces for young people aged 30 and under.

The Young Workers Centre, Victorian Trades Hall Council, and affiliated unions are committed to supporting, educating, empowering, and organising young people in workplaces right across Victoria.

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which Trades Hall stands, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We also acknowledge the traditional owners of all the Koori lands across which the Young Workers Centre conducts our business. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. This land was stolen and sovereignty was never ceded. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.





A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Jessica Dawson-Field

Over the last six years, the Centre has advocated for safer and fairer work places for young workers. This year, the hard work of the team at the Centre has resulted in some fantastic outcomes which are set out in this Report. In 2021 alone, we have recovered over \$200,000 in unpaid wages which were stolen from young workers. We've dealt with queries ranging from sham contracting, to wage theft and sexual harassment.

We've provided training on bullying and harassment and occupational health and safety. In 2021 alone, we delivered training to over 3,000 young people, despite the difficulties of lockdown and the challenges of Zoom meetings.

We've supported law reform projects on a broad range of issues such as regulating working conditions of food delivery workers. We've advocated for safer apprenticeships and ensuring workers obtained their entitlements through Jobkeeper.

Throughout 2021, the Centre has continued to fight for young workers in the court room, and throughout the media. We have broken stories and provided comment on a range of issues including the gig economy.

The Centre is in a stronger position than ever to advocate for young workers. We continue to train the next generation of lawyers, advocates and organisers. We are approaching almost \$2 million in total compensation for young workers since we were established. These successes will only continue as we fight for better and safer workplaces.

On behalf of the YWC Committee of Management, I would like to thank our wonderful staff and advocates for continuing to uphold the values of the centre in these difficult times.



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR AND PRINCIPAL SOLICITOR

**Felicity Sowerbutts,
Director, and
Oanh Tran,
Principal Solicitor**

2020 - 2021 has been another big year for the Young Workers Centre and sadly another difficult year for young workers in our state - with a lot of it spent at home.

Beginning to see a recovery and return to normal in the first half of 2021, YWC returned to the Hall in fits and starts, and we welcomed some advocates into the Hall as well. This was exciting, although we were the only CLC to continue to take on law students for placements during the second lockdown here in Victoria, it was nice to be able to have advocates together at the Hall.

In October 2020, we moved to a new client database management system and also moved to entirely paperless filing and case management. This process was remarkably smooth, thanks in large part to Leon!

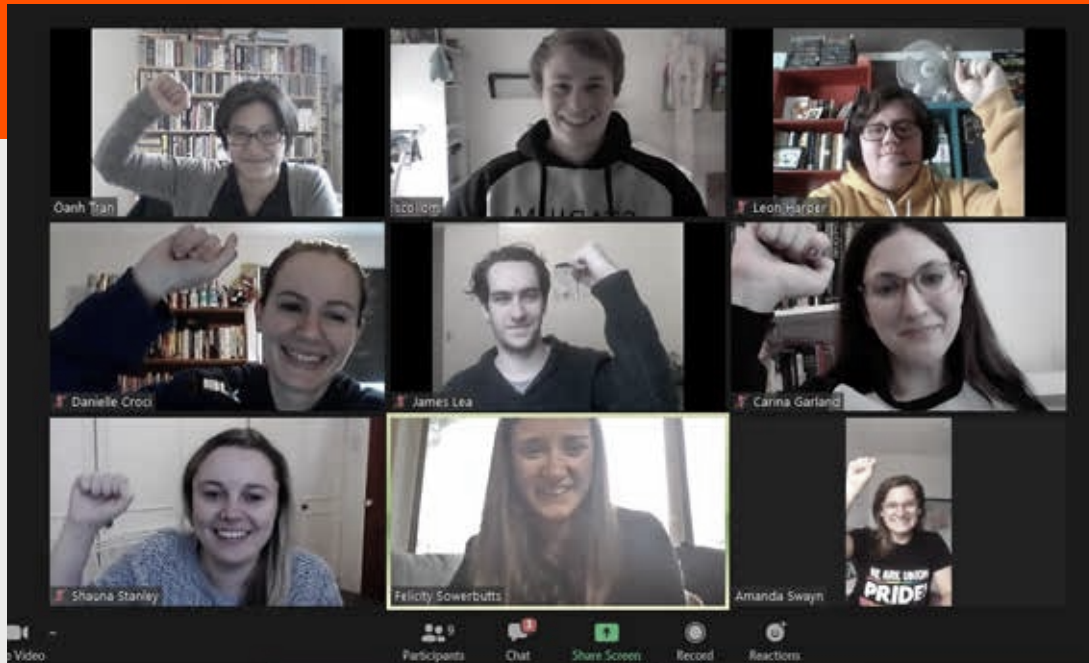
We've continued to campaign on Apprentice rights with a launch in April where over 40 apprentices and activists came together to plan our campaign. Although Covid-19 got in the way of some of these plans, our core group of activists have found ways to keep pushing the campaign forward and bring new activists in. Our Victorian youth week event 'Navigating the Apprenticeship system' was a great example of that.

Although we have had to remain flexible with the landscape changing around us, we've continued to educate young people on their rights at work through Zoom and our e-learning modules. The Young Workers Centre has remained a reliable voice in the media. Focusing on apprentice rights, Covid-19 recovery for Young workers and the gig economy.

In February of this year the Young Workers Centre turned 5 years old and due to work of our team, advocates and sensational activists; along with the ongoing support from Worksafe, EML, Slater + Gordon Lawyers, Maurice Blackburn Lawyers, Australian Super and our Committee of Management - we've recovered and won nearly \$1,400,000 for young workers, educated over 35,000 Victorian Students, assisted over 2,000 clients, trained over 150 law student advocates, and criminalised Wage Theft.

Everyday we get closer to our vision for a state in which young people are safe at work, do not suffer harassment or bullying, and are provided their legal entitlements.

MEET THE YOUNG WORKERS CENTRE TEAM



Olivia Pusey

Advocate Team Leader

Lauren Gerondakis

Advocate Team Leader

Leon Harper

Solicitor

Amanda Swayn

Solicitor

Danielle Croci

Outreach Organiser

Scott Collom

Outreach Organiser

James Lea

Campaign and Outreach Organiser

Shauna Stanley

Campaign and Outreach Organiser

Oanh Tran

Principal Solicitor

Felicity Sowerbutts

Director

Past team members:

Patrick Faulkner, Alan MacGill

LEGAL ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

Our numbers:

July 2020 – June 2021

352

young people assisted

2394

all time assisted

124

required information only

87

became legal clients

2

enquiries led to workplace campaigns

21

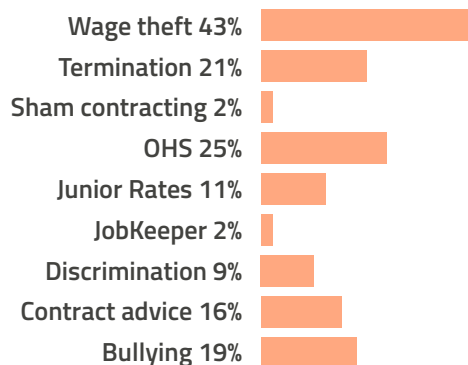
matters went to commission or court

\$208,221.84

won for young workers

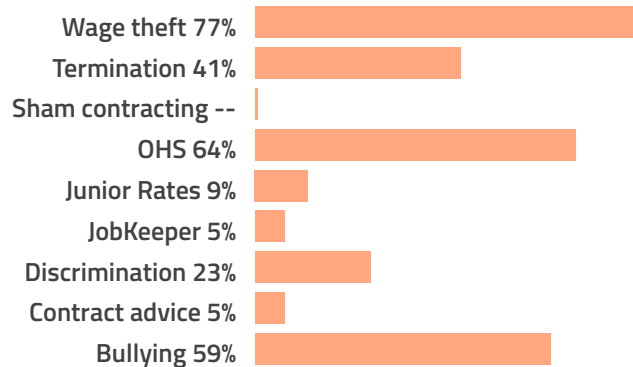
MATTER TYPE BREAKDOWN

all enquiries



MATTER TYPE BREAKDOWN

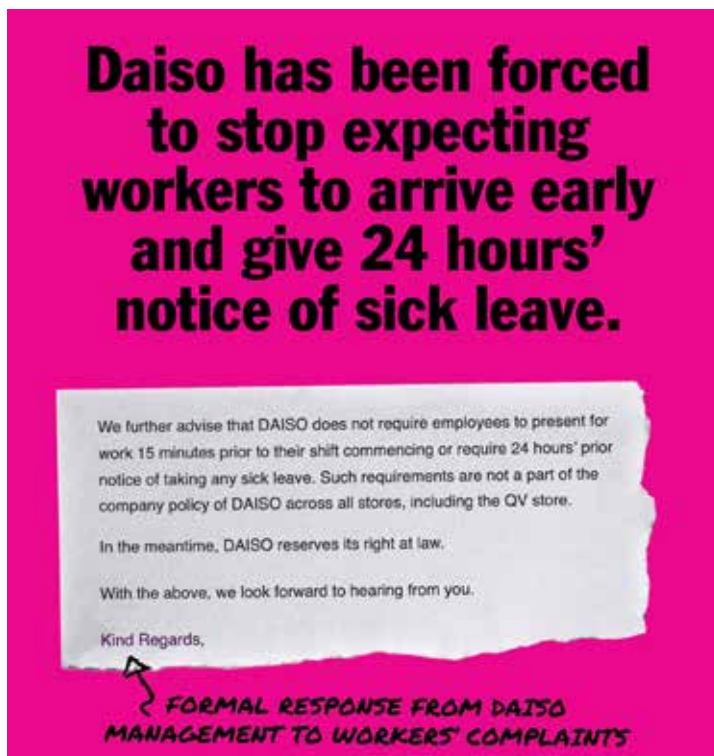
ongoing assistance



Our legal centre is the first and only specialist community legal centre in Victoria to represent young people with employment issues. Our legal team and law student advocates provide legal information, advice and representation for young workers in Victoria aged 30 and under.

We are accredited by Community Legal Centres Australia (CLCs-Australia) under its National Accreditation Scheme (NAS), which is an industry based certification process for community legal centres to support, recognise and promote good practice in the delivery of community legal services.

Despite the challenges of a pandemic, we have continued to provide timely assistance to the young workers reaching out to us.



CASE STUDY: Daiso

Workers stood up and spoke out late last year about Daiso Australia Official demanding they arrive 15 minutes early to every shift, to be quizzed on the company newsletter which they had to read and memorise in their own time. They've never been paid for these early starts, they were never optional and workers have been punished for being "late".

Daiso also demanded they give 24 hours notice if they weren't going to be able to work due to sickness. Sickness can strike at any time and providing 24 hours notice is not always realistic. Finally, Daiso have confirmed that these dodgy practices are not part of company policy, and workers are no longer required to turn up to work early or give 24 hours sick leave notice.

This is what happens when young workers stick together and demand better.

Quotes

Young workers explained my rights in an easy to understand way.

It was a lengthy process but I trusted in Oanh and her team. They were transparent with every step. I even got more money back than expected. I highly recommend Oanh and the YWC team.

I was stood down from my job which I'd been in for the last 7 years due to a downturn in work over the beginning of the Covid19 pandemic. I got in contact with YWC who advised me this was not a legitimate reason for me to be stood down. They jumped on board and did so much for me completely free of charge. Their knowledge and persistence is second to none.

Amanda Swayn you are an absolute god-send and so good at what you do. I cannot thank you enough. The world needs more people like you.

If you're a young person whose boss isn't doing the right thing and you're reading this thinking to yourself "Yeah but I don't want to get my boss in trouble" THIS IS THE SIGN YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR! Get in contact with The Young Workers Centre and take charge! I promise it will be the best thing you ever do.

Don't ever stop doing what you're doing guys. Dead set legends.

I wanted to speak up because I didn't want anyone else to go through what I went through. Everyone at YWC was so supportive and hearing that from them made me feel like I was able to fight for what's right. Special shout out to Amanda for being so understanding and caring throughout the whole process. YWC is absolutely amazing and I can't thank everyone enough!

ADVOCATE PROGRAM

We were joined this year by 25 law students from seven different law schools as Young Worker Advocates. These law students undertook placements for university credit with Young Workers Centre, under the guidance of our Advocate Team Leaders, Olivia Pusey, Lauren Gerondakis, and Rae Braganza, and our Solicitors Oanh Tran, Amanda Swayn, Tiarne Crowther, and Leon Harper.

When young workers speak up about their problems at work, our advocates are the first to hear their stories. A typical day as an Advocate might include:

- Interviewing a young worker over the phone or face to face to identify their legal issues
- Finding the relevant Award or workplace agreement
- Researching issues relating to the Fair Work Act and Occupational Health & Safety Act
- Drafting correspondence, legal documents and forms, such as letters of demand to employers and applications to Fair Work Commission about unfair dismissal and general protections
- Briefing our legal team on a young worker's issues and the legal merits of their case
- Filing documents with the Fair Work Commission, such as unfair dismissal applications.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Young Workers Centre began operating remotely in mid-March 2020. From late June 2020, we offered full remote supervision, allowing us to continue our operations through successive lockdowns. We plan to continue offering remote supervision, and in person supervision when we can.

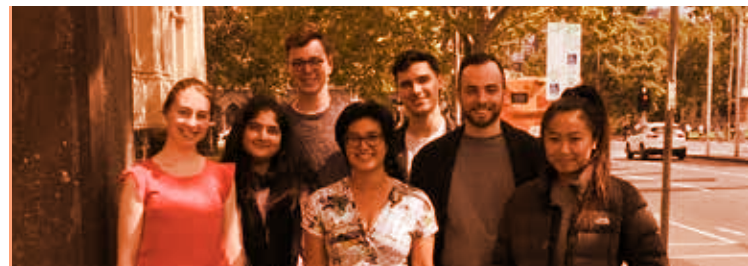
Advocates

Special thanks and congratulations to all our Advocates who have educated young workers about their rights and helped them access justice at work.



Semester 2 2020:

Rae Braganza, Evelin Thomas, Kiyan Basari, Steph Johnson, Isabella Relva, Natalie Montalto, Caitlin Sproull, Alan Wang, Theodoros Chrisant, Jasmine Xu, and Bisan Musleh



Summer 2020-21:

Jack Hadaway, Conor Robinson, Jennifer Zhao, Lucas Volfneuk, Marcella Isho, and Qaanitah Hendricks



Semester 1 2021:

Dion Leow, Ali Wright, Maddisson Rungen, Lucas Abicic, Lily Trinh, Reggii Moore, John Woo and Nicole Jones



Quotes

"I knew that I would learn a lot about drafting and communicating with clients. However, I was not prepared for other types of things that I would learn about the nature of employment, including the gross difference in power between employer and employee."

"I had a fantastic time. Everyone was extremely nice to me and willing to take time out of their schedule to help whenever I needed it."

"My placement at YWC has taught me the importance in advocating for the rights of my young working friends and letting be aware of what their rights are."

"It was really interesting to see broad range of people and how deep the issues of worker exploitation is"

"My favourite part of the placement was liaising with clients; at first, it was nerve wracking but I really enjoyed it."

"This place made me feel hopeful about law as tool for social change"

"Really helpful in understanding employment law but also work-life in legal industry"

"YWC were very accommodating and also fun to be round. Really helpful, heaps of support welcoming and friendly."

"Passionate about teaching and disseminating knowledge."

"Remote placement - it was hard but I feel YWC did it well; found morning and end of day catch ups really useful."

RMIT Research Partnership

In July - November 2020 we partnered with RMIT university for a Community Legal Education project. We were joined by two RMIT students, Tara Burnett and Katrina Harte, who produced fantastic CLE resources around wage theft and apprentices' rights at work.

University Partners

Thanks to our program partners at La Trobe University, the University of Melbourne, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Deakin University, Australian Catholic University, Swinburne University and Victoria University.

Where are our advocates now?

To our knowledge, former YWC advocates are now in the following roles related to employment law, industrial law or advocacy on behalf of young people:

- Legal & Industrial Officers at Unions (4)
- Para-legal roles at Unions (3)
- Lawyers at Plaintiff law firms (3)
- Lawyers or Graduate Lawyers at General Commercial firms (3)
- Lawyers or Graduate Lawyers at Community Legal Centres (3)
- Associates at FWC (1)
- Advisors in Government (1)
- Disability Advocates (1)

We could not have achieved some of the successful outcomes for our clients without the expertise of barristers **Gemma Cafarella**, **Leo Faust**, **Yasser Bakri** and **Brendan Johnson**.



YOUNG WORKERS COMMUNITY CAMPAIGNING AND TRAINING

We want to see a state where young people are safe at work, do not suffer harassment or bullying, and are provided their legal entitlements. At the core of that is training and resourcing activists and young workers to speak up and make change in their own workplaces, campuses and communities.

Safe Apprenticeships

As noted in the last annual report we saw a marked increase in the number of apprentices reaching out to the Young Workers Centre, from across most industries and throughout Victoria. That has only increased this year. They are continuing to present to the centre with fairly complex cases including but not limited to bullying and harassment, unsafe workplaces, unpaid TAFE fees and wage theft.

We believe that for us to change the outcomes for these young workers we have to shift the system around them, and for us that begins with bringing together young apprentices, skilling them up and empowering them to tell their stories.

We have run a campaign launch with over 40 young apprentices and activists, a phonebank, a youth week event focused on navigating the apprentice system and several stalls and handouts before lockdown.

JobKeeper

Last year we reported that the centre had spent time supporting workers who faced difficulties in obtaining JobKeeper. There were several places we reported success stories in the last report and we also now add General Pants Co. and Decjuba to the success pile. To win we run public campaigns, this involved online actions, a petition, collective worker meetings and extensive media coverage. With positive outcomes for each group of workers.

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

Young people's experiences at work must be centred in youth and employment policymaking. We advocate to ensure young workers' voices are heard by policymakers, academics, politicians and the wider community.



Submissions

We made a joint submission with the Foundation for Young Australians and the Tomorrow Movement to the Inquiry into the Omnibus Bill. We also contributed to the VTHC submission on this.

In mid December we made a submission to the Victorian Government's Youth Strategy. This was informed by previous submissions and the Log of Claims activist meetings we held in the second half of 2020.

In March 2021, one of our clients, Annie, presented at the Senate Economics References Committee Hearing into the Unlawful Underpayment of Employee Remuneration.

<https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;db=COMMITTEES;id=committees%2Fcommsen%2F94a62a53-3dbb-4cd8-8105-ab14d303e3c9%2F0002;query=Id%3A%22committees%2Fcommsen%2F94a62a53-3dbb-4cd8-8105-ab14d303e3c9%2F0000%22>

Another of our clients, Jorja, presented to the Senate Select Committee on Job Security.

Advocacy and consultation

We increased our support to workers in the gig economy to campaign and organise for safety at work and fairer pay in light of the Victorian Government's Inquiry into the On Demand Economy and the spate of food delivery rider deaths late last year. This work involved surveying workers, facilitating consultations between workers and the State Government, extensive media coverage and a petition launched.

In April 2021, YWC and one of our clients and activists Jorja presented to the Senate Select Committee into Insecure Work. She talked about her experience being on short term contracts and treatment as a casual worker.

<https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;db=COMMITTEES;id=committees%2Fcommsen%2F9efe1c87-845e-4294-9054-5c4b08b9b46c%2F0003;query=Id%3A%22committees%2Fcommsen%2F9efe1c87-845e-4294-9054-5c4b08b9b46c%2F0000%22>

We also participated in a consultation with the Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commission about their priority investigation areas for 2021.

Research

We have also participated in a handful of research projects by academics in our areas of expertise. These include: Trade Union Training: Reshaping the Australian Industrial Landscape with RMIT and Regulating the working conditions of food delivery workers in Australia with the University of Sydney.



EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Our education program trains young people in high schools, TAFEs and other community programs about bullying, safety, and their rights at work. We educate young people as they enter the world of work.

Our education team currently comprising Bella Himmelreich, James Lea, Adelaide Brace, and Scott Collom continued to deliver work-ready training modules to high school students across Victoria.

Modules include:

- Occupational Health and Safety
- Bullying and Discrimination
- Your Rights at Work

Along with these the team continued to use the apprentice specific module developed last financial year.

Our training is designed to prepare young people for life at work before their first job, and to support them in navigating their early working years. Students can share their own experiences at work, and be directly referred to the Young Workers Centre legal team for tailored legal advice if needed.

We continue to monitor outcomes from our presentations, and seek to make the presentations the best they can be. To that end the team has spent some time this year updating our core presentations to be ready to start presenting next year.

Since the Young Workers Centre was founded in February 2016 we have delivered training to over 35,000 young Victorians.

Our numbers:

July 2020 – June 2021

3,419

young people trained

179

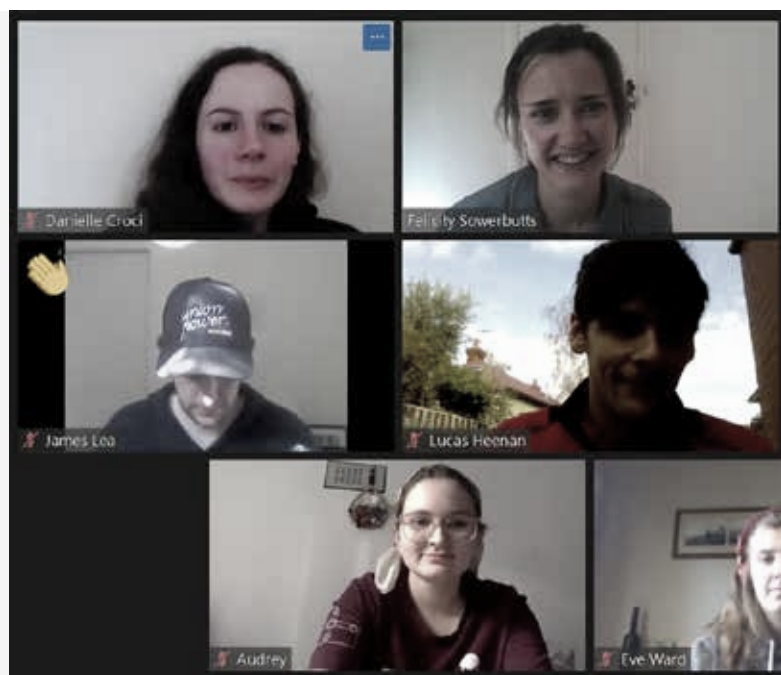
training modules delivered

120

high schools and institutions

5

regional high schools and institutions visited



Ongoing adaptation to the COVID-19 pandemic

With the ongoing lockdowns this year along with schools and educational institutions continuing with remote learning the Centre has predominantly run our sessions online through zoom and continued to offer our e-learning modules which were developed in response to the shift to remote learning.

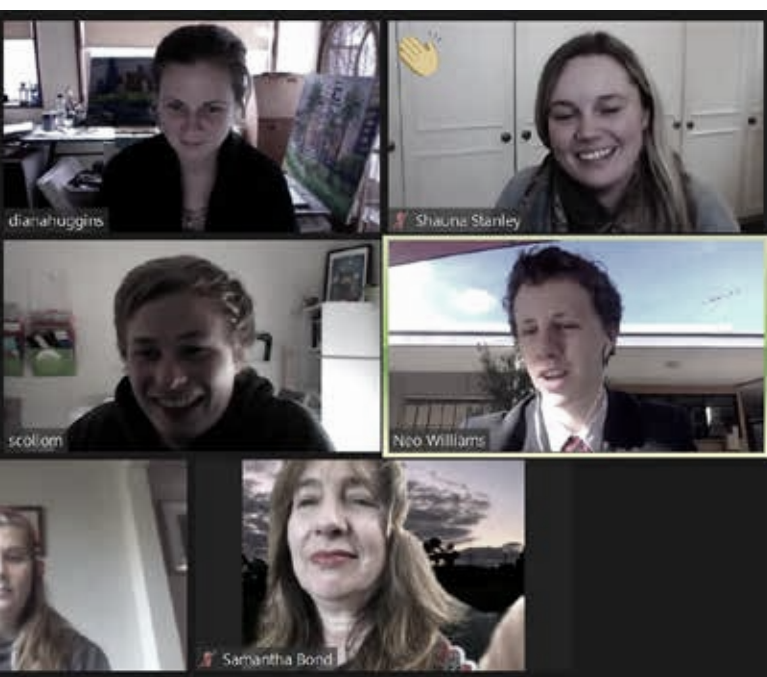
On top of our training modules 140 students have completed our e-learning modules.

Reaching Young people in Regional Victoria

Engaging with regional young people has had its difficulties this year. With Melbourne being in and out of lockdown it's really limited our ability to get out into the regions safely. We've been able to offer zoom modules where possible and the e-learning modules.

That said we have run outreach modules in Ballarat, Bendigo and Leongatha over the past year.

However we had a regional roadshow planned for Shepparton in April 2021 but this was postponed due to COVID-19 and with the current Covid-19 situation it's been challenging to reschedule.



in the media

The Young Workers Centre has been prominent in the media across print, TV and radio. We have worked hard to make sure that young people and their experiences are being heard and centred in the media.

We have broken stories and provided comments on a range of issues including; Covid-19, JobKeeper, bullying and harassment, gig economy, apprenticeship rights.

Although not this financial year we thought it was important to mention that we also spent time talking to the media and pushing out information on Wage Inspectorate Victoria and our state's new Wage Theft laws.

We will go into much more detail in next year's annual report but this is an important milestone for the centre and our activists.

Your rights at work

Bullying:

<https://www.abc.net.au/everyday/what-is-and-is-not-workplace-bullying/12016124>

Talking about pay:

<https://www.abc.net.au/everyday/the-right-time-to-talk-about-pay-when-going-for-a-job/12471826>

Pay disparity between men and women:

<https://www.abc.net.au/everyday/next-steps-for-women-being-paid-less-than-their-male-colleagues/12621430>

Work as a young person:

<https://www.mixcloud.com/okzoomershow/ep-4-work/>

<https://www.abc.net.au/everyday/tips-for-making-work-life-better/100002862>

Superannuation:

<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/superannuation-funds-push-for-5000-hand-out-to-low-income-workers-20210122-p56w7j.html>

Federal government and young workers

<https://www.onthejobpodcast.com.au/podcast/clothing-the-gap-and-the-new/>

Budget 2021

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2048079645345479>

COVID-19

Emergency Covid Support payment for young workers:

<https://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/hack/13364176>

Ramifications from Covid-19 for young Workers:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-07/coronavirus-young-adults-facing-difficult-economic-future/12426886>

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/drive/what-some-young-workers-are-facing-during-the-pandemic/12482404>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-24/coronavirus-intensive-care-nurse-warns-young-people-will-die/12486738>

<https://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/hack/12510114>

<https://independentaustralia.net/business/business-display/young-workers-worse-off-than-ever,14189>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-21/victorian-state-budget-women-affected-by-pandemic/12900880>

Jobkeeper:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=228853461502682>

Covid-19 and casual work:

<https://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak-linked-to-casual-insecure-work/12496660>

Apprenticeship rights

<https://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/hack/13334018>

<https://www.3cr.org.au/sticktogether/episode-202105120830/apprenticeship-campaign>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-05-10/young-workers-centre->

[calls-for-apprenticeship-licensing-system/100125144](https://www.3cr.org.au/sticktogether/calls-for-apprenticeship-licensing-system/100125144)

<https://www.3cr.org.au/sticktogether/>

<https://www.3cr.org.au/sticktogether/episode-202008120830/end-newspapers-and-apprenticeships-during-pandemic>

<https://www.rrr.org.au/explore/programs/breakfasters/episodes/14490-breakfasters-4-january-2021>

Workplace organising: Decjuba

Decjuba:

<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/melbourne/programs/mornings/mornings/12396224>

Gig Economy

Gig worker support during Covid-19:

<https://d27rxetj176nhc.cloudfront.net/podcasts/135/audio/1602550253494.mp3>

**Victorian Government's Gig
Economy enquiry:**

<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/workers-pay-price-as-gig-economy-avoids-regulations-inquiry-finds-20200714-p55bv2.html>

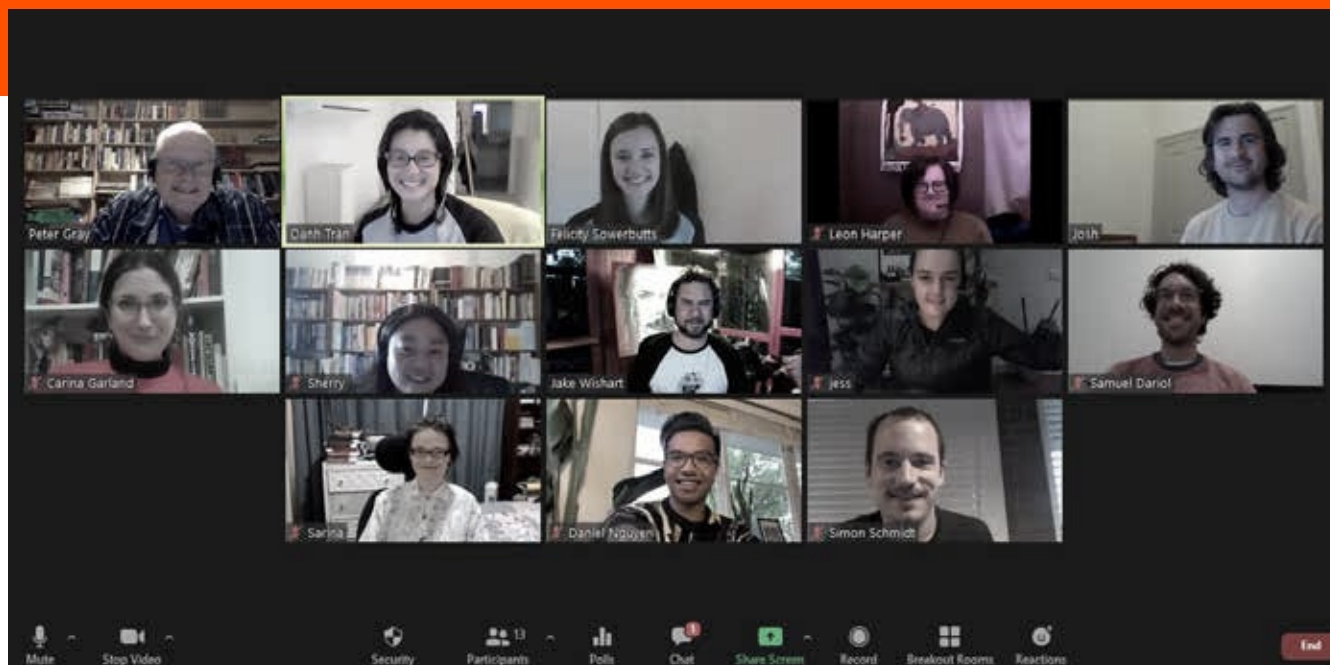
<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/drive/long-awaited-gig-economy-inquiry-report-finally-released/12458444>

Gig economy and insecure work:

<https://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/hack/12868886>

**For an updated list of all our
media appearances, please visit
youngworkers.org.au/press**

MEET THE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT



Jake Wishart

Chair (until 8 December 2020)

Jessica Dawson-Field

Chair (from 8 December 2020)

Josh Keyes-Liley

Deputy Chair

Samuel Dariol

Treasurer

Carina Garland

Secretary

The Hon Peter Gray

Sherry Huang

Daniel Nguyen

Simon Schmidt

Sarina Murray

Yasser Bakri

Observer

Bree O'Dwyer

Observer

YOUNG WORKERS CENTRE INCORPORATED

FINANCIAL REPORT

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2021

Assets

Bank	
Young Workers Centre Incorpora	198,107
Total Bank	198,107
Total Assets	198,107

Liabilities

Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	179,173
Suspense	2,000
VTHC Establishment payment	48,500
Total Current Liabilities	229,673
Non-Current Liabilities	
Loan- VTHC	100
Total Non-Current Liabilities	100
Total Liabilities	229,773
Net Assets	(31,666)

Equity

Current Year Earnings	(55,501)
Retained Earnings	23,835
Total Equity	(31,666)

PROFIT AND LOSS FOR THE 12 MONTHS ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

Income	
Grants received	50,000
Interest Income	35
Total Income	50,035
Gross Profit	50,035
Less Operating Expenses	
Assets(minor Equipment) ICT	3,692
Client Disbursements	5,461
Communications- ICT	10,162
Salary on- Costs	13,262
Superannuation	6,299
Training	349
Wages and Salaries	66,310
Total Operating Expenses	105,536
Net Profit	(55,501)

Keep in touch

We know that young workers are stronger when they stand together and are empowered to speak up and shout out.

Over the next 12 months we will visit more schools in regional Victoria, expand our work to support young apprentices and young workers to campaign for fairer apprenticeships and reforms in the franchise sector.

We also intend to train volunteer leaders to run campaigns and organise other young workers.

To hear about what we're up to in 2020-2021 and how you can get involved follow us on social media.



facebook.com/YWCVictoria



[@YWCVictoria](https://twitter.com/YWCVictoria)



[@YoungWorkersVic](https://www.instagram.com/YoungWorkersVic)



[Young Workers Centre](https://www.linkedin.com/company/YoungWorkersCentre)

And whether you want to be on a megaphone, at an action, or talking to young people about their rights at work you can sign up to volunteer at:

youngworkers.org.au/volunteer



NTS
NITTEE

FOOD & DRINK
2008

THE YOUNG WORKERS' VOICE
THE YOUNG WORKERS' VOICE
THE YOUNG WORKERS' VOICE

FOOD & DRINK
2008

**YOUNG WORKERS
STANDING
TOGETHER
FOR OUR
RIGHTS AT
WORK**

**YOUNG WORKERS
STANDING
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WORK**

 facebook.com/YWCVictoria

 [@YWCVictoria](https://twitter.com/YWCVictoria)

 [@YoungWorkersVic](https://www.instagram.com/YoungWorkersVic)

 [Young Workers Centre](https://www.linkedin.com/company/YoungWorkersCentre)

youngworkers.org.au/

