

Community Law **Waikato**

Te Tari Ture ā-Hapori o Waikato

Part of the National Community Law Movement



Annual Report 2019 / 2020

Our Vision

A Just and Fair Aotearoa



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Kia ora rawa atu!

We draw support from a wide range of stakeholders including community funders, official agencies, fellow community law centres, community agencies / NGOs, service providers, and the general public.

The support comes in many shapes and forms including time, grants and donations, discounts, donated equipment...it all contributes enormously to our mahi.

The past 12 months has shown again just how important our connections are as it pushed us through the usual and unusual challenges.





Chair's Report

Tēnā koutou katoa.

Welcome to the annual report of Community Law Waikato.

Ehara tōku toa i te toa takitahi. He toa takitini tōku toa. *My strength is not due to me alone but is due to the strength of many.*

In 2020, more than most years, the team at Community Law has been aware of the truth of this whakataukī. The challenge of Covid-19 required a team effort as we sought to work in new and creative ways to fulfil our mission.

During lockdown the Law Centre's services were maintained with staff working from home. Under the inspirational leadership of our two managers, Juanita Bennett (General Manager) and Angela Smith (Legal Services Manager) they rose to this challenge. For many this meant juggling work and home commitments. The Board is deeply grateful to the whole team for their hard work, flexibility and professionalism.

Community Law exists to provide free legal help to those in the Waikato who would other-wise not have access. We take seriously values of humanity, equity, respect and integrity. These whanonga pono are the foundation of our work and guide us in the way we engage with those who seek our help.

The day-to-day work of the Law Centre involves us in issues like housing, income (poverty), health, education, crime and civil liberties. People come to us feeling hopeless, distraught and stressed. Our team (of solicitors, a legal advocate, administrative staff, a community liaison and many volunteers) provide legal advice, assistance and advocacy. We also offer a range of law-related educational opportunities to build knowledge, promote well-being and strengthen local communities.

As you will read Covid-19 disproportionately affected the most vulnerable members of our communities and we anticipate an increase in the demand for our services. We are grateful for additional funding received from the Ministry of Justice through the Government's Covid-19 Fund. The Board is currently considering how this might best be utilised.

The Law Centre would not be able to operate as it does without the help of many people and groups. We are especially grateful to our supporters, volunteers and of course our community funders. I also want to say a special thanks to fellow Trustees who give their talents and commitment so very generously. Your support and friendship in enabling and upholding the kaupapa of Community Law is much appreciated.

Ngā manaakitanga,

Dr Susan Thompson

Chairperson, Trust Board

Our Values

Humanity—Equity—Respect—Integrity



Service Delivery & Development

Our purpose is to provide free legal help to those in the Waikato who would otherwise not have access

Community Law Waikato (CLW) is a charitable trust that has been in operation since 1995 and is at the front line of providing access to justice throughout Aotearoa. There are 24 Community Law Centres throughout New Zealand.

Our service covers the fourth largest region in New Zealand (Waikato). Majority of the individuals accessing our service reside in Kiriikiroroa but accessibility throughout the region is always at the forefront of our planning and implementation.

Services are aimed at benefiting those who need it the most. Access to legal services should be a basic human right but limited resources restricts that. Common barriers are fear, cost, language limitations, rural isolation, poor literacy, ethnicity, age and disability.

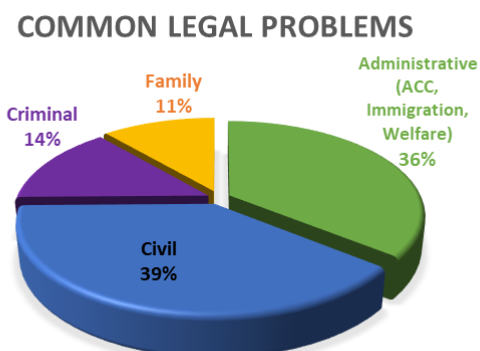


*Our day-to-day work is related to:
Housing, income (poverty), health, education, crime, democracy,
civil liberties*

Our service covers an extensive range of matters including criminal (low level offending and traffic matters), ACC, welfare, tenancy, consumer, credit contracts, immigration, family, protection of personal property and welfare, and employment to name a few.

We reunite families who are refugees, reinstate benefits along with back payments, address irresponsible lending, help employees keep jobs and claim compensation for unjustified dismissals or actions, complete sentencing applications and advocate in court, mediations and other forums.

On average, 60% of the people we help are referred from Government agencies and executives such as MBIE, Tenancy Services, Tribunals, Police, Courts and Immigration New Zealand. Whilst we receive people referred to us with open arms, we need to have ongoing conversations with these agencies about a way of collaboration to better support people and to avoid the significant cost shifting. Most of these agencies operate through online platforms which is not accessible to a very large portion of people in Aotearoa. The Citizens Advice Bureau digital divide report emphasizes the disadvantage this creates for people and highlights the challenge people face when dealing with government services online.





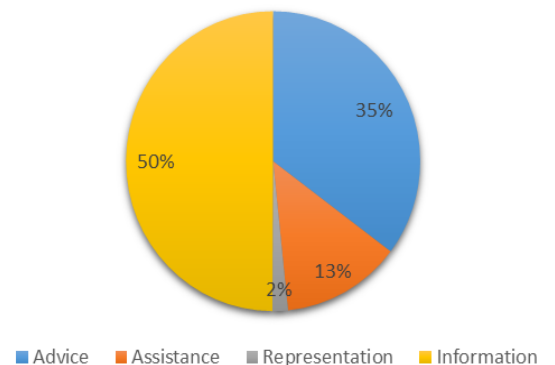
We provide advice, advocacy and support through an experienced legal team; deliver a range of seminars that build legal knowledge and strengthen communities and advocate for positive legal and social change to give people a voice.

Over the 2019/2020 funding year we helped 5286 people with legal information, advice, assistance, representation and education.

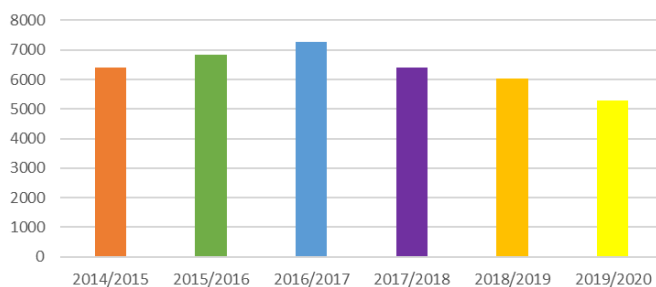
Our reception team triage up to 100 phone calls per day providing legal information, referrals, and coordination of legal advice call-backs. We receive an average of 345 legal queries per month with up to 160 assigned to one of our lawyers or advocate for advice and if needed, representation. Our legal team juggle up to 300 files at any given time throughout the year.

Our year to year figures show a fluctuation in the number of people we are helping. These figures do not reflect the level of need for community legal services, but rather our teams' capacity. We find that peoples' legal problems are complex and require a high level of resourcing. The funding we receive is only enough to cover a minimum level of service and does not cater for the true unmet legal need (which is growing).

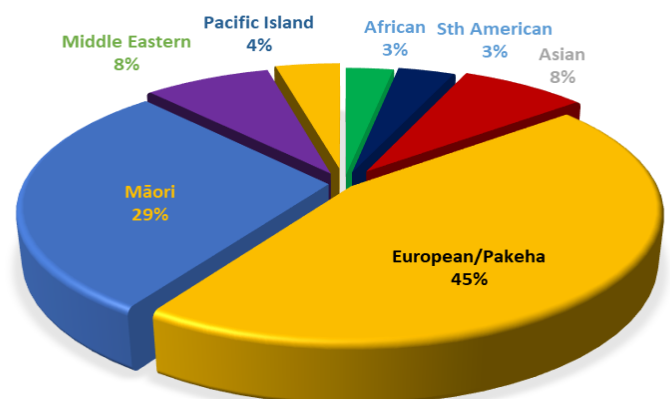
Legal Help Provided



Service to 5286 people in 2019/2020



CULTURAL DIVERSITY



Our new “Call back” service

To cope with high demand and finite resources, we implemented a new phone triage system. The aim is to improve access to services (shorter waiting times) and reduce cost such as travel time. As at the start of 2020 we ceased travelling to our legal outreach clinics with all incoming queries shifting to our central 0800 port. Coincidentally with the Covid pandemic we were forced to refine this system very quickly. It has resulted in much shorter waiting times (around 10 to 15 days) and less hassle for clients and a significant reduction in cost and administration.

Whilst we embrace technology we are well aware of the digital divide and we will be returning to some of our bigger outreach areas before the end of 2020 to ensure genuine access. We also continue face to face appointments for those who need it at our main hub in Kirikiriroa.



COVID-19 Response

The impact of COVID-19 disproportionately affects people most vulnerable in our community – Māori, Pasifika, women, migrants & refugees, generally people living payday to payday. It has also impacted peoples' ability to access the necessary services to support their whānau. Whilst demand in the initial phase of lockdown was up and down, subsequent patterns started to appear. People seeking initial information and help nearly doubled and many circumstances were volatile requiring urgent help. For example people losing their income and or their accommodation, family violence escalating, care of children needing sorting out, visa and travel exemptions needing to be actioned, debt scenarios requiring negotiation and much more.

Concurrent with increased demand, there were frequent changes to law, systems and process. It meant instant and constant upskilling for our team. Technology facilitated our connection within the community and we were able reach out and inform through Facebook and email.

Our COVID-19 response strategy will continue its course with the biggest challenge being resourcing and capacity.

EARS – Elder Abuse Response Service



Community Law Waikato has renewed a contract through MSD to provide legal advice to 'Elder Abuse Response Service Providers' throughout Aotearoa. As part of the service we assist providers with technical legal questions to help them point their clients in the right direction.

Late 2019 our lawyers travelled the length and breadth of Aotearoa to deliver workshops to the Providers on Enduring Powers of Attorney, Court Intervention, Family Violence, Financial Abuse and Property Matters and Privacy.

HPA – Alcohol Related Harm Project

Community Law Waikato, along with five other community law centres, continue the work with the Health Promotion Agency to support community participation (specifically objections) for alcohol licensing applications. It sits within the strategy of reducing alcohol related harm. It is the third and final year of a project.

The focus over the reporting period was around community education (in areas of high deprivation), strengthening networks, strategising at a national level, and providing case by case advice and advocacy. We partnered and mingled with various stakeholders including the Medical Officer of Health, the local community agencies, Police, and Regional District Licensing Inspectors.

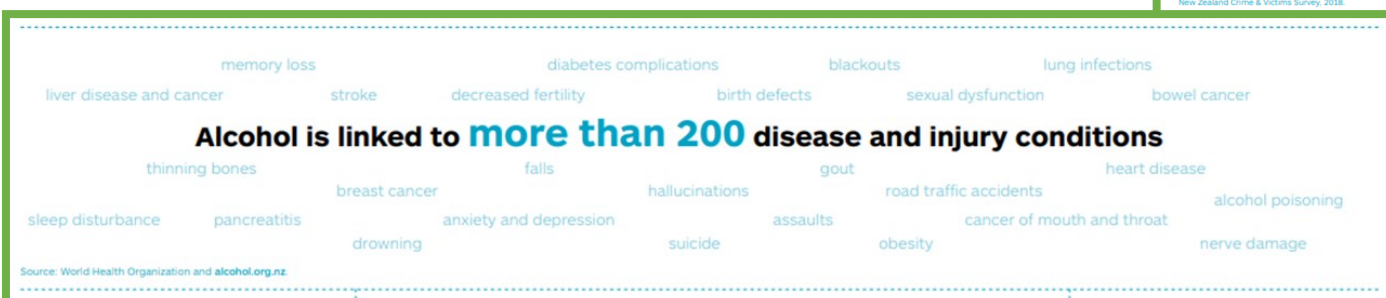
As a case specific example, a project like this gave us the opportunity to provide support to an Early Childhood Centre in a small town where the shop directly opposite sought a liquor license.

2 in 5 offences
that involve assault, abduction, robbery, threats or damage to property and

1 in 3
family violence incidents are known to involve alcohol.



Sources: New Zealand Crime & Safety Survey, 2014; New Zealand Crime & Victims Survey, 2018.





"Access to justice is a basic principle of the rule of law. In the absence of access to justice, people are unable to have their voice heard, exercise their rights, challenge discrimination or hold decision-makers accountable."

United Nations and the Rule of Law

Access to Justice

Access to justice is fundamental to the wellbeing of any society. Not only does it ensure that people can participate fully in society, it also prevents the downward spiral that happens when things go wrong in people's lives.

There is much international evidence linking improved access to justice to what is now being recognised in Aotearoa/New Zealand as being improved wellbeing, reducing the downstream social and economic costs to communities and government and more importantly, social and economic wellbeing among whānau.

Much of our immediate results are tangible outcomes, for example settling a legal dispute or reinstating a welfare entitlement. The flow on effect further down the track (the broader social impact and wellbeing) is something which is more difficult to capture however nonetheless a certain outcome for many.

In 2020 community law centres nationwide, including Community Law Waikato will implement a new database that will enable us to better capture statistics, prioritise need and progress law reform.





Law Related Education & Information

Delivering law related education is another aspect of our kaupapa that contributes to wellbeing for whānau. We cover a wide variety of topics and can provide a special rangatahi education program to schools, alternative education providers and other youth organisations. Our focus is to continue to provide education to as many people as we possibly can.

The education topics include getting your first job, going flatting, renting, police and your rights, care of children, disputes tribunal, Wills & Powers of Attorney, employment and redundancy, restorative justice, debt and insolvency, benefits, immigration, Maori Land, consumer rights, property law, adults with disability, IRD, Te Pae Oranga, Mental Health, health and disability and much more.

These education sessions are available for everyone and anyone in our community and can include one to two hour education sessions which can be held at our centre, community organisations or business and online. Speakers include our own team and professionals in their field volunteering their time to help with this kaupapa.

COVID-19 put a halt to most of our planned education sessions that were being held in Kirikiriroa and throughout the Waikato and presented different challenges to the way we provide education and information.

Where did we go?

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa	Youthline	K'aute Pasifika
Te Awamutu RSA	APM Workcare	Melville High School
Red Cross	Age Concern Hamilton	Salvation Army
Wesley Community Action	Age Concern Whanganui	Auckland EARS Consortium
Age Concern Kaitaia	Manaaki Ora Trust	Age Concern Hawkes Bay
Tairāwhiti Age Concern	Age Concern Canterbury	Age Concern Otago

59 sessions and 813 attendees Waikato wide

We utilised Facebook to share information on topics that were affecting people in our community. One such post included information about Work and Income adding extra food allowance for people receiving a benefit and letting people know that there are no food grant entitlement limits. This post reached 9477 people. The information posted on Facebook was also emailed to people and community organisations Waikato wide to help improve peoples experience and let them know their entitlements.



*"Education is the most powerful weapon
which you can use to change the world."*

Nelson Mandela – Former President of South Africa



HAUORA

*taha tinana (physical), taha hinengaro (mind),
taha whānau (family), and taha wairua (spirit).*

Community Engagement

Our service adopts a Hauora approach. This means that we look at problems through a wide lens to capture underlying or related matters such as mental health, addiction or substance abuse, domestic violence, and financial pressures. To support this kaupapa, we work diligently to strengthen our networks, collaboration and partnerships with organisations Waikato wide.

Some of the organisations we coordinate with include: Settlement Centre Waikato, Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, Te Kohao Health, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, Community Centres Waikato wide, Ngāruawāhia Community House, Huntly West Hub, Friendship House, Tokoroa Council of Social Services, Tokoroa Budget Advisory, Overdale Community House, Ngati Maniapoto Marae Pact Trust, South Waikato Pacific Islands Community Services, Ōtorohanga Support House, Te Kuiti Community House, Whangamata Community Services Trust, Te Korowai Hauora o Hauraki, Kainga Aroha Community House, Paeroa Community Trust, Te Aroha Citizens Advice Bureau, Cambridge Community House, Community Waikato, and more.

A snapshot of our mahi tahi ...



Te Whare o te Ata Open Day
July 2019



Paeroa Te Korowai Health Open Day
August 2019



Waikato Tainui Games
Kaumātua tent - February 2020



kia
KAHA
kia
MĀIA
kia
MANAWANUI



Te Kohao Health Whānau
Ora Day
November 2019



Creating a Fair and Just Community

An important part of our whakaaro is about driving systemic change. Networking and collaboration is key in helping us achieve that. Our representatives regularly attend network meetings, sector meetings and meet with government officials to lobby, traverse and strategise.

Over the past 12 months we have focused on the areas of welfare (addressing trends and concerns with MSD), refugee family reunification (seeking better consultation and support from INZ for refugees and families), employment (raising trends and posing solutions to MBIE around better access to employment related problems and remedies) and tenancy (pushing for legislative change around aspects such as termination, rent and property management).



Waikato Wellbeing Summit

This summit was held at the Claudelands Showgrounds. The targets are based on the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, but have been adapted to meet the unique challenges facing the Waikato region. The Hon Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern joined community leaders, on Friday 14th 2020, to launch the Waikato wellbeing targets. The targets are aimed at achieving a more environmentally sustainable, prosperous and inclusive Waikato region by 2030.

The summit, attended by 350 leaders from across the region, provided an opportunity for people to review the targets and workshop how they can be turned into action in partnership with iwi, councils, community trusts, business, NGOs, researchers and communities. The ten wellbeing targets are the region's first set of wellbeing targets to end poverty, fight inequality and act on climate change.

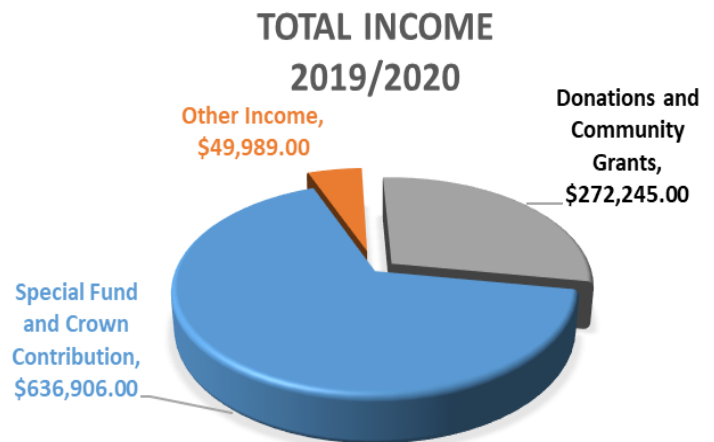




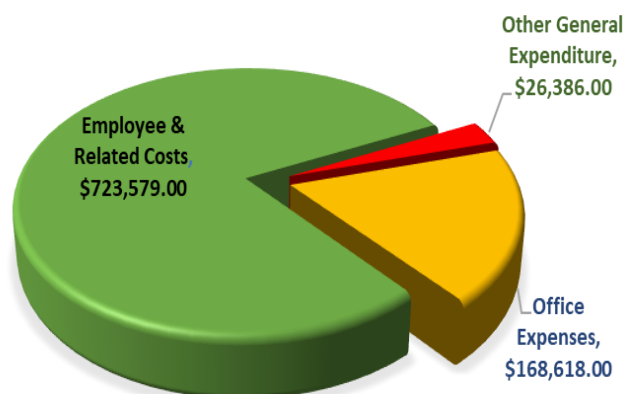
Financials

The main funding stream for most community law centres is usually the Lawyers and Conveyancers 'Special Fund'. This fund is interest derived from legal and conveyancers' trust accounts. The law mandates a split between banks and community law centres (40:60). Major banks also currently (and since 2016) donate another 20% (or more) of their share to community law centres.

In addition to the money from the 'Special Fund', community law centres receive a top up (capped) from the Justice Budget with the Ministry of Justice contracting the 24 centres to deliver community legal services.



TOTAL EXPENDITURE 2019/2020



Adequate and sustainable funding is a perpetual challenge. As the above graph shows, a significant portion of funding comes from donations and community grants which still allows only a capped level of service.

The Covid situation has a significant impact on funding for all Community Law Centres. The interest received by the Special Fund continues to drop (as at March this year it had already declined by over 40%).

Whilst the Ministry continues to top up the difference between the Special Fund and the cap, the same fix doesn't apply to the portion donated by the banks. Many Centres including ours rely heavily on this portion to sustain services.

The Ministry has recently granted some additional funds for pay equity (one off) and Covid related services (for the next three years). Whilst this aids with our budget deficit to a degree, it is far from an adequate solution. We are still forced to seek additional funding. Majority of our staff wages remain at around 30% less than market rates. Our service is dependent on qualified and experienced staff and we continue seeking funding to increase our capacity.

With careful fiscal management we have built a reserve over decades which covers unforeseen situations and budget deficits. It also cover our exit policy criteria.

A full copy of Community Law Waikato's audit accounts is available at <https://register.charities.govt.nz/>

*Nāku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi
With your basket and my basket the people will thrive*



Team & Team Development



Community Law Waikato purposefully took time this year to look carefully at our whanonga pono, our core values. We see and hear about our values but we wanted to dig a bit deeper into what this actually translates to when it comes to team work, service and strategic direction.

This 'organisational culture refresh' revolved around several workshops with Stefan Doll from Diversity Institute New Zealand. We focused on diversity, communication, conflict resolution and collaboration. There was plenty of laughs but also plenty of honest and challenging conversation. It pushed our team to define our values and actions, identify and understand different personalities and strengths, and taught us strategies to communicate and work together at an optimal level. We now have people maps pinned on office walls and it is part of our standard recruitment process for new team members.

We can now say without a doubt that the organisations values are engrained in our day to day mahi.





"To be fully successful in the law, one does not have to be brilliant or exceptionally gifted. The most effective work in the world is done by ordinary people who put forth extraordinary effort. This is true of lawyers. Our strengths are magnified with experience and inspiration."

President James E. Faust (J. Reuben Clark Law Society)

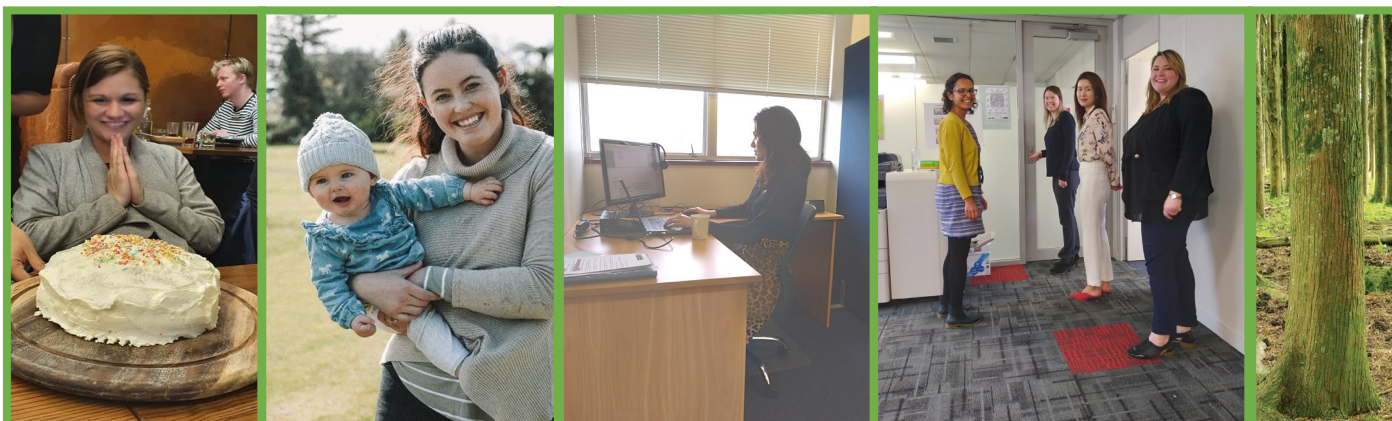
We are proud of our diverse and dynamic team. (Photos right and below) The passion for making positive change in the lives of others is what drives us. Quality and professionalism are key. We foster personal and professional development through constant upskilling, including work experience opportunities for students.

One of the social highlights is the annual team building. We close the office and go out into the world adventuring. Team building day this year took us to Rotorua where we cycled through the Redwoods, paddle boarded in te roto Tikitapu and ate good food. There were a few falls and splashes but it was a blast.



The success of our service relies on our amazing volunteers whom are law students from The University of Waikato (caseworkers and legal assistants) and legal practitioners (who give advice and assist with some probono work). These individuals sacrifice their precious time and energy to help fulfill the Community Law Waikato vision. Their contribution equates to over 1350 hours per year. We couldn't do

without them. Late 2019 we were able to make some change to incorporate a full time Reception and Volunteer Coordinator. This new role has meant that we could dedicate some more time and mentoring, giving our caseworkers and legal assistants the necessary training and support.





Governance and Staff

As at July 2020

TE POARI | BOARD

Susan Thompson — Chair
David McEwen — Co-Chair & Treasurer
Brian Dobbs — Trustee
Cheryl Green — Trustee
David Allan — Trustee
Patience Te Ao — Trustee

NGĀ KAIMAHI | STAFF

Juanita Bennett — General Manager
Angela Smith — Legal Services Manager
Justin Young — Solicitor
Sarah Fraser — Solicitor
Dee Holmes — Solicitor
Ellen Hockey — Solicitor
Sonali Perera — Solicitor
Harriet Youn — Solicitor
Ben Hoffman — Advocate
Billie Dell — Community Liaison
Janna Robertson — Receptionist
Dayna Dustan — Receptionist/Volunteer Coordinator
Samantha Smith (parental leave) — Receptionist
Caitlin Harrison (parental leave) — Solicitor

We acknowledge the contribution of members who resigned in the 2019/20 year; Tanya Botha, Ange Vanderwee, Karen Lockwood, Christina Howe, Cate Dwyer and Michael Kilkelly.

Ehara tōku toa i te toa takitahi

He toa takitini tōku toa.

My strength is not due to me alone, but due to the strength of many

