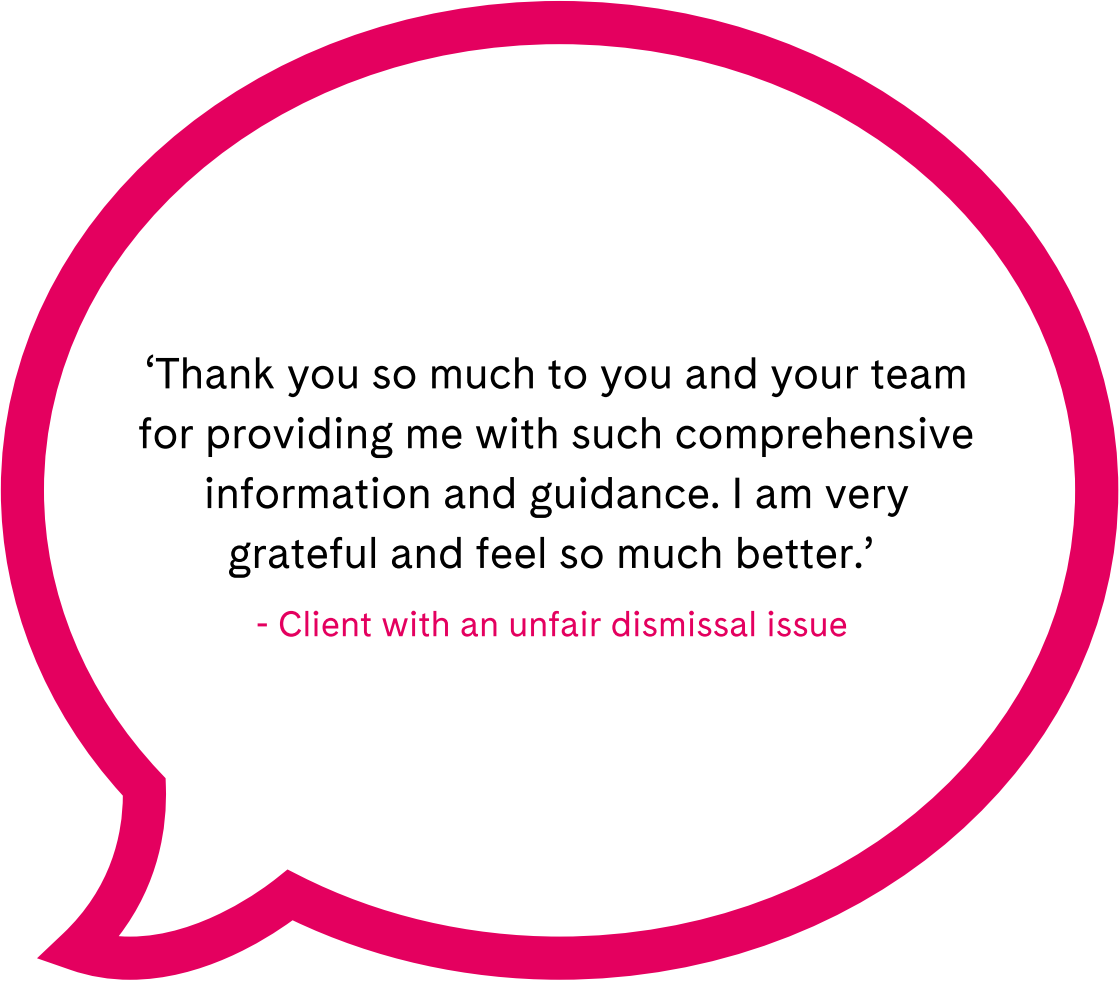




**Youth Law  
Australia**

# **Annual Report**

## **2020 - 21**



‘Thank you so much to you and your team  
for providing me with such comprehensive  
information and guidance. I am very  
grateful and feel so much better.’

- Client with an unfair dismissal issue

## For more information contact

### **Matthew Keeley**

Director

Youth Law Australia

T: (02) 9067 6510

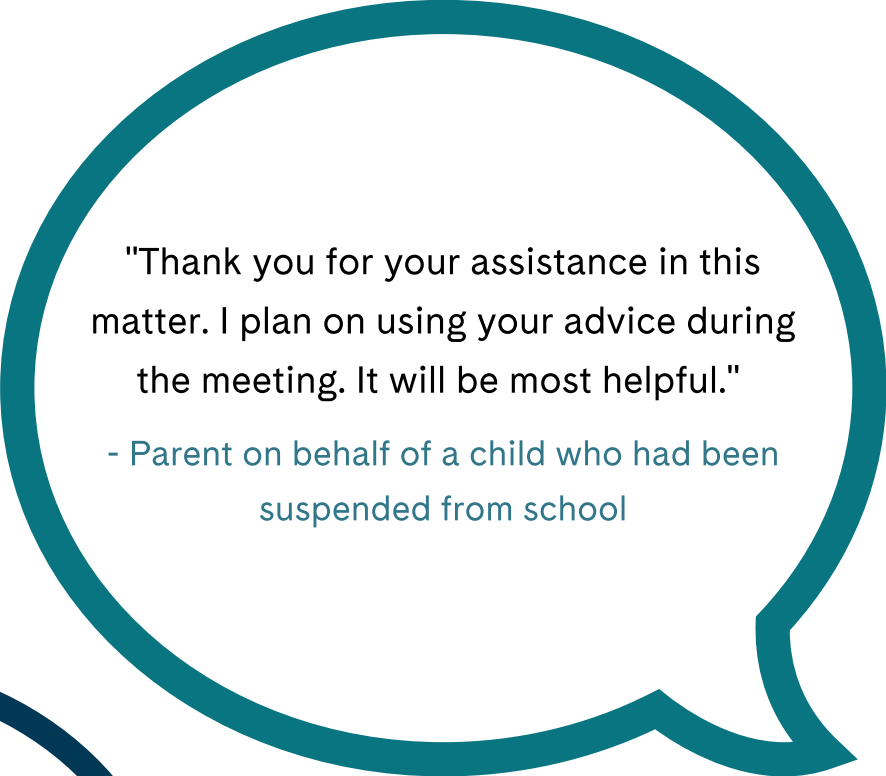
E: [matthew.keeley@yla.org.au](mailto:matthew.keeley@yla.org.au)

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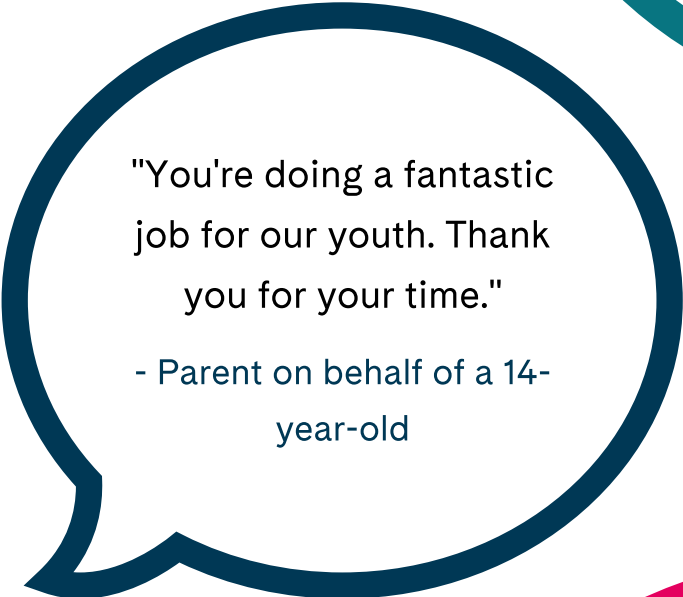
[www.twitter.com/youthlawaus](https://www.twitter.com/youthlawaus)

[www.instagram.com/youthlawaustralia](https://www.instagram.com/youthlawaustralia)




"Thank you for your assistance in this matter. I plan on using your advice during the meeting. It will be most helpful."

- Parent on behalf of a child who had been suspended from school



"You're doing a fantastic job for our youth. Thank you for your time."

- Parent on behalf of a 14-year-old



"I got my response within a week which was amazing... you showed empathy and care towards me and my issue... information and advice was written extremely clearly and helped me greatly in understanding my problem."

- 14-year-old experiencing image-abuse

# Contents

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My name is James and I contacted Youth Law Australia because I wanted to move out when I was 15. My step-mum was rude and abusive but I couldn't live with my real mum so I just needed to know what my options were.

Youth Law Australia told me what the law said about moving out at 15, but they also gave me some practical tips on how to talk to my parents about my concerns. Their advice empowered me to consider my options and decide what to do.



*\*Note: throughout this report, real client situations and feedback received in 2020/21 has been used. Names, identifying information and even genders may have been changed to protect the identity of clients*

# 2020-21 highlights

1655

total clients



895

clients under 18



2799

total legal matters

1783 advices

1016 infos

2316 referrals



6% of our clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

113

of our clients voluntarily disclosed that they had a disability



6121

followers on social media

## Matters by gender



1686 advices



1000 advices

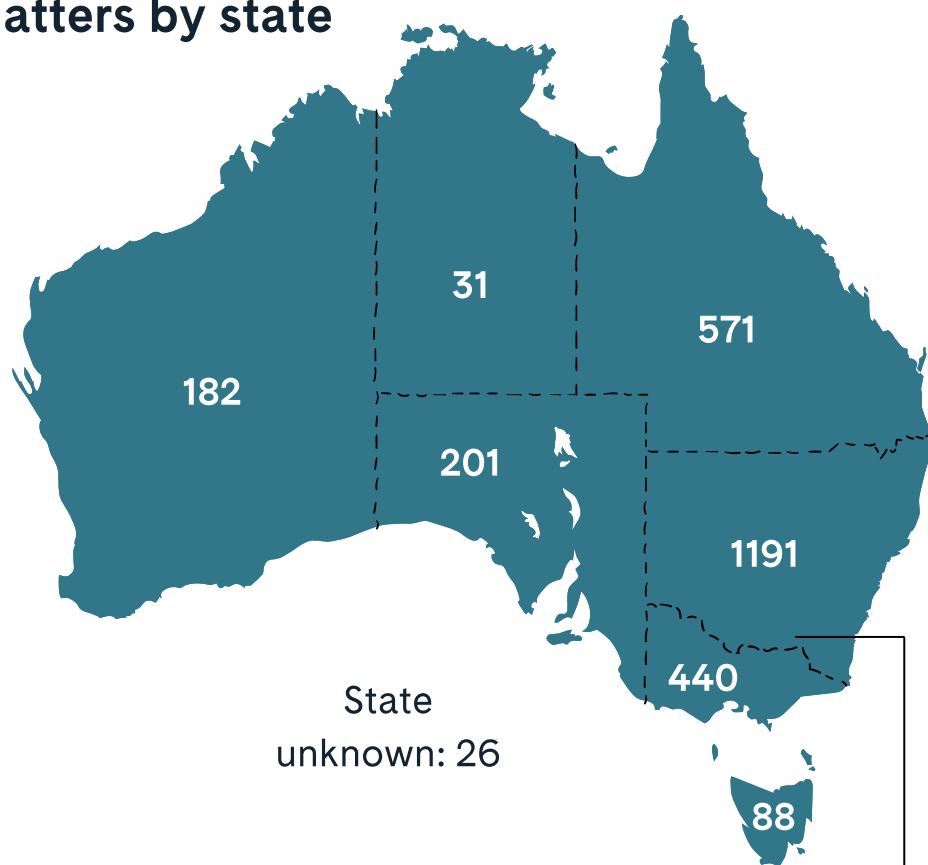


35 advices



85 advices

## Matters by state



## Clients by age



54% were under 18



33% were 18-25



11% were over 25

2,083,014 page views on [yla.org.au](https://yla.org.au)



# Thank you to our funders

YLA is a not-for-profit organisation and is accredited under the National Accreditation Scheme for Community Legal Centres (CLCs). We also have a special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), an organ of the United Nations.

YLA is able to provide its significant number of services through the financial and in-kind assistance of a number of supporters. We thank the Australian Attorney-General's Department, King & Wood Mallesons, the University of New South Wales faculty of Law & Justice, the Australian Government Solicitor, ASIC, Telstra and Microsoft for their generous support.

We are also grateful for the support of the Queensland, New South Wales, South Australian and Tasmanian Attorney-General's Departments for their targeted support during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Fair Work Ombudsman for their funding of our new Young Workers' Rights Service.

We would also like to acknowledge the hard work of our on-site volunteers, cyber volunteers and interns from the University of New South Wales, whose time and effort is invaluable.

Proudly supported by



UNSW  
SYDNEY



KING & WOOD  
MALLESONS

# Legal assistance

Youth Law Australia (YLA) is the only national legal centre that provides specialist legal advice and support to people under 25 years of age and their advocates. Our innovative tech-enabled service allows us to provide practical advice and assistance to all Australian young people 24/7, on their terms, wherever they may be. It is a targeted and specialist service that aims to intervene early to prevent the continuation and culmination of harm.

Last financial year, YLA helped 1655 clients with their legal problems. YLA provided specific legal advice on 1783 matters, and provided general information and referrals to a further 1016 requests for help.

YLA provides general information and referrals where we receive a request for help from an individual who does not fall within our service provisions. This could be, for example, because the client is over 25 years old or not currently residing in Australia. In these cases, YLA endeavours to be as helpful as possible by providing general legal information, relevant legal resources and referrals to other services.

YLA also made referrals to 2316 legal and non-legal services, including 1377 mental health services and 1077 government agencies. This reflects our aim to provide a holistic service which recognises the need for comprehensive support for young people encountering legal problems.

YLA is proud of its diverse client-base and strives grow these figures as we work to make our service more accessible for all. Last year, 6% of clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 113 clients voluntarily disclosed a disability and 120 clients identified as transgender, intersex or indeterminate, not male or female or other/rather not say. Just over half (54%) of our clients were under the age of 18.



# COVID-19 AGD Funding

COVID-19 has drastically affected so many young people Australia-wide. Throughout the pandemic, we encountered a significant rise in demand for our services in a number of states.

In response, the Australian Government provided us with additional funding to service the increased demand. We'd like to thank Queensland Attorney-General, Yvette D'Ath MP, South Australian Attorney-General, Vickie Chapman MP, Tasmanian Attorney-General, Elise Archer and New South Wales Attorney General, Mark Speakman for their support in enabling us to help people who experienced disadvantage through the COVID-19 pandemic.

This additional funding allowed us to employ solicitors to provide essential free legal services to young people, their families and their advocates in New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia and Queensland.

## Our top 10 COVID-19 funded matters



158 education matters



153 leaving home matters



87 domestic and family violence matters



82 parenting dispute matters



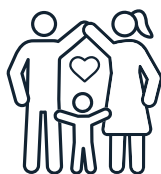
46 traffic and vehicle matters



45 sexual assault matters



36 parenting arrangements matters



34 child abuse material matters



32 child protection matters



31 domestic violence protection orders

# Key trends in our COVID-19 funded matters

With the unique challenges and experiences of COVID-19, we saw a significant increase in the number of young people, especially those under 18 years of age, asking YLA for help and advice. In particular, we saw a significant increase in matters with indicators of family violence and a risk of harm to the client.

## New South Wales

Between our 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 reporting periods, we saw a:

- **37% increase** in matters with an indicator of family violence
- **11% increase** in matters with an indicator of risk or harm to the client
- **22% increase** in matters involving a child under 18 years old

### Top 5 COVID-19 funded matters in New South Wales



78 education matters



46 age to leave home matters



36 traffic and vehicle matters



35 domestic and family violence matters



22 parenting dispute matters

## Tasmania

Between our 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 reporting periods, we saw a:

- **75% increase** in matters with an indicator of family violence
- **14% increase** in matters with an indicator of risk of harm to the client
- **114% increase** in matters involving a child under 18 years old

### Top 5 COVID-19 funded matters in Tasmania



17 education matters



11 age to leave home matters



5 parenting dispute matters



4 bullying matters



4 Gillick competence matters



4 harassment matters

## Queensland

Between our 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 reporting periods, we saw a:

- **221% increase** in matters with an indicator of family violence
- **35% increase** in matters with an indication of harm to the client
- **16% increase** in matters involving a child under 18 years old

### Top 5 COVID-19 funded matters in Queensland



75 age to  
leave home  
matters



48 parenting  
dispute matters



46 education  
matters



38 domestic and  
family violence  
matters



15 parenting  
arrangements  
matters

## South Australia

Between our 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 reporting periods, we saw a:

- **42% increase** in matters with an indicator of family violence
- **53% increase** in matters with an indicator of risk of harm to the client
- **61% increase** in matters involving a child under 18 years old.

### Top 5 COVID-19 funded matters in South Australia



21 age to  
leave home  
matters



17 education  
matters



13 child protection  
matters



11 child abuse  
material matters



11 domestic and  
family violence  
matters

# The Young Workers' Rights Service

*Introducing our employment law service for young workers in NSW, the NT and the ACT.*

In January 2021 YLA launched the Young Workers' Rights Service (YWRS), a specialist employment law practice operating in NSW, the ACT and the NT.

The YWRS is funded by the Fair Work Ombudsman's Community Engagement Grants Program to provide a full, free and confidential employment law practice for workers aged 25 and under and their advocates. This practice includes:

- legal information and advice on workplace rights, responsibilities and entitlements
- assistance with workplace disputes
- assistance with lodging applications
- legal representation
- education
- other services.

The YWRS is for all young workers and especially welcomes contact from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, international students, school students, migrant workers, culturally and linguistically diverse workers, workers with disability, apprentices and trainees, workers in sham employment situations and workers whose mental health and wellbeing have been affected.

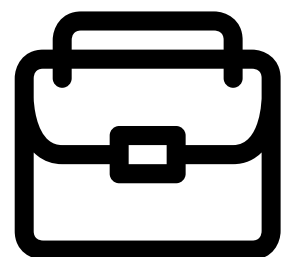
During the last reporting period, the YWRS assisted with:



**160** employment law matters



**25** community legal education sessions



**7** workplace relations casework matters

# What did YLA help with?

## Civil and administrative law

YLA helped with **1104** civil and administrative law issues in this year.

When advising young people in the civil and administrative practice, YLA educates clients about their rights and empowers them with legal options and practical solutions. This is done with a view to intervene early, and prevent further culmination of harm.

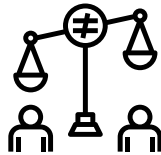
YLA's top 10 civil and administrative law matters included education, employment, discrimination, domestic violence protection orders, bullying, consumer, contract, defamation, child protection and housing.



**351** education matters



**213** employment matters



**68** discrimination matters



**64** domestic violence and protection order matters



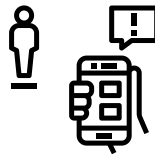
**60** bullying matters



**59** consumer matters



**55** contract matters



**51** defamation matters



**50** child protection matters



**49** housing matters

"Thank you so, so much for your advice regarding my issue. Your help has been hugely appreciated and I can't thank you enough for it! I have sent them off an email asking for a partial refund using the draft email you sent me."

- Feedback from a 24-year-old with a consumer issue.



# Criminal law

YLA helped with **694** criminal law issues in this year.

YLA advises all young people on criminal law matters, whether they have been affected by a crime or accused of committing one.

YLA's top 10 criminal law matters included domestic and family violence, sexual assault, child abuse, consent, harassment, traffic and vehicle matters, image based abuse, police powers, juvenile justice and criminal records.



**145** domestic and family violence matters



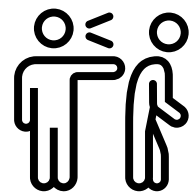
**96** sexual assault matters



**86** child abuse material matters



**78** age of consent matters



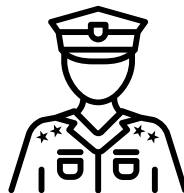
**78** harassment matters



**74** traffic and vehicle matters



**60** image based abuse matters



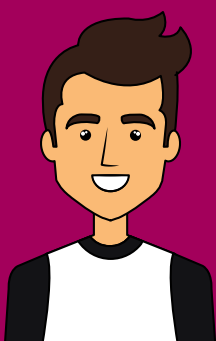
**43** police powers matters



**37** juvenile justice approach matters



**31** criminal records matters



"I just wanted to say thank you to the solicitors for helping me with this. The incident was stuck on my mind for quite some time and I didn't know who to ask for clarification on the legal matter until I came across Youth Law Australia. Thank you so much for the support you provide young people, you guys at Youth Law Australia are amazing people"

- Feedback from a 21-year-old asking about having a criminal record

# Family law

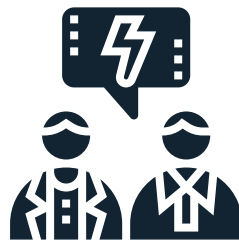
YLA advised on **381** family law issues in this year.

In the last financial year YLA's family law practice has expanded, largely due to the impacts of COVID-19 and lockdown. Many of these matters involved young people asking about what age they can leave home and many involved allegations of family and domestic violence. Referrals to mental health, family counselling and mediation services are a key part of YLA's family law practice, to ensure young people are connected with essential support services.

The top family law matters included age to leave home, parenting disputes and parenting arrangements.



**268** age to leave  
home matters



**189** parenting  
dispute matters



**73** parenting  
arrangement matters



**"The depth of advice is really amazing and I am grateful for it. If only I had found this platform before, I could have sought help earlier as well. Thank you."**

- Parent asking on behalf of her 16-year-old daughter

## Additional legal help

YLA offers ongoing support and assistance to clients from their first point of contact through to the resolution of their case. YLA provides as much assistance to clients that falls within our service provisions to ensure expediency and avoid clients needing to engage multiple legal services to resolve their problems. This includes helping clients to draft letters, notices and complaints, reviewing documents, completing application forms and representing clients in employment law matters.

For example, in a matter involving the suspension of a 16-year-old boy from his school, YLA drafted a letter for the client to send to the school, outlining the required steps that the school had failed to take with regards to the suspension and requesting that he be allowed to return to school immediately. The school complied and the client returned to school.

## Information and referrals

YLA also provides referrals to other legal and non-legal services where we are unable to provide clients with the assistance they need. It's important to us that everyone has access to adequate and appropriate legal services.

YLA also understands that young people facing legal issues can be facing stress and anxiety. We provided 1372 referrals to mental health services, such as Headspace and Kids Helpline to ensure our clients were getting the support they needed.

YLA provided general information to 1016 enquiries including a referral to another suitable service.

**"Thank you so very much! I really appreciate you taking the time to reply so quickly. You have been a comfort and a help."**

- Feedback from an individual who fell outside our service provisions but we provided with general information and referrals.





# Client feedback

YLA encourages clients to complete a short feedback survey after we have closed their case. The survey results show that YLA consistently provides useful and comprehensive advice that is delivered in a timely manner and tailored to the age of the young person. As an organisation that prides itself on being non-judgmental and accessible to all young people, we were particularly pleased that 100% of our clients felt that we treated them quite well or very well.



98%

of our clients said that our advice was  
useful or very useful



100%

of our clients said that we treated  
them quite well or very well



100%

of our clients said that they understood  
our advice



69%

of our clients said that we  
responded very quickly or  
quickly enough

# Community legal education

YLA works proactively to educate young people about the law and prevent legal problems from escalating early on. Our approach involves recognising the capacity of young people to have agency over their legal problems and develop an understanding of their rights and responsibilities for themselves. We also aim to illustrate that many common problems faced by young people involve legal elements, empowering them to recognise and respond to legal problems when they arise.

This year, YLA reviewed and updated 79 pages on our website, providing accessible legal information for young people on over 100 topics.

YLA staff also engaged with UNSW's Student Legal Education Group (SLEG) on a number of occasions to supervise law students as they taught high school students about their legal rights. A YLA solicitor accompanied SLEG on a regional tour, teaching in 8 different Tamworth high schools in 3 days.

The YWRS also began a series of webinars focused on young workers and their rights in the workplace, with a focus on identifying issues and intervening early.



# Legal education and information

YLA provides free legal information to anyone in Australia on our website. YLA's site can be accessed anywhere from a computer, phone or tablet. YLA is proud to provide access to legal information 24/7.



**881, 964**  
total visits



**2,072,772**  
page views

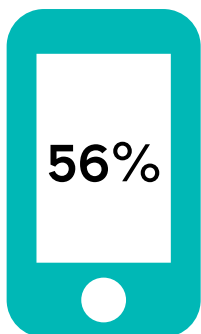


**736, 350**  
unique visitors to  
the site

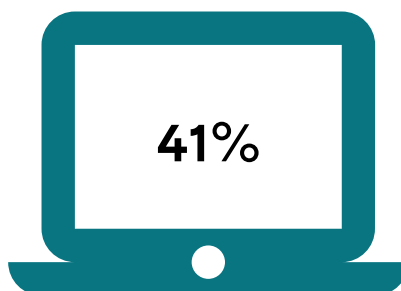
Last financial year, YLA's web pages received **over 2 million** views.

YLA factsheets are available on a broad range of topics, including employment, sex and dating, family violence, housing, drugs, traffic and more. These fact sheets are jurisdiction specific and available in each state and territory. The most popular topic pages included sex, age to start work, moving out and tattoos.

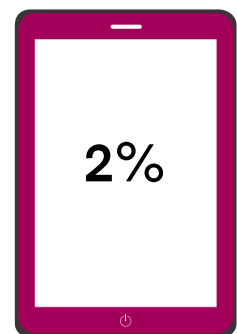
The most popular way to access the YLA site was via a mobile device, with over half of users finding YLA through their phones. Around 2 in 5 people accessed YLA through a computer and 2% used a tablet device.



accessed YLA on a  
mobile device



accessed YLA on a  
computer or laptop



accessed YLA on a tablet



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