

# Invested For Good

## Simpson Grierson Pro Bono Report





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*Pet Refuge's Erin Ellis-Roberts, Pro Bono Partner Shan Wilson and  
Pet Refuge's Mikayla.*

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# Introduction

## Tēnā koutou katoa,

It's a real pleasure to introduce our 2025 Invested for Good Pro Bono Report.

This year marks my fifth as Simpson Grierson's Pro Bono Partner — a role that continues to be deeply rewarding. Over that time, it has been inspiring to see our firm's commitment to pro bono work grow, with over 80% of our partners and lawyers working on pro bono matters in the past year.

Our dedication to pro bono is not new, it's woven into the fabric of Simpson Grierson. Back in the 1920s Max Grierson, a founding partner of our firm, helped establish the Auckland Sheltered Workshops and the Multiple Sclerosis Society. His belief that lawyers should use their skills for the good of the community continues to guide us today.

In June, we were proud to celebrate 20 years of partnership with Youthline — a milestone that highlights our long-term commitment to supporting vital community organisations. Youthline's tireless work for vulnerable rangatahi is inspiring, and our relationship is one that Simpson Grierson is particularly proud of.

Looking ahead, the launch in the last year of the Framework for Collaborative Pro Bono in Aotearoa by Te Ara Ture and a small group of law firms, including Simpson Grierson, represents a significant step forward. The Framework's aspirational target of 25 pro bono hours per lawyer per year aligns us with other jurisdictions. I hope to see the Framework increasingly adopted across New Zealand's legal profession.

It has been a privilege to work alongside so many dedicated organisations over the past year. I hope you enjoy reading about some of their incredible work in this Report.

## Nāku noa, nā

**Shan Wilson, Pro Bono Partner**

[shan.wilson@simpsongrierson.com](mailto:shan.wilson@simpsongrierson.com)



# Manaiakalani Education Trust

## Empowering learners and schools

The Manaiakalani Programme started in 2006 to support schools in challenged, stressed and isolated communities to achieve significant improvements in student outcomes, through innovative teaching, digital citizenship, and community-driven education.

The Manaiakalani Education Trust (MET) began in 2011 to form a governance body in service of the schools and in support of the Manaiakalani Programme, now delivered to over 100 schools across New Zealand.

### How we have helped

We have been involved from the start, with the development of MET's Trust Deed. In 2022 MET was engaged by the Ministry of Education to facilitate a programme delivering home internet connections to unconnected households with school-aged children. However, a policy change on 30 June 2024 left the programme without Government funding for the following year, impacting 8,500 households with school-age children.

We worked with MET to support the development of a replacement scheme ensuring connectivity could be maintained at a sustainably affordable price point for low income families post 30 June 2024. This involved MET contracting directly with households and Internet Services Providers to provide an alternative low cost service.

Senior Associates Zelda Gower, Amanda Stephenson and Michelle Dunlop drafted and edited the contracts used by MET on the project, supported by our banking and tax teams.

We continue to provide ongoing support to MET in drafting and updating their contracts and arrangements in procuring and making available affordable learning devices to the caregivers of MET's learners.

### The impact of our work

We are delighted that our efforts helped MET to ensure that thousands of households were able to maintain internet connections at an affordable cost.

*"I have been involved with Manaiakalani since I was a junior lawyer and the device programme was in its infancy. To sit with Manaiakalani as it goes from strength to strength, engaging with learners in its home town of Tāmaki Makaurau to now, right around the country, has been wonderful. Manaiakalani's Kaupapa is something I strongly believe in and to be able to help in a small way is a privilege."*

**Zelda Gower**  
Senior Associate | Simpson Grierson

*"This is great progress towards proving the case for a sustainable digital equity solution for those who need it. Manaiakalani is so deeply appreciative of the responsive expertise and understanding that Simpson Grierson brought to help make this happen."*

**Jenny Oxley**  
Chief Executive | Manaiakalani Education Trust

Senior Associate Michelle Dunlop, Manaiakalani's Jenny Oxley and Senior Associate Zelda Gower



# Pet Refuge

## Removing a major barrier to families leaving family violence

Pet Refuge provides temporary shelter for pets from around New Zealand affected by family violence, keeping them safe while their owners escape abuse.

It is a charity which, unfortunately, is seeing increasing demand for its services.

### How we have helped

We have worked with Pet Refuge in recent years on issues relating to this growth in demand. In particular, our commercial team, including solicitors Tessa Hill and Courtney Carran, have developed documents that streamline and enhance some of their key processes.

Given the nature of its services, privacy is a key focus for Pet Refuge. This includes the need for all visitors to its site to sign a Confidentiality Agreement. As more individuals from their regular contractors began supporting their work, managing this process was becoming an administrative burden.

To assist, we created a streamlined and user-friendly version of the Agreement, which saves time for Pet Refuge and is easy for visitors to complete.



*“Working with Pet Refuge has been truly rewarding. Being able to take the time to understand Pet Refuge’s incredible work allowed us to create legal documents that are clear and approachable for visitors, while still ensuring that Pet Refuge remains legally protected and is able to continue with its meaningful work.”*

**Tessa Hill**  
Solicitor | Simpson Grierson

*“As a small charity, we’re constantly refining our operations. Having expert support ensures we do so efficiently and safely. Simpson Grierson’s legal expertise is invaluable, but what we truly value is their understanding of our clients, partners, and context, enabling them to create tailored, practical legal documents that fit.”*

**Erin Ellis-Roberts**  
General Manager – Marketing and Business Operations | Pet Refuge

Another situation Pet Refuge has had to manage is the need to use third party boarding facilities for pets when its own site is at capacity. Our team helped create Terms and Conditions which address important issues around liability, support available for partner facilities, and alignment on pet care standards.

Our team has also assisted with updating Pet Refuge’s partnership agreements.

### The impact of our work

Pet Refuge is a charity we are proud to support. We are delighted to have been able to deliver practical solutions to help make their operations more efficient and effective, and also documents which are easy for pet owners, who are often under considerable stress, to engage with.





# Pacific Youth Leadership & Transformation

## Helping Pacific youth participate in democracy

Pacific Youth Leadership and Transformation (PYLAT) is a charity based in in Ōtautahi that helps Pacific youth participate in democracy and access leadership opportunities. It is run by a board of ten Pacific young people, with a vision to have a world well informed and influenced by Pacific young people.

### How we have helped

In 2024 Nick France, a solicitor in our Ōtautahi office, and Sarah Gwynn, a senior solicitor in our Pōneke office, helped PYLAT prepare a submission to Parliament on the Restoring Citizenship Removed By Citizenship (Western Samoa) Act 1982 Bill.

The Bill sought to restore citizenship as of right to a large number of Samoan elders, many of whom were victims of the dawn raids in the 1970s. They lost New Zealand citizenship when Parliament enacted the Citizenship (Western Samoa) Act 1982, overturning a Privy Council decision. The 1982 Act effectively rescinded and annulled any citizenship claims by Samoans living in Samoa.

As part of preparing the submission, Nick attended a PYLAT event alongside members of the Ōtautahi Pasifika community and MPs,

including the MP promoting the Bill, Teanau Tuiono. Sarah also supported PYLAT when they presented their submission to the select committee in Parliament.

### The impact of our work

PYLAT’s submission was one of the few made on behalf of a whole community and included approximately 45 viewpoints. The submission helped Ōtautahi’s Pasifika youth be part of a process they may not have otherwise engaged in.

Parliament passed the Bill in November 2024 with support from all parties, and it is now enacted as law. This means people born in Western Samoa between 1924 and 1949 can now apply to have their New Zealand citizenship restored, as of right.

As of February 2025, over 400 Samoans who had their citizenship stripped by the passing of the 1982 Act have successfully regained their New Zealand citizenship.

The amendment is a positive step towards addressing some of the tīgā felt by the Samoan community as a result of the dawn raids and the 1982 Act, including grandparents of those in the PYLAT community.

*“Being involved in this mahi has been hugely rewarding. I can’t imagine how it must have felt for Samoan people to have lived in New Zealand with this law still on the books. I remember learning about the 1982 Act at law school and it was a privilege helping the Pasifika youth community get it repealed.”*

**Nick France**  
Solicitor | Simpson Grierson

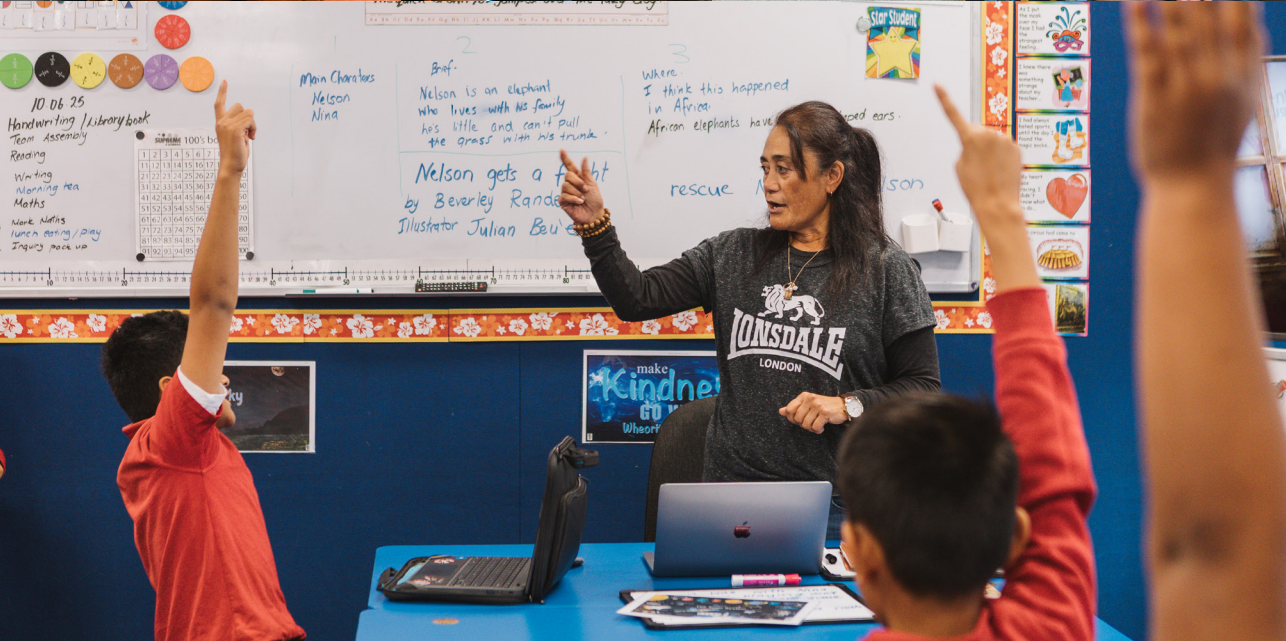
Back row: Senior Solicitor Sarah Gwynn and PYLAT’s Wesley Mauafu  
Front row: PYLAT’s Riki Welsh & Josiah Tualamali’i, and Solicitor Nick France



*“As a voluntary organisation, taking time to write compelling submissions to Parliament that accurately reflect the views of a diverse community is difficult. Having the assistance of professionals such as Sarah and Nick, who could articulate complex viewpoints on a piece of legislation that deeply affected our own families, is something we are eternally grateful for.”*

**Riki Welsh**  
Pacific Youth Leadership and Transformation







# Youthline

## Celebrating a 20 year partnership

Youthline is a charity that provides support for young people, particularly those struggling with mental health, with a 24/7 Helpline service, as well as therapy services, mentoring and school and community programmes.

In 2025 we are proud to be celebrating 20 years of supporting Youthline as our main community partner.

### How we have helped

Every year we work on a wide range of pro bono matters for Youthline. In the last 12 months, these have included a review of Youthline’s Trust Deed, branding and IP advice, partnership contracts and employment law support.

Our partnership with Youthline is wider than pro bono work. Each year we provide funding to Youthline to support its Helpline. At a time when funding budgets are being cut, we are pleased to have increased our financial support in recent years.

One of our young lawyers also has the opportunity to sit on the Youthline Board, providing an excellent opportunity to build governance expertise. This year, Tom Hammond is taking over the role from Matt Austin.

### The impact of our work

Our pro bono and financial support helps to ensure that Youthline can continue to provide much needed services to Aotearoa’s young people, at a time when demand is increasing.

Our partnership with Youthline also has a significant impact for our people. Our work with them is at the heart of our community programme, and a source of real pride within Simpson Grierson.

This year marks a significant milestone in our relationship, and we look forward to many more years of working together.

*“Our 20-year partnership is a significant milestone for the firm. We hugely appreciate the opportunity to assist Youthline with our legal skills and through the wider support we provide. We know that if we have their back when they need help, then we free them up more to provide the frontline support they are so good at giving to young people in need.”*

**Shan Wilson**  
Pro Bono Partner | Simpson Grierson



Waiata to celebrate our 20 year partnership

Simpson Grierson Chair Phillipa Muir, Pro Bono Partner Shan Wilson, Youthline CEO Shae Ronald and Simpson Grierson Managing Partner Andrew Harkness



*“We’re incredibly grateful for the support we’ve received from Simpson Grierson over the last 20 years. It’s a pleasure to have such an enduring partnership that has evolved with us over the years. From helping fund our Helpline to providing pro bono legal support, they have stood by us and responded to our needs as we’ve grown. We look forward to continuing to work together to support young people when they need us most.”*

**Shae Ronald**  
CEO | Tuma Rangatira



# Manawatū Community Law Centre

## Free legal help throughout New Zealand

Supporting Community Law Centres is an important part of our pro bono work across all our offices. This often involves our lawyers in Auckland and Wellington providing on-the-ground support on a weekly basis, and being a phone call away in Christchurch.

It's nice, though, when we can support Community Law Centres outside of the main centres.

A great example of this is a referral we took from Te Ara Ture and the Manawatū Community Law Centre for a Tenancy Tribunal appeal to the District Court. This case involved a young solo dad of two young children who had been subjected to a Tenancy Tribunal decision evicting him from his tenancy.

### How we helped

Brooke Clifford, a Senior Solicitor in our Wellington office, picked up this case.

Represented by Brooke, the tenant appealed the Tribunal's decision to the District Court on the grounds that the Tribunal made errors of both fact and law in its assessment of the issues in the hearing and its final decision.

The tenant also appealed the second decision of the Tribunal declining the tenant's application for a rehearing of the matter, on the ground that the Tribunal erred in finding there were no procedural errors present in the substantive hearing.

Brooke prepared written submissions and appeared in the Palmerston North District Court on behalf of the tenant.

*"As my role typically involves working with commercial clients, I really value the opportunity to be able to engage with members of the community on issues that are of real importance to their everyday lives. Assisting pro bono clients to achieve positive outcomes is not only incredibly rewarding but also reminds me of the positive difference we, as lawyers, can have on individuals, their families and their communities."*

**Brooke Clifford**  
Senior Solicitor | Simpson Grierson

### The impact of our work

We were delighted that the District Court's decision was successful for our client, meaning he could remain in the property. If his tenancy was terminated he would have struggled to find appropriate housing for him and his children at short notice.

*"It was great to have Brooke from Simpson Grierson work on this case. It was clear that she put in as much effort as one would expect in a fee-paying claim."*

**Mo' Shomade**  
Solicitor | Manawatū Community Law Centre

Senior Solicitor Brooke Clifford and Manawatū Community Law Centre's Mo' Shomade





# Motivating pro bono in Aotearoa

November 2024 marked a significant milestone with the launch of the groundbreaking Framework for Collaborative Pro Bono in Aotearoa

The initiative was led by Te Ara Ture, a division of Community Law Centres Aotearoa Incorporated and a group of law firms. Te Ara Ture connects clients needing free legal help to lawyers providing services for free for the public good.

Simpson Grierson was delighted to play a part in bringing the Framework to fruition and to be a founding signatory. We worked in collaboration with DLA Piper, Gilbert Walker, Holland Beckett, Luke Cunningham Clere and Russell McVeagh.

## A new era for pro bono in New Zealand

This first-of-its-kind national network aims to enhance access to justice for all New Zealanders by fostering collaboration and supporting a growing commitment in Aotearoa to provision of pro bono legal services.

Inspired by successful models such as the Australian Pro Bono Centre and the UK Collaborative Plan, the Collaborative Framework seeks to expand access to legal services for vulnerable people in our communities.

Under the Collaborative Framework, participating firms will share ideas and learnings and coordinate efforts to help develop a strong pro bono ecosystem.

As part of this each law firm has agreed to a voluntary target of at least 25 hours of pro bono legal work per FTE lawyer each year. Firms will report against this target annually, in an anonymous format, to assist with benchmarking and inform planning initiatives.

## Joining forces for a better future

The Collaborative Framework is a profession-led initiative dedicated to supporting and promoting pro bono within law firms in Aotearoa. Participation is voluntary and non-exclusive. All firms are welcome to participate.

**Shan Wilson** is enthusiastic about the Collaborative Framework and what it means for pro bono in New Zealand.

*“I am so pleased to have Simpson Grierson playing a formative role in this positive initiative. We recognise some give back of our legal skills on a pro bono basis should be part of being in a profession.”*



Te Ara Ture Director Sabrina Muck and Pro Bono Partner Shan Wilson

**Sabrina Muck, Te Ara Ture Director,** highlights the potential for the Framework to play a significant role in addressing the high levels of unmet legal need, particularly for vulnerable communities.

*“As a profession, we are well aware of the high levels of unmet legal need in our society. The launch of the Collaborative Framework offers an identifiable and structured pathway for lawyers across New Zealand to engage in providing pro bono services. In facilitating high-quality pro bono legal advice, we are able to walk alongside clients who would otherwise have nowhere else to go, with the aim of providing access to justice to those who need it most.”*







[simpsongrierson.com](http://simpsongrierson.com)

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