

Invested for good: pro bono update 2020/21

May 2021



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Pro bono facts and figures: April 2020 – April 2021

WE WORKED ON



134
matters



FOR

68

amazing clients



INVOLVING

157

Simpson Grierson lawyers



INCLUDING

20

partners



TOTALLING OVER

3,906

hours of pro bono services



INCLUDING

829

hours for local community law centres



FOR A TOTAL
fee equivalent
of over

\$1.8m



Pro bono partner
Shan Wilson

Kia ora tātou Welcome to our pro bono update.

As Simpson Grierson's pro bono partner, it's my pleasure to welcome you to the first edition of *Invested for good*, our annual pro bono update.

In 2020 Simpson Grierson took a big step forward in how we invest in our communities by expanding our pro bono practice, and appointing me as a dedicated pro bono partner. Over 12 months on, these changes have had a positive impact on our firm and the community organisations we work with.

Importantly, the changes refocused how we engage in pro bono work across our firm, placing a priority on providing meaningful legal assistance for initiatives and organisations that deliver practical support to disadvantaged and low-income community members.

Throughout 2020 we expanded many of our long-standing pro bono relationships, as well as forming new partnerships with other fantastic community organisations who are making a positive difference. It was surprising to see the number of charities that had no legal partner offering pro bono support. So we welcomed partnering, and deepening our relationship with these organisations, some of whom are featured in this update.

I think for all of us at Simpson Grierson, stepping up our pro bono programme couldn't have come at a better time with the rise in poverty and disparity due to the impacts of Covid. A lot of the pro bono work we're involved in makes us aware of how lucky we are to be in secure work, and gives our people a meaningful way to live our values of "putting people first" and being "energetic for change", by giving back to the community.

This is just the start, and it's exciting to have the firm backing the importance of pro bono work in the Aotearoa New Zealand legal sector - not only in growing our connections within the community, but also by providing a more rewarding experience for our Simpson Grierson team by giving them more opportunities to get involved.

I hope you enjoy reading our update and learning about some of the amazing organisations we have worked with over the past year.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Shan Wilson".

Shan Wilson
Pro Bono Partner
shan.wilson@simpsongrierson.com

Invested in pro bono

We recognise that accessing legal advice can be difficult for disadvantaged and low-income individuals and groups within our communities.

We also know that engaging in pro bono work makes for better lawyers. That's why we stepped up in 2020 to appoint a dedicated partner, Shan Wilson, to lead and grow our pro bono practice. That's a first for Aotearoa New Zealand law firms.

This move is a direct reflection of our organisation's broader commitment to be "energetic for change" through investing in Aotearoa New Zealand and its communities. We not only want to provide more assistance within the community, but also to embed an internal culture that embraces pro bono and sees access to justice as part of our professional obligations.

Through our practice we have assisted numerous people and groups, either on a one-off or ongoing basis (see right for some of the 68 organisations we assisted over the last 12 months). We also contribute to law reform and policy work on issues affecting low income or disadvantaged members of the community.

We've worked hard to strengthen our support to the Community Law Centres. Simpson Grierson has always had a roster of staff visiting the Auckland and Wellington centres once a week to cover the phones and pick up research, and in 2020 we expanded that assistance.

We have many ongoing pro bono projects, and are continuing to add new ones in 2021 as we keep building and growing our practice while embedding a culture of pro bono work at Simpson Grierson. Keep watching this space!



Simpson Grierson



Invested in our communities



Sir Ray Avery Foundation



From left to right: Rachael Wright, Shan Wilson, Josiah Ko, Alex Bengree and Ella Arbuckle Page.

Community Law Centres

"Simpson Grierson has been an invaluable support to us at Community Law Wellington and Hutt Valley (CLWHV)."

From the outset, their solicitors have gone above and beyond to support our kaupapa of providing those with the least with similar or better access to justice as those with the most. They are always so keen to use their expertise to assist our community and are a pleasure to have in our offices.

Simpson Grierson support CLWHV's work by providing a secondee for 5 hours every week, taking on pro bono referrals and most recently by sending a lawyer to advise on one of our weekly free legal advice sessions in our Te Awakairangi (Lower Hutt) office.

We feel beyond lucky to have this continued support from Simpson Grierson. Over the COVID-19 lockdown, and the tumultuous period afterward, the team were especially helpful with our more detailed work and we were blown away by their flexibility in fast-changing circumstances. This assistance provided extra stability when all our clients had to be helped remotely and this eased the huge workload of our staff lawyers.

I have found that whenever we need to refer a pro bono client, the team is happy to connect and assist our clients wherever possible. CLWHV really value the open lines of communication, high-quality work, manaakitanga and eagerness to help that the Simpson Grierson team consistently demonstrate.

A special thank you to Shan Wilson and Ella Arbuckle Page for the continued support and hard work they provide us, and to the entire team for this latest expansion in Simpson Grierson's volunteering, which will be a huge help in meeting the growing legal needs in our community."

Alex Bengree
Project Coordinator,
Community Law Wellington and Hutt Valley

The Hearing House

"Pro bono publico may read as an antiquated phrase with little relevance in today's world full of Covid issues, MIQ concerns and vaccine roll outs, but the translation "for the public good", and the way Simpson Grierson has embraced the concept underpinning it is significant.

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At The Hearing House we support people on their journey to access sound with cochlear implants. As CEO, I know first-hand the impact and benefit of the work Simpson Grierson does. For us their work has involved difficult matters including big-picture issues affecting the strategy of our organisation, privacy law matters, reviewing internal policies and documentation, investigation of issues around the implementation of a database and leasing matters. Simpson Grierson is also in the preliminary stage of considering a human rights matter.

Our work is diverse and complex and having Simpson Grierson's support means we can access excellent legal advice which we would otherwise not be able to receive. These are not matters that I could approach a community law centre about (where the majority of the pro bono legal work occurs). By offering this service Simpson Grierson's work has a positive and tangible impact on New Zealanders and the legal profession. Thank you."

Dr Claire Green
CEO, The Hearing House



Photo credit:
The Hearing House



Photo credit:
The Hearing House

Variety – the Children’s Charity

"As a charity, Variety has a duty of care to our donors to steward their gifts to ensure maximum impact for the children we serve and the initiatives we support, which is why we were thrilled to welcome Simpson Grierson as our pro bono legal counsel."



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Photo credit: wavebreakmedia/Shutterstock.com

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"Our partnership has not only bolstered Variety's capability as an organisation, it enables us to better honour our commitment to our donors to maximise the value of their support and funnel it to the areas of greatest need.

Recently, Variety launched a two-year pilot programme with Sport New Zealand valued at \$2.15m to increase participation in active play and physical literacy for vulnerable children. Simpson Grierson played a key role in helping us secure the partnership, providing pro bono legal support and advice to help us navigate, negotiate, draft and sign the contract. Variety is also transforming the way our families access funding, as we introduce the 'Variety card'. Simpson Grierson has been

instrumental in its successful execution, ensuring our needs are reflected in the agreement with our selected card provider. The diligence and attention to detail provided has been truly exceptional.

Like Variety, the team at Simpson Grierson, is committed to enabling organisations and initiatives that support the wellbeing of vulnerable communities and the growth and development of their youngest members. Variety has greatly benefitted from the tailored, high-quality advice and service provided by experts at Simpson Grierson who are motivated by our mission to 'provide brighter futures for Kiwi kids'"

Susan Glasgow
Chief Executive Officer,
Variety – the Children's Charity



The Period Place

"The Period Place is Aotearoa's biggest period charity. We're on a mission to provide safe spaces for period conversations, get period education to those that need it, and ensure every menstruator in Aotearoa has the same access to period products."



Simpson Grierson team members on this project (or as The Period Place calls them - the "kick-ass wāhine lawyers in our corner"). From left to right Holly McKinley, Anastasiya Gutorova, Shan Wilson, Courtney Mearns and Kate Tennent.



Photo credit: Gemma Chua-Tran

"We contacted Simpson Grierson when our first big partnership opportunity came about in 2020. Ever since, the support from the team at Simpson Grierson has been overwhelmingly generous. From contract negotiations to personal support down the end of the phone in tough moments, Simpson Grierson, and in particular, Shan, have gone above and beyond in their pro bono support for us.

Thanks to Simpson Grierson, The Period Place has been able to confidently enter into partnerships and collaborations with key organisations around the country, and from overseas, ensuring The Period Place is able to continue achieving the bold goal to make Aotearoa the first period equitable country in the world by 2030. This means zero period stigma, and everyone in the country having the same access to period education and all types of period products, irrespective of their gender, location, or cost inhibitors.

The support from Simpson Grierson has enabled us to enter into partnerships with The Warehouse and Kimberly-Clarke (UbyKotex), collaborations with Auckland Council and other Government departments, and sign on countless Community Impact Partners around the country - including ASA Foundation, Auckland City Mission, E Tipu E Rea, Mahitahi Trust, Manakau Urban Maori Authority and Rainbow Youth, just to name a few!

Simpson Grierson has enabled The Period Place to confidently walk through the doors of life-changing meetings, and walk out with that signed contract and a smile on our faces. For that, we are forever grateful."

Danika Revell
Cofounder + CEO, The Period Place

the
period place.



Photo credit:
CARE Waitakere Trust

CARE Waitakere Trust

"CARE Waitakere Trust has been working in West Auckland for over 22 years. ”

We are a recognised and respected wrap-around social service provider in Te Atatu and the wider Waitākere area. Our services include counselling for adults, children and families, advocacy, family support, social work, financial mentoring, and emergency food assistance. We are the only wrap-around service provider on Te Atatu Peninsula. CARE's vision is that our community is safe, connected, resourced, and thriving. Our mission is to meet the needs of our community, Waitākere City.

Simpson Grierson has provided pro bono legal advice to our Financial Mentoring team since October 2020 and in February 2021 engaged one of our clients for full legal representation. This has delivered significant value to both our organisation and the clients we support by allowing us to benefit from their deep knowledge and experience in estate administration, tenancy law and employment law. Our clients have wide ranging advocacy needs, and while our Financial Mentors are experienced and knowledgeable in many of these areas, accessing the expert knowledge and advice provided to us by Simpson Grierson has not only helped our Financial Mentors develop deeper knowledge but has also led to stronger outcomes for the community we serve."

Kathy Clist
CEO, CARE Waitakere Trust



TupuToa

“TupuToa has enjoyed a meaningful partnership with Simpson Grierson over the last five years, working together to deliver on our vision to grow Māori and Pacific leaders for a greater Aotearoa.”



“Simpson Grierson has provided us pro bono with legal support, in particular developing our contracts, from our humble beginnings five years ago with 20 partners and a standard agreement, to more than 140 partners across a range of different partnership categories today.

In that time, TupuToa has developed and successfully delivered an innovative internship programme creating pathways for Māori and Pacific students into professional careers. Our unique programme was recognised with a DiversityWorks NZ Diversity Award for Impact last year.

We are pleased that in addition to legal services, Simpson Grierson also hosts a TupuToa intern each year. The impact of this work goes beyond individual interns – changing lives for their entire whānau, be that economically, socially or culturally.

And while the genesis of our relationship may have been legal contracts, at its heart it's about relationships which aim to build a more inclusive and prosperous Aotearoa.”

Anne Fitisemanu
Chief Executive, TupuToa



AUCKLAND

Level 27, 88 Shortland Street,
Private Bag 92518,
Auckland 1141, New Zealand
+64 9 358 2222

WELLINGTON

Level 24, HSBC Tower,
195 Lambton Quay, PO Box 2402,
Wellington 6140, New Zealand
+64 4 499 4599

CHRISTCHURCH

Level 1, 151 Cambridge Terrace,
PO Box 874,
Christchurch 8140, New Zealand
+64 3 365 9914

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