



yes

Annual Report 2021

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Our Vision

In New Zealand today 30% of young people under 25 have a disability. YES' vision is to create a collaborative community that is equitable for all New Zealanders. We actively support young people with disabilities and their whānau to take maximum control of their lives. We do this by running a number of programmes, including the innovative I.Lead movement, to enable young people to reach their full potential.

Leadership Review

Paul Blair

Chair of Services Trust



In 2021 YES' reputation and relationships, built within the sector and community over many years, has made it a 'go-to' partner for Government and philanthropists to deliver trusted advice and services to the disability community.

As I write this, Auckland remains in Level 3 lockdown and YES have been heavily involved in helping Government agencies reach vulnerable members of our community. Concerns with vaccination, mental health and access to safe, high-quality services have been real issues for the disabled community during lockdown. YES, have been very active in using online tools and engagement programmes to keep our community safe and provide a trusted source of information and services.


We have put a lot of effort into creating a robust operating platform that provides confidence to our funding partners that we can deliver. Most importantly, the work we have done on our operating platform and governance has allowed

us to provide more and better services to our community.

In February, the Ministry of Social Development undertook a detailed review of YES, including our governance, finances, staffing, health & safety and the quality of our programmes & services. We were very pleased to be granted a Level 3 Social Sector Accreditation status to deliver programmes through the Ministry of Youth Development. Our new website went live in May, with support from our partner Benefitz. We have been successful in tendering for a grant to create a new, nationally focused digital platform to connect the disability community to work, called Future Ready.

Our success in raising new funding has allowed us to expand our team, with Susi Burke, Mags Gerasimova, Lavinia Lovo, Kathleen Derrick, Abdulla Shiblaq and Shannon Prevett joining us this year, all of whom have added fresh energy and skills.

Unfortunately, the return of Level 3 & 4 settings has



forced us to defer the I.Lead conference, originally set for September 2021, into 2022. I'm proud of the work that the team has done under the I.Lead banner in providing training to over 600 student teachers from Massey and other Universities on disability awareness.

My thanks go to all of the board for their hard work this year, focused on our strategic plan. We were sorry to accept the resignation of Gareth Berry due to other work commitments. Gareth has been a strong advocate for YES and has made a key difference in our digital skills in particular. A highlight for me was the creation of a new Communications plan, led by Elissa and Jo with input from our staff and community, which will help inform our future communications and funding strategies. Robin Paul has been on the board of YES, and its predecessors, since inception. Robin's history of YES will be made available in 2022, and it highlights just how far the organisation has come from its early days to its position now as a trusted, sustainable and highly effective organisation.

I want to acknowledge Sonia Thursby's excellent leadership of YES. When I joined the board 3 years ago, YES was delivering good outcomes, but with a very small team and an unsustainable financial base. COVID has been a shock, however it has highlighted the importance and value of organisations like YES that are close to their communities and which have strong trust and reputation.

At our AGM this year we have an opportunity to reset the governance of YES Services and Foundation to accelerate YES' social impact. It has been a privilege to serve as Chair, however I will be stepping down at the AGM to provide an opportunity for fresh ideas and thinking as YES enters a new and exciting phase of growth. Thank you to Jason Alexander for stepping up to accept the Chair role for YES Services, and to Sue Stanaway for her leadership and support as Chair of the Foundation Trust.

Paul Blair



Sue Stanaway

Chair of Foundation Trust

YES is one of the many organisations that call the Lion Foundation House its home. The 'House' contains a variety of organisations working in the not for profit sector. The Board work hard on maintaining the building to a high standard, ensuring it is a modern, welcoming environment for all.

The "House" is a hub of activity and support for all of its visitors and tenants. It was the inspirational vision of the Combined Rotary Clubs of the North Shore when they raised the funds to create the freehold building over 14 years ago. This year YES was awarded the Rotary "Arthur Coombes Memorial Cup" for recognition to our contribution to the community, coming full circle and fulfilling the aspirations of those Rotarian's whose dream is now very much reality and a pivotal part of the disabled community.

In March 2021 Shore Junction officially opened to become New Zealand's first free-to-access youth innovation hub for anyone in Auckland between 13

and 24 years of age. After months of 'testing' we are pleased that our doors opened to all young people. Our aim of 100 testers at Shore Junction quickly climbed to 157 as young people were so excited to share the space with their friends and siblings.

The old RSA building has been transformed into an innovative hub for all young people to use, creating a space that provides an even playing field for all. Young people are able to access a fully equipped music room and digital suite, an arts area, an exercise area and a technology area with 3D printer, Maker Space, Robotics, electronics all supported by study areas and meeting rooms. All of this is provided free of charge, made possible by our wonderful donors and ongoing fundraising.

Shore Junction has become a place where they can build long-term relationships with positive role models and peers, as well as take opportunities to develop their skills and capabilities. Where they can be part of something bigger, work as a team, learn together, eat together, and have meaningful conversations.

Shore Junction was also acknowledged this year at the Master Builders 2021 Awards. We were very proud to win two awards. Our thanks to everyone who worked with us to deliver this exceptional and nationally recognised project.

There are so many people to thank who have contributed to the initiative thus far, who have given their time, energy and expertise (and money!) to make this a reality. The one group who deserve so much recognition are the young people. Young people are at the heart of everything we do at Shore Junction, they know what they and their peers are looking for in an innovation space - it is that expertise we use to make Shore Junction a success.

My sincere thanks to my fellow Board of Trustees who have guided with wise counsel and hard work both YES and Shore Junction. Raising the funds to provide the community with Lion Foundation House, and a New Zealand first with Shore Junction, a place of safety, learning and friendship for many young people and community organisations. None of this

could have been possible without the support of our generous donors, who saw the vision and enabled us to build Shore Junction.

My thanks also to the staff team at Shore Junction and YES who are driven by a passion to make a difference and whose enthusiasm, professionalism and hard work we are so proud of.

Sue Standaway



Sonia Thursby

CEO

It has been 18 months like no other, a time when we have learnt a new language, 'Covid', 'lockdowns', 'MIQ' and for many 'online schooling'. For the whanau of children and young people with disabilities it has been particularly hard and my respect and admiration goes out to those parents, caregivers and people with disabilities. It is well documented that the inequities for this group of New Zealanders has grown during the pandemic.

The support we have offered in this time has been different, zoom calls, end of footpath visits connecting whanau with other services and the famous "Cheer Parcels".

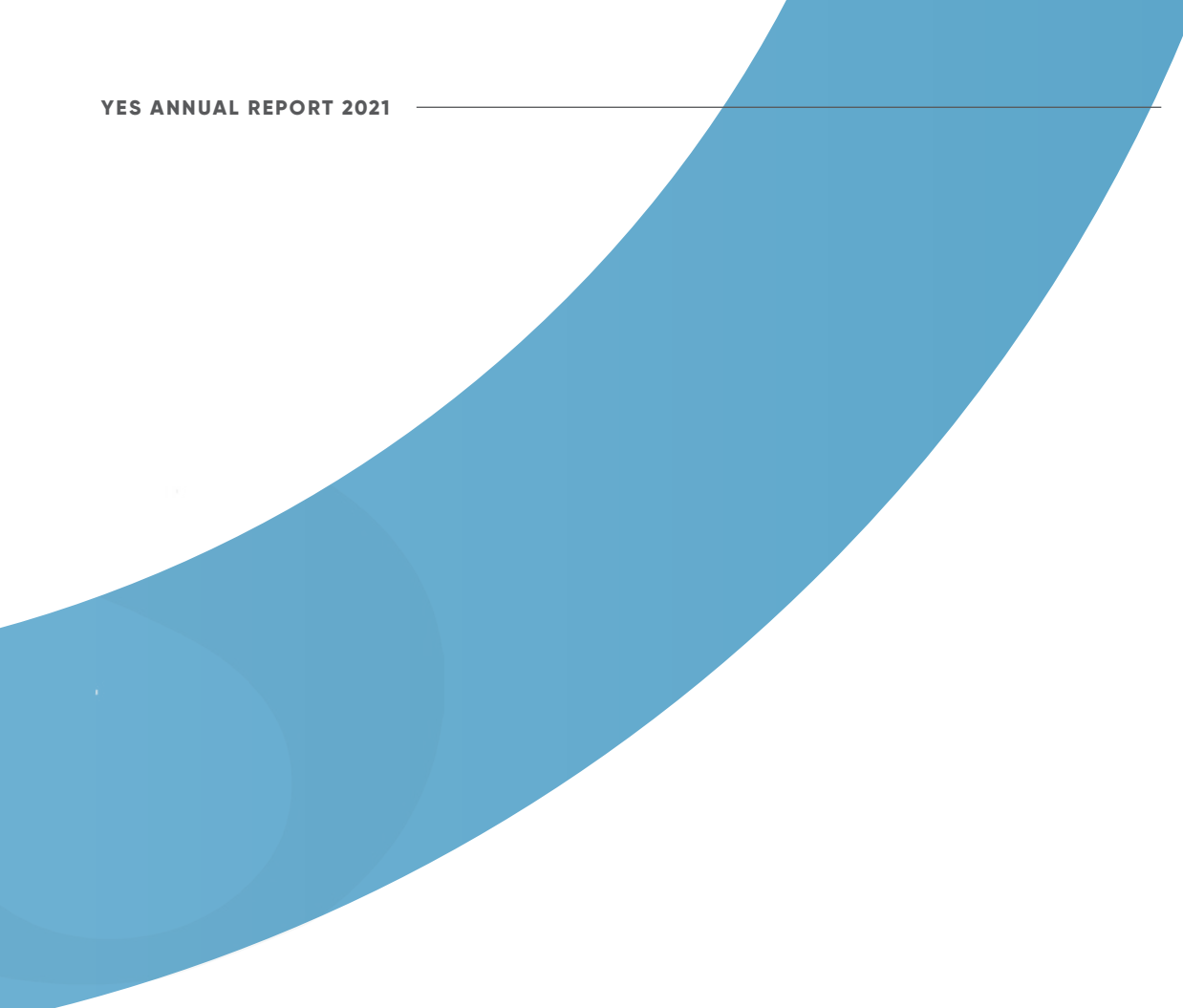
As CEO of YES I have been on a number of Ministry of Health working groups advocating strongly for extra support where needed for disabled young people. Our I.Lead team have also been on working groups advocating for our sector and we are very proud of them. I believe we have made a difference

and have had some small but significant wins. Free transport to vaccine centres, accessible testing and vaccine centres, and in home vaccination for those that cannot leave the house.

The young people of I.Lead have had to endure two postponed conferences but have continued to connect and reach out to young people with disabilities around the country. As I have read through this report I am extremely proud of all of them.

We have reached some incredible milestones with the opening of Shore Junction, one of my proudest days. It is everything the young people asked for and more than they could imagine. Winning the "Judges Special Award" at the Master Builders Awards was truly unexpected, but a testament to everyone who has contributed - donors, builders, but most of all young people.

At our opening we were honoured to announce our Patron Mrs Jackie Reeve. Jackie has supported



the idea of Shore Junction from the beginning, she is a champion for our cause, her enthusiasm and support has been one of the reasons we have Shore Junction.

The year has been different, but no less incredible. We have won awards including the Rotary Arthur Coombes Cup; I was awarded the Paul Harris Fellowship from Rotary and the President's award from the New Zealand Federation of Information Centres; and Shore Junction won two building awards. These awards are a reflection of team YES and Shore Junction. Staff, trustees, young people and whanau, together we make a difference, together we have been recognised, and together we will continue to strive for a place that is inclusive for all New Zealanders.

My heartfelt thanks to the staff team who are inspiring, fun, and go above and beyond every day. To the trustees, we would not be where we are without you, your stewardship and guidance push us to be better than we have ever been before, and you

support us to deliver excellence to the community. YES has a wonderful reputation of "getting things done" and as a team we do.

We have no idea what the next 12 months will bring, but I do know we will continue to make a difference. We will respond in ways we never thought possible, advocate with a strong, bold voice, keep young people safe and support them to be all that they can be. We, staff, volunteers, trustees and young people are a small team of dedicated, brave change makers.

Sonia Thursby

Tribute to Sir David Levene KNZM OBE

YES Patron 2013 – 2021

On the 11th August 2021 our Patron Sir David Levene passed away after living an amazingly full life, a life of hard work, generosity and some very wise words.

YES, was so proud and privileged when Sir David agreed to be our Patron. What he gave to us was so much more than his name. I was lucky enough to have regular one on one conversation with Sir David, who very quickly insisted I called him David and drop the Sir!

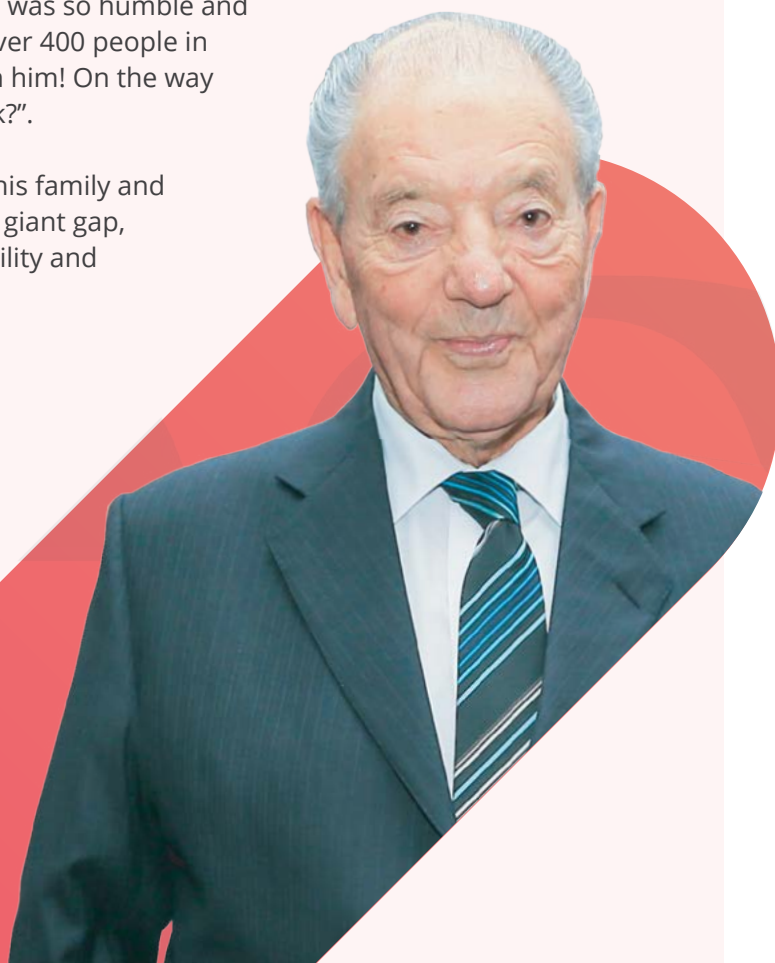
David was so generous with his wise words, stories and challenges, in a great way. I would share the aspirations of YES and the difference we wanted to make, he would ask questions and always helped me to find the answers. I would regularly share our achievements with him and he always phoned to congratulate the team when we had reached a major milestone.

Listening to David speak at Rotary, he looked at me and asked “who wants to hear from an old timer like me?”, he was so humble and didn’t like public speaking. Well there were over 400 people in the room who definitely wanted to hear from him! On the way home he asked all of us in the car “did I do ok?”.

Many people will miss him, none more than his family and closest friends, but for us at YES he has left a giant gap, he has also left an even bigger legacy of humility and generosity - especially his time and wisdom.

To me, and those of us at YES, he will always be Sir David, gentleman and wise sage.

Sonia Thursby



Our reach

YES' community relationships

50

new collaborations improving access to disability services through NZ

5,500



interactions with young people over COVID lockdowns

Number of individuals attended our inclusive education programme

1,020



Number of people reached through Facebook

117,000

Number of new I.Lead members across NZ

100



25%

increase in social media activity



Our impact

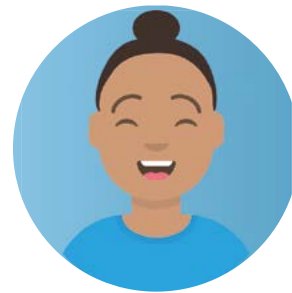
Supporting young people



Khalan he/him

Living in rural New Zealand and living with a physical disability has meant that **Khalan** often felt neglected by a lack of support. When he visited us at one of our expo's, he immediately knew that joining our I.Lead regional group would help him to advocate for increased support in his region. Now, Khalan has been a strong advocate within the community for increased PPE during the Covid-19 outbreak due to the support he receives from the I.Lead team.

"When I met I.Lead at the expo, I knew that it was the perfect opportunity for me to advocate for the things I felt we had been missing. They have been great with helping me get PPE over COVID and I have learnt how to advocate for my own needs as well as others that don't feel as comfortable doing so."



Aliceshe/her

Alice, 18 years old, is a young woman with autism. She recently finished high school and was feeling anxious about her career and education options. Alice heard about I.Lead through friends and joined up. Being part of the committee provided Alice with the opportunity to learn more about the support that is available to her in both education and the workforce, along with providing her with the opportunity to advocate for her needs.

"Being a part of the I.Lead Committee has given me a community of people that support me and I feel confident in my options with education and work now. I am so glad that I was able to join the committee and provide my thoughts on how NZ can be more inclusive for people with autism. Now I know I want to continue this work in my studies as a youth worker, and eventually support other young people with disabilities"



Braydon he/him

Braydon is a 15 year old living in South Auckland. Living with an invisible disability, he felt unsupported with his schooling. His options in gaining support around education were limited due to a lack of funding at his local school for teacher aides. Through YES' Pacific Education program, Braydon was able to attend one on one tutoring sessions with a qualified teacher that tailored his learning specifically to meet his needs. He was also able to meet other students that were in the same situation and felt less alone in asking for help.

"I was feeling hopeless and frustrated at school. When I heard about this program, I was hesitant to join but I am so happy I did. Finally, I feel like I can learn in a way I want to and I get to be around awesome people that support and embrace me for who I am."



Ioane they/them

Ioane attended our Fala Talanoa - Pasifika Symposium. They are a young person living in a wheelchair, and often felt that there were no opportunities available to them where they were able to embrace their culture and their disability. During their attendance at Fala Talanoa, they were connected with other people who felt the same. Not only did Ioane feel connected to their culture, but they felt connected to others that were feeling the same. Through this event, Ioane has kept in touch with many of the other attendees and they plan to hold similar events to showcase the power of their culture and disabilities. Ioane spoke to us about how they felt empowered after getting involved and the long-lasting positive effects this has had on their overall mental health.

"My culture was always important to me, but I never knew that there was a way to showcase the power we have with both our culture and our disabilities. Fala Talanoa did this and more - I have gained lasting friendships and a new sense of my identity through it."

I.Lead

'Creating opportunities, creating change'
If you asked members of I.Lead to sum up the last year, this is what you would hear. I.Lead has truly proved its place within the community as leaders in the youth with disabilities sector. Overcoming the challenges that COVID has thrown its way, I.Lead continues to strive for youth with disabilities to have a strong voice in every aspect of life.

After the success of our inaugural I.Lead Conference in 2019, the committee set its sights on running the second conference in September 2021. It was clear that they wanted to have this important platform to share experiences, stories, barriers and successes. This was the perfect opportunity to build conversations with government to work towards an inclusive and accessible New Zealand. The committee felt strongly that they wanted to ensure that recommendations from the last conference were not forgotten, as well as developing and adapting to the ever changing world we now live in.

Due to the COVID outbreak, we were unable to hold the conference in September but the committee are continuing their planning towards a conference in February 2022. It will focus on the affect the COVID-19 pandemic has had on young people with disabilities.

Whilst planning for the second conference was going strong, I.Lead continued to hold events, work alongside government and non-government organisations and even teach trainee teachers how we can all work together to build inclusive environments. Our Fala Talanoa - Pasifika Symposium was a highly successful event where I.Lead members were able to produce and record

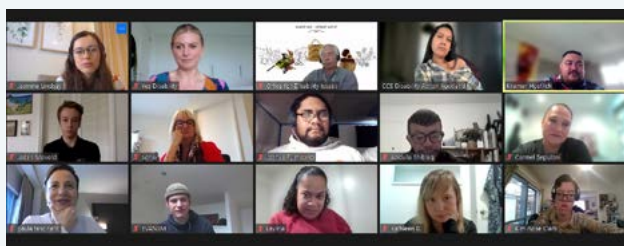


a song around their strengths and resilience coming out of the COVID-19 lockdowns. We were lucky enough to present this song at the INVOLVE Youth Workers conference in Wellington, and hope to create a music video to go alongside it. The attendees that took part were overwhelmed with the success of the song and felt proud to produce something that symbolised their strength and culture.

I.Lead has consulted on multiple different government policies throughout the year, ensuring that policies and protocols are inclusive and accessible for young people with disabilities, and remove the barriers they currently face. These include documents with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Environment and the Office for Disability Issues. We are grateful to have strong partnerships with the Hon. Carmel Sepuloni, the Human Rights Commissioner for Disability, Paula Tessoriero, Principal Analyst at the Ministry of

Education, Nicola Meek and the Director of the Office for Disability Issues, Brian Coffey. Their support has meant that I.Lead has been able to shape the future of New Zealand for all people with disabilities.

As more people learnt about I.Lead, it became increasingly clear that there was a need for I.Lead across New Zealand. I.Lead is being set up in a number of regions so that young people with disabilities have their voices heard about what matters most in their area. COVID has meant our



plans have been slowed down a little but we still managed to visit Christchurch and Wellington to meet with people who want to build I.Lead there. We are increasing our membership across the country to build a national voice that will be even stronger in the ears of decision makers.

I.Lead continues to grow with new members joining every day. We are evolving, growing and developing to build a movement that is unstoppable. By learning from the experiences of our members, their families and friends, I.Lead has the capability to improve the lives of every young person with a disability. COVID has created challenges but we have adapted and refined how we work, and proved that we are capable of great things even in the face of unprecedented times. Next year is going to be exciting, and we can't wait to be able to show you what we have planned!

I.DRIVE

The successful I.DRIVE programme continues to be run, supporting young people with disabilities gain their learner's license. The course runs over 2 days and is tailored to meet the needs of our unique learners. Attendees can bring a support person and attend the course as many times as they need to pass. We are really excited to be extending our programme into supporting young people beyond their learners to achieve their full driving license.



I.EDUCATE

It been an amazing year for I.Educate with two main programmes seeing large numbers of teachers and students involved.

The Pacific education programme offered young people with disabilities from the North Shore and South Auckland a chance to attend a free homework club with expert tuition and the opportunity to explore their talents through music, dance and art. The programme supported students who had struggled after the COVID pandemic and encouraged them to stay in school and get an education. Over 100 students have taken part, including a 2 day workshop that helped them to focus on their goals and build resilience. They worked with leading producers and writers such as Brotha D to produce a new song to be released at the end of the year.

The I.Educate inclusive education programme has gone from strength to strength. In the last 12 months members of the I.Lead committee have presented to over 600 trainee teachers all over New Zealand. This programme helps student

teachers think about how to teach, interact and respond to students with disabilities. The I.Lead committee tell their stories about attending school and what made a difference to their experience in an effort to educate and inspire the next generation of teachers.

The feedback from the student teachers has been amazing and they are looking forward to applying their knowledge in the class room. By 'teaching the trainee teachers' we catch them early so they will go on to promote inclusive education throughout their entire career.



FUTURE READY



YES, has been the driver of the innovative new website 'Future Ready'. A new platform for young people with disabilities to access transitional services, support and information when leaving school.

Currently no one website like this exists in New Zealand, information is spread all over different websites and sometimes is still in paper form. Young people with disabilities often get stuck in the transition space – from school to tertiary study, school to employment, tertiary study/training to employment, school to unemployment. They have a hard time navigating supports and services and often the information is inaccessible.

Future Ready will cover the whole of New Zealand and will be easy to use and understand. Students, their families and educators will be able to filter information and find exactly what they need to support them on their transition journey. Whether it is from school to tertiary education, employment or training, Future Ready is set to close the gap that many people with disabilities experience when transitioning through this important stage of their lives.

Future Ready will help improve independence and autonomy for young people with disabilities. It will be launched initially at the end of 2021 with Auckland specific information and will be grown to become a national resource.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH

This year YES became proud partners of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award. It is the world's leading youth achievement award, a non-formal education framework with more than 60 years of experience challenging young people to Dream Big and discover their full potential.

YES has been selected to launch the award in Auckland for young people with disabilities. We will be working with a small group of young men and women to help them on their personal journey of self-discovery, responsibility and commitment. The Bronze award takes 6 months

to complete and involves learning new skills and undertaking new physical challenges. We are very excited to see where the journey will take us!

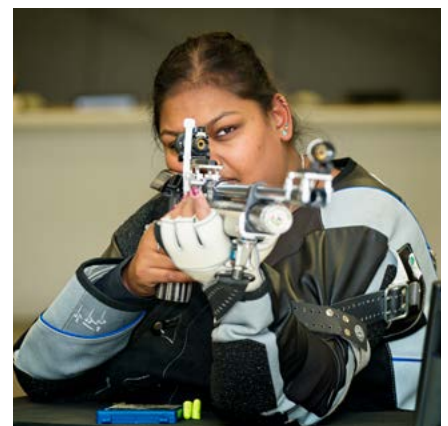


RE-IMAGINE: OLYMPIA

Re-Imagine was launched 5 years ago, with the core purpose of changing the narrative and negative misconceptions that surround young people with disabilities. Our theme this year is Re-Imagine: Olympia, reflecting the 2021 Paralympics in Tokyo. The vision for Olympia was to celebrate the strengths and achievements of our young people with disabilities and encourage them to go for gold!

Thanks to funding from **Le Va** and our partnership with **Parafed Auckland**, we worked alongside 11 young aspiring athletes with disabilities doing what they love to do. We photographed them representing their Paralympic sport to create a photographic art series to be displayed on billboards across Auckland. Later in the year there will be two art exhibitions to showcase the images to an even bigger audience.





Shore Junction

Shore Junction is a place where young people find themselves in a safe environment to develop their current passions whilst exploring and trying new skills. We are proud to be 100% co-designed, everything that has gone into the space has been achieved with our community of young people on the North Shore.

These past 6 months have seen Shore Junction exponentially grow the scope of young people we engage with. From developing strong relationships with the Pacifika community of the North Shore, to becoming a safe home for our queer and rainbow youth. We have increased engagement with alternate education providers, utilised our fully accessible building for a range of our disabled youth and provided the space for dynamic musical theatre productions. We have formed countless connections with youth organisations from around Tamaki Makaurau.

When asked why our young people keep coming back to Shore Junction every week, the reasons can be grouped into 3 main categories:

1 No matter who the young person is, no matter what sexuality, gender pronoun, ethnicity, economic background or where they sit on any other spectrum, they feel like they are safe and belong at Shore Junction.

This has been a major focus over the past year, to increase engagement from all walks of life on the North Shore. No matter who the young person is that enters Shore Junction we allow them and encourage them to be their true and authentic self. We believe if they feel accepted in Shore Junction, they will learn to accept themselves- and others- too.

2 They feel like the staff at Shore Junction care about them as young people.

We truly believe that each young person who enters the door at Shore Junction has intrinsic value and worth. We believe that by seeing the worth in young people – and acknowledging it whenever they come in- we enable them to see their own worth in themselves. When young people believe they're important and hold value, they begin to live life with a new confidence. They also start to see and acknowledge the value in other young people.

3 They are able to grow in their current passions or develop a new skill in a safe space.

We say that Shore Junction is a safe place to grow and a safe place to fail. We encourage all our young people to try new things that they wouldn't normally do in their everyday life. We offer workshops in skills they've never attempted before e.g. 3D printing design, dancing, art work etc. Our young people who have never recorded a song in a studio before are suddenly doing it all the time and falling in love with it. They are inspired to write and record numerous songs because they know, that even if the first song isn't great, they will continue to improve and one-day record something incredible to mainstream- if that's what they want.

Another core objective of Shore Junction is to provide affordable and accessible spaces for hire to other community groups and locals users. We are excited to deliver a range of multi-use spaces within Shore Junction, including a youth incubation space, meeting rooms, dance spaces and an auditorium that have the flexibility to provide



community groups, and local business users with opportunities to meet or deliver their services. These spaces are accessible, youth-friendly, and affordable.

We have had a large uptake in use during the first half of 2021 from lots of local groups; Hospice North Shore hosting their day groups; Halberg Sports Foundation running a leadership programme; professional development meetings for Physio Connect; Principals Morning tea for Simon Watts; Pacific Suicide prevention workshops and Mother's meetings for the North Shore Multi-Cultural society. We enjoy seeing the spaces used during the day, and evening by other community groups and members of the community.

Shore Junction was designed to be a place for young people to come up with brilliant ideas and to grow as individuals, however in the past 12 months it's become so much more than that. It's become a community which builds beautiful friendships, it's a place to share music and performances, a place to explore and expand skillsets, a place to share ideas and develop them but most importantly, It's become a safe haven for those who have felt unseen, uncared for and forgotten about. Shore Junction is more than just a youth space, it has become a home for those young people.

"As a Tongan who grew up in a big family, my Dad worked really hard just to put food on our table. We aren't a rich family but everyone who finds out we live on the North Shore always assumes we have lots of money. So we usually miss out on opportunities just because of where we live. It's like just because we live on the Shore people assume we have lots of money. But we don't.

Being Tongan and having a big family means we have to miss out on doing fun stuff sometimes just because we can't afford it. But when I'm here it doesn't matter that I'm Tongan and don't have a rich family or don't have a production studio at home. I come to Shore Junction and I feel like no matter who you are, or which culture you are, you're allowed to be here. You're allowed to try things. You are allowed to work on the things you love. It's special because no matter who you are, you belong here. We all do."



A special thanks

Patron (YES)

Sir David Levene (2013 – 2021)



Patron (Shore Junction)

Jackie Reeve



Foundation Trust Board

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QBE insurance
Smales Family
Takapuna Rocks

Get involved

We couldn't do what we do without our generous supporters.

We'd love you to join us – and these are just some of the ways you can get involved.

DONATE

With just a single donation you can make a difference to a young person with a disability. Donate via our website.

JOIN A COMMITTEE

If you are a young person with a disability, why not get involved with one of our committees? Get in touch via our socials to learn more.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

Support from Corporate partners helps us to support more young people with a disability. Please get in touch if you think you can help us.

Keep in touch

Website: yesdisability.org.nz

Email: Info@yesdisability.org.nz

Address: Lion Foundation House, 3 William Laurie Place, Albany, Auckland, 0632



