



## Assisting our communities



### Te Ara Ture - A Bridge to Law

In 2022 Russell McVeagh registered with Te Ara Ture, an innovative online portal that connects volunteer lawyers with disadvantaged kiwis, referred by Community Law Centres across the motu to make the justice system fairer and more accessible. Being part of the Te Ara Ture community of volunteer lawyers opens up opportunities for our people to contribute their expertise to some of Aotearoa's most vulnerable communities.

“Te Ara Ture values Russell McVeagh's consistent and ongoing support of pro bono matters. The firm's lawyers are excellent to deal with, and provide marginalised and disadvantaged clients with the quality of service one would expect from a top-tier firm. This makes a significant difference to access to justice for clients and communities experiencing hardship.”

Sabrina Muck, Director – Te Ara Ture

“It was a privilege to be counsel for our pro bono client who was referred to us from Te Ara Ture. Our client was required to prepare a brief of evidence and be a witness at a coroner's inquest. It was very rewarding to have helped an understandably nervous client who said that she felt very supported by Russell McVeagh.”

Erin Gatenby, Solicitor, Russell McVeagh

## Community Law centres



Community Law centres provide legal assistance to those in the community that need it most, especially those for whom the cost of legal services would be a barrier to enforcing their rights or solving their legal issue/s. Russell McVeagh has a long-standing relationship with Community Law centres in Aotearoa, especially the Māngere Community Law Centre which we have been supporting since 1987.

Each week, a group of solicitors attend drop-in sessions to provide legal assistance to members of the community who otherwise might not have the means to seek the support they need. For many, legal issues can be expensive, confusing, and difficult to navigate. By providing free one-off advice, our aim is to empower our clients to make informed decisions about their rights.

### Māngere Community Law Centre

Senior Solicitor Richelle Go Ocao and Solicitor Ella Marr, shared their experiences volunteering at the centre:



“Every Tuesday, a few of our solicitors volunteer at the Māngere Community Law Centre by meeting with members of the community to offer free legal advice. We meet with clients who are dealing with a wide range of issues – from consumer issues and debt disputes to tenancy problems and fencing disputes. It is incredibly rewarding for us to be able to use our skills and knowledge to help members of our community navigate the legal system and seek practical solutions to their issue/s.”

Working on complex cross-border commercial transactions can feel worlds away from a driveway dispute with a neighbour. Volunteering at the Māngere Community Law Centre is a rewarding opportunity to be able to apply our legal knowledge and analytical skills to everyday issues which can be stressful to navigate without assistance.



## Wellington and Hutt Valley Community Law

We have been supporting Wellington and Hutt Valley Community Law since 2003 and our relationship has continued to grow over the last year. In addition to providing a regular team of lawyers to support their drop-in sessions each week, Banking and Finance Solicitor Riki Kahukiwa completed a virtual secondment for the law centre and we donated a number of surplus monitors from the Wellington office. The team at Community Law was grateful to have the chance to update their technology to make their lives a bit easier, and we were glad to see the monitors put to good use (pictured).



Our solicitors at Wellington and Hutt Valley Community Law – L-R Rithirot Sokhom, Rianna Maxwell, Alice Pennington (Community Law Coordinator), and Alister Hughes



*My virtual secondment at Community Law gave me great exposure to areas of law that I wouldn't touch upon in my day to day work, which made the experience really interesting. It was also really rewarding on a personal level to have the opportunity to help people in the local community navigate their legal issues.*

Riki Kahukiwa, Solicitor, Russell McVeagh



Last year a few of our solicitors also contributed to the production of the 2023/24 Community Law Manuals for the Wellington and Hutt Valley Community Law Centre.

The Community Law Manual is a free, accessible, plain language legal resource designed to empower everyday people in Aotearoa New Zealand to know their legal rights. The Wellington law clerks and Community Law coordinators helped with the update by reviewing a number of the manual's chapters. Solicitors Riki Kahukiwa and Louis Daysh attended the launch in Wellington (pictured) which was a celebration of all the work that goes into creating the manual and a reminder of the essential role that both the manual and Community Law play in making the law accessible for all New Zealanders.



L-R - Riki Kahukiwa and Louis Daysh



*Volunteering at the Community Law Centre has been a rewarding journey where I have learned, shared and connected with my community in meaningful ways. It is about lending a hand and offering support to those who need it most.*

Rithirot Sokhom, Solicitor, Russell McVeagh



*We're really grateful for the work Russell McVeagh does with our Law Centre. They work across many parts of our organisation – from our legal advice sessions, our Community Law Manual, supporting some of our refugee and immigration clients, providing support to our lawyers through our secondment relationship. Russell McVeagh's work with us directly contributes to our kaupapa of increasing access to justice in our communities.*

Ben Drury, Kairuruku Kaitūao/Volunteer Coordinator, Wellington and Hutt Valley Community Law

