

# YOUNG, FREE & PACIFIC 2025 – MSD REPORT

## Pasefika Proud Funding

### Family Violence Prevention Community-Led Initiatives

**Funded Organisation:** Affirming Works Limited

**Grant Number:** 1028

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## Introduction

*Young, Free & Pacific (YFP)* is an annual youth-led leadership initiative proudly delivered by **Affirming Works Limited**, with the support of **Pasefika Proud**, under the *Family Violence Prevention Community-Led Initiatives* funding stream (Grant 1028).

Now in its **11th year**, YFP brings together Pacific secondary school students from across Aotearoa to strengthen cultural identity, leadership, and community connection through creativity, storytelling, and talanoa.



In 2025, YFP was delivered across four events in **Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland)** and **Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington)**, reaching over **470 students** from **34 schools**. Each regional event was split into separate days for **young men** and **young women**, offering gender-responsive programmes that reflected the theme for Youth Week 2025.

The programme is grounded in cultural values, youth development principles, and our ongoing commitment to preventing violence by empowering young people, fostering identity, and building resilience. YFP is made possible through the collaboration of Affirming Works, Pasefika Proud, and the Ministry of Social Development — each working to support thriving Pacific youth, families, and communities across Aotearoa.

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## 1. WHAT WERE THE HIGHLIGHTS/ACHIEVEMENTS?

Now in its 11th year, Young, Free & Pacific (YFP) 2025 brought together over 470 students across two cities and four events—Auckland Men’s and Women’s Days, and Wellington Men’s and Women’s Days. With 34 schools participating, including both long-standing partners and new attendees, the event celebrated identity, leadership, and connection.



Speakers included powerful Pacific leaders such as Judge Ida Malosi, Eteroa Lafaele, Latayvia Tautai, Xavier Breed, and Jayden Luapo. Students engaged in workshops across spoken word, dance, music, art, and carving, facilitated by mentors and alumni.

There was a visible rise in pride, self-expression, and cultural identity among students, with many wearing Pacific attire and sharing openly in a safe space. The event also stood out for the broad diversity represented—20 ethnicities, with the top three being Samoan (346), Tongan (159), and Māori (64).

Student quote: *“I felt like I could be myself and learn about other Pasifika people who are doing cool things.”* — Student, Mt Roskill Grammar

## 2. WHAT WERE THE KEY LEARNINGS?

We learned that being agile and prepared is critical when working with schools. Teachers are stretched, and roles like Pacific dean or careers advisors often cover multiple portfolios. We’ve worked to make attendance easier by preparing full EOTC and RAMS documentation, transport guidance, and offering support staff to receive and supervise students on the day.



We also learned that student safety, authenticity, and the sense of belonging are key to impact. Events like YFP are crucial especially for Pacific students who are a minority in their schools. Many students said it was the first time they were surrounded by other Pacific young people.

Student quote: *“It helped me realise I’m not alone and there’s so many of us doing amazing things.”* — Student

## 3. WERE THERE ANY CHALLENGES, AND IF SO, HOW WERE THEY ADDRESSED?

A recurring challenge is ensuring that the right person within the school receives the event invitation. Sometimes these get stuck in admin inboxes or sent to someone no longer in the role. Staff turnover also plays a part. We addressed this by following up via multiple channels and offering direct assistance for logistics.

We've also responded by offering more hands-on support: our team is on-site all day, all staff are police-vetted, and we clearly communicate safety protocols to schools.

School feedback: *"The pre-event documentation made it easier to organise permission and transport."* — Staff, Tawa College

#### **4. WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE OF OUTCOMES?**

Feedback from over 100 student evaluations and five school surveys show strong positive outcomes. Key themes include cultural pride, increased confidence, and feeling inspired by relatable role models.

- 94% of students said they would recommend the event to friends.
- Many noted they felt more confident in their identity and motivated to pursue leadership.



Student quote: *"It gave me confidence to speak up and be proud of who I am."* — Student, Papatoetoe High School

School quote: *"Our students always come back energised and affirmed in their cultural identity. It's a highlight of the school year."* — Teacher, Aotea College

#### **5. HOW WILL YOU SHARE THE INSIGHTS GAINED FROM THIS INITIATIVE?**

We plan to share this report widely across our networks including all participating schools, community partners, funders, and regional stakeholders. Schools involved in 2025 will also receive a feedback summary.

We continue to deliver youth mentoring in several of the schools that attended YFP and will use this connection to reinforce the learning and identity outcomes experienced at the event.

Schools will be invited before the end of 2025 to register interest for YFP 2026 so planning can begin early. We're also in talks with potential speakers and workshop leaders to ensure high-quality delivery.



#### **6. WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE INITIATIVE MOVING FORWARD?**

As we look to the future, our plan is simple but steadfast: keep growing, keep partnering, and keep informing.

We will continue to keep all stakeholders informed — from schools and students to community partners and funders — about the journey and impact of Young, Free & Pacific. This includes sharing our data insights, registration trends, feedback themes, and the real stories of how YFP continues to inspire and uplift Pacific youth across Aotearoa.

We're focused on deepening our partnerships with schools, ensuring each year's delivery is more responsive, more logistically seamless, and more impactful. By sharing clear communications early, and by providing tools like EOTC, RAMS, and transport guidance upfront, we're removing barriers and inviting more schools to take part.

Looking ahead, we aim to:

- Sustain and strengthen our current regional delivery in Auckland and Wellington
- Explore opportunities to expand into other centres over time, as capacity allows
- Continue leveraging our year-round mentoring relationships with schools to reinforce the event's messages throughout the school year
- Build out our Alumni stories, capturing the journeys of young people who have been part of YFP in years past and are now leading in their communities



Events like this matter — and they matter deeply to our young people. When students leave saying, *“I’ve never felt so seen,”* or *“This is the first time I’ve been surrounded by people like me,”* we’re reminded that this isn’t just a conference — it’s a catalyst.

*“I want to come back next year — this has made me feel more confident in who I am and proud to be Pacific.”*

— Student, Sacred Heart College, Lower Hutt

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

