

Advocacy case study Clare Foundation

About Clare Foundation

The [Clare Foundation](#) is a private spend-down foundation that launched in 2020 with a ten-year investment horizon. Its focus is on supporting systems change by identifying and investing in initiatives with potential to be transformative at all levels - for individuals, whānau, communities, the environment, institutions and society.

Clare has four key focus areas for its giving – women, oral health, youth wellbeing and environment. Its approach is “*mindful of the power of collective action, the unique role that philanthropy can play to realise change, the value in taking risks and always doing no harm*”.

Advocacy journey

Clare Foundation views advocacy as a key lever for systems change, helping to challenge the status quo by amplifying community voice, growing awareness, shifting narratives and mindsets, building alliances and influencing the political will to act on key issues.

A key part of Clare’s approach is working collaboratively and in allyship with its community partners and other funders to amplify collective influence. The Foundation has funded groups to lead targeted advocacy campaigns, invested in new research and pilots, helped mobilise community action for legislative change, and invested in advocates to develop the capabilities needed for effective advocacy and systems change leadership.

Types of advocacy engagement and impact

Clare Foundation stands out for the breadth of its advocacy support. It has an intentionally multi-faceted approach, with ability to invest both long-term on key issues and more responsively when windows for influence emerge.



Funding advocacy
(including alternative practice)

[MindTheGap](#) is a key example of direct advocacy work that Clare helped seed and is continuing to support. It is focused on campaigning to close pay gaps for women, Māori, Pacific peoples, disability communities and other ethnicities in Aotearoa. MindTheGap has produced vital research on pay equity, led government policy advice, and developed petitions for legal reform around employer pay equity transparency. More recently, it has developed the [Pay Gap Insights Hub](#), which includes tools and resources that support employers to measure, report on and take action to close their pay gaps.

Under its oral health focus area, Clare Foundation has a three-year funding partnership with ActionStation to support the campaign for universal free access to dental care. The campaign, supported by the [Dental for All](#) coalition, has released research and mobilised community action to influence party policy on dental care.

Under its youth focus area, Clare has supported [Make It 16](#), a youth-led, non-partisan campaign aimed at uplifting and strengthening youth voices by lowering the voting age to 16.

Clare has invested in [Lawyers for Climate Action](#), a group of lawyers and legal academics focused on driving more effective action on the climate crisis. The group uses strategic climate litigation to hold governments and companies to account, advocates for legislative and policy change, connects members to community groups for pro-bono support, and produces resources to support more climate-conscious legal practice.

Clare is also a key investor and partner in the Right to Repair Coalition, working to influence right to repair legislation that would protect consumer rights to repair goods, with associated financial and environmental benefits. The Coalition is actively engaging in the [Consumer Guarantees \(Right to Repair\) Amendment Bill](#), with a select committee report due in August 2025.



Growing advocacy capacity

Clare Foundation has provided funding to [The Workshop](#) for stipends for its Narrative Fellowships programme, which trains and empowers advocates and storytellers from across the for-purpose sector to develop the skills, practices and connections needed to accelerate their work on changing narratives. The programme supports leaders to change how they talk about big issues, to shift mindsets and help people understand and support the changes that will make the biggest difference.



Evidence for change

Alongside J R McKenzie Trust and the Selwyn Foundation, Clare co-invested in a [report by the Coalition to End Women's Homelessness](#) that provided evidence about the level and impact of women's homelessness in Aotearoa, including the disproportionate impact on wāhine Māori, single mothers, and older women. The report provides clear advocacy calls for solutions, including policy and investment approaches.

Clare Foundation invested in the [Community Water Fluoride \(CWF\) Research project](#) (University of Canterbury), to analyse fluoride exposure from drinking water and create a 'Fluoridation Index' that provides communities and iwi with the evidence and tools to hold the Crown (central and local Government) to account over any inequities in community water fluoridation.



Collaboration, convening, mobilising

Clare Foundation strongly focuses on co-investment, with its ability to be nimble and flexible adding value alongside the pūtea of other funders.

[Weave](#) is a good example of this – a collaboration of eight family foundations that provides investment and support for community collaboration, whilst also championing and influencing more collaborative practice across philanthropy.

Clare Foundation is also a member of the [Rainbow Funders Rōpū](#), a group of ten funders working together to support the work of rainbow and Intersex communities and sector organisations. The Rōpū enables more strategic co-funding, including co-investment in the [Rainbow Support Collective](#), a group of organisations working together on shared outcomes to increase wellbeing for rainbow and intersex people. The Rōpū is also focused on influencing funding practices and acting in allyship to amplify the voices of rainbow communities through, for example, issuing [solidarity statements](#).



Direct advocacy

Clare Foundation has engaged in direct advocacy, primarily by providing submissions and signing letters from the sector.

Learning/insights

Clare Foundation has learned that equity is a key lens for effective advocacy, and encourages other funders to consider who is most impacted by an issue and whether/how their work helps to elevate those voices. Funders have a unique scope to see and determine where resources are going – who is being supported, and whether that support is being shared equitably.

Another key learning insight for Clare Foundation is that timing is everything. There needs to be the right level of readiness across all parties involved. Focusing where there is energy and momentum is important, as is knowing when not to battle uphill. If the political will is not there, advocacy efforts should focus on getting organised and ready for when the opportunity to influence does arrive. In some cases, this means looking at global trends and legislative or behaviour changes in other countries that might spark opportunity here, as with the Right to Repair campaign. At certain times, Clare Foundation has learned that holding ground may be just as important as creating progressive change, pointing to the backwards steps in the USA around women's reproductive rights as a reminder that established rights cannot be taken for granted.

Funders investing in advocacy are encouraged by Clare Foundation to look for opportunities to collaborate and get involved in coalitions, as well as funding ecosystems where there is common ground across sectors. Funding the infrastructure to support advocacy is also a key opportunity – particularly the professional development and training opportunities that underpin good advocacy, community organising and narrative-shift work.

Flexibility is another key advocacy insight that Clare Foundation pays close attention to. This includes offering flexibility for community partners to change direction and work adaptively in response to changing environments, emerging opportunities and non-linear journeys of progress on advocacy issues. It also means being flexible about what 'success' looks like, acknowledging that supporting advocacy often has multiple wider benefits – including building capacity, strengthening networks and learning about effective ways to have influence. Whilst legislative change is often a desired end outcome, Clare has learned that this doesn't happen overnight and sticking with advocacy kaupapa over the long-term is needed.