

**NOT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – UNDER PUBLIC EMBARGO UNTIL 5:00PM 25 SEPTEMBER 2025 (NZST)**

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## YOUTH SEARCH AND RESCUE TRUST (YSAR) TO CEASE OPERATIONS AT THE END OF 2025

The Youth Search and Rescue Trust (YSAR) Board of Trustees has resolved that YSAR will cease all training operations at the end of the 2025 training year.

After consultation with New Zealand Search and Rescue (NZSAR) and the Minister for Youth and Associate Minister of Transport the YSAR Board of Trustees has made this most difficult and least desired decision; and resolved to cease training operations at the end of the 2025 training year. The Trustees have also agreed in principle that once training operations have been concluded, the trust will be dissolved and the appropriate financial and accounting processes will be commenced to close the accounts and apply for the Trust to be deregistered and removed from the New Zealand Charities Register.

**Decision Background:** The Board of Trustees has, over the 12 months prior to September 2025 become increasingly concerned with the financial viability of the YSAR delivery model, in particular the sustainability of the growth strategy which has been implemented since 2019. The reality is that only approximately 12% of the YSAR operating budget is covered by student fees, with a little over 50% covered by NZSAR and the balance through fundraising, where possible. Our ambition to scale was sadly not matched by a sustainable funding model to enable it.

The Board of Trustees and key staff have spent hundreds of hours exploring alternative funding solutions, changes to the delivery model and options which might allow the continuation of the program beyond 2025. Efforts to redesign the YSAR program, find alternative funding sources, create alternative scenarios where training can be delivered safely and consistently and within fiscal constraints proved impossible.

The Board of Trustees acknowledge that during this process of constant change it has brought much uncertainty. Only in the last week have the Trustees been in a position to determine the final outcome.

**Thanks to all associated with YSAR:** The Board of Trustees wish to express their sincere thanks and appreciation to all students, parents, volunteers, staff and supporters – past and present – for their effort and dedication to the YSAR program. The Trustees also wish to express their sincere gratitude to funders and financial contributors including the NZSAR Council, NZ Ministry of Transport, the Freemasons Charity, Zespri, the Morgan Foundation and many regional and local charitable trusts across New Zealand.

YSAR would like to express our gratitude for the support that the program has received from our NZSAR Sector partners and affiliated organisations. The Trustees also want to acknowledge the dedicated effort made by the current staff and undertake to support them through the difficult task of closing the organisation and effecting their own redundancy. The Trustees encourage all stakeholders to remember that these are dedicated members of the YSAR family who are having to find new employment in a difficult economic environment.

**An organisation to be proud of:** YSAR was first launched in 2005 in Hamilton. The organisation operated in various local forms in the Waikato and Bay of Plenty until 2019, when the current Youth Search and Rescue Trust was established and a national growth plan was developed. YSAR has operated 8 branches across the North and South Island and during its nearly 20 years of operation has graduated over 600 students from a 3-year training program.

The YSAR Board of Trustees encourages all YSAR stakeholders to take solace in the fact that graduates of the programme have been equipped with some incredible skills and knowledge. Some graduates are already volunteering or working in SAR and emergency management organisations. Feedback to us is that these graduates are amongst the finest contributors within their organisations. Many more may find their way to those in the future, but most will be leading recreational trips into the bush and mountains, imparting their knowledge, ensuring the safe return of party members and others they may encounter on their journeys.

There is huge value in this, and everyone who has been involved in YSAR over the last two decades can be proud of this achievement and the well-rounded, competent, capable humans YSAR has helped mould.

Ends.