

# Media release



Wednesday, 10 October 2018

## Mental health – is an annual awareness week enough?

**Kids Helpline's new KHL @ High School mental health and wellbeing program is being launched this World Mental Health Day to stress the crucial importance of keeping conversations about the mental health of young people active all year around.**

Suicide remains the leading cause of death of children and young people in Australia. In 2017, 428 children and young people under the age of 25 died from suicide – 180 were 19 years or under.<sup>1</sup>

While not all mental health concerns lead to suicide, by stepping in early the tragic deaths of young people who are struggling with their mental health could be prevented – their lives could be saved.

The new Kids Helpline @ High School program being launched this week in Central and North Queensland High Schools, aims to do just that. It is free to schools and focuses on increasing the mental health literacy and coping and resilience skills of high school aged young people. Most importantly, it lets them know that it's a strength and not a weakness to reach out for help.

**yourtown/Kids Helpline** CEO Tracy Adams said Kids Helpline's own contacts with young people about mental health highlight why the Kids Helpline @ High School program is so important.

"High-school students in the 13 to 18 year old age group tell us they experience issues such as family relationship breakdowns, suicide-related thoughts, study and education issues and, most prominently, mental health concerns," Ms Adams said.

"Mental health was the number one reason children and young people contacted Kids Helpline in 2017. One in four or 17,115 of counselling contacts to Kids Helpline were about this issue.

"Over half of these young people were seeking support or strategies to manage an established disorder, while close to two fifths (37%) had symptoms of an undiagnosed mental health condition.<sup>2</sup>

"Clearly we all need to work together to ensure young people have the knowledge and support they need at such a crucial time in their lives."

The Kids Helpline @ High School program is funded by the Australian Government through Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN).

NQPHN Senior Program Officer Alison Fairleigh said the funding for the program was provided to enhance existing services due to the high level of need in the region.

"The Kids Helpline @ High School program was funded to complement existing mental health services for young people and aligns with the Australian government's preferred model of prevention and early intervention in schools," Ms Fairleigh said.

"Kids Helpline has a proven track record of delivering support and providing strategies to manage stressful situations and mental health conditions that make a real difference to people's lives.

"We are proud to collaborate with Kids Helpline on the Kids Helpline @ High School program to help northern Queensland youths live happier, healthier, longer lives."

Kids Helpline @ High School was developed in consultation with more than 450 students, teachers and parents in 10 schools across the Central and North Queensland region.

While the program was designed to primarily focus on students in years nine and ten, the consultations revealed a critical need for support for older students.

“There was particular concern for young people in Year 12 going through stressful final exams and the exciting but also sometimes scary unknown that opens up when leaving school behind,” Ms Adams said.

“The Kids Helpline @ High School program aims to booster the resilience of this group and let young people know that although they’re leaving school, Kids Helpline is not leaving them. Kids Helpline is a 24/7 services for young people aged 5-25.”

The Kids Helpline @ High School program is being piloted in Central and North Queensland high schools with an estimated reach of more than 2,000 young people.

Kids Helpline believes the program will be particularly important for Indigenous communities in the area. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data revealed Indigenous young people experienced a suicide-rate five times higher than non-Indigenous young people in the five-year period between 2013-2017.<sup>1</sup>

At the conclusion of the 12 month pilot Kids Helpline hopes to offer the program to schools nation-wide, as it has done with the successful Kids Helpline @ School program for primary schools.

Session topics for the Kids Helpline @ High School program include:

- Developing resilience
- Emotional intelligence
- Respectful relationships
- Introduction to Kids Helpline

For more information about accessing the Central and North Queensland High Schools program see [www.kidshelpline.com.au/highschoolnq](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au/highschoolnq)

Primary schools across Australia can access the free **Kids Helpline @ School** program: **Optus Digital Thumbprint with Kids Helpline and Wellbeing program** supported by Bupa. The counsellor-led sessions are designed to increase resilience and encourage help seeking by children, turning around emotional wellbeing concerns and creating positive futures for young people across Australia.

Further information about mental health and suicide-related concerns in young people can be found in the **2017 KHL Insights Reports**, go to [www.yourtown.com.au/insights/annual-overviews](http://www.yourtown.com.au/insights/annual-overviews)

Kids Helpline is Australia’s only free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. **FREE call 1800 55 1800** or [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

Kids Helpline would like to remind media to include [Kids Helpline](#) contact details during or at the end of broadcast coverage and articles to direct children and young people who may need support.

<sup>1</sup>ABS (2018). Causes of Death, Australia, 2017. Cat. No. 3303.0

<sup>2</sup>Kids Helpline (2018). Annual Insights Report, 2017. Accessed at <https://www.yourtown.com.au/insights/annual-overviews>

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## INTERVIEW/PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

Jessica Kane, Counsellor, Kids Helpline @ High School  
Tracy Adams, CEO **yourtown**  
Tony Fitzgerald, Kids Helpline Virtual Services Manager  
Kids Helpline counsellors  
Kids Helpline VNR available on request

## MEDIA CONTACTS:

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