

Tuesday, 14 November 2017

## Kids Helpline calls for youth suicide early intervention revamp

National counselling service Kids Helpline (KHL) is calling on Queensland political parties to put youth suicide early intervention strategies high on their policy agendas.

Suicide is the leading cause of death for children and young people aged between 12 and 25 years in Australia, with Queensland having the highest number of suicide deaths for children aged between five and 17 years.<sup>1</sup>

From 2012 to 2016, Kids Helpline had more than 59,000 contacts related to suicide, with one in five of those from a child aged 14 years or younger.

Despite these alarming statistics, **yourtown's** Head of Strategy and Research John Dalgleish said there are limited mental health support services available to children under 12 and that more government support is urgently needed.

"Our experience at Kids Helpline and through **yourtown's** other services, tells us that early intervention is key to preventing youth suicide. We work hard to put services in place to support those needing help, but a lot more needs to be done as a community if we are to effectively address this issue," Mr Dalgleish said.

"We know that youth mental health outreach services are vital in overcoming the stigma of help-seeking that exists among children and young people. Despite outreach investment in recent years, further investment is urgently required to meet the levels of need in Queensland's remote and regional communities in particular.

"This year, we were pleased to see funding put aside for youth mental health services to replace the Barrett Adolescent Centre, provide two new units and refurbish day program venues in South East Queensland, but this is not nearly enough.

"These new services must only be seen as the start of a state-wide, multi-sectoral and integrated strategy to effectively address youth suicide.

"Kids Helpline's research with young people who had lived experience of suicide showed that when they do seek our support it does make a difference but we need to find new ways to support those that do not reach out for help.

"This requires investment into support services designed to meet the specific needs and preferences of children and young people.

"We ask every candidate in every constituency to help make youth suicide prevention a key priority in this election and in the forthcoming government. Every young life lost to suicide is one too many."

Kids Helpline is Australia's only national 24/7 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).

<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016, *Causes of Death, Australia 2016*, viewed 13 Nov 2017, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3303.0Main+Features!2016?OpenDocument>

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### INTERVIEW/PHOTO/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES

- John Dalgleish, **yourtown** Head of Strategy and Research
- Kids Helpline counsellors | VNR footage available of Kids Helpline call centre and interviews with counsellors

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