

EMBARGOED to 8.30am, Saturday, 10 September 2016

## Young people 'give voice' to suicide: Listen, don't judge, care more

**yourtown/Kids Helpline consulted 472 children and young people who had thought about, planned or attempted suicide about their help seeking experience. Their message was simple: Listen, don't judge, care more.**

Suicide is the leading cause of death amongst 12-25 year old young people in Australia (ABS). Last year, Kids Helpline (KHL) received more than 7,500 contacts related to suicide and initiated 568 emergency care actions.

**yourtown/KHL** CEO Tracy Adams said the organisation initiated a nationwide consultation because of these alarming statistics and Kids Helpline's own experiences in counselling children and young people.

"We consulted with children and young people who had lived experience of suicidal issues to find out more about their experiences of seeking help to learn more about what works for them and how the Australian community can better recognise, and respond to their cries for help," Ms Adams said.

The consultation, which produced five Insights papers released today, emphasised that young people don't seek help for fear of being judged or called an 'attention seeker'.

"They told us their fear about telling someone could be paralysing. Around 60% of those surveyed had never sought help and of those that had, 20% had not received help until after they had attempted suicide," Ms Adams said.

"Only 31% said someone 'noticed' and asked how they were when they were experiencing suicidal feelings."

Ms Adams said the results showed there was an urgent need for more community education about suicide and young people.

"Sadly, when young people do reach out they don't always get the support they need," she said.

"Forty-four (44%) per cent said their parents were not helpful at all when they asked them for help, 32% said their GP (General Practitioner) was not helpful and 27% said school staff were not helpful.

"Young people said that professional counselling did help but they were not always sure where to go to access this support.

"We clearly need to listen to what our children and young people are telling us and find a way to be a help when they are at their most vulnerable. Their lives can depend on this."

**yourtown's** Dr Samantha Batchelor who was the lead researcher for the project, said the striking statistics proved that there is an urgent need to improve responses to suicide concerns and address the ways in which information is provided to young people and their support networks.

"One young person said 'If a child tells you they are suicidal, know that it takes great courage to do so, and that they are desperate for help'. Their message speaks to us all," Dr Batchelor said.

"We need to increase awareness that suicide is a real issue amongst young people and ensure that every young person is taken seriously.

"It's important we deepen our understanding of how we can encourage young people to seek help and ensure that when they do seek help we give them the support they need.

“That includes understanding how they want to engage with service providers. For example, 50% of our respondents sought help online, suggesting the web is an important source of information and support.”

**yourtown** CEO Tracy Adams said that integrated support for families was also essential to assist young people experiencing suicidal feelings.

“The consultation showed that parents matter as a crucial source of emotional and practical support. Parents and carers need to have a better understanding of suicide and young people, including what supports are out there.”

“Learning that your child is thinking about suicide is distressing. Parents need support too, both for their own wellbeing and so they can effectively support their child.”

The five **Preventing suicide: The voice of children and young people** papers can be accessed at [www.yourtown.com.au/insights/advocacy](http://www.yourtown.com.au/insights/advocacy)

KHL 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). It is a service of **yourtown** and is 72% funded by the **yourtown** Art Union, donations and corporate support. Federal and State Governments fund 28%.

More information about contacts to KHL can be found in the **Kids Helpline Insights 2015** reports available at [www.kidshelpline.com.au/reports](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au/reports)

ENDS

#### INTERVIEW/PHOTO/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES

- Tracy Adams, **yourtown** CEO
- John Dalglish, Head of Strategy and Research
- Dr Samantha Batchelor, Senior Researcher
- Sue, Mother of young person who has attempted suicide

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## Preventing Suicide: The voice of young people

### FACT SHEET

Between October 2015 and February 2016, yourtown/Kids Helpline consulted 472 children and young people who had lived experience of feeling suicidal. Their message was simple: Listen, Don't judge, Care more.

- Suicide is the leading cause of death among young people aged 12-25 years (ABS).
- In 2014, 151 young people in Australia aged between 5 and 19 years died by suicide (ABS).
- Approximately 60% of children and young people consulted by **yourtown /KHL** said they had never received help. Of those who had received help:
  - Most didn't get help until their symptoms were severe
  - Only 31% said someone noticed and asked how they were
  - 20% didn't get help until after they attempted suicide.
- Young people say parents are a crucial source of emotional and practical support.
- Community education about suicide and young people is urgently needed:
  - 44% of young people who sought help from a parent said they were 'not at all helpful'
  - 32% said their GP was 'not at all helpful'
  - 27% said school staff were 'not at all helpful'.
- One in five respondents identified as LGBTIQ and they reported more severe suicidality than others.
- Young people don't seek help because:
  - they fear 'being judged' or called an 'attention-seeker'
  - they feel worthless and undeserving, and put the needs of others above themselves
  - fear can be paralysing.
- In 2015, KHL received more than 7,500 contacts related to suicide, which constituted 11% of all counselling contacts:
  - 77% were from young people experiencing suicidal thoughts
  - 6% were from young people expressing an immediate intention to suicide
  - 2% involved a current suicide attempt
  - 14% were from young people concerned for another person, and
  - 1% were seeking information about suicide.
- In 2015, KHL initiated 568 emergency care actions related to suicide, an average of 11 per week.

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