

Media release



4th October 2019

Mental health major issue for young people

Mental Health Month (October 2019) is a compelling time to raise awareness around the number of mental health related issues reported to Kids Helpline said **yourtown** Chief Executive Officer Tracy Adams.

Kids Helpline says mental health issues and thoughts of suicide accounted for 59% of all contacts made last year by children and young people.

Each year we see an increase in mental health, emotional wellbeing and suicide-related concerns, they now account for 59.2% or 39,812 of all counselling contacts. Adolescents with mental health problems report higher rates of suicidal ideation and other risky behaviours.” said **yourtown** Chief Executive Officer Tracy Adams.

“Our concern is that this may be just the tip of the iceberg as only a small percentage of kids actually seek help. We really need to encourage more help-seeking among children and young people, particularly among boys,” said Ms Adams.

ABS data show that 458 children and young people aged under 25 years died by suicide in Australia last year. Twenty-two of them were children aged 14 years or younger. Amongst adolescents aged between 15 and 19 years, 40% of all deaths were a result of a young person ending their own life

What is particularly concerning is the rapid increase in the suicide rate for young people. Over the past 10 years the overall suicide rate has increased by approximately 13%, but the suicide rate for young people aged 15 to 19 years has increased by more than 70%. Ten years ago, children and teenagers had the lowest suicide rate of any age group, but that’s no longer the case.

According to the National Mental Health Commission ABS data, 600,000 Australian children between the ages of 4 and 17 are affected by a mental health problem each year with tens of thousands of those calling services like Kids Helpline.

“One in four people aged 16 – 24 experiences some form of mental illness each year and three-quarters of all mental illness manifests in people under the age of 25. But there’s still a lot of stigma and confusion around the topic, young people are feeling isolated, alienated and extremely sad, that’s where early intervention and accessing crucial help 24/7 with trained counsellors at no cost can help.

“Increasingly, young people are calling with an urgent concern such as suicidal thoughts. This form of teen help-seeking can be accessed via telephone call, text message or online chat, with web chats more comfortable for some young people. As a result, we are seeing longer counselling sessions and increasing numbers of young people who require regular support,” Ms Adams continued.

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“The growing numbers of mental health and suicide-related concerns is disturbing but it is a positive sign that many young people are now seeking help to manage these issues,” continued Ms Adams.

Kids Helpline acts as a ‘safety net’ for children and young people in a broader social support system having a unique position of being the only national free and confidential 24/7 counselling service available to those aged from 5 – 25 years of age. An expert in the field of early intervention services, Kids Helpline logged its 8 millionth response for help from children and young people in 2018.

Kids Helpline is a service of **yourtown**. Last financial year it was 80% funded by the **yourtown** Art Union, donations and corporate support. Federal and State Governments funded 20%.

If young people want to talk to someone they can call Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or use email or web counselling services. www.kidshelpline.com.au

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