

Celebrating a milestone

in our 30 year history of keeping
our children and young people safe.



A lot has changed in 30 years...

When Kids Helpline launched as a 24/7 phone counselling service in 1991, it changed the way children and young people in Australia reached out for support. Over the decades since, Kids Helpline has continued to break new ground and is now regarded as a crucial part of mental health and child safety systems.

To celebrate Kids Helpline's 30th anniversary in March 2021, we proudly share some of the highlights of our journey so far.

Where it all started

In the late 1980s, support services for young people were inconsistent, at best. Children with personal problems or family issues were often nervous or confused about where to turn for confidential advice, referrals or crisis counselling. As for around-the-clock services for anyone under 15? There were none.

At the same time in Beaudesert, south-west of Brisbane, BoysTown Director, Brother Paul Smith was investigating programs to support children in times of crisis, especially when there was domestic violence, abuse or neglect at home. Br Paul discovered a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week phone counselling service in the UK called Childline – and he saw the potential it had to help at-risk children here.

"Brother Paul was very entrepreneurial," says **yourn town** CEO Tracy Adams of the organisation's founder, who retired in 2000.

"He found out about this particular model overseas and brought the idea back to Australia. The BoysTown organisation at that point had the financial capacity to trial the service and that's why we launched Kids Helpline as a Queensland-only service to start with."



TO: KHL STAFF

FROM: Maia + Lisa

Hundreds of kids ring you every day including us. KHL is a great idea & keep up the good work.

Throwing out phone net



By NICOLE TAYLOR

Traditional support systems such as the nuclear family or church activities have been supplanted by 1990s technology in the form of a Kids Help Line launched in Sydney yesterday. Kids Help Line, a free phone-in service for children from five to 18, is available for those unwilling to call as well as those with urgent issues to address. The Federal Human Rights Commissioner, Mr Brian Burdett, said at the launch that with the rapid decline of youth support systems and the great increase in single-parent families, such service was desperately needed. The 24-hour service, started in March 1991 in Queensland, now operating nationally, in 1991 is operated by 75 people.

Mrs Keating and Cynthia Kojongian Help Line yesterday — Picture: AP

YOUNG TV STAR BECOMES KHL AMBASSADOR

It is not often that busy young actors volunteer their services to endorse a service — but that is exactly what Neighbours star Ian Williams decided to do when he learned about Kids Help Line.

Ian, who plays Adam Willis in the popular weeknight serial, has not only become a virtual ambassador for the service. And it is a role he takes very seriously indeed.

"I'd always promised myself that if I was ever in a position to speak at a mass level, I'd take the opportunity to support something I really believed in," Ian told to celebrity magazine and a big personal following guarantees that his message will be met by a very keen audience.

Ian is no stranger to childhood trauma. He spent 12 months in Los Angeles working with a band that enjoyed quite a following of streetkids. Seeing the way these kids lived made quite an impression on the young actor — it wasn't his first time.

Ian proudly mentions his childhood, his friends in need, and his friends go through times growing up.

"I was one of the wonderfully support upbringing and I give of Kids Help Line a little back."

MATER GET THE LINE MESSAGE

Kids Help Line recent message to the Mater Hospital and along the way spread a bit of Easter cheer among young children spending Easter break in hospital.

And thanks to the generous staff of the Mater, Neighbours star Ian Williams — and of course, the busy — it was an Easter that won't be forgotten for a long time.

Ian took time out from his schedule to join the Easter Bunch distributing Easter eggs and...

Sunday Crisis hotline for kids

A CRISIS hotline for children will be launched tomorrow in NSW — the first State in Australia to adopt the service. The hotline, aimed at children five to 18, will deal with problems from homework to family problems and child abuse.

Radio personality Kathryn Greiner and Annita Keating will open the service with NSW Community Services Minister Jim Longley. In other States, more than 700,000 calls have been made to the numbers, which is run by a youth group operating in Brisbane.

BoysTown is one of the largest youth organisations in the country, the service being funded through art union, lottery and other fund-raising activities.

The 24-hour hotline number is expecting between 600 and 14,000 calls a week to come from NSW.

New service expecting to handle 14,000 calls for help every week

YOUTH problems are growing concern in NSW, with the Government having committed \$17.6 million to deal with the crisis, the terms and long-term commitment for young people past two years.

Another \$13.3 million was dedicated to family and youth support services.

The toll-free number is 0011...

WHAT IS KIDS HELP LINE

- Kids Help Line is a free seven day a week telephone counselling service.
- It will help any child with any problem.
- Help Line is manned by professionally qualified counsellors.
- The service is anonymous.
- The calls are not traceable.

Hand for kids on the line

By D.D. McNICOLL

THE fabric of society had changed dramatically in only one generation and the country faced a youth culture crisis which few politicians, or adults in general, understood, the federal Human Rights Commission told the national launch of the Kids Help Line in Sydney yesterday.

Mr Burdett said children and adolescents made up one third of the population but there were virtually no social resources available to them.

"In some urban areas 30 per cent of children come from single-parent homes and they need an organisation such as Kids Help Line to talk to," Mr Burdett said. The crisis in youth culture could be caused by the "50 to 60 per cent" increase in teenage suicide rates in country areas.

The Kids Help Line, which has been operating successfully in Queensland for two years, was officially launched nationally by Mrs Annita Keating, wife of the Prime Minister.

Mrs Keating said most parents would like to solve all their children's problems. "We would like our children to be able to talk to me about everything and anything," she said. "But even in open and caring families, there are some issues children don't want to talk about with their parents."

"In families where there is no communication or no trust, the need for children to have someone to talk to outside the family is even greater."

"Kids Help Line is that someone to talk to. Someone who is caring and who will not judge them. Someone who is not emotionally involved."

Kids Help Line is a confidential counselling service for children aged five to 18, funded through the BoysTown organisation on behalf of the De La Salle Brothers.

It operates through a free 600 phone number which connects children throughout Australia with trained counsellors in the organisation's Brisbane headquarters.

The chairman of BoysTown national community projects, Brother Paul Smith, said the service had taken 750,000 calls since it started in Queensland in March 1991.

help open the Kids
NNA ROGERS



Kids Help Line: KIDS HELP LINE AN INITIATIVE OF BOYSTOWN

Reported by Annita Keating, Prime Minister's wife

New technology allows for one-third boost in calls

Thanks to the latest telephone technology, Kids Help Line now provides a better service to more children using the same number.

"The replacement of our existing PABX system with a modern Integrated Business System has proved to be a major success," said Executive Director Trevor Carlyon. "Our counselling line often has been frustrated by technical problems, which often meant that calls were not answered."

Now, because of the completely new equipment, every call is a live one. The new line has saved considerable time for Kids Help Line to take more than 2,500 additional calls each week — an increase of more than one-third.

Another benefit of this new system is the facility for three-way conferencing and, with the child's permission, contact with the child's parents, contact with the child's school and contact with the child's doctor.

However, the cost of this new system is not cheap. It cost more than \$200,000 to purchase and install the new equipment. But the cost is well worth it, says Mr Carlyon.

TV star out to break the silence

By G. STANLEY

COME and Away star Wendy Dickson, who has been in the national spotlight since she was 16, is out to break the silence about child abuse. Wendy, who is now 21, is the first of a new breed of young people who are not afraid to talk about their problems. Wendy, who is now a successful actress, is the first of a new breed of young people who are not afraid to talk about their problems.

Wendy, who is now a successful actress, is the first of a new breed of young people who are not afraid to talk about their problems.

YES, I want to help Kids Help Line reach out to more youngsters in crisis.

Here's my donation of

☐ \$30 ☐ \$60 ☐ \$120 ☐ \$240 ☐ \$300 Other

Please make cheques payable to Kids Help Line.

I enclose cheque ☐ money order ☐ other ☐

Please print name and address

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____

Postcode _____

State _____

OR please debit my

☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Other

Please print name and address

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____

Postcode _____

State _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Thank you for your donation

AT LINE?

24 hour, phone

WHY CHILDREN WILL RING

The reasons are fairly basic —

They have no one to listen, no one to trust, they are too ashamed and in many cases they are scared of the person hurting them.

The anonymity and distance of a telephone call will give these children new hope.

The problems which prompt these calls are many and varied. The largest single problem is sexual abuse. The Help Line, however, will be a counselling service for all problems and experience shows that children will ring about many others including:

- Parental Problems
- Medical Problems
- Physical Abuse
- Bereavement

HERE'S WHAT WE AIM TO DO

• Provide a professional service to reach the silent sufferers — those who are hurting, those who are victims, those who do not have the skills, confidence or avenue to seek help.

• Break the self-perpetuating cycle of abuse.

• Remove the feeling of hopelessness and helplessness.

• Fill the gap in existing services.



KE US TO 2m MARK

South Australia has more than 250,000 children aged five to 15 years old.

KHL CELEBRATES FIRST YEAR

Just over 12 months ago, Kids Help Line opened its phone lines to the youngsters of Queensland. And when we celebrated our 1st birthday in March, we had much to cheer about!

In just one year, our counselling team had grown to strength from 21 to 36. We had expanded our phone lines from an initial 10 to 23 by November 1991.

And we'd taken calls from more than 300,000 youngsters. After only six months in operation, we expanded into the Northern Territory and New South Wales. Today, our counselling team's skills are available to 1.5 million youngsters.

While that's a pretty impressive track record for a new service, it's the most exciting prospect that will be the most challenging.

Kids in crisis need someone to talk to. They need Kids Help Line — and they need your support to help keep Kids Help Line open.

Entirely self-funded by BoysTown lotteries, Kids Helpline was launched on Monday March 25, 1991 by then Brisbane Lord Mayor Sallyanne Atkinson. Queensland children as young as five years old and up to 18 were encouraged to call with any issue that concerned them.

On that first day, the staff counsellors took 3,200 calls. By the time the service went national in 1993, more than 1 million calls had been answered.

It turned out Br Paul was right. Australian children and young people had desperately needed a service like Kids Helpline.

Kids Helpline takes off

It didn't take long for the word to get out.

Grateful schoolteachers guided students to our new telephone service, even organising phones at school where the children could talk privately (and not on the communal home phone where parents, carers or siblings could overhear). Other children would see the Kids Helpline number on stickers in telephone boxes and make the free call.

"Right from the very beginning, it was a key principle that there should be no impediment to a child using the service," says Tracy Adams.

"It had to be free and, with a 1800 number, everybody could have that free access.

"The other element was we didn't want kids worrying about the 1800 number coming up on mum and dad's phone bill. So, Kids Helpline established relationships with phone providers to ensure they didn't display the number on bills. That was recognising what 'free and confidential' meant in practice."

By 1993, the Queensland-only trial was clearly successful, and Kids Helpline went national.

Our Australia-wide service was launched by Australia's then 'first lady' Annita Keating, wife of Prime Minister Paul Keating.



ABOVE: Lord Mayor Atkinson launches Kids Helpline.

Sallyanne Atkinson

"I was asked to do a lot of things as Brisbane Lord Mayor and I made my choices based on what was good and worthwhile. I knew Kids Helpline was worthwhile. As the mother of five, 30 years ago my youngest was a teenager; I had children and I understood.

What's important about Kids Helpline is the ability for young people to talk, to be heard and to know that somebody is listening. Quite often in a family, everybody's busy or people don't really want to know about the issues. And I know from my own experience, my children would say, 'well, I told you that, you weren't listening properly'.

I know from the criminal justice system, children act out when they feel frustrated and lonely, and when they think that nobody cares about them. All those things impact on the way a young person behaves in society.

To Kids Helpline my message is Congratulations on 30 years and please keep going, because more than ever kids need to be able to talk and feel that they're being heard."

Sallyanne Atkinson AO is an author, business mentor and public speaker; she sits on or is chair of boards including the Museum of Brisbane and the Queensland Brain Institute.

In 1991, in one of her final roles as Lord Mayor of Brisbane, she officially launched Kids Helpline in Queensland.



ABOVE L TO R: Brother Paul and Lord Mayor Sallyanne Atkinson.



Handy book sellout helps troubled kids

JOHN Schluter's environmentally friendly book *Everything Handy* has sold out on its first print run.

More importantly, John's donation of \$20,000 to the Kids Help Line — a free, 24-hour counselling service for kids — will allow the employment of an extra counsellor for a year.

Calls to the service jumped from 30,000 to 40,000 in the first week of the Christmas holidays.

The service is still only responding to 25 percent of these calls and an extra counsellor will help respond to more than 4000 problem calls in the



JOHN Schluter ... donation.

Handy way to help kids



John Schluter and Kenneth Seitor, 9 ... hints help kids

A CHILDREN'S counselling service is benefiting from the environmental bons mots of Channel 9 weatherman John Schluter.

He ends his weeknight weather forecasts with advice and tips on saving the environment.

Those "back to basics" tips are now published as a book and the proceeds are being given to the Kids Help Line, a non-denominational service run by the De La Salle Brothers.

The Help Line, which began in Queensland in 1991, now operates nationally as a confidential service for five to 18-year-olds.

It costs more than \$3 million a year to run and most of that is

funded through the Boys Town art unions.

Schluter said he hoped his book, *John Schluter's Everything Handy*, would help. It is the first time the service has received this sort of funding.

"It was a case of Nine wanting to help a worthy cause," he said.

He said many people were probably aware of the Help Line but it became pushed to the back of their minds. "I've got to admit in the last 18 months I haven't been too aware of it," he said.

He said he had no idea how much money would be raised through the sale of the book. "It's a case really of sitting back and waiting."

— NEIL MELLOY

thank
you!



ABOVE L to R: Brother Paul and John Schluter

Thank you John Schluter

In 1993, Queensland's favourite TV weatherman donated the proceeds of his first book to Kids Helpline.

John Schluter was about halfway into his 25-year stint presenting the weather on the top-rating Nine News 6pm bulletin when his book *Everything Handy* was published.

Everything Handy was a compilation of many of the environmental tips he'd shared with his viewers at the end of the each weeknight weather.

After *Everything Handy* sold out its first print run, John handed over a \$20,000 cheque to Kids Helpline.

It was the first time Kids Helpline had received such a large personal donation.

"These photos taken 30 years ago bring back many wonderful memories of being involved in the early stages of Kids Helpline. It was a great privilege and honour.

I believe there is no greater cause than assisting children and young adults to deal with difficult issues in their lives, helping them make the right decisions for a brighter and more meaningful future.

From very humble beginnings, Kids Helpline has grown and adapted to the ever changing challenges that face our future generations and are still there 24 hours a day, seven days a week making a huge difference to their wellbeing.

I congratulate every dedicated person who's been associated with Kids Helpline over all of these years. I have great admiration for all of you, and offer my very best wishes for now and the long successful future ahead."

John Schluter

Kylie, Corn Flakes and computers

The last few years of the '90s were memorable at Kids Helpline for three things particularly: superstar Kylie Minogue became our official ambassador, a new partnership put Kids Helpline in kitchens across the country, and a little thing called the internet was gaining traction...

"In 1998 Kellogg's came in with a three-year \$3.2 million partnership deal," says Fundraising Manager Marie Coleman. "Kellogg's put Kids Helpline and our new ambassador Kylie on the back of cereal packets and suddenly, our number was on kitchen tables across the country. Our contact rates shot up to 30,000 calls a week and 12 per cent of new callers said they first saw us on their cereal box. I understand sales of cornflakes went up too!"

Another corporate partner was to figure prominently in the growth and direction of Kids Helpline in the late '90s – telecommunications company Optus. As our longstanding phone service provider, Optus was keen to support our work and help us tap into Australia's enthusiastic take-up of the internet.

Our website had launched in 1996, initially targeting information to parents and adults only, but it was soon apparent that young people were turning to technology too. Kids Helpline and Optus could see the digital future was coming.

So, in 1999, both organisations worked together to create a true world-first – a model for web-based counselling. Kids Helpline WebChat allowed children and young people to communicate with counsellors as they did with their friends – online.

"We knew we had to meet young people on the channels they were on," says Tracy Adams. "WebChat used the knowledge of Optus, who are experts in communications, and our in-house team, who are experts in the way they work with children and young people."

From the start, Kids Helpline and Optus confidently led the way with the e-mental-health approach, which has only now – because of the pandemic – become more widely used by other health practitioners.

A new millennium and new frontiers

As the calendar flipped over to the year 2000, technology use was exploding. WebChat became an official Kids Helpline service, but initially hours were restricted.

"At first, we only had a small number of counsellors trained and skilled to work on the web," says Tracy Adams. "But, with each year the demand for WebChat would grow, so the hours would stretch out. Three



ABOVE: Kylie Minogue was an official ambassador for Kids Helpline.

"...Each year the demand for WebChat would grow."

Matt Middleton – Kids Helpline Counsellor

years ago, we went 24/7 with WebChat which could take over as the preferred contact type by 2023."

Counsellors were also noting another group of young people who needed Kids Helpline support.

"We were getting a lot of calls from young adults," says Matt Middleton, who has been a counsellor and supervisor with Kids Helpline for almost 30 years.

"They were young people about to turn 18, or sometimes in their early 20s. They were about to transition out of out-of-home care or youth mental health support services because they were turning adult. They were finding it difficult to access adult services and we were aware that this was a very vulnerable population of young people."

The solution was to meet that need.

"There was user demand," says Tracy Adams.

"A lot of the young people had started their journey with Kids Helpline and said, 'Please don't cut us off at 18; there's nowhere to go. We need a space'."

In 2003, the Kids Helpline service was extended to take calls from anyone aged between five and 25.

Getting mobile

The 'noughties' was also the decade when more parents started to put mobile phones in their children's hands.

But, although personal mobiles gave young people better access to friends, family and the digital world, it created a new challenge for Kids Helpline – how to continue providing a totally free and confidential service.

Unlike landlines, mobile calls to 1800 numbers were not free – they were charged by the minute.

Our corporate partner Optus was aware of this difficulty and immediately set up no-charge mobile calls to Kids Helpline's number, which also meant the calls didn't appear on itemised phone bills. The telco even issued a directive that Kids Helpline's number was to be pre-installed on mobiles bought for children, subtly promoting the service to all of Optus' young phone customers.

But it would be many more years of lobbying both the federal government and other network providers before the last service provider changed its billing policies. Finally, in 2015, every young person in Australia could call Kids Helpline, free of charge.

"Each year mobile phone use was increasing. We knew we were facing a real problem because we could see mobiles would become the device of choice," Tracy says.

"But in the end, the issue was solved very quickly through external advocacy support, media focus and recognition of the potential impact of not doing something."

Cyber safety

Throughout that first decade of the 2000s, Kids Helpline counsellors were among the first to notice new trends in the digital world.

"One we were able to identify very early and begin to address was the issue of sexting," says Tracy. "I remember one day John Dagleish, our Head of Strategy and Research at the time, came to me because he had noticed that the counsellors' case notes were showing this kind of use of mobiles. He said, 'I think we've got something we need to be watching very carefully'."

To help deal with such emerging issues, Kids Helpline partnered with the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) through their newly launched Cybersmart initiative. The Cybersmart website, which went live in 2009, was the first of its kind in the country.

"ACMA approached us to provide counselling support to the young people who went to their website but found they wanted additional support," says Tony FitzGerald, **yourtown** Virtual Services Manager. "Those young people could click straight through to our WebChat and receive priority support."

"If you think back to then, social media was in its infancy so it was ground breaking to have a strategy to educate young people about online dangers and particularly cyberbullying."

Cybersmart was replaced by ACMA's eSafety Commissioner in 2015, but the partnership with Kids Helpline continues to this day. Visitors to the eSafety website are still able to seamlessly go from the site to WebChat with Kids Helpline counsellors, and Kids Helpline always prioritises those urgent contacts.



1991

Officially opened in March and 3,200 young people called in on the first day



1993

Became a national service and had registered over 1 million calls from young people



1999

Introduction of email counselling



2000

Launched WebChat live counselling



2019

Kids Helpline answered 8 millionth call for help



2021

Kids Helpline celebrates 30 years of service



ABOVE: **yourtown's** mud army.

Then came the flood...

Across the country, Australians were glued to their television sets in January 2011 watching as Queensland towns and cities battled the worst flooding in almost 40 years.

In Brisbane, the Milton offices of **yourtown** were hard hit. Despite being elevated, the centre's ground floor was inundated, and the floodwaters threatened the first-floor offices that housed Kids Helpline's counselling team.

Matt Middleton was a Kids Helpline counsellor in 2011 and still can't quite believe what happened that week.

"It's hard to get your head around how much of the **yourtown** office space was under water. It was about three metres high from street level," he says.

"It had such an emotional impact on everyone. Staff had to clear out the lower floors and the counselling staff didn't know what was going to happen with the continuity of our service."

Floods, bushfires and other natural disasters are typically a time of great uncertainty for all, and it's often when larger numbers of young people turn to Kids Helpline for support.

"We had to move the counsellors and our phone systems out of the way in case the floodwater rose that high," says Tracy Adams.

"But where were we to go? It took just one phone call to Paul O'Sullivan, the CEO of Optus, and he organised temporary space for us at Woolloongabba. It was a relief to have such a supportive corporate partner at that difficult time."

So, with waters still rising, Kids Helpline was relocated within hours. Kids Helpline was up and running again, ready to support Queensland's – and Australia's – young people.

A decade of innovation

The past ten years have seen massive shifts in the digital landscape. Apps, games and even schools went online. Kids Helpline continued our mission to keep up to date and develop new channels and places to meet and interact with young people where they want to be – not where we think they should be. The 2010s, for us, were about introducing alternatives we believe do just that.

We started the decade by creating a new school program, initially with the financial support of the Commonwealth Government, and subsequently Optus and the Bupa Health Foundation.

Kids Helpline @ School was launched in 2011 with pilot funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health. Using video technology (such as Skype and



Google Hangouts), we live-streamed Kids Helpline counsellors into classrooms around the country. The aim was to promote help-seeking and raise awareness of Kids Helpline amongst primary school students, whilst also providing education in relation to issues including online safety, bullying, and other wellbeing.

“We created a range of topics that aligned to the eSafety Commission’s messages and the curriculum,” says Tracy Adams.

“Our counsellors dialled into the classroom in real time and they discussed with the students issues such as bullying and cyberbullying, staying safe online, friendships and feeling sad.”

Future Generation created a unique opportunity by seed funding and investing in an innovative pilot project that enabled Kids Helpline to trial and develop another world-first for Kids Helpline – KHL Circles.

This funding and partnership with Sydney University enabled Kids Helpline to develop and trial the

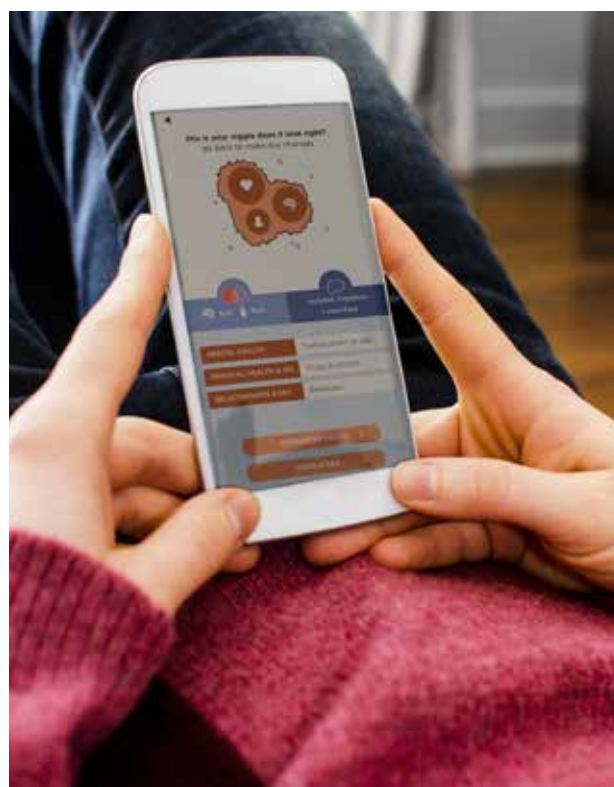
concept, make refinements along the way based on the participation of young people, and build an evidence base which included measurement of change achieved for young people.

“The way the model could be adapted for use by other organisations was key in our success securing funding for My Circle in 2020 from Bupa Health Foundation,” says Marie Coleman, **yourtown**

Fundraising Manager.

“My Circles will be a much-used alternate channel within our digital offerings, both for Kids Helpline and other elements of our work in the future. Thanks to all involved from the beginning, to Future Generation for seed funding, and Bupa Health Foundation in 2020, My Circle can continue to expand its reach and range of discussion topics.”

Another technology-driven initiative is Niggle – an app developed in conjunction with the Queensland University of Technology. Users downloading the app can track their wellbeing and get personalised information, videos, podcasts, quizzes and tips to help tame their niggles. They can also connect with other users to share stories. Since launching on the Apple App store in 2019, the app has been fine-tuned and updated to improve its usefulness and iron out early bugs.



To the future

“When you work with young people, you can’t afford to stagnate,” says Tracy Adams, “otherwise you won’t be here tomorrow.”

At Kids Helpline, every member of every team – from counsellors to management; tech engineers to support staff – knows we must continue to look ahead and listen closely to young people.

“They don’t need to be relevant to us, we need to be relevant to them,” says Tracy.

For us, that means developing new digital opportunities, speeding up call and WebChat response times, and securing the funding needed to make it all happen.

“We are finalising a new digital transformation strategy that will create efficiencies for our counsellors and help put as much information as we can into the hands of children and young people, when they need it and where they need it,” she says.

“We will use more automation in the way our systems talk to each other, which will give counsellors as many tools as possible to capture data. If we create our digital systems to be user-friendly and economic for our counsellors, we buy back time they can devote to working and supporting more of our young clients.

“And then conversely to that, we’re really focusing on tools and resources for our young people. We want them to have multiple entry channels – lots of new and relevant ways to get to Kids Helpline and have their needs met.”

Kids Helpline already has a new bricks-and-mortar counselling centre in Sydney’s western suburbs that will support the growth we experience, year-in, year-out. The demand for this additional counselling centre shows that, although 30 years may have passed, children and young people still need someone to turn for issues big and small.

Kids Helpline 2021 and beyond? Watch this space...





Adults tell: ‘How Kids Helpline helped the young me’

We sent out a call on social media, inviting anyone who had called Kids Helpline in the early ‘90s to get in touch and share their memories. Now in their 30s and 40s, these adults generously responded. Their stories are both heartbreaking and heart warming.

In the early ‘90s, a call to Kids Helpline generally meant a walk to the nearest telephone box, or a sneaky call on the home landline when no one was home. Now, more than 25 years later, those early clients still appreciate what Kids Helpline meant to them back then.

Suzanne*, now 36, says she was extremely lonely because her parents worked 12-hour days, six days a week. She wasn’t close with her other siblings.

“Kids Helpline was there for me when no one else was. They answered the phone and wanted to hear me talk about my day, about my favourite TV show. They were small insignificant things that a primary school-aged kid talks about. Kids Helpline made me feel worthy.”

For Janine*, 37, it was the fear of a violent and abusive mother that prompted her to call Kids Helpline in 1994. She clearly remembers the first time she rang.

“I cried my eyes out to the woman who answered,” she said. “I was so tired of being scared and alone.”

Janine rang regularly for four years, calling it a “light in some very dark days”. Today, she is a mother of four children, and their relationships are “loving and stable”.

“I am so thankful I had Kids Helpline to turn to when I was young. I don’t know how else I would have coped through those very lonely years.”

Although it’s been more common for girls to reach out to Kids Helpline over the past three decades, we’ve always been there for boys and young men too.

Mike*, now 35, also lived in an abusive home environment.

“In 1995 I was running away from a troubled home,” he wrote. “The police gave me the Kids Helpline number to call when I was scared and alone. Many times I remember being at a phone box waiting for the police that Kids Helpline would send to keep me safe.”

For someone like Melissa, now 40, even the thought that Kids Helpline existed could be enough.

“At times I didn’t even need to ring. I already knew if I needed someone, they would be there.”

Since 1991, Kids Helpline has answered more than 8 million contacts from children and young people.

*Names have been changed for privacy reasons.

Professional counselling

Being there when kids need us most.

Our counselling staff are all paid professionals, drawn from fields including psychology, social work and healthcare. But for them, Kids Helpline is more than just a job.

After ten years (and counting) as a Kids Helpline Counsellor, Peter Naylor won't accept the suggestion that staff like him are the heart and soul of Kids Helpline.

He's reluctant to take any personal credit but quick to highlight his belief that Kids Helpline – the service, the organisation and the brand – deserves the praise.

"We have this immensely strong identity and young people truly trust Kids Helpline," Peter says.

"I've had thousands of experiences where, within five to 10 seconds of speaking with me, someone is telling me a profound thing, sharing a deeply personal experience. That young person, for whatever reason, has already established and connected to the assumption that I'm going to listen and I'm going to help.

"That trust, that spirit and that energy that is Kids Helpline starts to go out into the community and it spreads. There's a connection there. Millions of people in this country are connected with us because of their interactions with us or with someone they know or care about."

Because of that trust, our Kids Helpline counsellors have fielded an immense number of contacts from – "I'm at home alone and just need to talk to someone" to crisis calls from young people attempting suicide or self-harm.

Dealing with the stress

Matt Middleton is Kids Helpline's longest-serving counsellor – he started as a university graduate a few months after our launch in 1991. Thirty years on, he also acts as a relief Counselling Centre Supervisor, so he knows well the toll a stressful call can take on a counsellor.

"Everyone has their own way of dealing with it," says Matt.

"Some people might want to go and make themselves a tea or coffee, a lot of people need to go for a walk and get some fresh air. Other times they'll want to come straight into the shift supervisor's office and as soon as that door's closed, they'll break down in tears."



ABOVE: Counsellor and Supervisor Matt Middleton.

Matt says it's reassuring for Kids Helpline counsellors to know there's always support available for them, too.

"A real strength is the peer support from those around you. Other counsellors sitting near you often hear you've just had an intense call and offer support. We also have regular breaks, counsellor training and a psychologist available to us any time, at the expense of the organisation. That's pretty amazing."

Committed to the cause

The fact that so many Kids Helpline counsellors are loyal long-term staffers is testament not only to the supportive environment, but to the counsellors' commitment to doing work that helps others.

"The people who stay here love the work and are naturally gifted. They are intrinsically motivated to do the work," says Peter Naylor.

"And we have some ridiculously overqualified people who work for Kids Helpline, but they just want to be a counsellor. They could be teaching, overseeing doctoral programs – the number of PhDs and Masters we have here – and they're happy. They find the work rewarding."

With the demand for services increasing every year, Kids Helpline needs to continually recruit new counsellors – annual funding permitting. By the end of 2021, we expect to have more than 250 counselling staff across our Queensland and New South Wales centres.

Two of our 2020 newcomers represent the demographic we serve: Indy is 23 while Effie is 21. They both started with Kids Helpline's NSW Counselling Centre when it opened in April 2020. Not surprisingly, they both love what they do.

"I feel sincerely privileged to be in a position to hear young people's stories and to offer a safe space for them to share what can be the most vulnerable aspects of their life," says Effie.

Indy also mentions the word 'privilege' when she talks about the trust shown by the young clients sharing their personal stories.

"There have been a few instances when young people have called back after weeks or months to just share a positive change or success in their life, relating to something from their last session," she says.

"That is a hugely rewarding experience, to hear the impact of the partnership formed between clients and counsellors."

Thanking the clients

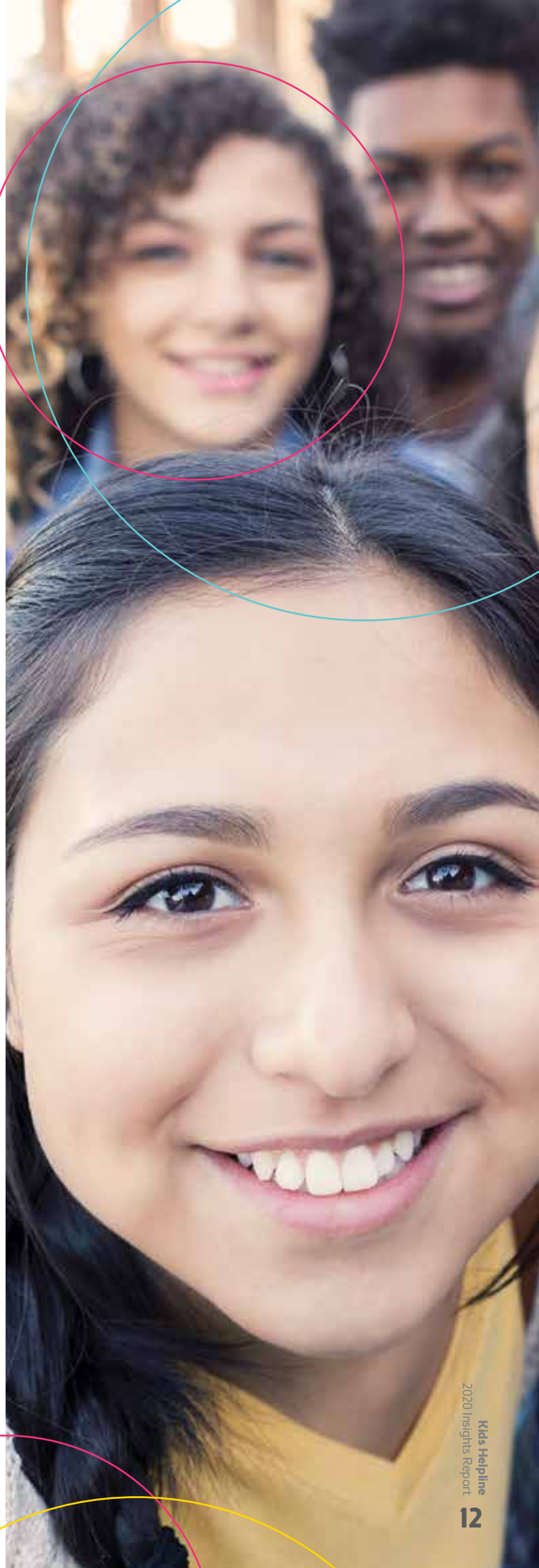
For Peter Naylor, it's a special feeling knowing he's helped a child or young person get through their day. But, in the true spirit of our Kids Helpline counsellors, he shifts the focus back to the young people he works with.

"Some young people express their thanks for the months of work we've done, or the call a week, or whatever," Peter says.

"And, you know, I get the chance to say 'thank you' back to them. 'Thank you for how you've changed me and how you've put me in a different position. The next person I work with, I will be better at my job because of what I learned from our relationship and our experience together'."

Even to non-counsellors, that sounds like exactly the kind of validation a young person needs to hear. And, although Peter may not acknowledge it, we think it is people like Matt, Effie and Indy who are the heart and soul of Kids Helpline.

BELOW: The new Kids Helpline Counselling Centre in Sydney opened in April 2020.



Highlights 1991 – 2021

1991

Kids Helpline launches in Queensland, with 100% funding provided by BoysTown lotteries, as a telephone counselling service for 5–18 year olds. More than 3,200 young people call Kids Helpline the first day.

1993

Kids Helpline becomes a national service, with over 1 million calls from young people.

1991

1993

1998

Kellogg's comes on board as part of a three-year, \$3.2 M partnership. Kylie Minogue is recruited as Official Ambassador for Kids Helpline.

1998

After the launch of the Kellogg's cereal packs featuring Kids Helpline details, 12% of new callers report that they first heard of the service from their cereal box. Around 40% of callers during the promotional period cite television as their source of referral.

1998

2000

A world first is created with the national launch of a real-time web counselling service for young people.

2000

2003

Kids Helpline expands the service to 19–25 year olds.

2003

2009

eSafety partnership begins with Australian Communications and Media Authority.

2009

1996

1996

Federal government becomes involved through their Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy delivering \$2 million over the next three years. Funding includes an ongoing television advertising campaign aimed at both raising awareness and changing behaviour. Calls from young people around Australia increase to 40,000 a week during this period, with 94% awareness among high school students.

1999

1999

Kids Helpline introduces email counselling, responding to a trend for young people to reach out for help via email.

1999

Optus becomes an official corporate partner, helping develop Kids Helpline WebChat.

1999

Trial of WebChat, the world's first online counselling for children and young people.

2002

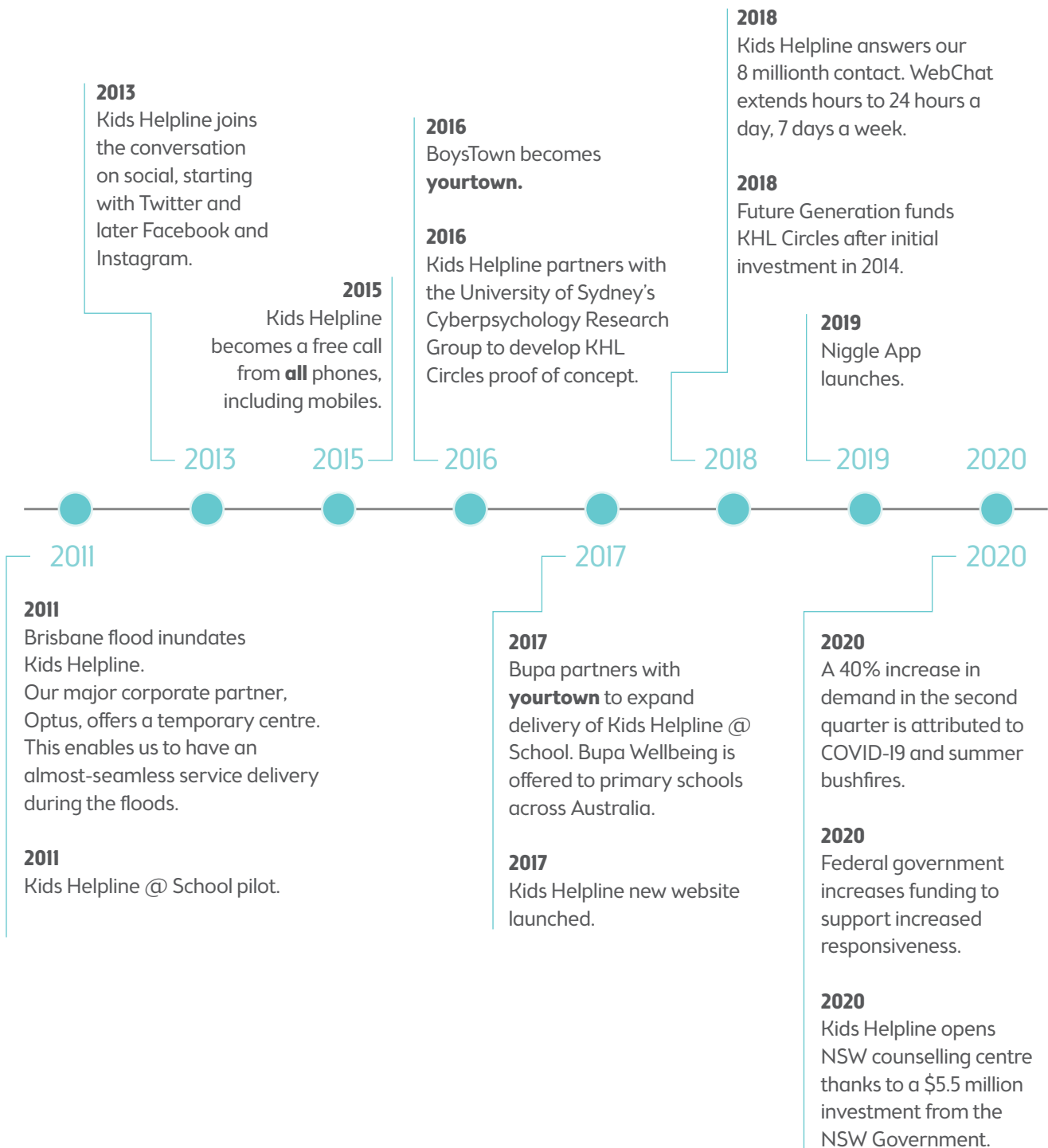
2002

Almost all telephone counselling is still via landlines (96%).

2007

2007

First mental health funding is provided to Kids Helpline by the Federal Government.



yourtown art union and Kids Helpline

– a deep and meaningful partnership

Profits from the then BoysTown Lotteries funded Kids Helpline's Queensland trial in 1991 and beyond. But could Kids Helpline ever have launched, survived or thrived without art union support? And what has this financial stream meant for the service over the past 30 years?

It was an era when youth mental health and child protection issues were barely spoken about, let alone championed by the media.

So, in 1991, the launch of Kids Helpline was considered ground-breaking for two key reasons. Primarily, it was extraordinary because it was Australia's first 24-hour phone counselling service for children and young people. But it also broke the mould because it was a support service that was totally self-funded, with no government grants or corporate sponsors paying its way.

Today, **yourtown** CEO Tracy Adams, who was a BoysTown temp worker in 1991, acknowledges Brother Paul Smith's foresight in setting up Kids Helpline and the importance of that initial lottery funding.

"You could build a service like Kids Helpline and continue to allocate funds because you genuinely believed children and young people were worth the investment – that's what the lottery allowed us to do," she says.

"And then, over the years as the art unions grew, Kids Helpline grew as well. They mirror each other in their journeys."

From little things, big things grow

From relatively small prizes such as family cars in the early years of the giveaways to 2020's \$4.1 million beachfront home, the **yourtown** Art Union has become one of Australia's premium art union draws. Similarly, Kids Helpline has grown from a one-state phone counselling trial to a vital national service – offering multi-channel support with WebChat, email counselling, in-school video services, online therapy groups, apps and more.

"The art union has essentially been the most critical factor enabling and sustaining Kids Helpline," says Tracy.

"Does that mean there would be no Kids Helpline without the art unions? Perhaps not. But it certainly wouldn't be the Kids Helpline that we know, and we certainly wouldn't have achieved the responsiveness that we have."

Since sourcing some government funding in 1996, Kids Helpline has been primarily a 'community funded' model. However during 2020, there was an increase in government funding, largely in response to COVID-19.

"Our 2020 responsive funding from government allowed us to upscale immediately," says Tracy. "We could hire more counselling staff to meet the increased demand."

Contributing to something bigger

In the past few years, support from governments at both state and federal levels have increased, as has corporate financial sponsorship from partners such as Bupa, Future Generation, Optus, and First National Real Estate. But 2020 also saw an increase in sales of art union tickets. Tracy Adams believes that indicates where our community funders' hearts and minds were in the time of COVID-19.

"It showed the true capacity of the community to rally and recognise what's important," she says.

"I think people recognised what we were doing in supporting children and young people. Of course, it's nice to think of winning a multi-million-dollar house, but there was more to it than that. There was a sense of contributing to something bigger."

As for the ongoing reliance Kids Helpline will have on the art unions, Tracy Adams says: "We speak a lot about partnerships, but the Art Union and Kids Helpline have a partnership that is deep, meaningful and is crucial to our community."

thank



Then

Draw 221
1992



Now

Draw 503
2021 - Celebrating **yourtown**
60 year Anniversary



you

Raj's story

"If I could have one more conversation with her..."

What I would love every parent to do is to support Kids Helpline in the hope that their kids never have to use it. If you supported Kids Helpline and your kids don't have to use it, then that's an investment that's paid off. That's the ideal outcome.

I don't want any parent to imagine their child's suicide because it shouldn't be something they should be thinking about. It's just the darkest ... I don't know how to describe it. I just don't think that it's anything a parent can ever prepare for. I don't have a magic answer on how you deal with it, because it's the worst thing that could ever happen.

But what happened in our family is not unique. It can happen to anyone. What I've discovered about me – but I've also learned that a lot of parents have a similar thing – you have a blind spot when it comes to your kids. I just thought Yasmin was going through normal adolescent issues and felt it will sort itself out

with the support we were giving her. I never in my wildest dreams would have envisaged this happening.

Yasmin was very normal. She was incredibly loving, sensitive, fun, active – all the things that you would expect an adolescent to be. She played sport. She dabbled a little bit in music. She wasn't overly enamoured by school but with her friends she had a connection she enjoyed.

As Yasmin entered her teen years we sensed that her anxiety levels started to build. She worried a lot about things, which from an outsider's perspective you'd say well, they're things that you don't really need to worry about. For example, she played hockey and she was asked to coach some junior kids in an introductory hockey program. And she worried so much about it. She didn't think she was good enough to do that. When she did it, she's amazing at it. So, we thought Yasmin just needed more confidence.

Counselling, medication and a normal school day

She shared a very close relationship with the school counsellor and she had mentioned to her that she had tried to self-harm. That was about a week prior. The school naturally escalated the matter to us as her parents and her Mum took her immediately to a renowned public hospital which has a mental health unit in the emergency department. She was assessed there to be low risk of self-harm.

That was a Thursday. She went back to school on the Tuesday. Two days later, on Thursday evening, it all came to an end.

But even in the hours prior to that, everything was very normal. She had an orthodontist appointment, so she'd gone there after school.

She ran into a cousin of hers and they were planning to go out on the Friday night. Her Mum was going out



somewhere and while her Mum was still home, Yasmin made dinner. She had a miniature dachshund puppy, six months old, and she loved Dusty and was going to spend time with Dusty. Everything was very normal. So, I think this is all relevant because what might be seemingly normal on the outside, and what is actually transpiring on the inside, can be quite different.

A full-stop moment

That night, when her Mum rang me and she told me, it was a devastating sense of disbelief. Her Mum lives about a kilometre or so from where I live. On the short drive there, I thought, "it's not possible. This hasn't happened".

Then I remember going inside...and I still thought, "No, no, this, this can be fixed". But then that feeling was soon followed by a sense of being – numb is the best way to describe it. A lot of things flood into your head. This is the finality of things. All those things that I had dreamed about for her to happen in her life, all those milestones, all those special times, all those things that could happen in her life – this is a full-stop moment. I don't know how grief counsellors deal with these situations but I would be absolutely surprised if there is a way to reduce the pain.

I think that, despite the relative inexperience of her school counsellor, Yasmin had trusted her counsellor enough to be open and talk about what was really going on. Whereas with something like the doctors at the hospital, she didn't have the trust to feel she could open up. That's why having the likes of Kids Helpline is absolutely important. It's that immediacy and also the anonymity that Kids Helpline provides that it is an absolute crucial triage and support service.

If I could have a conversation with Yasmin again, I would love to be able to say to her, "No matter how difficult the situation is, how much pain you must be enduring, we will work through it and we'll find a way through it."

Raj Wilson's daughter Yasmin suicided in November 2019. She was 15.

The night before she died, Raj texted his daughter to tell her he was proud of her. The morning she died, she sent him a text. It said: "Love you dad".

Amanda's story

Someone to listen was what she needed

I was 13 years old and living in a very ordinary Melbourne suburb when I first called Kids Helpline in 1992. I had changed schools the previous year, but I wasn't fitting in. The bullying at school was the catalyst for my call, but I think it was the cumulative effect of a lifetime of bullying. I felt that I had nobody to listen and support me.

I was lonely at home during the school holidays. I was nervous about talking to a counsellor, and I cried whilst I talked about what I was going through. Even though the counsellor didn't give specific strategies in regards to dealing with the bullying, I was simply relieved because it was the first time in my life that I felt safe. The counsellor listened, and reassured me. That was what I needed at the time.

Since accessing Kids Helpline in my early teens, I have gone on to a career in welfare. Initially I didn't connect the dots, but I think there was an influence from the Kids Helpline. If I can connect with and empathise with a young person who has endured what I have, it may prevent the tragedy of suicide and self-harm.



Shannon's story

From a 'living hell' to the life of his dreams.

Look at Shannon Molloy today and here's what you see: a successful and respected newspaper journalist, a published author whose memoir is set to be turned into a film, a confident man in his 30s, loving life in Sydney and happily married to his partner.

Flashback 25 years or so, however, and the picture is vastly different: an eight-, nine- and then ten-year-old boy visiting his grandmother's place in central Queensland – relieved because she has a payphone at the end of her street. When Shannon visits his grandmother, he can make phone calls without anyone overhearing what he is saying. He needs to talk to someone about what he's feeling because he knows his parents' marriage is struggling. He calls Kids Helpline.

"I remember it really vividly," says Shannon now. "Kids Helpline was a refuge in some ways. It was the place that I could go when I couldn't really go anywhere else. I knew that there was always someone who was there to listen to me unconditionally."

Teenage trauma

Shannon's fears and anxiety didn't miraculously improve after his parents separated. The fallout continued into his teens – he moved towns, said goodbye to old friends, started at a new school and even secretly worried about his single-parent family's new financial state. But even worse was to come.

"My parents' separation was challenging and I struggled for a very long time. Then, in my early teens when I started high school, my life was – without exaggeration – a constant, daily, living hell," Shannon says.

"I went to an all-boys, footy-mad Catholic school and, as the only very clearly gay kid, I just endured horrific bullying – from constant psychological torment through to very violent physical abuse. And, you know, teachers turned a blind eye or were complicit.

"There were very few places that I could turn. There were very few people that I could trust and I was terrified about anyone finding out this thing that seemed like it was the worst thing in the world."

Help at a critical point

Again, it was Kids Helpline that Shannon turned to.

"Sometimes when I called it was for reassurance – just a chat. Other times it was speaking to someone when I felt like I was on the very edge.



"Kids Helpline was a refuge when I couldn't go anywhere else.

There was always someone there to listen unconditionally."

"Kids Helpline was so vital at a very critical point in my life when things could have gone either way. There were some very difficult periods that, as an adult, I think back on in horror."

As someone who's continued to use counselling services throughout adulthood, Shannon wants to help others see the value of reaching out and using mental health services and supports. He wants everyone – children, young people and adults – to understand there's always someone around to help.

And for children and young people, Shannon's most sincere message is this: "It gets better".

"I have the life of my dreams – the life that young me could have only dreamed," he says.

"I was in some very dark places and I hate thinking what could have been. I would have missed out on so many wonderful things if not for love and luck and kindness. And, yeah, my life is wonderful. I'm very, very, very happy."

Sue's story

The phone call that saved a life.

There's no doubt – absolutely no doubt in any of our minds – that Kids Helpline is the only reason that Molly's alive today.

She was struggling for many years with her mental health, with bullying at school, she was self-harming and she was under the care of the Child and Youth Mental Health Service. She had been suicidal on many occasions and we were managing it the best we could. But as a parent it was a really scary time so I can only imagine how terrifying it was for Molly.

I'd gone to wake her up that day and she said that she wasn't well enough to go to school. So, we'd made the decision that she should stay at home. Both my husband and I had to go into work and left her alone.

The next thing I knew I had a phone call from the emergency services to say that they were at my home, and that Molly had taken an overdose, and they needed to get her to hospital quickly. So, in that time she had rung Kids Helpline; Kids Helpline had realised the severity of the situation; and they had sent the emergency services around to our house. If that hadn't happened, we would have arrived home later that day – and it's horrendous to think what the consequences could have been.



We are so fortunate the Kids Helpline counsellors are experienced enough to assess the situation and know exactly what to do.

It was very emotional for us one day when we walked through the call centre at Kids Helpline because that really brought home to us that one of those counsellors sitting there on the phones could have been the person who spoke to Molly that day.

We owe the counsellors everything. It's many years ago, but it's still ... still very emotional. We will never be able to repay them for saving our daughter's life.

Molly is now 23 and continues to work hard on her mental health. She is a Kids Helpline Lived Experience youth advocate.

Sue and her family are ongoing supporters of Kids Helpline and regularly hold fundraisers for our organisation.

Chris's story

From tragedy came the drive to help others.

In 2016 my little sister Jane took her own life. It's something you read about in the newspaper, you see it on TV, but you don't understand until you experience it. Jane's passing took a huge toll on me physically and mentally but the way it affected my Mum and Dad, Janet and Shane was something else.

They've been incredibly strong and supportive of me though and they were of Jane too. Jane and I are both adopted and they made the whole world possible to both of us. They're incredible and I love them to bits and I know Jane did too.

We wanted to create an Everyday Hero page through my Dad's former company to raise awareness for an organisation that supports mental health and suicide, particularly youth mental health. So, after making enquiries, we found Kids Helpline. It seemed perfect.

After the first year, I had the idea of, 'hey, let's host a little golf day to raise a bit of extra funds for Kids Helpline'. Then, that idea of having 20 boys turned into

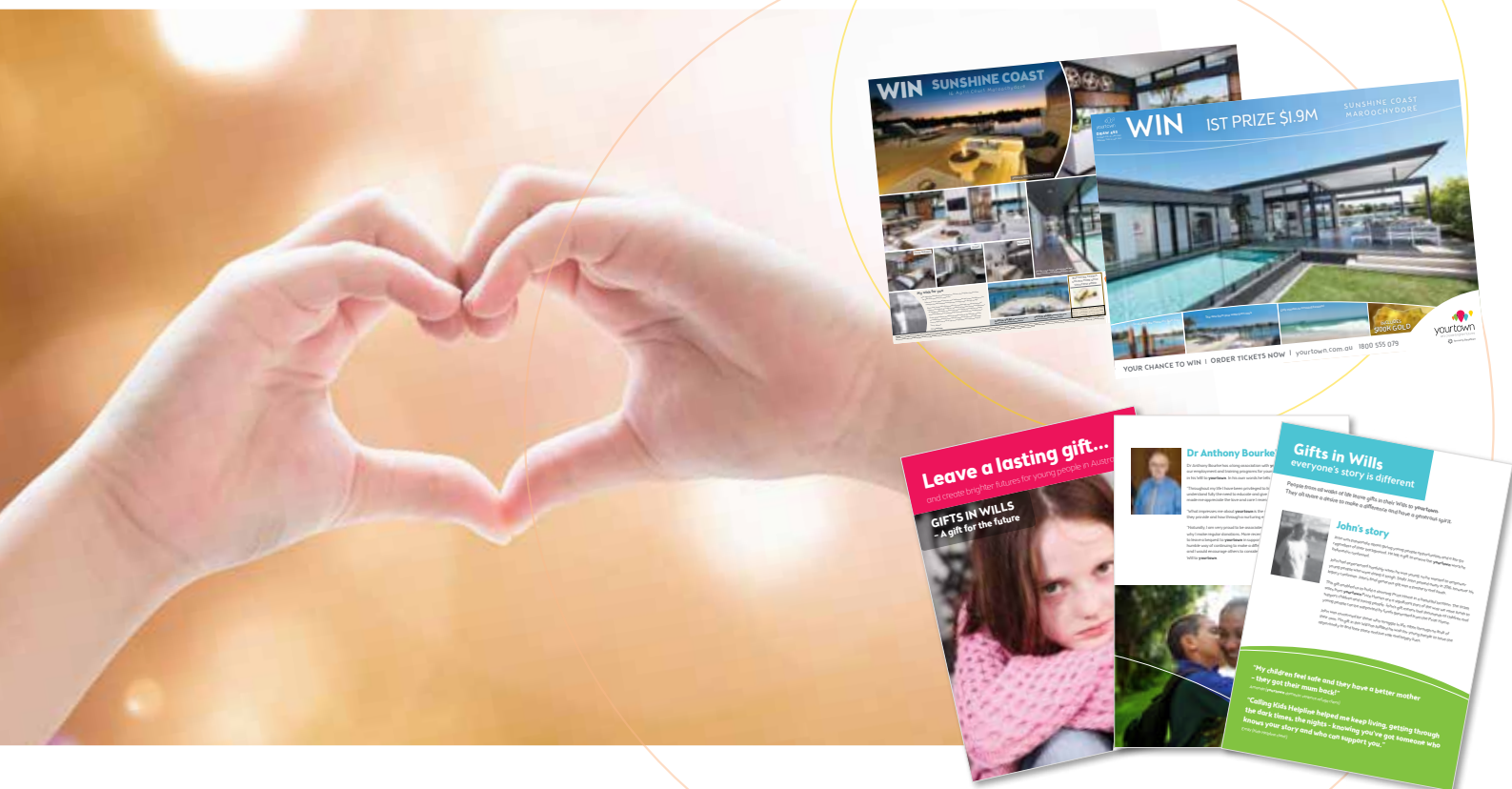
hosting 350 people at our first event A Day for Jane at Indooroopilly Golf Club. All those funds went to Kids Helpline. We've raised a little over \$70,000 in the three years we've been doing the golf days. Everyone digs deep because everyone does know, or has known, someone who has suffered or is currently going through mental health concerns. To get that support from the community has been absolutely amazing.

I've only got high hopes for what Kids Helpline is doing. I am part of the Kids Helpline youth advisory group and if we can enact a little bit of change on the community level, then the state level, the federal level and then the world level – we can definitely make a difference. If we can make that little bit of change there, that awareness, that stops even just one person taking their life, I know that we've made an absolute, huge difference to a family.

Chris Curran, 25, is a member of Kids Helpline's Lived Experience Network and a director of the Day for Jane fundraiser.

Our big-hearted community helps us support children and young people

From a ten-year-old-girl generously giving her pocket money, to a schoolteacher bequeathing her Gold Coast home, Kids Helpline has been supported by many generous donors over the past 30 years.



Whether someone gives five dollars or a million, every single donation is appreciated and makes an incredible difference. Support from the community is vital for us to continue this vital service into the future.

“Our supporters are many and varied from individual donors, community fundraisers, school students, corporate partners and business people,” says Fundraising Manager Marie Coleman. “Their contributions are all significant to us. It’s about the community coming together to support an organisation that gives back to their community every day, changing and saving lives. Each and every donation counts.”

Some of largest donors over the years include:

- A Sunshine Coast donor who left his property to **yourtown**. The house has been a gift that keeps giving as young people in our enterprise programs have been able to work on this home and gain skills to get jobs and help purpose build an exquisite art-union Prize Home that not only changed someone’s life, it helped raise over \$5.5 million.
- A bequest from a long-standing donor who at the end of his life donated and staggering \$1 million from his estate.
- Another generous bequest, a property so we could support families transitioning from our family and domestic violence refuge. This enabled us to provide much-needed transitional accommodation to help families rebuild their lives in the community.
- And a high school teacher who gifted her Gold Coast home in her will. “We were not aware of a connection with this wonderful teacher,” said Tracy Adams, “all we know is she had valued highly the service to children that Kids Helpline makes what a wonderful and substantial bequest that was.”

Marie says every donation makes a difference and supports Kids Helpline’s work with children and young people. “Although we are primarily independently funded, there is plenty of room for more corporate and government support to help us meet demand and ensure the ongoing needs of children and young people are met.”

Key statistics 30 years Kids Helpline 1991-2020

8.4 MILLION responses

- **507,887 counselling sessions** for mental or emotional health (includes self-injury)
- **443,075 counselling sessions** for family relationships
- **298,887 counselling sessions** for peer relationships
- **226,241 counselling sessions** for partner relationships (includes partner violence)
- **187,374 counselling sessions** for child abuse and family violence
- **133,062 counselling sessions** for suicide
- **119,520 counselling sessions** for bullying

**Every 69 seconds
a young person
contacts Kids Helpline**

Acknowledgements

Without the support and involvement of our many committed supporters over the past three decades, we would not have been able to help hundreds of thousands of children and young people who have engaged with Kids Helpline.

Kids Helpline would like to pay tribute to the significant contribution of corporate partners, donors, federal and state governments, Art Union and community support, schools and bequests over the past 30 years.

**We recognise the support of
our Principal Partner**



Thank You
Thank You

We recognise the support of our corporate partners and governments





**We're here.
Anytime. Any Reason.**

**kidshelpline.com.au
1800 55 1800 Free Call**

“The principles Kids Helpline started the service with are still the same 30 years on: professionalism, confidentiality, and giving children and young people access to the services in the ways they need them. That’s what has built trust.”

Tracy Adams – **yourtown** CEO

If you have any questions, please contact:

Maree Reason-Cain
Corporate Affairs & Media Advisor
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Kids Helpline is a service of yourtown for 5 - 25 year olds

