

Media release



COVID-rise in online body-shaming abuse affecting Aussie students

High school teachers are being urged to guide students to Kids Helpline and to use new school resources to help teenagers deal with the online body-shaming abuse thought to have increased throughout COVID-19.

yourtown Chief Executive Officer CEO Tracy Adams said Kids Helpline, a service of **yourtown**, identified that with lockdown restrictions occurring over the past year and school holidays curbing teens' IRL (in real life) interactions, teenagers had spent more time than usual on devices. That increased time has us concerned by the number of young people now affected by online appearance-based abuse.

"It's difficult for young people, living in a world of photo-filters and picture-perfect selfies, to maintain positive body image and self-esteem, particularly when it's so easy for others to make a nasty comment," she said.

"At Kids Helpline, we regularly hear from teenagers who are distressed by online body-shaming. We know arming them with strategies to manage the abuse and their emotions can help prevent the situation spiralling out of control, but often young people are reluctant to reach out, or may not know where to turn. I'd encourage teachers and parents to keep an eye on students who seem to be struggling and point them in our direction."

To support teachers and our school communities Kids Helpline had partnered with Australian anti-bullying organisation, PROJECT ROCKIT, to create a series of free online resources for schools which include resources related to body-shaming and online abuse issues.

"Kids Helpline's professional counsellors shared their knowledge and advice with PROJECT ROCKIT TV to create resources that can be used by teachers in the classroom," she said.

"They include videos and worksheets addressing topics such as body image, managing boundaries and how tech can be used to improve mental health."

Kids Helpline is Australia's only free confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for children and young people aged five to 25.

PROJECT ROCKIT TV is a free anti-bullying resource for students across the country created by young people, for young people.

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EDITORS PLEASE NOTE: PROJECT ROCKIT'S young presenters are available to quote or undertake photo opportunities this week.