

Media release



9 September 2021

Kids Helpline: Concerns relating to suicide in teens higher during COVID-19

In the lead up to World Suicide Prevention Day and RUOK? Day, Kids Helpline announce that the number of children and young people presenting with varying levels of mental, emotional and psychological anguish continues to increase in 2021 with 8,242 contacts up from 6,887 for the same period in 2020, which represents 45 contacts each day over the past 6 months (March to August 2021) from young people expressing concerns related to suicide.

“Our professional counsellors responded to on average 20% more children and young people reaching out across March to August and making a connection related to suicide related concerns about themselves or others compared to 2020, with 16 years of age being the mean age expressing these concerns to our counsellors,” said **yourtown** CEO Tracy Adams.

“The stark statistics, released as part of World Suicide Prevention Day are an opportunity to increase awareness in the community of the increasing despair in children and young people, and to all work together to focus on the vital imperative of suicide prevention. Disturbingly, we have identified that one in four contacts to Kids Helpline from young people who identify as Trans or Gender Diverse were related to suicide,” continued Ms Adams.

Kids Helpline’s latest data reveals that in the past 6 months (March to August) counsellors made contact with frontline responders for an emergency crisis intervention 135% more than the same period in 2020.

An emergency crisis intervention is an instance where Kids Helpline counsellors make contact with police, mental health, child safety or ambulance services because a child or young person is deemed to be at imminent risk of harm.

Kids Helpline, has revealed that significantly higher rates of suicide-related contacts to the helpline appear to have corresponded with times when COVID-19 stressors and community responses (e.g. lockdown orders and school closures) were heightened, indicating that children and young people experienced elevated distress during these periods.

- Nationally, Duty of Care emergency actions related to suicide attempts were 92% higher between March and August 2021, compared to the same period in 2020;
- For New South Wales children and young people, Duty of Care emergency actions related to suicide attempts were 77% higher between March and August 2021, compared to the same period in 2020;
- For Victorian children and young people, Duty of Care emergency actions related to suicide attempts were 161% higher between March and August 2021, compared to the same period in 2020;

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- For Queensland children and young people, Duty of Care emergency actions related to suicide attempts were 57% higher between March and August 2021, compared to the same period in 2020.

“Suicidal thoughts and behaviours are closely tied to mental ill-health ranging from depression, anxiety, alcohol or substance abuse and psychological distress”, said Ms Adams.

“Kids Helpline remains focused on providing mental health and suicide prevention support, focussed on working as part of a broader community towards a nation without youth suicide,” Ms Adams concluded.

Kids Helpline remains Australia’s only national 24/7 counselling and support service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years – free call 1800 55 1800 or online at www.kidshelpline.com.au

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