

Media release



9 September 2019

Mental health in the picture

Mental health is under the spotlight in September with three awareness days this month.

yourtown/Kids Helpline CEO Tracy Adams said Child Protection Week (Sept 1-7); World Suicide Prevention Day (Sept 10) and RU OK Day (Sept 12) focussed discussions around mental health.

Kids Helpline says mental health issues and suicide-related thoughts accounted for more than one fifth of all calls made by children and young adults.

Young people are considered as having a mental health issue when they are experiencing symptoms of depression or anxiety, emotional distress, psychotic thoughts, thoughts of suicide, or when they are engaging in violent behaviours, disordered eating, substance abuse, or self-harming behaviours.

The number of contacts to Kids Helpline for the 6 months to July 2019 was 76,257, with 6,928 (9%) related to suicide.

“To cope with increasing counselling demand, Kids Helpline recently increased the opening hours for WebChat to 24/7. This has resulted in an additional 3,108 attempts and 1,723 contacts in the first half of this year. As a result, we are seeing longer counselling sessions and increasing numbers of children and young people who require regular support,” said **yourtown** CEO Tracy Adams.

“In addition, significant numbers of young people in our employment services are dealing with mental health issues and it is one of the biggest barriers to employment readiness,” she said. “The impact of long term unemployment is of itself a contributor to mental health issues.”

“There should be no wrong doors to accessing help but we need to be working together, early intervention, greater access to services and support for families need to be prioritised,” Ms Adams said.

Kids Helpline relies heavily upon **yourtown's** charitable art union and donations from the community to continue its operation. The only 24/7, free and confidential service for kids and young people aged 5 to 25, Kids Helpline is 69% self-funded by **yourtown** art union, donors & grants.

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INTERVIEW/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES:

Tracy Adams, **yourtown** CEO.

VNR available.

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