

# Parentline Insights 2015



Insights into families in  
Queensland and the Northern Territory.



# About Parentline

Parentline has provided professional counselling, education and support for parents and carers of children and young people for 20 years.

**We respond** to an average of 145 contacts and make 40 outreach offers of support each week, about issues that include:

- parenting strategies for challenging behaviours
- parent-child relationships
- custody and access
- mental health/emotional wellbeing of children and young people.

Operating in Queensland since 1996, we expanded to the Northern Territory in 2004.

**We aim to strengthen parents and families.** We help parents and carers:

- obtain a better understanding of the way their family works
- believe in themselves and their own skills and strengths
- develop strategies for changing how things are done in their family in a way that suits their family's needs
- identify their information needs—counsellors can provide callers with relevant tip sheets regarding more than 100 topics.

The telephone and email service operates between 8am–10pm, seven days a week. Web counselling is available 11am–2pm, Tuesday and Thursday.

1300 30 1300\*

[www.parentline.com.au](http://www.parentline.com.au)

[facebook.com/  
ParentlineQLDNT](https://facebook.com/ParentlineQLDNT)

\*Cost of a local call from landlines.  
Mobile phone charges apply.

## Data collection and limitations

Parentline counsellors record non-identifying information at the end of every telephone session. There are a maximum of 38 different fields where data may be logged, however, only eleven are mandatory. Ideally, counsellors enter information for each field however, the amount of information recorded can vary due to: anonymity of contacts, sensitivity of information, and the length or nature of the call.

For further information about data collection please contact **yourtown**.

Parentline is a service of yourtown and is funded by the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment (Office for Early Childhood Education and Care) and the Northern Territory Department of Children and Families.

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## Parentline works for me

## About this report

Parentline has been strengthening parents and families for 20 years, assisting hundreds of thousands of parents and carers since 1996.

In 2015, Parentline counsellors engaged in 9,617 individual counselling, support, information and/or referral sessions. Our diverse range of contacts included custodial and non-custodial parents, grandparents, parents from blended families, single parents, extended family members, and parents and carers from different cultural backgrounds. Their concerns were often complex and varied, and related to children of just about any age. They also focused on relationships and external factors affecting their families.

**This report details the diversity of Parentline contacts, their main concerns and the nature of those concerns. It also talks about our counselling service and other work we do in the community.**

In producing this report, we are proud to present valuable insights into issues affecting families, particularly in Queensland and the Northern Territory, which may also be reflective of families across Australia.

We thank you for your interest in the wellbeing of parents and carers, and their children.

For further information about the service, please contact us at 07 3368 3399 or visit [www.parentline.com.au](http://www.parentline.com.au), [facebook.com/ParentlineQLDNT](https://facebook.com/ParentlineQLDNT)

*Tracy Adams*

TRACY ADAMS  
CEO  
yourtown

**“Parentline works for me. I like to seek advice, take it away and make my own choices. It’s fantastic. They make you feel confident and validated. Even in my case my issues are complex but still they don’t tell me what to do or what to say. It’s very good and not judgemental.”**

Parentline Caller





# Parentline Insights 2015

Fast facts about the Parentline service during 2015:

## How many contacts did we receive?

There were:

**9,944**

attempts to reach the counselling service with **7,546** (76%) answered

**1,000**

attempts by Parentline to offer outreach support to clients with **472** (47%) connected

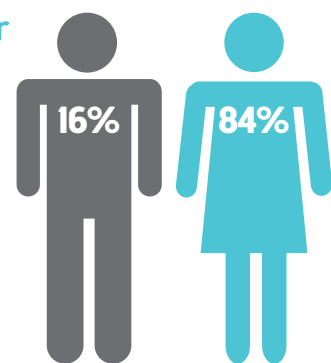
**38,048**

unique visitors to the Parentline website with **92,125** page views

## Who contacted us?

Gender

(N = 6,771)



Intersex, trans & gender diverse <1%

Age

(N = 3,131)

Under 30 years

10%

30–49 years

72%

50+ years

18%

Culture<sup>1</sup>

(N = 3,581)

Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander

3%

Culturally & linguistically diverse

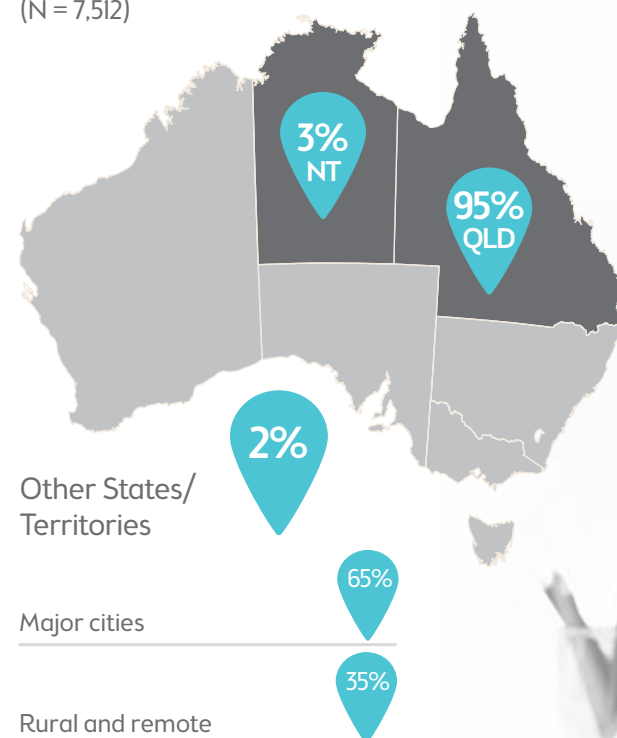
13%

Neither ASTI or CALD<sup>2</sup>

84%

## Where did they come from?

(N = 7,512)



## Were they parents, carers of others?

(N = 3,522)

Custodial parents

72%

Non-custodial parents

8%

Shared custody

10%

Other carers<sup>3</sup>

10%

## Top five concerns of parents and carers

- 1 Challenging behaviour and discipline
- 2 Child mental health/emotional wellbeing
- 3 Parent-child relationships
- 4 Parenting strategies
- 5 Parent mental health/emotional wellbeing

## How old were the children being discussed?

(N = 4,581)

0–4 years

18%

5–8 years

18%

9–14 years

32%

15–18 years

24%

18+ years

8%

<sup>1</sup> Proportions based on numbers of sessions where the cultural background of client was known. Given the cultural background of clients was recorded in only 47% of contacts, it is likely these figures under-represent the actual number Indigenous and culturally diverse clients.

## Counselling contacts<sup>4</sup>

**6,161**

were contacts seeking counselling.

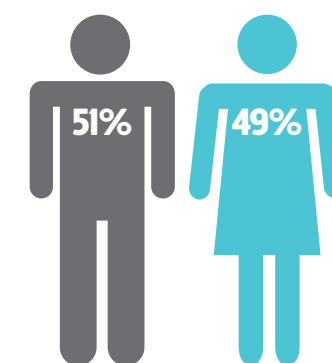
**1,745**

were seeking information, contacting their regular counsellor, giving feedback about the service, or were existing clients contacted by Parentline to schedule counselling.

## What was the gender of the children being discussed?

(N = 4,540)

Intersex, trans & gender diverse <1%



## Did Parentline help? (N = 102)

90% of parents surveyed said the service increased parenting confidence, strategies and skills or improved their relationships with their children.

<sup>2</sup> CALD = Culturally and linguistically diverse. ASTI = Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

<sup>3</sup> Includes foster carers, other relatives, family friends, neighbours and professionals involved with children (e.g. teachers and social workers).

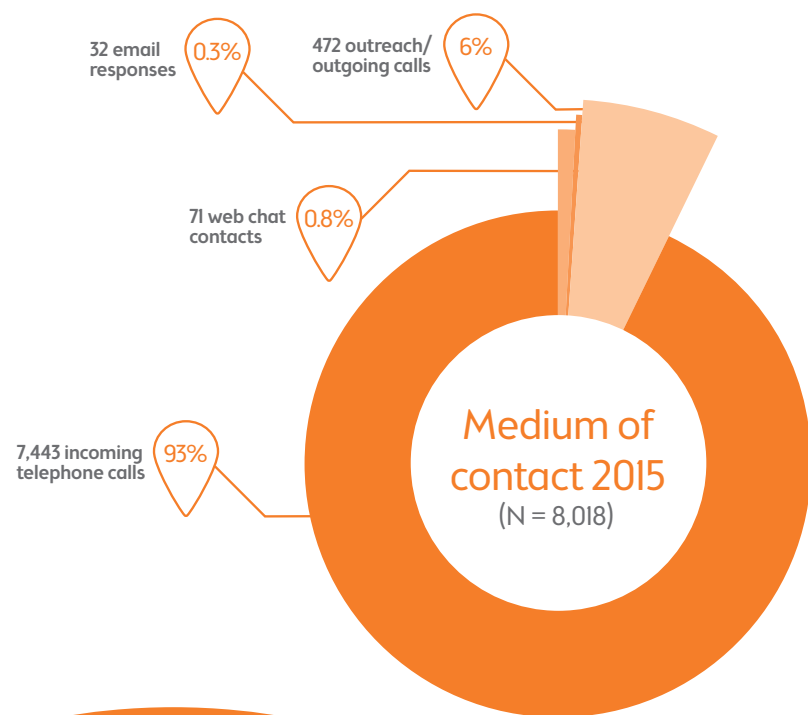
<sup>4</sup> 112 contacts were not logged.

Challenging behaviour was the No. 1 reason for contacting Parentline



# How we were contacted

Parentline engaged in **8,018** phone, email and web contacts in 2015. A further **38,048** unique visitors accessed the service's website.



## Online Contacts

The Parentline website offers access to counselling and 24/7 parenting information and tip sheets.

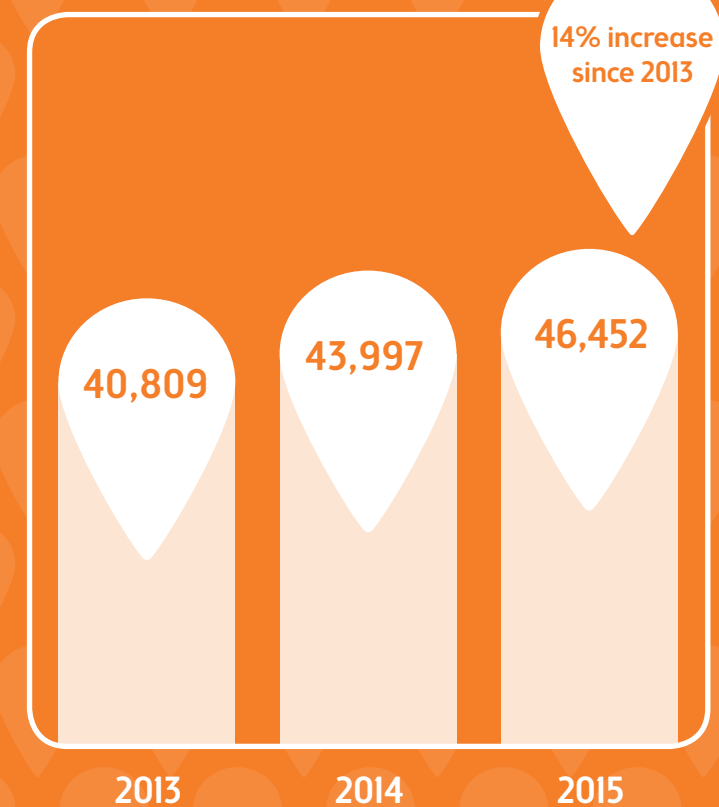
Email counselling often works for clients who need to take longer to compose their message or express their thoughts and feelings. It also benefits individuals who feel confronted by phone and web counselling.

Tip Sheets accessed from the website provide information and strategies about issues facing children and young people.

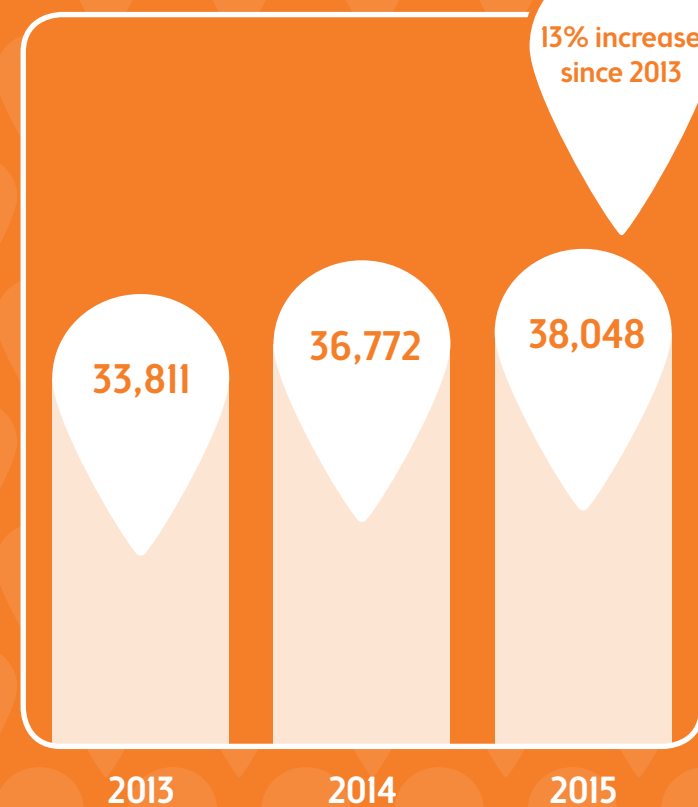
<sup>1</sup>7,546 were received and 472 were outreach.

## Website demand 2013-15

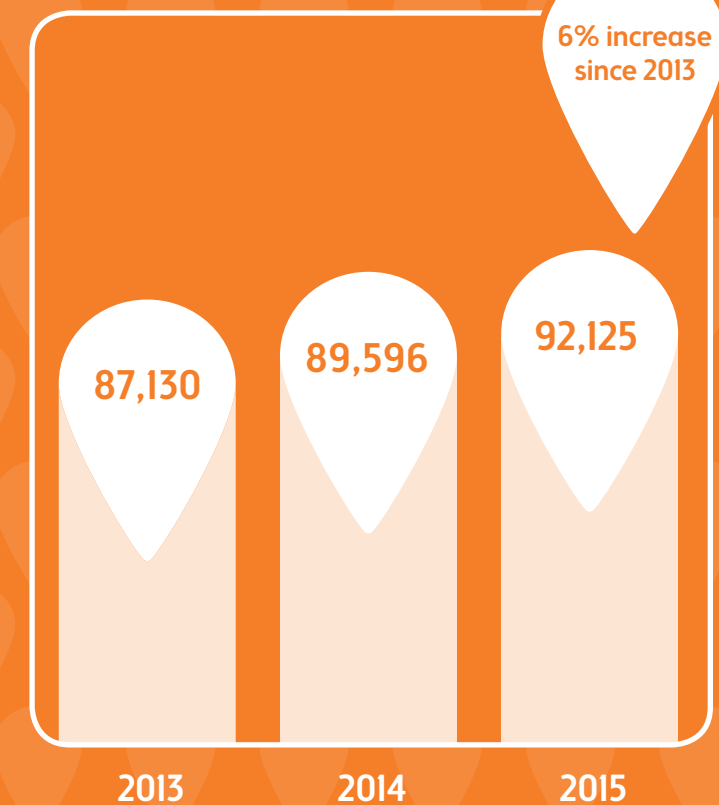
### Visitor Sessions



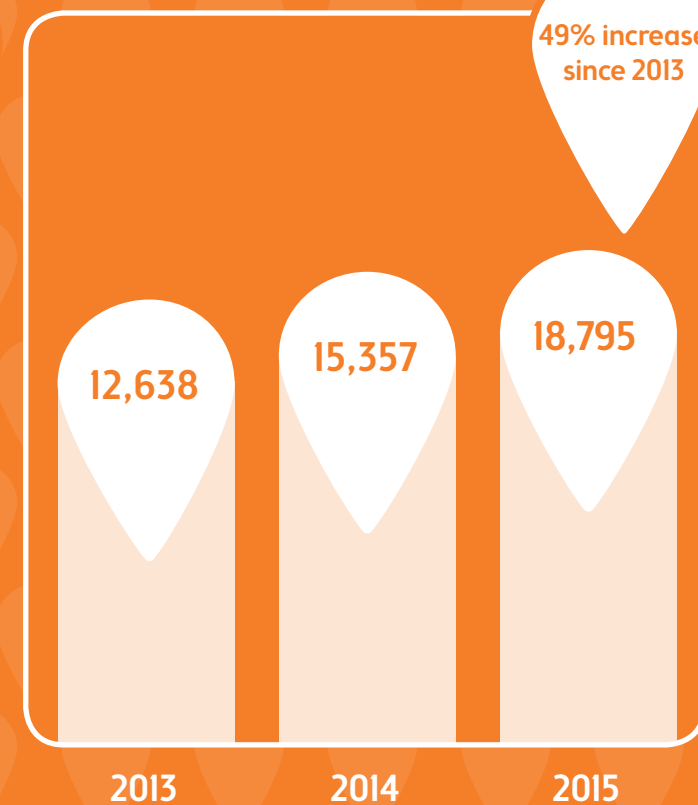
### Unique (Individual) Visitors



### Page Views



### Tip Sheet Views



**Real-time web chat counselling**  
11am-2pm Tuesdays & Thursdays



**Email counselling**  
8am-10pm 7 days a week



**Tip Sheets**  
24/7



## Parentline 'Tip Sheets'

All Parentline counsellors are also Kids Helpline counsellors with a wealth of exposure to the issues facing young people. Knowledge gained through these services provides counsellors with a unique understanding of issues facing both parents and their children.

## Top 10 Tip Sheets

| Topics                     | Page Views |
|----------------------------|------------|
| Exam stress                | 4,246      |
| Self-harm                  | 2,444      |
| Anxiety                    | 1,577      |
| Cross cultural differences | 1,405      |
| Shared custody             | 852        |
| Transitioning              | 795        |
| Communication              | 620        |
| Cyber bullying             | 600        |
| Dealing with conflict      | 557        |
| Social anxiety             | 498        |

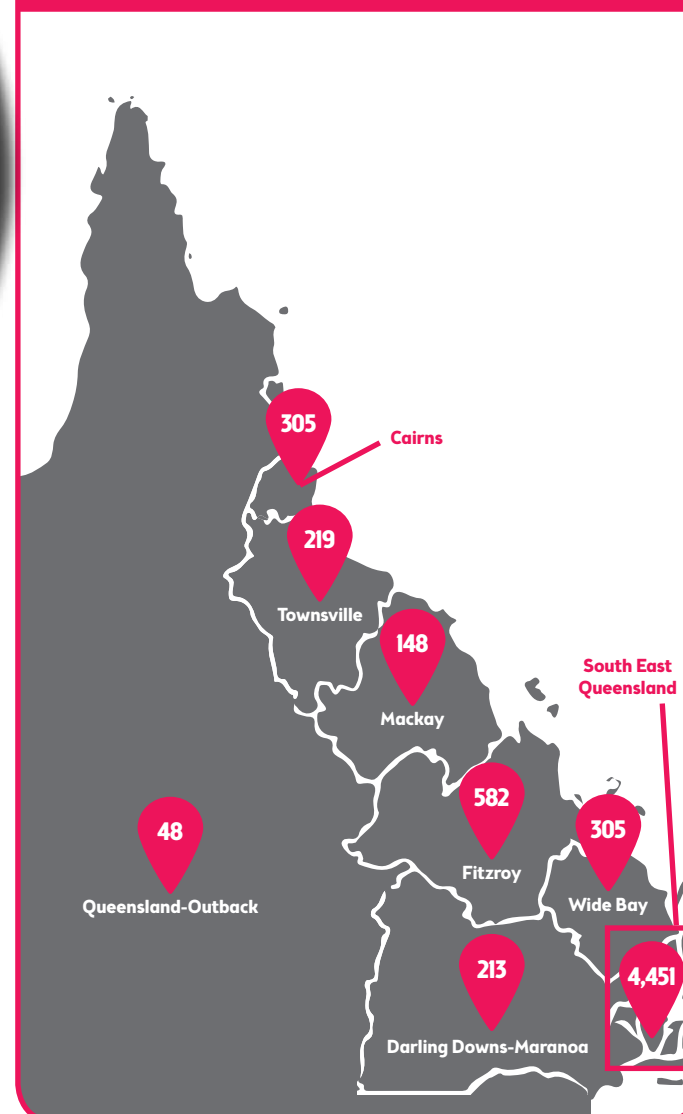


### Not giving up

"When I called I was very anxious and worried, and unsure. During the call I became more confident and realised I was doing the right thing for my daughter. I realised what was happening was normal for her—and I needed to be there for her and not give up."  
Parentline caller

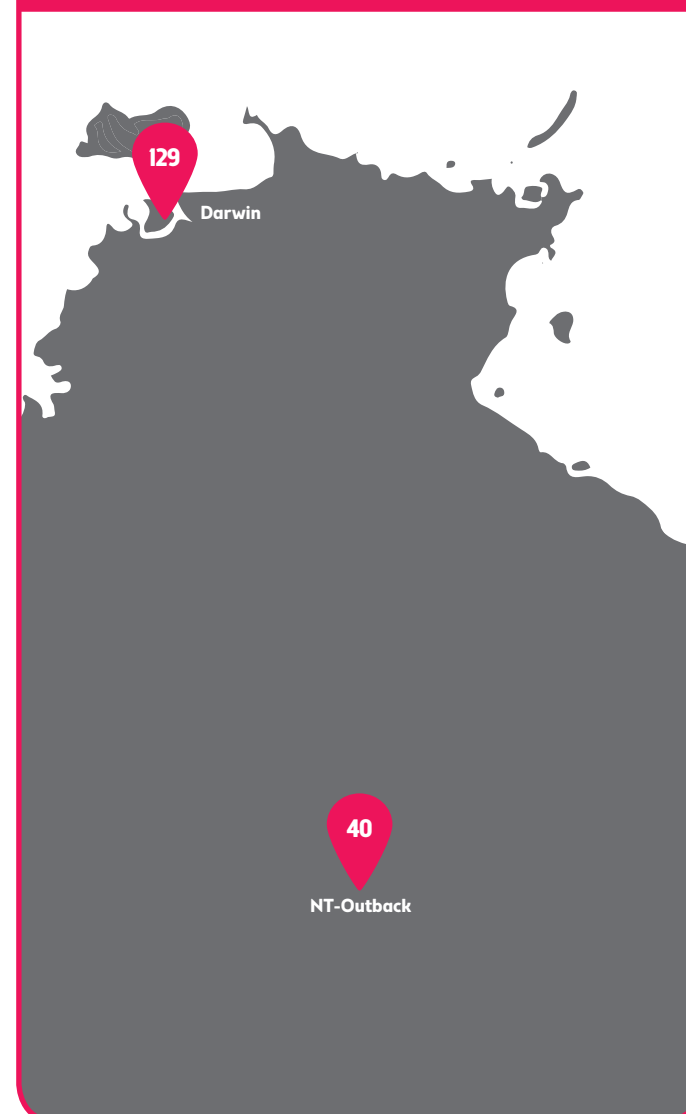
# What region did parents and carers come from?

## Queensland



| Region*                  | Number of Contacts** | Percentage of Contacts | Census Proportion |
|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Cairns                   | 305                  | 5%                     | 5%                |
| Townsville               | 219                  | 3%                     | 5%                |
| Mackay                   | 148                  | 2%                     | 4%                |
| Fitzroy                  | 582                  | 9%                     | 5%                |
| Wide Bay                 | 305                  | 5%                     | 6%                |
| Darling Downs-Maranoa    | 213                  | 3%                     | 3%                |
| Queensland-Outback       | 48                   | 1%                     | 2%                |
| South East Queensland*** | 4,451                | 71%                    | 70%               |

## Northern Territory



| Region     | Number of Contacts* | Percentage of Contacts* | Census Proportion |
|------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Darwin     | 129                 | 76%                     | 57%               |
| NT-Outback | 40                  | 24%                     | 42%               |

### Other states and territories—123 contacts

\* Regions are Australian Bureau of Statistics SA4 regions.

\*\* Figures have been extrapolated.

\*\*\* South East Queensland is a combination of SA4s Brisbane—East, Brisbane—West, Brisbane—North, Brisbane—South, Brisbane—Inner City, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Logan—Beaudesert, Moreton Bay—North, Moreton Bay—South, Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba.

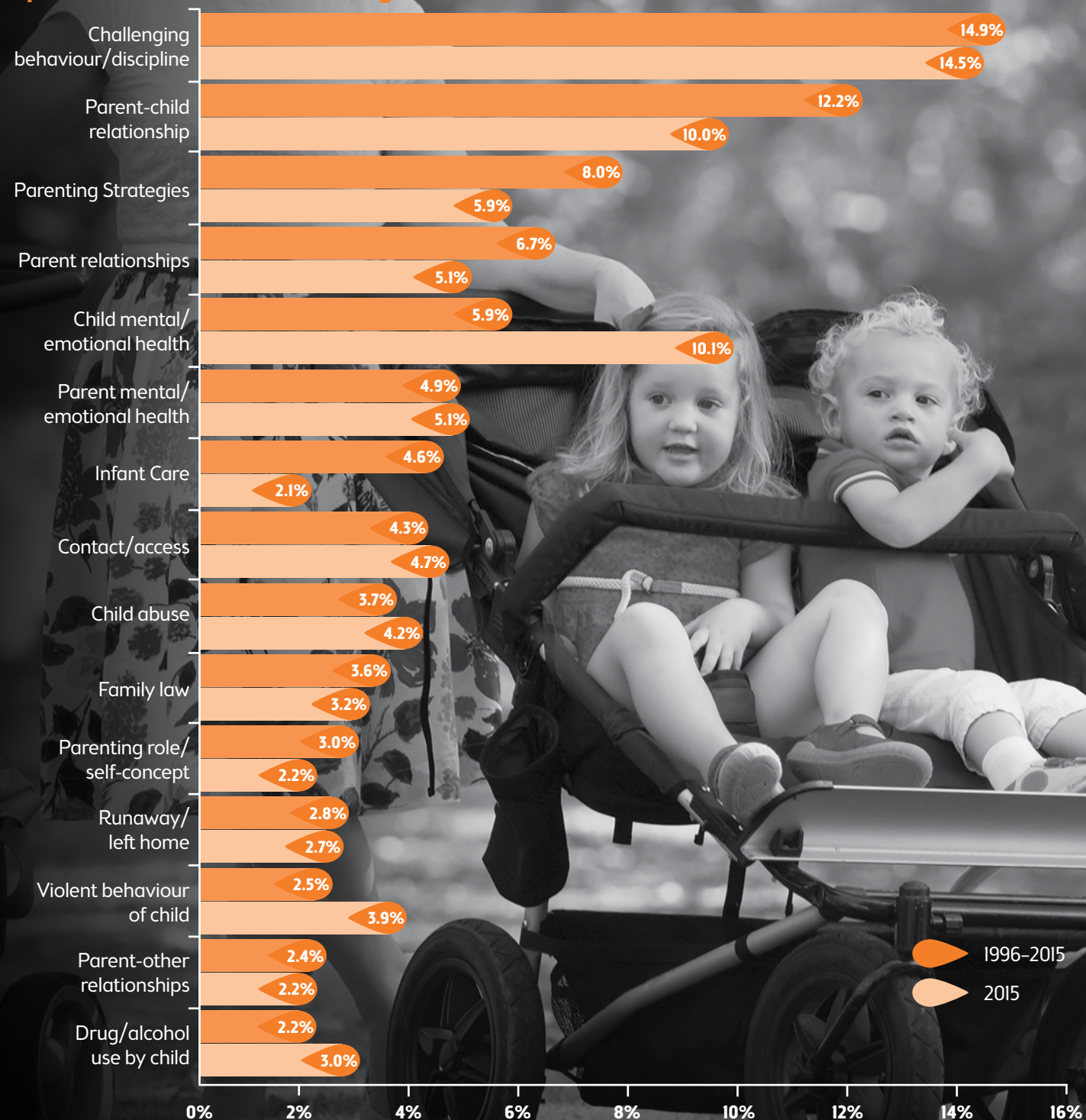


# Counselling trends— 20 years of Parentline

**“It’s our goal to help parents and carers build stronger relationships with their children.”** Tracy Adams, CEO yourtown

Parentline has provided substantial support to parents and carers about the challenging behaviour and mental and emotional health of children for 20 years. Concerns have remained mostly consistent during Parentline’s 20 year history, with concerns about the mental and emotional health of children showing the most notable increase over that time.

## Top 15 Concerns—Counselling Contacts 1996–2015



(2015 n = 6,161; 1996–2015 n = 150,223)

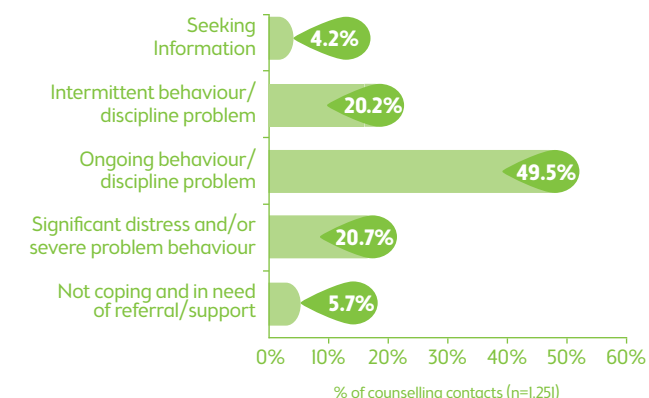
# Analysis of top 3 concerns 2015

The number one reason parents and carers contacted Parentline remained concerns about managing children’s challenging behaviour.

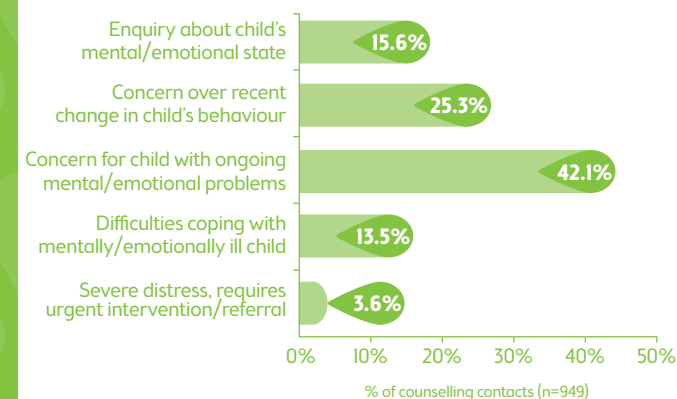
This refers to concerns about children’s behaviours and seeking help with discipline.

Almost half of contacts (49.5%) dealing with challenging behaviour were experiencing ongoing problems with behaviour or discipline.

## 1 Challenging behaviour and discipline



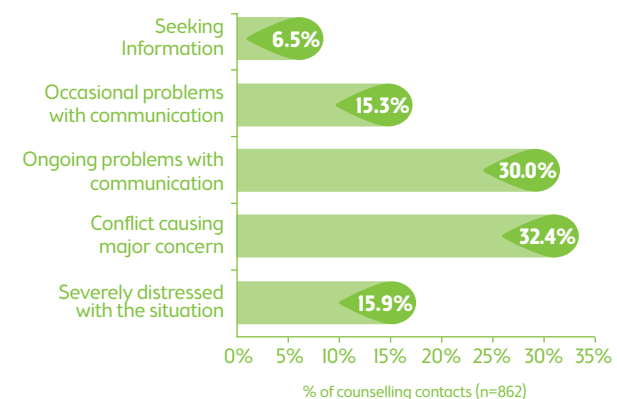
## 2 Child mental and emotional health



Concerns about children’s mental health and/or emotional wellbeing included changes in the child’s behaviour, ways of interacting with others or related to issues such as grief, loneliness, eating disorders, psychosis, depression and/or anxiety symptoms.

Forty-two per cent (42%) of contacts discussing the mental or emotional health of a child were concerned with ongoing mental or emotional health issues experienced by that child.

## 3 Parent-child relationship



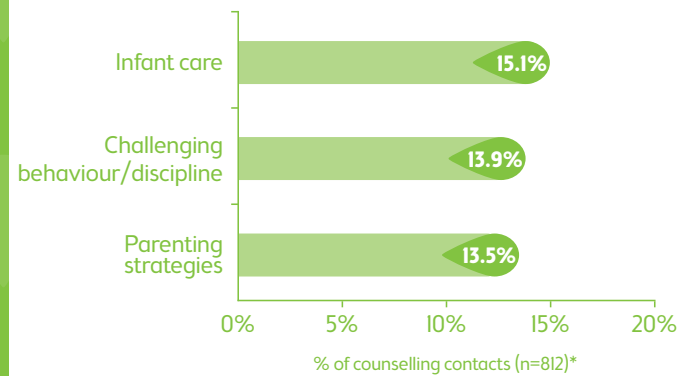
Concerns about the relationship between themselves (as parent or as primary carer) and their children was the third most common reason for contacting Parentline.

In nearly a third (32.4%) of contacts regarding parent-child relationships, the contact wanted to discuss a conflict causing them major concern. Another 30% of contacts were discussing ongoing problems with communication between a child and a caregiver.

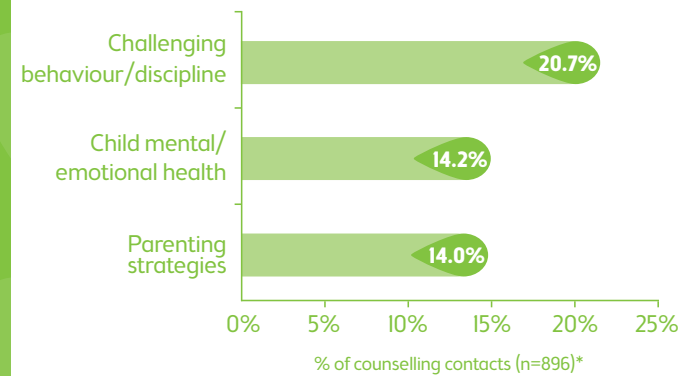


# Top 3 concerns by child age group

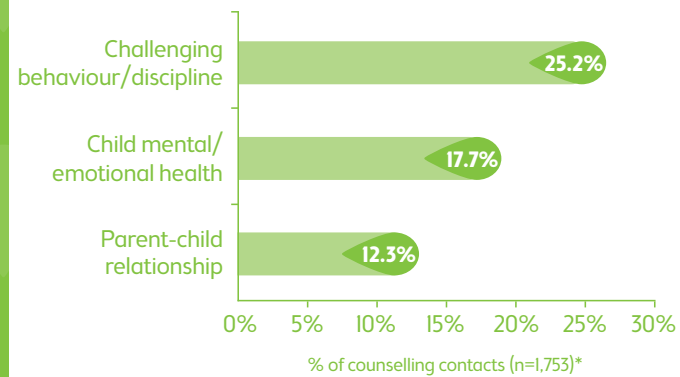
## Aged 0–4 Years\*



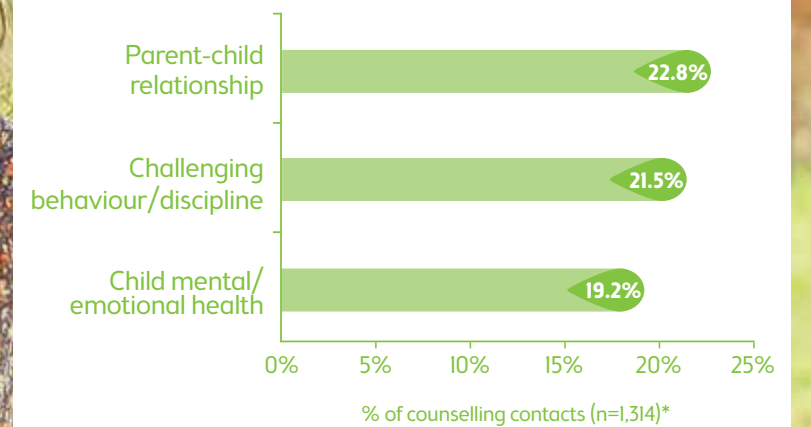
## Aged 5–8 Years\*



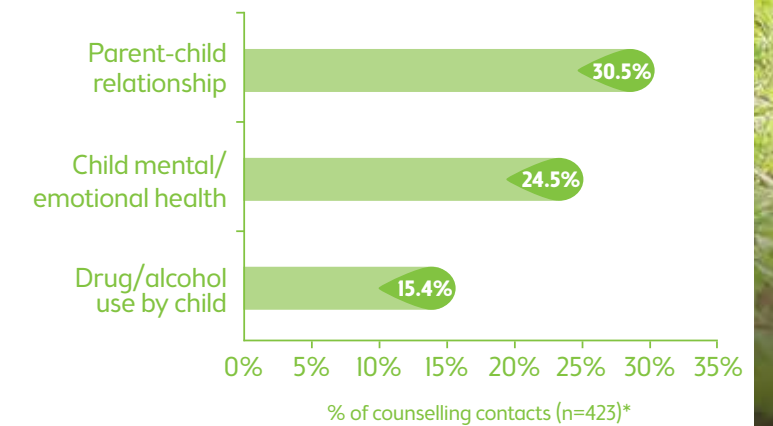
## Aged 9–14 Years\*



## Aged 15–18 Years\*



## Aged 18+ Years\*



\*Where age of child is known.

\*Where age of child is known.



# Professional counselling

Parentline counsellors are fully qualified professionals who have a minimum of an undergraduate degree (social work, counselling, psychology) and at least one year of counselling experience when beginning at Parentline.

Additional training at Parentline supports core counselling skills and the provision of phone or online counselling. This ensures that each client who contacts Parentline receives the very best of care.

## Strengthening families

Kathryn\* contacted Parentline five months ago to discuss how she was coping with looking after a newborn and the challenges of lack of sleep and her baby not sleeping well.

She had four children and had been living with her partner, Blake\*, for 10 months. Blake is the father of her six month old child. Her other three children saw their father once a week on weekends.

In her first contact with Parentline, the counsellor encouraged Kathryn to talk about how it had been being a new mum again, the times when it was good and when it was challenging. Kathryn talked about feeling guilty about not being able to spend more time with her other children. She was tired all the time because she was the only one attending to the baby. Her partner spent a lot of time with his friends and wasn't around much.

Over the course of two months, Kathryn contacted Parentline weekly and talked with her regular counsellor. She eventually revealed that when Blake was around he was angry and impatient. She talked about feeling anxious when he was there and relief when he wasn't. Kathryn also said things had escalated to Blake 'shouting in her face and storming out of the house'. He would then be gone for several weeks. Since the baby had come along he seemed uncomfortable and was hesitant to spend time with her and the children.

Kathryn wanted to talk with Blake about making the anger stop so they could all live together reasonably happily. She also wanted to talk with him about how he might be feeling about having a new baby and the role he might like to play in the baby and the other children's lives.

The counsellor and Kathryn talked about what Kathryn might say to Blake and when she might do this and they practiced some of this together. Over time, Kathryn felt more confident to try to broach the subject with Blake.

When Kathryn called Parentline after talking with Blake, she said that whilst he was a bit 'cranky' to begin with he calmed down saying he felt guilty for his behaviour and didn't want to act this way. He wasn't sure where he fit into his baby's life as he was a first time father and didn't want to do the wrong thing. He was struggling to cope with so much change and being out of work for six months. Kathryn said they had a good talk and she suggested that Blake call Parentline and have a chat with a counsellor. Whilst Blake was reluctant to do this at first, with Kathryn's support, he did make the call.

Both Blake and Kathryn engaged in regular calls with their separate counsellors at Parentline. The family has been spending more positive time together and have worked hard to be open about how they are feeling. Blake had joined up with a group of other fathers who take their babies for swimming lessons together.

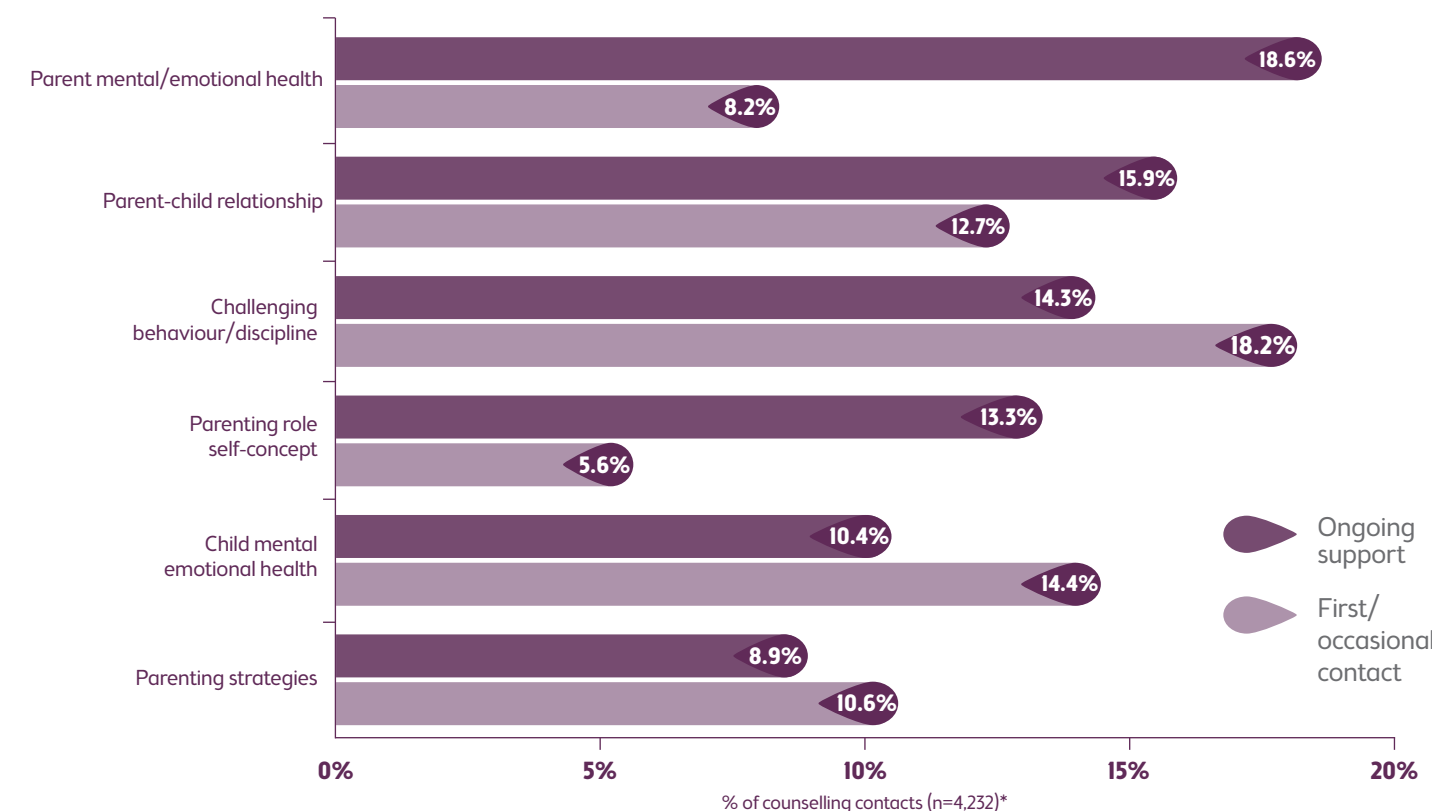
\*name changed for privacy

# Occasional contacts vs ongoing support: Top 5 concerns

First and occasional contacts to Parentline were more frequently focused on a child with challenging behaviour and discipline or a child's mental and emotional health. Clients receiving ongoing support were more likely to contact us about their parenting role, their own mental and emotional health and/or self-concept, and their relationship with their child.

## Having someone to help

"If it weren't for Parentline I would not have coped with my daughter in the last five or six years. I needed Parentline because my husband had cancer—he died four years ago. You can just grab the phone and ring when emotions are running high and you need someone. You get off the phone and you see it differently and can put things in place that you wouldn't have thought of. It's so helpful to have that as sometimes you have no one else to turn to for help." Parentline caller



\*Where relationship with service is known.



# Working with others

## Referrals to other support services

Parentline counsellors have access to an extensive database of support services for parents and children that enables them to quickly identify relevant services within the contact's local community.

Services include:

- child health
- family counselling
- emergency services
- clinical services for behaviour management
- child care
- parent support groups.

Counsellors were able to assist 55% of Parentline clients without referring them to another agency. Twenty-two percent of counselling sessions resulted in the client being referred to another service for ongoing support.

A further 17% of Parentline clients were referred to their doctor, counsellor, mental health worker or other non-specific referral. In 5% of sessions, counsellors were unable to provide a referral because no appropriate service was available or the client finished the session before a referral was recommended.

## Duty of Care actions

In 2015, Parentline counsellors instigated:

13

Duty of care actions

70%

of those actions were to protect a child at immediate risk of or currently experiencing abuse.

## Feeling safe

Simone\* is 18 years of age with a one year old child. She called Parentline very upset, crying saying that her partner had grabbed her and threw her to the ground, twisting her arm to the point that it was bruised and swollen. Simone said this happened on a daily basis and in front of her child. During their four years together there hadn't been a time when this hadn't happened and she was very fearful about what he might do next.

Whilst her partner had never hurt their child, he had come close when he had punched Simone while she was holding the baby. She said she couldn't deal with the situation anymore and didn't want her child to be exposed to this behaviour. Simone wanted to leave but didn't have anywhere to go.

The counsellor established that Simone and her baby were at her friend's place, and her partner did not know she was there. Simone said that she was safe but that her arm was really sore. She didn't want to seek medical attention until after she found a place to stay as she couldn't remain at her friend's.

The counsellor facilitated a three way call with a local Domestic Violence service. Within four hours, the service was able to relocate Simone and her child to a refuge where she said she felt safe for the first time in four years.

\*name changed for privacy



# Online forums

## Talking Families initiative

In 2015, Parentline facilitated Q&A Facebook forums for parents and carers as part of the Queensland Government's Talking Families program.

Parentline counsellors facilitated discussion among parents, providing advice and sharing information about where to find helpful resources about parenting. Parents were also encouraged to share information and strategies with each other.

Forum topics included:

- Balancing work and family life
- Social anxiety
- Back to school issues for children
- Sleep

A key message of the forums was that parenting can be challenging and it's OK to reach out for help.

# Parentline network

Parentline is a member of Parent Help Lines Australia and New Zealand (PHLANZ), a network of help lines for parents of children and young people across Australia and New Zealand.

The network is committed to professional telephone support, information and counselling for families, and carers of children. It aims to build knowledge and skills for telephone and web based services to achieve the best possible outcomes for those using our services. The organisations in the PHLANZ network are committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for callers, building and sharing knowledge and skills for telephone and web based support services.

Members include Parentline services in each Australian state, the Maternal Child Health Line in Victoria, 13 Health in Queensland, Tresillian and Karitane helplines, and Plunketline in New Zealand.

## NEW Parentline forum to be launched

In May 2016, Parentline will launch monthly forums targeted at parents with children 0–8 years in Queensland and the Northern Territory. This will integrate other services such as Police Referrals and Triple P.

The forums aim to provide another way for parents to talk to each other and our counsellors and extend the reach of Parentline to more parents and carers. They will discuss challenges and provide support and information for parents as well as raise awareness of the Parentline service. Forums will be moderated by a Parentline counsellor. They will be promoted through **yourtown** social media and take place via Facebook—a precedent set by Talking Families—but may lead to the development of a specialised forum platform.

# Police referrals

Parentline works with the Queensland Police Service to support vulnerable parents and carers in the community to get the support they need 365 days a year.

Through the police referral service, Parentline is providing outbound non-crisis calls that support individuals who are experiencing issues such as:

- domestic violence
- mental health concerns
- alcohol and drug misuse
- elder and carers support
- legal assistance
- accommodation assistance.

This takes pressure off frontline Policing.

# In 2015:

2,571 attempts were made to contact individuals referred to Parentline by the Queensland Police Service.

1,599 (62%) of those attempts resulted in a successful contact with the referred client. Of these contacts:

- 888 received counselling, information or referrals from a Parentline counsellor
- 687 asked to schedule a time for a call back or declined the offer of information, counselling or referral to other support.

In contrast to the regular Parentline counselling service, Police referrals contacts were:

- much more likely to assist caregivers with the violent behaviour or the drug or alcohol use by a child
- more likely to be to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander families to discuss children aged over 9 years.

## Who were referred by the Queensland Police Service?

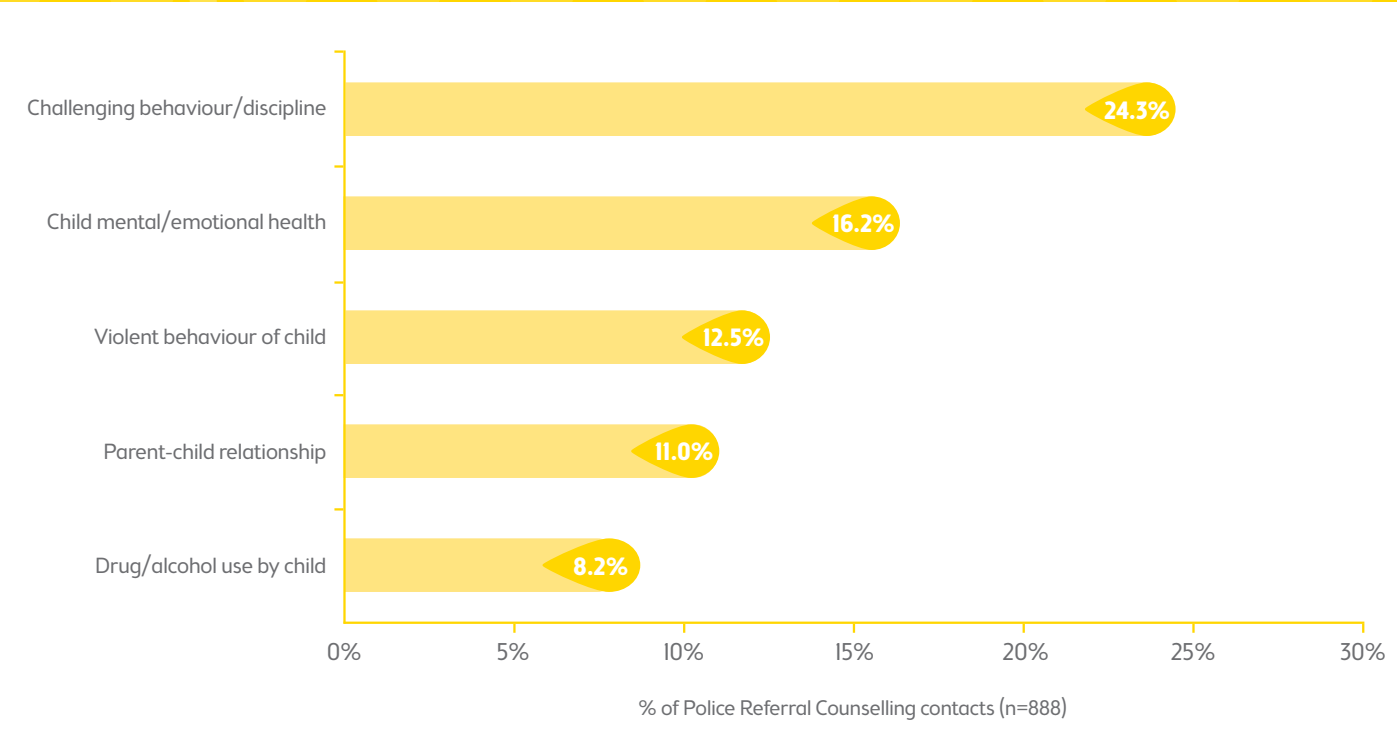
| Culture (N=1,050)                        | %   |
|--|-----|
| Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander | 6%  |
| Culturally and linguistically diverse    | 12% |
| Neither ATSI nor CALD                    | 83% |

| Relationship to child (N=724) | %   |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Custodial parents             | 87% |
| Shared custody                | 4%  |
| Non-custodial parents         | 3%  |
| Other carers                  | 5%  |

| What was the gender of the children discussed? (N=961) | %   |
|--|-----|
| Female   | 48% |
| Male   | 52% |
| Intersex, trans and gender diverse                     | 1%  |

| What was the age of the children discussed? (N=908) | %   |
|---|-----|
| 0–4 years   | 4%  |
| 5–8 years   | 9%  |
| 9–14 years  | 44% |
| 15–18 years   | 34% |
| 18+ years   | 9%  |

## Top 5 concerns—all concerns Police referral counselling contacts 2015





# What parents and carers had to say about Parentline

## Parentline and positive parenting

Parentline is a critical service in promoting the positive parenting of children living in Queensland and the Northern Territory.

The 2013 Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry report stressed the importance of having effective family services in the community to help reduce the incidence of child abuse and promote the quality care of children within families.

Parent capabilities found to be common protective factors that prevent child abuse and neglect include:

- Parenting confidence
- Parenting strategies and skills
- Relationship with child/children
- Understanding of child/children
- Capacity to cope, and
- Ability to care for child/children.

Feedback from 660 parents and carers that used Parentline between 2011-15 showed that the service was very effective or effective in increasing these parent capabilities.

Increasing the parents' capacity to cope

90%

Increasing parenting confidence

85%

Increasing the understanding about children

86%

Developing parenting strategies and skills

83%

Increasing parents' ability to care for their child/ren

84%

Improving the parent-child relationship

64%

## A most vital service

"It is the most vital service for parents in my situation that I could imagine. Please double your support. It must continue."

Parentline caller



"There was a change straight away because I tried what we talked about which was different to what I had been doing."

"It allowed me to calm down and talk out the noise in my head and decide what to do next. It allowed me to build up my self-confidence and to understand my child."

"The most important thing is that I am not so worried. I had been very, very anxious and probably even a bit depressed. So I have felt better in myself and my son could see that I wasn't so stressed."



"It was great to talk to another man about the situation. As a single parent of a boy it's nice to talk to someone. I just needed to know the laws as a parent. It gave me someone to talk to who understood what I was going through. He really got it. We live in a small one horse town and there's just no help."

"After talking with the Counsellor I felt more centred about myself as a mother. I then had a 30 min conversation with my son (unheard of). My son said 'Thanks Mum. We've had a good chat'."

## What they said



Parentline  
1300 30 1300



[www.parentline.com.au](http://www.parentline.com.au)  
[facebook.com/ParentlineQLDNT](https://facebook.com/ParentlineQLDNT)



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