

# Inquiry into the Victorian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

- yourtown's advocacy



## What is it about?

**yourtown** was recently invited to appear at a public hearing for the Inquiry into the Victorian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Kathryn Mandla, Head of Advocacy and Research, appeared at the public hearing on Friday, 29 April 2022.

## Why is it important?

Lockdown orders had a significant impact on the mental health of children and young people in Victoria. In Victoria the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* sets limits on the amount of time that Victoria can be in a State of Emergency. The time limit has been extended by Parliament multiple times over the course of the pandemic.

At this hearing **yourtown** responded to two key questions:

1. Has the pandemic had an impact on children and young people in Victoria?
2. Have lockdown measures had an impact?

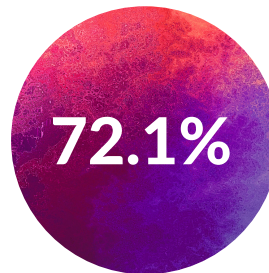
**yourtown** argued that based upon what we have seen and heard - the answer is **yes** to both questions.



In 2021, close to 123,000 attempts were made to connect to our KHL counsellors from young people in Victoria



Kids Helpline experienced a 264% increase in immediate emergency responses where children are in immediate danger in Victoria last year on pre-COVID levels



Of the key concerns where young people specifically referred to COVID, 72.1% sought support for mental health (34.8%) or emotional wellbeing (37.3%)



Of the key concerns where young people specifically referred to COVID, 11.6% for suicide-related concerns.

## Some of **yourtown's** key messages:

1. Because the lockdown measure in Victoria were so long there was uncertainty around education, and the increased restrictions and disruptions had a major impact on Kids Helpline demand.
2. Lockdowns led to more emergency responses to Victorian children and young people. On average there were 4 emergency responses per day compared to 2 per day pre-COVID in 2019.
3. During lockdowns and high-level restrictions, around one-third of counselling related contacts from Victoria related to COVID.
4. There was increasing evidence that COVID restrictions and disruptions to face to face schooling were contributing to children's concerns

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<https://www.yourtown.com.au/insights/advocacy>

