

EMBARGO 10 October 2023

Mental health a major issue for young people

Today is World Mental Health Day – a day for global mental health education, awareness, and advocacy, and a compelling time to raise awareness around the number of mental health related issues reported to Kids Helpline, said Kids Helpline's Virtual Service Manager, Tony FitzGerald.

With the theme of World Mental Health Day being 'Mental Health is a Universal Human Right' this presents an opportunity to highlight the importance of protecting the mental health of our children and young people and ensure they are empowered and equipped from an early age with the knowledge and understanding on how to seek help when they are not feeling OK.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing 2020-21, more than two in five Australians will experience a mental health issue at some point in their life.

"Mental health, emotional wellbeing and suicide-related concerns now account for 61% or 47,574 of all counselling contacts to Kids Helpline. This indicates both the ongoing prevalence of emerging or existing mental health concerns amongst our children and young people as well as a willingness on their behalf to reach out for support. By acknowledging that Mental Health is a universal human right we need to ensure that the support is there for them at the right time," said Mr FitzGerald.

"At the moment Kids Helpline is only able to respond to 2 out of every 5 contacts and with more in depth and ongoing counselling required when they do get through, this places further pressure on us as service to respond," Mr FitzGerald stated.

This World Mental Health Day also serves as a reminder that we should as a community all play a role in supporting positive mental health. This includes supporting those around us who may not be feeling OK. Some helpful tips from Kids Helpline include:

- Don't be afraid to ask "Are you OK?"
- Be ready to listen and respond – but you don't have to have all the answers. There's power in just "being there" for someone
- Encourage them to reach out for help and offer to assist

Kids Helpline acts as a 'safety-net' for children and young people in a broader social support system having a unique position of being the only national free and confidential 24/7 counselling service available to those aged from 5 – 25 years of age. An expert in the field of early intervention services, Kids Helpline counsellors managed 138,970 responses last financial year, with 64% of these responses occurring outside normal 9 – 5 working hours when options for broader sector support are more limited.

"We are currently in the process of recruiting more counsellors to allow us to respond to more contacts and continue to be there to support the ongoing demand for support in relation to mental health."

Kids Helpline is committed to providing 24/7 support free of charge to children and young people, no matter where they live. Young people living in rural and regional Australia have equitable access to Kids Helpline, simply by calling 1800 551 800, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or use email or web counselling service – www.kidshelpline.com.au

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media contact

For more information or to arrange a media interview, please contact Maree Reason-Cain, **yourtown** Corporate Affairs & Media Advisor.



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about yourtown

yourtown is a trusted provider of services for young people, with a focus on mental health and wellbeing, long term unemployment, prevention of youth suicide, child protection, as well as support for those experiencing family and domestic violence.
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