

# Media release



## A pandemic within a pandemic

As COVID-19 cases have surged across the nation, so too has sexual abuse & sexual assault of children and young people, cites Kids Helpline.

Kids Helpline, a service of **yourtown** for children and young people aged 5 to 25, reports an increase of **nearly 50% (49%) nationally** in sexual abuse by family members over the past 6 months, 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021, when compared to the same period in 2020 from young people making contact with counsellors.

"Kids Helpline answered 210 additional contacts in the first six months of 2021 – a total of 662 – from children and young people raising the issue of being sexually exploited by family members. A total of 452 contacts were responded in the same time period in 2020," said **yourtown** CEO Tracy Adams.

"Child sexual abuse can take place behind closed doors. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected daily life through restrictions on people's movements and interactions, potentially limiting opportunities for child abuse to be detected and reported. It is uncomfortable to think children are being sexually abused by those who have responsibility to care for them most, but Kids Helpline statistics for the past 6 months highlight the vulnerabilities children have in their own homes," continued Ms Adams.

Breakdown by State of Sexual Abuse (Intra familial abuse/Incest) and Sexual Assault (classified as being external to the family) for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 vs the same period in 2020:

- **Victoria** has had an increase of **70%** in contacts from children and young people making contact with counsellors about sexual abuse (intra familial abuse) and an increase of **19%** for reports of sexual assault (classified as being external to the family)
- **New South Wales** has had an increase of **49%** in contacts from children and young people making contact with counsellors about **sexual abuse** and an increase of **43%** for reports of **sexual assault**
- **Queensland** has had an increase of **30%** in contacts from children and young people making contact with counsellors about **sexual abuse** and an increase of **37%** for reports of **sexual assault**

"Child vulnerability evidenced by this spike in sexual abuse (intra familial) and sexual assault (external to the family) of children and young people across Australia is shocking and needs to be acknowledged.

"Kids Helpline plays an important role as a child protection safety net to support young people and we have employed an additional 100 counsellors to help meet current demand," said Ms Adams.

Kids Helpline supports new podcast **No Laughing Matter**, in which comedians including Adam Hills, Fiona O'Loughlin and Jean Kittson narrate adult incest victim/survivors and their stories. A GoFundMe page has been set up to help ensure the **No Laughing Matter** podcast series continues to help reduce the prevalence of incest in Australia – <https://gofundme.com/f/nolaughingmatter>

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