

# Media release



## Kids Helpline plays a critical role in protecting children and young people across Australia

Kids Helpline, a service of **yourtown** is reminding the community to put children first, during National Child Protection Week which runs from Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September to 12<sup>th</sup> September.

**yourtown** Chief Executive Officer Tracy Adams said it was an opportunity for everyone to think about how harm and neglect may be impacting the lives of children and young people across our communities. Pandemic pressures have fueled the number of contacts for help from children or young people at risk of imminent harm from abuse or suicide.

“Kids Helpline has provided 32% more duty of care interventions between 1 January and 31 July 2020, compared to the same period last year. A duty of care intervention is where Kids Helpline contacts police, child safety or ambulances when a child or young person is deemed to be at imminent risk,” said Ms Adams.

The escalation is largely related to: suicide attempts (26%), child abuse (33%) and mental health escalation (60%), according to Ms Adams.

“We are finding that young people are spending more time in homes that are potentially not safe,” said Ms Adams.

“We knew an increase in child vulnerability was going to occur through the lockdown and containment, however the challenges faced by our children and young people is very disturbing. We are seeing some very distressed children and young people who have to deal with existing parental abuse and conflict at this time,” continued Ms Adams.

Kids Helpline reveals it has gone from receiving on average 6,000 contacts per week to now receiving up to 10,000 per week.

“Additional funding from the Commonwealth and NSW governments has allowed Kids Helpline to employ over 50 additional counsellors, with additional counsellors being recruited now to deal with the increased demand of our counselling service arising from COVID-19. This has also included the establishment of a counselling centre in Sydney,” said Ms Adams.

“Early intervention is critical. We need to have children and young people stay connected, and as a community, we need to continue to normalise help-seeking. Keeping children and young people safe is everyone’s business and we can all pay a role,” said Ms Adams.

As Australia’s only national 24/7 counselling and support service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years – free call **1800 55 1800** or online at [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au) Facebook: @kidshelpline, Insta @kidshelplineau, Twitter @KidsHelplineAU.

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