

Media release



Critical new funding announced for Kids Helpline to help combat mental health concerns for children in New South Wales

To help combat youth mental health issues, children and young people living in New South Wales will have improved access to Kids Helpline, with a Kids Helpline Counselling Centre set to open in western Sydney.

Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women, Bronnie Taylor stated that funding will support Kids Helpline, a service of **yourtown**, to answer an additional 18,000 contacts per year. The funding commitment of \$5.5 million over four years is a critical step forward enabling Kids Helpline to respond to greater numbers of children and young people contacting the free 24/7 confidential support and counselling service.

yourtown Chief Executive Officer Tracy Adams said the NSW Government funding will give young people across New South Wales greater access to counselling support when they need it most and could prevent more serious mental health issues through early intervention. Recruitment for new professional counsellors has already begun with an expected 20 + fully trained counsellors being sought to be part of the Kids Helpline team in Sydney.

“Since the 2016/2017 financial year, NSW Kids Helpline contacts relating to mental health and suicide have increased by 16% and 20% respectively, whilst 37% of NSW counselling sessions in FY2018/2019 related to a mental health concern, self-injury, or thoughts of suicide.

“We have developed Kids Helpline to play an important counselling and referral role for youth mental health. Because Kids Helpline provides a variety of contact mediums, phone and online, young people no matter where they live are able to access support and help in ways that best suit them. Flexible access including 24x7 availability and a professional counsellor workforce ensure that young people get developmentally appropriate advice, support and care when they need it.

“Being largely self-funded, Kids Helpline simply does not have the resources necessary to meet the demands made on the service. The funding from the NSW Government means that they now partner with community in supporting this critical service,” said Ms Adams.

Kids Helpline responds to children and young people aged 5–25 through telephone and online contacts as well as providing extensive tips and content to support help-seeking behaviours through the Kids Helpline website and social channels such as Facebook and Instagram. Kids Helpline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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