



media release



TUESDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2015

Optus 'Kids Helpline @ School' connects with Aspendale Primary School

Kids Helpline connected with Aspendale Primary School's Year 5 students this week to talk about Peer Pressure as part of the Optus 'Kids Helpline @ School' mental health and wellbeing program.

The Optus sponsored 'Kids Helpline @ School' program connects professional counsellors with primary school classrooms via video linkup and aims to increase the mental health literacy, digital citizenship and help-seeking behaviour of children.

According to Kids Helpline General Manager Wendy Protheroe, education sessions have been developed to generate discussion and provide information about the core issues impacting primary school aged young people.

"More than 4,000 contacts were responded to by Kids Helpline counsellors each week from children and young people, with family relationships, bullying, emotional wellbeing and friend/peer relationships some of the top reasons primary school aged children contacted us," Ms Protheroe said.

"During Kids Helpline @ School sessions our counsellors talk with the class in real time about these and other issues that commonly cause problems for young people. The sessions are designed to help kids gain confidence in how they react in certain situations and to know they can reach out for help."

Tom Pearce, Teacher from Aspendale Primary School, said that after the Kids Helpline @ School session he asked the children if they felt more comfortable in ringing Kids Helpline (if they ever needed to) and it was almost a 100% positive response.

"The counsellor's relaxed and inclusive nature encouraged the children to participate and share their responses. Overall, it was a great session and I would definitely recommend the free program to other primary schools around Australia." Tom Pearce said.

Since 2013, more than 26,500 primary school participants have been part of sessions nationally. Eighty-nine percent of students surveyed said they now know where to go for help. They also said they had learnt more about problem solving, cybersafety, how to deal with bullying, how to build and maintain friendships and other wellbeing strategies.

Optus Associate Director of Corporate Social Responsibility Helen Maisano said Optus was delighted to be using its technology to assist children across Australia.

"It's exciting to hear as a result of having a Kids Helpline @ School session, that young people are displaying the ability and confidence to better handle issues, especially those relating to cyberbullying," Ms Maisano said.



Focused on early intervention, the sessions align with the General Capabilities of the Australian Curriculum. Kids Helpline counsellors work with the teacher or school counsellor to tailor the topic to the needs of the class.

To find out more about Kids Helpline @ School or to book a session, teachers and school counsellors can go to www.kidshelp.com.au, email school@kidshelp.com.au or phone 07 3867 1284.

Kids Helpline is Australia's only national 24/7 counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years – free call 1800 55 1800 or at www.kidshelp.com.au

ENDS

INTERVIEW/PHOTO/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES

- Wendy Protheroe, General Manager Kids Helpline
- Tom Pearce, Teacher, Aspendale Primary School
- Stock picture attached – caption: Kids Helpline @ School launch at Fairhills Primary School

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