

Submission

No 65

## INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 9-14 YEARS IN NSW

Organisation: BoysTown  
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Telephone: 07 3867 1276  
Date Received: 8/05/2008

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7 May 2008



BoysTown

Ms Jo Alley  
Senior Committee Officer  
Legislative Assembly

Dear Ms Alley

### **Inquiry into Children and Young people 9 – 14 Year in NSW**

Thank you for the invitation for Kids Helpline to provide a submission to the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Children and Young People from 9-14 years in New South Wales.

Kids Helpline is a service of BoysTown. The Strategy and Research Business Unit of our organisation has been able to provide details of the evidence we have gathered from the contacts made from our young clients. Ms Kathleen Ellerman-Bull, Manager of our Counselling Services has also provided insight to give a picture of our findings from the work with 9-14 year olds.

I trust that this information can provide both quantitative and qualitative data for the use of the Parliamentary Committee.

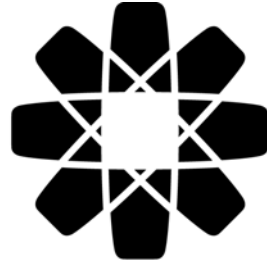
We invite you to make further contact either with Ms Ellerman-Bull (07 3858 5307) or myself if we are able to provide additional support.

Yours sincerely

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# BoysTown

## **Submission**

Inquiry into Children and Young People  
9-14 years in New South Wales

## BoysTown Mission Statement

To enable young people, especially those who are marginalised and without voice, to improve their quality of life.

**Kids Helpline** is a service of **BoysTown** that provides free, confidential, 24 hour national telephone counselling for the 5.38 million Australian children and young people between the ages of 5 and 25 years. The Kids Helpline telephone counselling service has been operating as a Helpline service for young people since 1991. Web based counselling was introduced in 1999. Counselling is provided on a wide range of issues, including mental health issues such as depression, emotional and behavioural problems, suicide prevention and self harm, grief and loss, alcohol and other drug use, and psychological trauma associated with abuse, bullying or violence, eating disorders as well as relationship difficulties, loneliness, homelessness, bully, study issues etc.

## Responses to Terms of Reference

### *1. The needs of children and young people in the middle years i.e. between about 9-14 years of age.*

Top 10 concerns for young people between 9-14 years of age calling Kids Helpline in 2007.

Concern	Number Australia wide	Percentage Australia wide	Number from NSW	Percentage from NSW
Relationships with family	3137	25.93%	891	24.17%
Relationships with friends and peers	1662	13.74%	553	15.00%
Bullying	1447	11.96%	426	11.56%
Emotional and/or behavioural management	987	8.16%	270	7.33%
Physical abuse	661	5.46%	203	5.51%
Relationships with partners	464	3.84%	152	4.12%
Developmental issues	308	2.55%	102	2.77%
Grief	303	2.50%	99	2.69%
Mental health issues	274	2.27%	87	2.36%
Homelessness	235	1.94%	81	2.20%

Top 10 concerns for young people between 9-14 years of age in NSW contacting Kids Helpline via online counselling

Concern	Number of online contacts from NSW	Percentage of online contacts from NSW
Relationships with family	155	17.78%
Emotional and/or behavioural management	153	17.55%
Mental health issues	124	14.22%
Relationships with friends and peers	108	12.39%
Relationships with partners	44	5.05%
Suicidality	37	4.24%
Bullying	32	3.67%
Self-image	32	3.67%
Sexual abuse	23	2.64%
Grief	21	2.41%

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## Proportion of callers in NSW for each age group 2007

Age group	Proportion of callers in NSW	Proportion of callers across Australia
5 - 9	2.77%	3.63%
10 - 14	27.95%	30.76%
15 - 18	51.61%	49.03%
19 - 25	17.68%	16.58%
Total	100%	100%

## 2. *The extent to which the needs of children and young people in the middle years vary according to age, gender and level of disadvantage.*

### Top 10 concerns for *females* between 9-14 years of age calling Kids Helpline 2007

Concern	Number Australia wide	Percentage Australia wide
Relationships with family	2232	25.79%
Relationships with peers and friends	1391	16.07%
Bullying	880	10.17%
Emotional and/or behavioural management	643	7.43%
Physical abuse	429	4.96%
Relationships with partners	371	4.29%
Grief	240	2.77%
Mental health issues	214	2.47%
Pregnancy	191	2.21%
Homelessness	186	2.15%

### Top 10 concerns for *males* between 9-14 years of age calling Kids Helpline 2007

Concern	Number Australia wide	Percentage Australia wide
Relationships with family	886	26.50%
Bullying	555	16.60%
Emotional and/or behavioural management	333	9.96%
Relationships with peers	256	7.66%
Physical abuse	227	6.79%
School authority	115	3.44%
Relationships with partners	91	2.72%
Homelessness	88	2.63%
Mental health issues	87	2.60%
Developmental issues	69	2.06%

## Indigenous Children and Young People.

Over the last two years Kids Helpline has implemented specific service objectives to ensure the delivery of culturally appropriate counselling services to indigenous children and young people, increase the access of indigenous young people to the service and build relationships with the indigenous communities.

The call trends demonstrate that if the intention is to ensure that access of Indigenous children and young people's usage of mainstream counselling services is equitable then long term funding for marketing activities and community relationship building is essential.

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The most common reason Indigenous children and young people contacted Kids Helpline during the 2006-2007 periods was to start to build a trusting relationship with a counsellor and the service. Of the 2,281 calls in 2006 and 2007 that were identified as being from Indigenous children and young people, 44% (n=1,015) were of this nature.

Clearly, Indigenous children and young people do not have the commonly held level of understanding and trust of telephone counselling compared with other Australian young people. Consequently, liaison strategies are essential for Indigenous young people to facilitate the access to mainstream counselling services for this highly disadvantaged and high risk population.

The Kids Helpline Indigenous Reference Committee is comprised of National Indigenous leaders and BoysTown staff who have conducted community consultation and activities at Bourke, Brewarrina, Dubbo and Kempsey in New South Wales.

Issues raised highlighted the need for the provision of a safe house for children escaping family violence in rural and remote Indigenous communities. For example: it was reported that in Bourke a bus is provided to pick up children from 6pm to 11pm. The children are driven around the town to keep them safe and then returns the children to their homes that are often more unsafe at 11pm.

In the rural and remote Indigenous communities it is often difficult to access telephone, online and communication services to enable young people to access counselling, health and other services and opportunities to develop resilience, because children and young people have little private access to working telephones.

Education, employment and recreation activities are not available and this often results in boredom, violence, anti-social behaviours, physical and mental health issues.

Kids Helpline Indigenous counselling call statistics indicate that indigenous young people are more often concerned about conflictual family relationships, bullying including racism, family violence, homelessness and drug or alcohol use.

These concerns have been further confirmed in discussions with community and local service providers. There is a lack of resources and structure to provide youth focussed programs and services which build resilience in a consistent and sustainable way during these very important developmental years.

### ***3. The activities, services and support which provide opportunities for children and young people in the middle years to develop resilience.***

Kids Helpline seeks to assist young people to develop strategies and skills that enable them to manage their own lives more effectively through the support of professionally qualified, paid counsellors. Depending on the concern, young people using the service may be engaged by a counsellor in ongoing counselling and/or case management and may be referred to health and counselling services which provide face to face counselling and support.

Kids Helpline is built on values of child-centred and young-people practice, and empowerment. Counselling of children between the ages of 9-14 years increases their resilience through increasing their confidence, self-esteem, social skills, problem solving, facilitating referrals to appropriate local community services and supports and facilitates young peoples' access to reliable information in legal and health areas. Kids Helpline enables Duty of Care interventions in Child Protection and Mental Health situations.

There are over 7,000 different services listed in the Kids Helpline database searchable by postcode or keyword. The website has links to specific factual information about

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important health and legal information. The Kids Helpline website provides links to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and resources.

### **Referral database**

1,721 specific referrals for callers in New South Wales aged up to 25 years

315 specific referrals for youth aged 9-14 years in NSW

5,146 specific referrals for callers across Australia aged up to 25 years

1,065 specific referrals for callers across Australia aged 9-14 years

The issues that have been identified through the calls from Indigenous children in NSW highlight the need for parent support and access to services to improve the quality of life for children in these communities. It is essential that mainstream services such as Parentline provide culturally appropriate health, counselling and parenting support. The lack of telecommunication and online infrastructure is a barrier to access these support services for parents as well as young people in rural and remote communities in NSW.