



# Northern Territory

## Highlights from 2008

- During 2008, Kids Helpline received 1,922\* telephone and online contacts from the Northern Territory. Counsellors responded to 999\* (52%) of these contacts.
- Telephone counselling remains the core Kids Helpline service, with **914\* answered telephone calls in 2008**. Online services account for 9% of answered contacts from Northern Territory, with **85\* online contacts in 2008** (27\* from web counselling and 58\* email sessions).
- Of the 999 total answered contacts, counsellors engaged in **217 telephone and online counselling sessions** with Northern Territory children and young people aged between 5 and 25 years.
- **Main Issues:** The majority of counselling sessions were about relationships, managing emotional and behavioural responses to situations, mental health issues, bullying or child abuse.
- **High Risk Issues:** Current thoughts of suicide were reported by Northern Territory youth during 9 counselling sessions in 2008. Reports of deliberate self-injury (as distinct from suicidality) were received 18 times.
- **Type of Assistance:** Thirteen percent of counselling sessions were with young Northern Territorians either working with designated counsellors to receive ongoing counselling or with those receiving intensive support with a case-management plan.
- **Referrals:** Counsellors referred 12% of young people to other support services in their local area.
- **Protective Actions:** Responses required to protect children, such as contacting an emergency service or child protection agency, were actioned during or after 2 counselling sessions with Northern Territory young people during 2008.



\* State/Territory location data was available for 99% of telephone calls and 60% of online contacts. Total figures presented are an extrapolation based on available data.

## Providing counselling, support and connection

Children and young people contact Kids Helpline for a diverse range of reasons. Counsellors are trained to respond to each individual's needs – support, encouragement, counselling, assistance, information and connection are provided.

Some interactions are with children and young people who do not report any immediate problems but have heard of Kids Helpline and want to “check out” the service to find out what counsellors actually do. Kids Helpline has confidence that if young people test the service in this manner and are responded to in a positive and respectful way then they are likely to connect with a counsellor if more serious concerns arise.

More than half (57%) of all Northern Territory interactions were with children and young people seeking either support or counselling. Support provided is often low intensity communications with young people who want to build relationships with a safe adult. Some young people are in crisis and have heard of Kids Helpline's reputation for assisting in these kinds of situations. These young people often know what they want and are able to ask for what they need. Others may be facing less critical concerns and are seeking help to consider their options or simply want to talk things through.

The remainder of this Northern Territory 2008 Report is based on the **217 telephone and online counselling sessions** known to have been with Northern Territory children and young people aged between 5 and 25 years.



## Age, gender and cultural background

Males made 25% and females 75% of counselling contacts. This gender breakdown is consistent with help-seeking trends for other counselling services and for Kids Helpline nationally.

Fifty-six percent of all counselling sessions were with older adolescents and young adults during 2008, continuing a seven-year trend of increasing contact from older age groups (see table 1 below).

table 1

Age Group	Females	Males	Total (N=197)
5-9 years	3.6%	.5%	4.1%
10-14 years	32.5%	7.6%	40.1%
15-18 years	34.5%	9.6%	44.2%
19-25 years	4.1%	7.6%	11.7%
Total	74.6%	25.4%	100%*

\* These percentages were related to contacts where age and gender was known.

Counsellors recorded cultural background of the young person in 48% (104) of counselling sessions. Of these, 22% were with young people who identified as Indigenous. A further 11% identified as being from a culturally and linguistically diverse background (including non-English speaking backgrounds). The remainder of young people did not identify as being from either of these backgrounds.

## Concerns of Northern Territory children and young people

The concerns of children and young people who contact Kids Helpline are often complex and relate to more than one issue, for instance both bullying and peer relationships. However, the primary topic discussed during each counselling session is always recorded in order to provide an indication of what is concerning young Australians.

## Main Concerns 2008

The 10 most frequent primary concerns reported by Northern Territory children and young people in 2008 were (in rank order):

- ☀ Relationships with family
- ☀ Relationships with partners
- ☀ Relationships with friends and peers
- ☀ Bullying
- ☀ Emotional and/or behavioural management
- ☀ Child abuse
- ☀ Mental health issues
- ☀ Development issues\*
- ☀ Grief and loss\*
- ☀ Homelessness or leaving home\*

\* Developmental issues, grief and loss, and homelessness issues were equal seventh most common concerns presented by children and young people living in the Northern Territory in 2008.

## Nature and severity of main concerns

### 1. Relationships with family

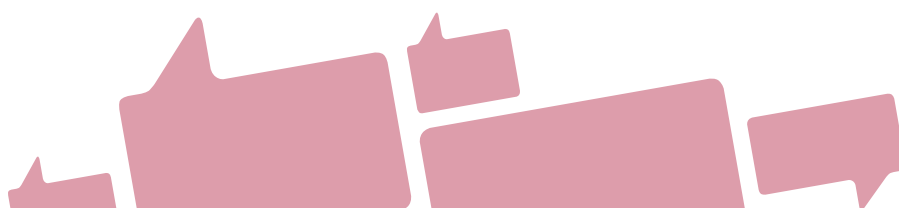
Of the 49 counselling sessions in which family relationships was the primary concern for a Northern Territory child or young person:

- ☀ 47% related to frequent or major family conflict or disruption
- ☀ 25% reported occasional family conflict or disruption
- ☀ 18% were concerned about family breakdown, separation or divorce, and
- ☀ 10% of young people contacted because they were worried about a family member.

### 2. Relationships with Partners

During 2008, Kids Helpline counsellors responded to 32 young people in the Northern Territory for which partner relationships was their primary concern:

- ☀ 56% were experiencing significant relationship difficulties or relationship breakdown
- ☀ 22% were seeking help with negotiating a relationship, and
- ☀ 22% wanted to establish a relationship.



### *Deliberate self-injury and suicidality*

During 2008, counsellors recorded whether children and young people contacting Kids Helpline had recently engaged in deliberate self-injury (as distinct from suicidality). In 8% of counselling sessions (18), Northern Territorian young people reported deliberately injuring themselves in a way that they believed to be non-lethal.

Current thoughts of suicide were reported in nine counselling sessions with Northern Territory young people during 2008, accounting for 4% of all counselling contacts from the territory.

### *Referral to other support*

Across all counselling sessions, counsellors were able to directly assist 150 (69%) of Northern Territory young people contacting the service without referring them on to another agency. For those counselling sessions in which a referral was required:

- 12% (25) resulted in the child or young person being referred to another service for ongoing support (including crisis response and three-way link-ups with both the client and another agency)
- 13% (29) were referred to their doctor, school/guidance counsellor, mental health worker or other non-specific referrals
- In 13 sessions (6%), counsellors were unable to provide a referral because either no appropriate service was available or the young person finished the session before a referral could be discussed. This may have been because they did not want to engage in the process, were reluctant to disclose identifying information or were not ready to seek face-to-face help.

### *Ongoing counselling and intensive support*

Young people with severe, complex and long-standing issues benefit from working with a service on a regular or ongoing basis (ongoing counselling). This usually includes speaking predominantly with one or two key counsellors who become familiar with their concerns. Case management is a model of care that offers more intensive support, generally to ensure numerous different needs can each be considered and planned for. Sometimes this might mean linking the young person with other more specialised face-to-face services and developing joint or "wrap-around" case management plans.

Of the 167 counselling sessions with Northern Territorians where counsellors recorded the frequency of contact and type of assistance provided, 13% (21 contacts) were with children and young people receiving either ongoing counselling (19 contacts) or intensive support with a case management plan (2 contacts). The other 87% of counselling sessions were with children and young people who were contacting Kids Helpline for the first time or who occasionally contacted the service.

### *Protective actions*

Counsellors exercise their duty of care obligations if they assess that a child is at risk of injury or harm at the time of their call or online contact. Responses required to protect children and young people, such as contacting an emergency service or child protection agency, were actioned during or after two counselling sessions with Northern Territory children and young people during 2008.



## Northern Territory yearly trends

### Proportion of telephone and online contacts by year

MAIN CONCERN	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS</b>	38.8%	34.9%	36.7%	36.8%	35.2%	45.2%
Family	17.8%	21.1%	15.6%	20.8%	14.6%	22.6%
Friends	12.9%	4.0%	12.7%	11.9%	12.4%	7.8%
Partners	8.0%	9.8%	8.4%	4.1%	8.2%	14.7%
<b>SCHOOL</b>	11.6%	10.4%	8.9%	5.6%	3.9%	10.1%
School Authority	2.1%	0.9%	0.8%	0.7%	0.4%	1.8%
Bullying	7.2%	6.1%	4.6%	4.1%	2.6%	7.4%
Study Issues	2.3%	3.4%	3.4%	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%
<b>EMOTIONAL</b>	11.4%	14.1%	16.5%	20.1%	15.0%	14.3%
Emotional/Behavioural Management	4.9%	4.0%	9.7%	14.1%	10.7%	6.9%
Grief & Loss	2.6%	3.1%	3.0%	2.6%	1.7%	3.2%
Loneliness	2.1%	4.9%	1.3%	1.1%	1.3%	1.8%
Suicide-Related Issues	1.8%	2.1%	2.5%	2.2%	1.3%	2.3%
<b>PRACTICAL</b>	7.5%	5.5%	6.8%	9.3%	11.2%	4.6%
Employment/Financial	0.3%	0.9%	0.4%	1.1%	1.3%	1.4%
Homelessness or Leaving Home	3.1%	3.7%	3.4%	5.6%	6.4%	3.2%
Legal Issues	2.3%	0.6%	1.7%	1.1%	2.1%	0.0%
Life Skills	1.8%	0.3%	1.3%	1.5%	1.3%	0.0%
<b>VIOLENCE</b>	6.5%	2.8%	1.7%	1.5%	6.0%	4.6%
Physical Assault or Harassment	2.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.7%	0.9%	1.4%
Cyber Harassment or Bullying						0.9%
Sexual Harassment	0.8%	0.3%	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%	0.9%
Sexual Assault	2.3%	1.2%	1.3%	0.0%	3.9%	0.0%
Domestic Violence	1.3%	0.9%	0.4%	0.4%	0.9%	1.4%
<b>SELF CONCEPT</b>	6.5%	7.3%	5.1%	3.7%	3.0%	4.1%
Developmental Issues	3.1%	2.1%	2.1%	0.4%	0.0%	3.2%
Self Image	1.3%	4.0%	3.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.9%
Sexual Orientation	2.1%	1.2%	0.0%	2.2%	3.0%	0.0%
<b>SEX RELATED</b>	6.2%	4.3%	4.2%	7.1%	6.0%	4.6%
Sexual Activity	1.8%	1.8%	1.7%	2.2%	2.1%	1.4%
Contraception	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%	1.3%	0.0%
Pregnancy	2.6%	1.8%	0.8%	4.5%	2.6%	2.8%
STIs	1.3%	0.6%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
<b>HEALTH</b>	5.4%	2.1%	8.0%	10.4%	10.3%	4.6%
Eating Behaviours/Weight Concerns	1.0%	0.6%	1.7%	0.4%	1.3%	0.0%
HIV/AIDS	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Physical Health Issues	1.6%	0.0%	0.8%	4.1%	1.3%	0.0%
Mental Health Issues	2.8%	1.5%	5.5%	5.6%	7.7%	4.6%
<b>CHILD ABUSE</b>	3.9%	15.0%	5.9%	4.5%	6.9%	6.0%
Emotional Abuse	0.3%	0.6%	1.7%	0.0%	0.4%	0.9%
Neglect	0.3%	10.7%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.9%
Physical Abuse	1.8%	0.6%	2.5%	3.0%	5.2%	1.4%
Sexual Abuse	1.6%	3.1%	1.7%	1.1%	1.3%	2.8%
<b>CHILD ABUSE</b>	3.9%	15.0%	5.9%	4.5%	6.9%	6.0%
Emotional Abuse	0.3%	0.6%	1.7%	0.0%	0.4%	0.9%
Neglect	0.3%	10.7%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.9%
Physical Abuse	1.8%	0.6%	2.5%	3.0%	5.2%	1.4%
Sexual Abuse	1.6%	3.1%	1.7%	1.1%	1.3%	2.8%
<b>OTHER</b>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

\*Cyber-bullying and harassment issues were separated from "Bullying" and "Assault or Harassment" problem types from 1 July 2008.