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Stress no excuse for abuse

In the wake of today's West Gate Bridge tragedy, Kids Helpline has urged parents to recognise that there is never an excuse for child abuse.

Kids Helpline General Manager Wendy Protheroe said while it is obvious that the father must have been experiencing some form of significant stress it is never a reason to harm children.

"A child's life was senselessly taken today, an extreme situation that highlights the very real need for parents under stress or in crisis to seek help before things get out of hand," she said.

"Families need to know there is somewhere to turn – there is always an alternative to hurting children."

Kids Helpline is afraid that children will become the new victims of the current global economic crisis, with growing job losses and increasing financial pressures taking their toll on families.

"Mental health concerns were already at unprecedented levels in our society," Ms Protheroe said.

"Combine this with the growing financial pressures and we may very well see more parents on the edge.

"Reaching out for help is one of the strongest steps any of us can take to change our lives for the better.

Last year more than 5 per cent of Kids Helpline counselling sessions were in relation to child abuse.

"Kids reach out for help when their lives feel too heavy – over 300,000 young Aussies contacted us last year – and in Queensland and the Northern Territory, where we operate Parentline, we answered about 11,000 calls from parents seeking support to cope with the ever changing demands of raising children."

All Kids Helpline and Parentline counsellors are tertiary qualified professionals, who work with callers to identify and develop their strengths to find better ways to manage their lives.

Kids Helpline, Australia's only national children's counselling service, provides 24 hour counselling services to young people aged 5 to 25 years – free call **1800 55 1800** or online at www.kidshelp.com.au

Parentline (in Queensland and the Northern Territory) is available from 8am to 10pm seven days on **1300 30 1300**

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