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## Ramping up Indigenous service

**Young Indigenous Australians face a number of challenges, the greatest can be the sense of isolation that comes from lack of suitable support services.**

Kids Helpline General Manager Wendy Protheroe said the national counselling service is working hard to ensure Indigenous young people have somewhere to turn with concerns about their health, wellbeing and futures.

“Sometimes in this world we need to take extra steps with targeted groups, so they can enjoy services that the rest of us take for granted,” she said.

“Often young Indigenous men and women need to talk to someone who can help them deal with difficult situations and cope with tough times.

“We established the Expanded Kids Helpline Indigenous project last year with the aim of increasing the access of Indigenous callers and improving the delivery of services to Indigenous children and young people.

“We can report that our effort is working because we have seen an increase in the number of calls from Indigenous young people across the country.

Kids Helpline responded to 1,562 contacts from Indigenous children and young people aged between 5 and 25 years during 2008. Almost one in every 20 contacts received are from Indigenous and Torres Strait Islanders.

“As with non-Indigenous callers the issue they are most worried about is relationships, especially family relationships, which have continued to be the top area of concern over the past 4 years.

“Most concerning was the increased proportion of counselling sessions about health-related issues, especially mental health, which has proportionally increased six-fold over the past four years, along with emotional issues, especially emotional/behavioural management, which proportionally has almost doubled since 2005.

“These figures highlight again just how important it is to have a readily accessible service.

“Our counsellors teach improved coping mechanisms and, when necessary, help children and young people reach direct support in times of danger.

“Everyone deserves the right to feel safe and to have someone listen and help them when life is overpowering.”

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](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

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