

Mental Health Month October 2023

Australian
Kookaburra Kids
Foundation
Media Release

Kookaburra Kids makes an urgent call for more investment in early intervention mental health services following the release of shock new figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

29 September 2023

In the lead up to **Mental Health Month** (October) in Australia, the [Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation \(AKKF\)](#) is calling for more investment in early intervention mental health services in an effort to create better outcomes for young people.

The annual campaign encourages all Australians to think about their mental health and wellbeing, regardless of whether they have experienced **mental illness** or not. It also gives everyone the opportunity to understand the importance of good mental health in everyday life and encourages help seeking behaviours when needed.

According to Noella Ennis, Head of Clinical Services at the Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation, early intervention programs such as those provided by **AKKF** can play an important role in improving health, social, and economic outcomes.

“We know young people who have a parent with a mental illness have a significantly higher risk of having their own mental health problems compared to children with parents with good mental health,” Ms Ennis explained.

The urgent call for more investment in early intervention services, follows the recent release of [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) data showing there were 3,249 lives lost to suicide in Australia in 2022. Sadly, statistics also revealed more than 75% of those lives lost were men, with male suicide increasing by 2.6% on the previous year.

Australian Kookaburra Kids CEO Renee Coffey says the statistics are proof that there needs to be more investment in programs promoting better mental health strategies from an early age.

“The statistics further highlight the findings of a global review study by [Australia’s Curtin University](#) which found children faced a 42 per cent higher risk of depression if their father was depressed, while previous research from the [National Institute of Health and Care Research](#) shows that children with a mother who has depression, are 3 to 4 times more likely to develop it themselves,” said Ms Coffey.

“Our free camps and activity days, not only provide a fun connection for young people who are impacted by family mental illness, but are also clinically designed to deliver mental health education and teach young people coping strategies to use in everyday life. Our programs also enable them to learn what supports are available to them and their families.

“Despite evidence that mental health concerns impact the family unit, most treatment approaches continue to focus only on the individual and not their families,’ Ms Coffey added.

“It is estimated that 23% of children living in an Australian household have a parent with a mental illness. This equates to just over one million impacted Australian children.

“We know with additional funding; we can offer more quality programs to children impacted by family mental illness. I have spoken directly with families who are desperately waiting for opportunities for their children to engage with Kookaburra Kids. These calls can be upsetting and really do highlight the need for our work in the community.”

About the Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation

The Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation delivers services to young people (8-18) impacted by family mental illness with the aim of empowering them to build resilience lifelong knowledge and abilities to reach their potential. This is carried out through face-to face programs and online Connect sessions which are run across Australia.

To donate to the Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation please go to our website <https://kookaburrakids.org.au/get-involved/donate/>

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