

Submission

No 26

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

Organisation: Parentline  
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Date Received: 2/05/2008

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## PARENT LINE



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2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2008

The Committee Manager,  
Committee on Children and Young People  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street,  
Sydney. NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam,

Attached is the Parent Line response to the enquiry into Children and Young People 9 – 14 years in NSW.

We have attached our statistical reports for your information. We do have further reports available if you should require them.

We wish the committee well with the Enquiry, and hope to hear further from you if we can be of any further assistance.

Yours Sincerely,

**Barbara Adair**  
**Manager, Parent Line.**  
**Centacare Catholic Community Services.**



**A Centacare Sydney project – funded by NSW Department of Community Services.**

## ***Age and Gender of child***

From Sunday, 1 Apr 2007, until Wednesday, 23 Apr 2008

Age	Male	Female	Total
9 Years	203	216	419
8 Years	195	199	394
7 Years	189	191	380
6 Years	231	222	453
5 Years	238	308	546
4 Years	269	304	573
3 Years	324	357	681
20 Years	62	47	109
2 Years	305	377	682
19 Years	42	78	120
18 Years	199	146	345
17 Years	199	207	406
16 Years	242	266	508
15 Years	260	334	594
14 Years	254	362	616
13 Years	229	267	496
12 Years	212	237	449
11 Years	182	147	329
10 Years	205	178	383
1 Years	217	338	555
0 Years	267	501	768
Years	9	137	146
Total	4533	5419	9952

## Call By Region

From Sunday, 1 Apr 2007, until Wednesday, 23 Apr 2008

Name	Code	Value
Unspecified	1	21
Central Coast	2	518
Central West	3	135
Cumberland/Prospect	4	549
Eastern Sydney	5	612
Far North Coast	6	464
Far West	7	114
Hornsby Ryde	8	275
Hunter	9	5
Hunter Valley	10	211
Illawarra	11	454
Inner West	12	433
Macarthur	13	173
Mid North Coast	14	143
Nepean	15	368
New England	16	120
Newcastle	17	397
Riverina	18	2
Riverina/Murray	19	163
South Sydney	20	308
South West Sydney	21	408
Southern Highlands	22	144
Warringah	23	354
<b>Total</b>		<b>6371</b>

## Reason For Call

From Sunday, 1 Apr 2007, until Wednesday, 23 Apr 2008

Name	Code	Value
DISCIPLINE	1	1097
PARENT/CHILD	2	701
CHILD DEVELOPMENT	3	666
Information	4	615
STUDY/EDUCATIONAL	5	423
VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR OF CHILD	6	421
PARENT /PARENT	7	402
PHYSICAL - CHILD	8	396
ANXIETY - PARENT	9	288
PARENTAL SEPERATION	10	276
ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT	11	274
STRESS - PARENT	12	254
SLEEPING	13	252
ANGER - CHILD	14	249
ACCESS	15	248
RUNNING AWAY	16	239
CHILD /FRIENDS	17	231
MENTAL CHILD	18	209
ANXIETY - CHILD	19	202
OTHER	20	175
TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS	21	173
DEPRESSION	22	152
CUSTODY	23	140
BULLYING	24	140

ANGER - PARENT	25	139
<b>Total</b>		<b>8362</b>

## Who Called

From Sunday, 1 Apr 2007, until Wednesday, 23 Apr 2008

Code	Value	Percent
	21	0.33%
Parent/Mother	4691	73.63%
step parent	62	0.97%
Parent/Father	563	8.84%
Child	3	0.05%
Grandparent	281	4.41%
Neighbour	12	0.19%
Other Relativ	94	1.48%
Professional	480	7.53%
Other	69	1.08%
Friend	95	1.49%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6371</b>	

## **Enquiry into Children and Young People 9 -14 Years in NSW.**

### **Response from Parent Line NSW, Telephone Counselling Service**

Parent Line has operated in NSW since 1994. We employ only skilled, professionally qualified counsellors. The service is operated by Centacare Sydney and funded by the NSW Dept. of Community Services. In October 2007 we received an enhancement of our funding, specifically to operate Parent Line on a 24 hr. 7 days per week basis.

Parent Line operates a database into which all telephone calls are logged and we have data about calls for the past 10 years. Our data for the year April 07 to April 08 (24 hr service only since November 08) shows that we received 8344 calls about 9927 children. Data for the past 7 years, i.e. 2001 – 2008 shows that we received more than 31,000 calls from parents in NSW.

Of these calls 2684 or 27% related to children aged between 9 and 14 years. The calls originated from the following regions: (top 10 – full report attached).

No. 1	610 calls	Eastern Sydney
No. 2	548 calls	Cumberland Prospect
No. 3	514 calls	Central Coast
No. 4	462 calls	Far North Coast
No. 5	453 calls	Illawarra
No. 6	433 calls	Inner West
No. 7	407 calls	South West Sydney
No. 8	397 calls	Newcastle
No. 9	367 calls	Nepean
No. 10	353 calls	Warringah

We assume that this shows both areas of greatest concern as well as areas where services are either sparse or where waiting times are long. This is particularly so in some of the more heavily populated areas in Sydney, such as the Cumberland/Prospect area which includes Mt. Druitt, Blacktown and St. Marys. Central Coast where there are more families and Far North Coast where there is a greater shortage of Community Health Services to serve an expanding population of children.

We are surprised that Eastern Sydney is top of our list, this area includes the Eastern Suburbs, some parts of inner Sydney and areas such as Maroubra, Malabar and La Perouse.

There are several issues which occur regularly in our list of problems for families, and which relate particularly to this age group:-

1. Study/Education (including bullying)
2. Violent behaviour of child
3. Parent conflict (including separation issues).
4. Adolescent Developmental issues (including running away and sexuality)
5. General discipline and developmental issues.

Study/Educational and bullying problems are usually referred to schools and school counselling programs, and there is an assumption that schools will deal effectively with these matters. We always suggest that if parents do not feel satisfied with the school's ability to address this issue, then they should call us again, we would then refer to more senior Department personnel. In general, there seems to be improvement in schools anti-bullying policies being implemented more effectively. We have seen a reduction in the number of repeat callers and referral to outside sources for anti-bullying matters.



The issue of violent behaviour of children towards their parents is of great concern. The violence can range from shouting, screaming and swearing to serious assault with weapons. We have had calls from parents of children as young as 9 yrs. who are violent, and teenagers who invite others to join in intimidating parents with violent behaviour. A frequent result is property damage and damage to cars

The violence is not restricted to boys although violence from girls is less likely to involve physical assault it can be more constant and intimidating. Violence usually involves pushing, shoving, hitting and sometimes assault with objects and weapons. We have had calls from parents who are fearful of their physical safety and that of others in the household.

Violent behaviour from children can also include violence to younger siblings, and pets and does often result in injury. Typical parent's experiences include:

Depression

Feeling hopeless

Sleep disturbances

Frightened and walking on "egg shells" when the adolescent was home

Feeling alone and isolated

Sense of shame

Believe they are the only ones experiencing abuse from their son/daughter

Estranged from their child

Child has left or is leaving home

Feeling guilty & like a failure

Marital conflict

This type of violent behaviour is generally directed towards the mother, and can involve siblings and less often, the father. More often than not this type of violence occurs in single parent households, and can include stand-over tactics for money and quite serious theft of larger amounts of money using stolen keycards and credit cards.

Although there is a degree of drug and alcohol abuse involved in adolescent violence, this is not always the case, particularly in younger children. There is frequently a history of domestic violence and/or parental d & a issues.

Our interaction with parents involved in violent situations with their children, is to talk to them of the necessity to take action to protect themselves and other children, and to take steps to prevent the violence from recurring. Where the violence is extreme and involves assault, we generally talk to them about the need to stop the violence before their child is older and at real risk of serious legal implications. Many parents are afraid of this, fearful that their child will hurt someone and go to gaol. We usually discuss the need to speak with the Police and if possible to take an AVO to contain their child's behaviour.

Most parents are reluctant to take this step, we do frame it as, "loving them enough to stop this behaviour before it gets worse and the child ends up in gaol". However, as with other types of family violence, there is a general reluctance to deal with it. The implications are serious when dealing with a child however, unless this is deal with effectively, the child may continue on to become more violent or may assault his own family when an adult.

One of our concerns is the lack of services available to help parents, particularly as we deal with parents from all over the state. While counselling for parents may be helpful and effective, there needs to be better services for young people to ensure that this problem is stopped. Police Youth Liaison Officers where available are particularly

helpful, but there needs to be a range of services to assist parents before the problems escalate out of control, and where the only effective solution is a court appearance and legal sanctions. Earlier interventions, if properly structured would assist parents to deal more effectively with their childrens' behaviour.

Parents separation also continues to be a problem for children, with 12.75% of calls last year relating to issues of concern about parental separation. Many of these calls were from parents who had serious concerns about safety of children while they were in the care of the other parent, including use of alcohol and or drugs, and inappropriate care arrangements. These callers often felt helpless to deal with their concerns because the courts had made orders and they felt that they must comply.

It is also essential that we as a society, are seen to deal appropriately with violence and that children and young people are contained while this is possible and before they have access to weapons, and means of more serious violence.