



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Call for government support amid unprecedented childhood mental health crisis**

An Australian children's mental health provider is calling for urgent government support amid an unprecedented childhood mental health crisis.

KidsXpress are on a mission to improve mental health support in primary schools following their new national survey highlighting that 85 per cent of parents and carers believe their children are experiencing negative mental health after three-years of generation-defining disruptions.

KidsXpress founder and CEO Margo Ward said catastrophic bushfires, storms and floods, along with nationwide COVID-19 lockdowns, have highlighted the inadequacies of our long underfunded mental health services sector.

"Concerns about the prevalence of mental ill-health in Australia existed before 2020 but these have been amplified in recent years and matters are only going to get worse if we don't act now," she said.

"We are calling on the NSW Government to support children's mental health providers, which have limited resources and funding to roll out critical prevention and early intervention services for primary-school aged children who've been impacted by trauma.

Ms Ward said early intervention for child mental health concerns was effective in reducing risk factors and the financial burden on families and the economy.

"Partnering with schools is one way that we can help identify the signs of trauma and mental ill health early, and deliver support in an easy and accessible way," she said.

"This approach supports the child and the network surrounding the child which is equally important.

"Any trauma, if not addressed early, can worsen with time, as issues carry into adulthood and can negatively alter a child's lifetime trajectory."

The national survey conducted by the Sydney-based mental health provider, which delivers trauma-informed expressive therapy to children under the age of 12, also found that 77 per cent of all respondents believed classroom teachers required more support to help identify students suffering from trauma and adversity. A further 47 per cent felt skilled mental health professionals should be available in the classroom.

Sally Hewett's family grew through adoption and her children have benefited greatly from KidsXpress. The Sydney mum says the KidsXpress trauma-focussed therapy is a great match for her kids' needs and is something that they really enjoy.

“KidsXpress is play-based, the sessions are individualised...and the children absolutely love coming here. My daughter wrote on a piece of cardboard – I think in her first or second session – ‘this has been the best day of my life’.

“I tell lots of people about KidsXpress. I’ve encouraged my children’s school to look at the training programs that they offer...I think that the better equipped we can be as a society to understand adverse childhood experiences, the better the outcomes are going to be for children.”

From October 21 to October 29, National Children’s Week will recognise the talents, skills, achievements and rights of children across the country, and KidsXpress believe mental health must be front and centre.

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### **About KidsXpress**

*A children’s mental health charity, KidsXpress helps to transform the lives of children impacted by adversity. They deliver trauma-informed Expressive Therapy to children and the Education Services for those that care for them.*

*Over 16 years, KidsXpress has delivered therapy to thousands of children and teachers at multiple schools across Sydney, which are supported via the KidsXpress holistic school partnership model.*

*By strengthening the emotional wellbeing of children and building the capacity of their caregivers, KidsXpress help to create a future all children deserve.*

*Find us online: [kidsxpress.org.au](http://kidsxpress.org.au)*

*KidsXpress in action: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnM4urrtcV4>*

### **About Margo Ward, KidsXpress Founder and CEO**

*Working for many years as both a play therapist and in a national suicide prevention role, KidsXpress founder Margo Ward saw first-hand how unresolved childhood trauma could lead to much greater social and psychological problems in adulthood.*

*But when traumatised children were given the creative and emotional resources to work through problems as they arose, she also saw they were able to turn these challenges into opportunities, building strength, resilience and other life skills that would benefit them into adulthood.*

*These experiences and observations were supported by international academic research, and led to Margo establishing the KidsXpress program in 2005 – to change the life trajectory for children in need.*