

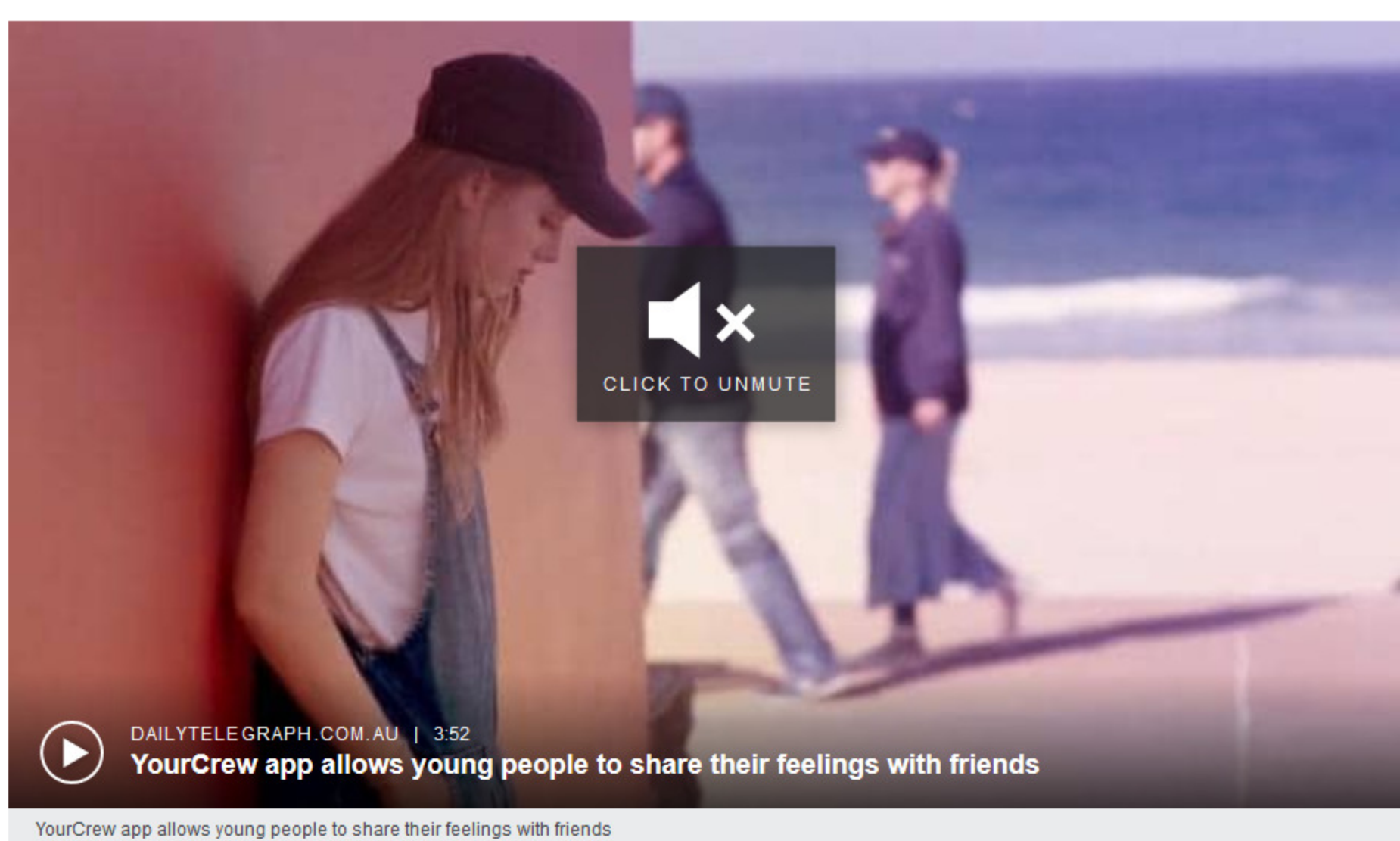
NSW CORONAVIRUS NEWS

Mum hopes app developed after son's suicide can help others during social isolation

A devastated mum whose 13-year-old son committed suicide has developed an app to keep young people connected — and she hopes it will save lives during COVID-19 social isolation.

Miranda Wood, Senior Writer, The Sunday Telegraph

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Amanda Riedel had no warning her 13-year-old son would take his own life.

Nearly six years after Harrison went to school one morning — and never came home — the Sydney mother wants to ensure no other families experience the same devastating grief.



Amanda Riedel developed an app for teens to stay connected after her thirteen-year-old son Harrison took his life. Picture: Sam Rutby

She has developed the YourCrew app to allow young people to share their feelings with a "crew" they trust and to keep watch over one another.

Mrs Riedel said as an increasing number of kids struggled to cope with social isolation during the COVID-19 crisis, the free app would help them talk about the "tricky stuff".

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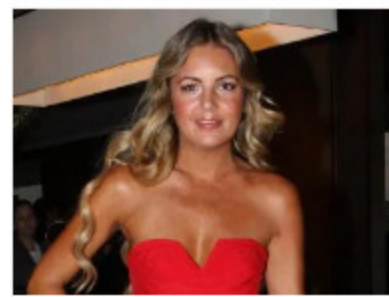
"We want everybody to be using this app and I'll use my son as an example," she said.

"He was popular at school, he was doing well. No one would have picked that he would do what he did and I think that a lot of kids keep it to themselves.

"They either want to self-help or they don't do anything — they just want to stew on it.

"The aim of this was to give them a platform that makes it a lot easier to reach out for help."

Users of the new app can regularly check in and share updates on their mental wellbeing by writing down their thoughts or posting emojis and pictures.



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Harrison Riedel was popular and doing well at school.



YourCrew app could be especially useful during COVID-19 lockdown.

If they need urgent help, they push an alert button, which shares their location with their crew and can also put them directly in touch with Kids Helpline or triple O.

Mrs Riedel said she wanted all young people to make YourCrew "part of their day".

"We're very much preventive and, as the thoughts come into their heads, if they share that with their crew and stop small things becoming large things, and large things becoming catastrophic, then that's what we're aiming to do here," she said.

"We think just the act of developing or getting your crew together is like putting on a warm blanket."



The Riedel family — Scott, Alexandra, Harrison and Amanda — hope the YourCrew app could save young lives.

In the past month, as the coronavirus crisis escalated, Kids Helpline has recorded a massive surge in young people contacting the 24/7 counselling service.

Kids Helpline chief executive Tracy Adams said tools like the YourCrew app make a difference.

"I know that's something that Amanda's really driven through the app is that sense of 'no matter the situation, there can be someone there for you'," Ms Adams said.

"Young people want information and want to feel engaged and the more tools we have, the stronger we are and that support network."

YourCrew app is available on Apple Store and Google Play. To contact Kids Helpline call 1800 551 800 or visit kidshelpline.com.au.

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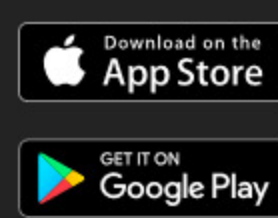
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