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PLANET YOUTH SURVEY RESULTS REVEALED

A Planet Youth survey has revealed some surprising insights and trends into alcohol and drug use among the Limestone Coast's next generation.

The survey results were announced by the Planet Youth team from Iceland's Reykjavik University at a community information session at Mount Gambier City Hall on Wednesday 26th February.

Students aged 15 from four schools in the Grant and Mount Gambier council areas participated in the online survey, which asked questions around drug and alcohol use, mental health, sleep patterns and social media and gaming habits.

Key insights include:

- 29.2 per cent have tried alcohol by the age of 13;
- 29.5 per cent have been drunk once or more in their lifetime;
- 13.2 per cent have used cannabis once or more in their lifetime;
- 16.4 have used e-cigarettes once or more in their lifetime;
- 20 per cent have smoked a cigarette in their lifetime;
- 57.7 per cent rate their mental health as 'good' or 'very good';
- 4.3 per cent are using prescription stimulants without a prescription;
- 23.2 per cent drink alcohol at home;
- 27.5 per cent drink alcohol at the home of others;
- 11.5 per cent got drunk in the last 30 days;
- 53.3 per cent spend 3 hours or more each day on social media.

Mount Gambier was one of five sites selected for the Planet Youth trial by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation, with the program coordinated by local drug action team Substance Misuse Limestone Coast (SMLC).

SMLC Project Officer Sophie Bouchier said it was clear from the results that youth alcohol misuse was one of the greatest problems facing the region.

"Alcohol is pervasive in the Australian culture and these statistics show very clearly that young people think it's okay to abuse it," she said.

"It was disappointing to see that nearly 30 per cent of the young people surveyed had tried alcohol by the age of 13 and the same percentage have been drunk by the age of 15 but this is also valuable insight for us.

"On a more positive note, it was pleasing to see our data showed lower cannabis use compared to the average and also, good results around mental health and general happiness."

“It was also interesting to see how many adolescents had tried e-cigarettes or vaping equipment - the modern-day version of smoking traditional cigarettes.”

Comparison data against other sites involved in the program showed similar trends across many of the questions, however local social media use was nearly 14 per cent above the national average.

Ms Bouchier said Wednesday’s closed session with stakeholders, including councils, schools and organisations, was the first step towards proactively addressing the issues raised.

“Now it’s about analysing the data and forming a blueprint of sorts, to guide us into the future,” she said.

“The Planet Youth model is internationally renowned for significantly reducing alcohol and drug use among young people using solutions that are regionally unique and we’re very fortunate to be part of it.

“Over the next few years, we can address all issues highlighted to assist and guide our young people to flourish in an even more vibrant, healthy community.”

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