



Substance
Misuse
Limestone
Coast



Limestone Coast
Local Government
Association

Global Problems, Local Solutions

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Permissive alcohol culture the target of region-wide Planet Youth campaign

A region-wide campaign around the permissive alcohol culture by adults towards young people is being planned by Substance Misuse Limestone Coast (SMLC) and a Planet Youth community network group.

Three Planet Youth network groups have been newly established across the Limestone Coast, including City of Mount Gambier/DC Grant, Penola and Naracoorte, following the release of the second Planet Youth survey data earlier this year.

The campaign is being planned in response to a key finding in both the 2019 and 2021 surveys around high levels of drinking at home and at the homes of friends by young people.

SMLC Project Officer Sophie Bouchier said the data clearly showed “a permissive culture of alcohol use by adults towards young people”.

“Alcohol harms the adolescent brain and changes young people’s trajectory in life,” she said. “Giving your child one beer won’t stop at that one beer.”

“The aim of the networks is to keep the Planet Youth model in action in their area and also, to support the message that alcohol use among adolescents is harmful.”

SMLC will apply for funding through the Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF) and Wellbeing SA to run the campaign, beginning in 2023.

Since the survey data was released, SMLC has facilitated 50 meetings and 21 workshops across the Limestone Coast to communicate the findings to schools, councils and community groups.

“The feedback from these sessions has been valuable and frequently, eye-opening,” Ms Bouchier said.

“It’s clear that many people are unaware these problems exist and are understandably shocked to find out the levels of adolescent alcohol use in their home towns.

“There’s been a sense of urgency to continue to have conversations with parents and significant adults about the damage early alcohol use can cause.”

Ms Bouchier said SMLC is currently advocating for greater resources to educate parents and caregivers on the issue.

Planet Youth, a pioneering drug and alcohol early intervention model developed in Iceland, was expanded across the Limestone Coast in 2021, with twelve secondary schools taking part.

Coordinated by SMLC, the city of Mount Gambier was selected to trial the program by the ADF in 2019 - one of only five regions in Australia.

Targeted lifestyle surveys are completed in exam-like conditions in the school environment by Year 10 students, with questions about their mental health, physical activity, family and school experience, internet use and substance use.

Ms Bouchier said the program had been welcomed by secondary schools across the region.

“In 2019, we had four secondary schools participate across two local government areas,” she said. “In 2021, there were 680 students eligible for the program across seven different council areas.

“The more students that participate, the more data is generated and the more we can begin to understand the risk and protective factors that determine substance use among our young people.”

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