

## **Sporting clubs host regionwide SMLC youth alcohol education campaign**

A new region-wide health promotion and education campaign is being launched by Substance Misuse Limestone Coast (SMLC) and a local Planet Youth Network group to open conversations around the supply of alcohol to teenagers.

The health promotion and education campaign is a direct response to the local Planet Youth schools survey, which found a high permissive culture by adults leading to some high adolescent drinking statistics across the region.

The data clearly shows that among those young people who drink, the two most common places they drank were either at home or, in the homes of others.

SMLC Project Officer Sophie Bouchier said the campaign is about giving everyone the opportunity to learn more about the harms associated with young people drinking alcohol.

“This is about educating parents, caregivers and significant adults about the harms of alcohol on a young person,” she said.

“We are concerned about parents and other adults being the major suppliers of alcohol to young people, in the mistaken belief that monitoring alcohol use is the best way to introduce young people to alcohol, when instead, there is no safe level of alcohol for the adolescent and developing brain.”

Through signage at 26 local sporting grounds; a key point of congregation for families, the campaign is designed to start conversations between parents, caregivers and other significant adults in young people’s lives, said Ms Bouchier.

“A strong health promotion and education campaign is an important part of a broad approach to minimise the harms of alcohol use, particularly among young people.

“We want our education campaign to reach as many parents and other adults as possible and because sporting clubs are protective hubs in our community, they have put up their hands to promote our education campaign.”

A QR code on the signage will lead people to educational resources on the [SMLC website](#).

“Because the brain continues to develop until our mid-twenties, it’s important to delay drinking for as long as possible,” Ms Bouchier said.

“There is clear evidence young people are more vulnerable to the harms associated with using alcohol and we want our young people to thrive and be as healthy as possible.”

Network member and Limestone Coast Crime Prevention Section Sergeant Jade Hill said she hoped the campaign would be a “driver for change”.

“In my role as a parent and as a police officer, I’ve often seen parents wanting to be their child’s friend, but they also need to be parents and sometimes that means saying ‘no’,” she said.

“I would like to see this campaign bring about positive change and result in better outcomes for young people. I come from the business of prevention and if we can educate our next group of adults, we can begin to see real generational change.”

The campaign was organised by SMLC and the City of Mount Gambier and District Council of Grant Planet Youth network group, which formed in 2021.

### **Local leaders supporting the campaign:**

**Michael Summers-** *Western Border League Club President*

“As a league, we’re supporting this campaign to help prevent and reduce underage drinking and the supply of alcohol to young people. We need to be leaders on and off the field. Let’s be the leaders to stop exposure to alcohol to our young stars. Younger players look up to us, so let’s teach them that drinking at a young age shouldn’t be encouraged.”

**Tony Pasin –** *Federal Member for Barker*

“SMLC and the Planet Youth Network have been working hard to open a wider community discussion around alcohol consumption amongst our youth. The permissive culture of youth alcohol consumption perpetuated by adults, including parents, needs to change.

“For this to happen, adults in our community must be aware of the damage that alcohol does to young people, and this campaign is a great way to get the message out. This campaign is a great example of the positive change that SMLC aim to make in our community, and I encourage everyone to get on board and take notice.”

**Tony Elletson –** *LCLGA Sport & Recreation Development Officer*

“This campaign is very timely and important. The more we can educate and support local organisations to see that drinking culture has a negative outcome for young people, the sooner we can shift the mindset and start implementing the necessary change to provide a safe and welcoming environment for our youth. This will ultimately lead to our juniors becoming positive leaders and changemakers in our community.”