

Back-to-school Planet Youth parenting resource for Limestone Coast students

A Planet Youth parenting resource will be included in the back-to-school packs of 1,500 Limestone Coast students as they head back to the classroom next week.

The parenting and sleep guidelines, with key recommendations and statistics, will be distributed to secondary schools from Mount Gambier to Bordertown as part of the region's ongoing Planet Youth project.

Coordinated by the region's leading alcohol and other drug advocacy service, Substance Misuse Limestone Coast (SMLC), the initiative has been prompted by the Planet Youth survey, conducted in 2019.

Mount Gambier is one of five regional Australian areas to participate in the pioneering early intervention program, introduced in Iceland in 1998, which has seen youth drug and alcohol use rates drop to among the lowest in Europe.

SMLC Project Officer Sophie Bouchier said the booklet contains recommendations stemming from key statistics from the survey results.

"The survey revealed more than half the 15-year-old students surveyed were not getting enough sleep and uninterrupted sleep is just as important to a child's well-being as nutrition and exercise," she said.

"It is recommended teenagers get around 9-11 hours of sleep per night but of course, we're all aware screen time is having a huge impact on this."

The survey showed 53 per cent of Limestone Coast 15-year-olds were spending around 3 hours or more on social media per day, 14 per cent above the national average.

The Planet Youth resource has been funded by the national peak body for alcohol education, the Alcohol and Drug Foundation, a key collaborator with SMLC.

Ms Bouchier said the Planet Youth program had shown many factors contributed to a young person's capacity for taking up drugs and alcohol early in life.

"If parents and young people spend more time together, it should reduce the risk factors of drug and alcohol use among young people – family time increases protective factors," she said.

"Parents need to be aware the sleep guidelines are for long-term good health, leading to better outcomes for work, health, study and life in general.

“If young people are outside the family home late at night, that is a huge risk factor for drug and alcohol use and the survey data backs that up.”

Ms Bouchier said the booklet were designed as an informative guide for parents, not a lecture.

“People have said how difficult it is to find information relating to parenting teenagers and it’s recommended parents spend quality time with young people talking about these issues,” she said.

“As I’ve travelled around meeting with schools and councils over the last few months, I’ve been surprised by how much demand there is for a resource like this.

“Planet Youth takes a holistic and long-term approach through community stakeholders,” she said.

“This may seem like a very small step, however it builds into big picture thinking. It’s a slow burn to change the way people think around reducing risk factors for our young people.”

The next Planet Youth survey is due to commence in mid-2021.

For more information about Planet Youth, visit www.smlc.org.au

-Ends-

Media contact: SMLC Project Officer Sophie Bouchier | M: 0429 342 175 | E: smlc@lclga.sa.gov.au