

GLENELG ALCOHOL HEALTH PROMOTION & PLANNING COMMITTEE MEDIA RELEASE

“Adults should not supply alcohol to children”

A survey recently completed with school students in the Glenelg Shire has found that 60 per cent of 14 year old youth report using alcohol, with most supplied at home.

Deakin University Psychology Professor John Toumbourou, said “many parents allow youth to use alcohol at home in the hope that they can teach their children to use alcohol moderately. Unfortunately it has the reverse effect and early age use leads children to develop tolerance to alcohol that results in heavier adolescent use, alcohol problems and brain damage”

“There is growing community support in the Glenelg Shire to discourage adults from supplying alcohol to adolescents so that local youth can become a “Smart Generation” by not damaging their brains with alcohol.

The student survey was completed by the Glenelg Alcohol Health Promotion & Planning Committee with support of Deakin University. Rowena Wylie from the Committee said “Key findings from this report will be presented at a stakeholder’s forum in Portland on Thursday 26th February at SW TAFE (154 Hurd St Portland). Our Committee plan to work with local community members to use the survey results to create a community action plan for promoting healthy youth development.

Professor Toumbourou urged all adults, including parents and those working in bottle shops, not to supply or sell alcohol to children under 18. Professor Toumbourou said “The evidence is very clear - in communities where underage youth find it difficult to obtain alcohol, there is less youth alcohol use and are fewer alcohol related injuries, assaults and deaths. Communities with less youth alcohol use have higher rates of school completion.”

“An increasing number of parents are successfully preventing youth alcohol misuse by communicating clear rules not to buy or supply alcohol to underage youth. This may mean, for example, becoming stricter and not turning a blind eye when children wish to sip dad’s beer.

“Parents sometimes have the fear that if they don’t allow alcohol use at home their children may rebel and use alcohol behind their backs. Research shows that in families where parents set a rule that children are not to use alcohol, rebellion tends to be limited to the children having a few drinks behind their parents back and there are much lower rates of underage alcohol use. However, in the families where the parents allow moderate alcohol use their children are more likely to rebel with heavy and harmful alcohol use.

“Young people tell us they like it when parents and adults set rules not to allow alcohol use as it makes the boundaries clear and gives youth an excuse to say no when they are in situations where alcohol is offered”

Ends

Professor John Toumbourou, Chair in Health Psychology at Deakin University, is available for interview and can be contacted on 0400 502 938