

## Campaign targets underage drinking

A covert operation to tackle underage drinking can now be revealed. Posters featuring three brightly-coloured characters, Quirky, Daring and Funny, have been appearing across Glenelg Shire over recent weeks.

The campaign's message is being revealed at a series of youth events and forums this week, starting with last Friday's Blue Light Disco and at school forums at Heywood on Monday and Portland on Tuesday.

"We want to send a positive message to young people under 18 to believe in themselves and encourage them to resist peer pressure to drink alcohol", said a spokesperson for Glenelg Beyond the Bell. The campaign's concept is that "You're Enough" to have fun and fun to be around, without alcohol.

The Glenelg Beyond the Bell group which has developed the campaign includes Glenelg Shire Council, Portland District Health, Victoria Police, the Glenelg Southern Grampians Local Learning & Employment Network and Southern Grampians Glenelg Primary Care Partnership working with local schools.

"We are encouraging young people to defer their first drink, as we now know the significant harm from alcohol on the developing brain and the increased risk of mental health issues and future alcohol problems when young people start drinking at an early age. We also know that when school-aged young people regularly drink alcohol, they are less likely to do well at school or to finish at all. We want all of Glenelg's young people to reach their full potential."

The other message is that **not** drinking is socially acceptable. A spokesperson for Glenelg Beyond the Bell said, "this is a challenging message – so many community events, celebrations and commiserations involve alcohol. We want to make it easier for young people to feel they can choose not to drink and still have fun and fit in."

A survey completed in Glenelg Shire in late 2014 found that 43% of Year 6 students surveyed and 58% of Year 8 students had drunk alcohol. "As people working with young people, we were very concerned at the levels of alcohol use, even by children as young as 11 and 12."

The campaign also targets parents and other adults. "We want to encourage adults including parents, retailers and sports clubs not to supply children with alcohol and to support them to defer their first drink as long as possible."

Glenelg Beyond the Bell worked with a creative group of RMIT University Graphic Communication & Design students and graduates who took a very innovative approach to the alcohol message. "We feel that the campaign's three illustrative characters will cut through a lot of the noise of other campaigns, and give ours a playful, vibrant energy."

"We are excited to see the campaign evolving with local students creating their own characters to build on the initial campaign. The new artwork will be showcased at an exhibition later in the year. To have our young people having a voice and being a creative partner rather than having a campaign that talks at them is very powerful".

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EMBARGOED UNTIL MONDAY 20 JUNE, 2016