

Focus on alcohol in teens

BY ERIN MCFADDEN

THE Wimmera Drug Action Taskforce will focus on young people and alcohol in the first half of 2017.

Taskforce co-ordinator Sally Pymmer said this would complement Horsham Rural City Council's work.

Council received \$25,000 from VicHealth for a scoping study into reducing alcohol

consumption by youths aged 12 to 20.

"This grant is looking at the culture of alcohol in our community and how it relates to young people," Ms Pymmer said.

"Even though the legal age for buying alcohol is 18, the brain does not stop developing until around age 25.

"Because of this, drinking alcohol in the teenage years

and early twenties can have life-long effects on the brain."

Ms Pymmer said drinking could also increase rates of depression and anxiety in later life.

"It is concerning," she said. "Delaying the uptake of alcohol consumption for as long as possible is an important preventative measure."

Ms Pymmer said many parents believed they were

doing the right thing by supplying their 16 or 17-year-old with alcohol for a party.

"There is a belief that if their child is provided with a certain number of drinks at least they will know how much the child is drinking," she said.

"Unfortunately, this might not be the case as additional alcohol is often being consumed. "The more parents supply-

ing alcohol, the more alcohol there is to be shared around."

Ms Pymmer said alarmingly, some teenagers who were supplied alcohol by their parents did not drink it themselves but instead, gave it to their friends whose parents did not give them alcohol.

"Inadvertently this can cause problems with parents unknowingly being involved in secondary supply," she

said. Ms Pymmer said a way to protect young people was with positive role modelling.

"In order to protect our children maybe a good start is to take a look at ourselves first," she said.

"Our children and young people are precious and deserve to have the best futures possible. "Everyone can play

their part."