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Business location concerns

HEALTH

BY CARLY WERNER

Horsham

WIMMERA Drug Action Taskforce is worried a new Horsham liquor outlet's proposed location is near community health organisations that help people with alcohol and other drug issues.

A Ballan-based consulting firm has applied - on behalf of a licensee - to Horsham Rural City Council for a planning permit for a packaged liquor licence for a new store in the former Supercheap building in Hamilton Street.

Last month, Grampians Community Health announced it would establish a new base in an adjacent building, formerly Wades.

The organisation provides alcohol and other drug counselling among its services.

Headspace Horsham opened in the street in May.

On Tap Liquor Consulting principle consultant Stephan Jerman said the Supercheap

building would become a Cellarbrations store that would employ up to 10 staff.

"They will sponsor local sporting clubs and things once the business is up and running," he said.

"It will inject \$500,000 worth of wages into the community. When you talk about having a full team of staff on, there are certainly a lot of economic benefits.

"The person who is going into that building is an existing licensee who runs another successful business in a small town."

Taskforce co-ordinator Sally Pymer said it was far from ideal to have alcohol outlets in the same area as health organisations.

"Alcohol has a range of detrimental effects to health, and having it amongst organisations promoting health does not send a good message at all," she said.

"Alcohol is more of a problem than other drugs in the region, so it would be

preferable people do not see alcohol suppliers when seeking alcohol and other drugs services or medical support."

Ms Pymer said the group was also concerned about having an additional liquor outlet in town, and its proximity to other stores including The Premix King and BWS at Woolworths Horsham.

"The Wimmera Drug Action Taskforce focuses on harm minimisation and aims to educate the community on the dangers of alcohol and other drugs," she said.

"Research has often shown the more liquor outlets you have, the more likely there is to be alcohol misuse.

"Having another liquor outlet also just reinforces the huge alcohol culture and contributes to alcohol being normalised."

Council's planning and economic director Angela Murphy said the planning permit application was lodged on June 14.

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MS MURPHY said the application was referred to relevant government agencies and adjoining property owners for comment. She said the Planning and Environment Act 1987 required a range of considerations be made before an application was determined, including the planning scheme, objections and other submissions; decision and comments from any referral authority; effects the use or development might have on the environment; and social and economic effects.