

# Drug action team expands

## HEALTH

BY REX MARTINICH

Ararat, Stawell

ARARAT Rural City and Northern Grampians Shire will soon join forces with the Wimmera Drug Action Taskforce in a bid to reduce harm in the community.

Both municipalities will have their own drug action team to help prevent misuse of alcohol and other drugs.

The Central Grampians Local Drug Action Team's focus will include crystal

methamphetamine, also known as ice.

The drug action team will be a community partnership established with the help of the federal government's National Ice Action Strategy and the Alcohol and Drug Foundation.

The drug action team will receive an initial \$10,000 from the federal government and will be supported by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation to develop and deliver community-led action plans. The team will centre on

preventing drug use, and will be tailored to the particular needs of the Grampians region.

Grampians Community Health direct care programs manager Kath Heading will join the drug action team.

"What we're looking at doing is collaborating with the Wimmera Drug Action Taskforce in a program called 'Knowledge is Power,'" she said.

"This is a really successful schools program that looks at working with year six

students across the Wimmera catchment.

"It has been very successful over the years and there has probable been more than 1000 students attend."

Total drug crimes in Ararat increased by almost 32 per cent to 162 incidents in the 12 months to July.

Drug use and possession increased by 67 per cent to 144 cases while drug dealing and trafficking dropped by 62.5 per cent to 12 cases.

Cases of people cultivating and manufacturing drugs

increased from 5 to 6.

The drug action team was intended to collaborate with other community groups to help prevent drug and alcohol issues.

"One of gambling and drug services committee members has just come back from a global alcohol conference and let us know that the number of alcohol ads that young people are exposed to each day is really related to the likelihood that they take up drinking themselves," Ms Heading said.

"This approach is about providing information to young people to build their knowledge and their resilience.

"It can also give them a dialogue to have with their families."

Ms Heading said people could go to [www.adf.org.au/](http://www.adf.org.au/) for more information about the drug action team.

The Wimmera Drug Action Taskforce has been working to reduce drug and alcohol abuse in the region since its inception in 2011.