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Survey tracks drug issues

Community groups launch new project

HEALTH

BY REX MARTINICH

Ararat

A COALITION of community groups around Ararat has launched a survey to measure the region's concerns around alcohol and illicit drugs.

The Ararat Local Drug Action Team will use the results of the survey to help create a new four-year action plan on substance abuse.

The team includes Grampians Pyrenees Primary Care Partnership, Grampians Community Health, East Grampians LLEN, Ararat Rural City Council and Victoria Police.

The survey will be open until July 15 and all responses will be kept strictly confidential.

Organisers said they had received a large amount of responses in the first few days of the survey, which they believed to show how serious the issue was to the Ararat region.

Grampians Community Health (GCH) project coordinator Anna Greene said the survey would also measure personal experiences with alcohol and drugs across all

age groups.

"We're trying to gauge where our community sees there is need for early intervention," she said.

"At this stage a lot of the feedback we are getting is around illicit, non-prescribed drugs.

"There's a lot coming in around alcohol."

Ms Greene said alcohol was still the biggest single concern in the region, followed by illicit drugs.

Prescription medication abuse had not increased significantly in Ararat, despite experiences in other regions.

The hard copies of the survey will be available via GCH Ararat office, East Grampians LLEN and the bush nursing centres at Elmhurst and Lake Bolac.

An online survey has also been placed on the GCH website.

East Grampians LLEN executive officer James Skene said his organisation was involved because he wanted to prevent young people from taking up illicit drugs.

"One of the issues in Ararat is a lack of activities for young people, which can lead to encounters with drugs," he said.



SURVEY: Grampians Community Health's Anna Greene, East Grampians LLEN's James Skene, Alcohol and Drug counsellor Liz Green and Grampians Pyrenees PCP's Emily Anderson.

"Some young people also consider drugs as a cheaper alternative to alcohol, and they never know what exactly substances they are being sold as drugs."

In 2014, 48.2 per cent of Ararat respondents to a similar survey were at increased risk of an alcohol related injury on a single occasion, with the state average being 42.5 per cent.

The number of drug cases requiring care more than quadrupled between 2011 and 2015.

Established in 2017 the Ar-

arat Local Drug Action Team was designed as a partnership to deliver evidence based strategies that target young people at risk of drug and alcohol harm.