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Drug battle stays on message

By Paul Pickering

26th April 2007 09:49:21 AM

KNOX Community Health Service (KCHS) will use a \$40,000 Federal Government grant to establish an innovative program for dealing with illicit drug use in the City of Knox.

The funding, announced by La Trobe MP Jason Wood last week, will go towards KCHS's new Register and Get Educated (RAGE) program, which will use SMS technology to provide positive messages to illicit drug users.

KCHS CEO Anne Lyon said: "The concept is to develop a health promotion and education program to reduce the risk factors and impacts involved with illicit drug use.

"We've been trying to find relevant ways of engaging with the population, and we believe that because young people are such high users of SMS this could be a very good medium."

While the RAGE project is in its development stage, Ms Lyon said that the idea was to use mobile phone technology to reinforce key messages to potential drug users in times of vulnerability.

One scenario foreshadowed by Ms Lyon was if a drug user was entering into a vulnerable social situation such as a party, they might receive a message at a designated hour reminding them to stop and take stock of their options.

In developing the program, KCHS will continue to consult with police to identify community groups to enrol young people to the program.

Ms Lyon noted that the program was a response to



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a recent feasibility study indicating that access to drug and alcohol support services is quite limited in the municipality.

Mr Wood agreed that the Federal funding would provide a much-needed means of tackling the issue at a local level.

"This is a huge boost for the electorate in its capacity to deliver crucial drug treatment services to young people," he said.

"I congratulate Knox Community Health Service for their commitment to this issue and their commitment to the local community."

The KCHS grant was one of 57 projects being funded across the country by the Federal government, worth a total of \$5 million, which were announced on Monday, 16 April.



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