

Drug Action



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NSW COMMUNITY DRUG STRATEGIES NEWSLETTER

Corowa through the eyes of young people

The views of young people in Corowa are reflected in a photographic exhibition, *R U Listening* launched during September.

The 33 black and white photographs were taken by students at Corowa High School as part of a project organised by the **Corowa Community Drug Action Team**.

The young people took part in 10 weekly workshops under the guidance of a professional photographer, who is a member of the Corowa CDAT. They were invited to create photographic representations of what they liked and disliked about living in Corowa.

By giving young people a voice through an arts medium, the Corowa CDAT hopes to be able to respond to the concerns identified by young people.

The project was funded through the Premier's Department Drugs and Community Action Strategy Special Fund.



Students Simone Bevan and Leanne Kilsby with their photographs at the *R U Listening* exhibition. Picture courtesy of the Border Mail.

A Summer Bay CDAT



(L-R) Nathan Grey, George Gregan, Ray Meagher (Alf Stewart) and Ben Darwin take part in the Summer Bay Community Drug Action Forum.

TV's fictional town of *Summer Bay*, featured in Channel Seven's *Home And Away*, has its own Community Drug Action Team. A recently screened episode of *Home And*

and crew at *Home And Away* were congratulated in Parliament for their responsible storyline, by Special Minister of State John Della Bosca.

Away featured a community drug forum, which resulted in the establishment of a Community Drug Action Team. New Wallabies' captain George Gregan and teammates Nathan Grey, George Smith, Phil Waugh and Ben Darwin 'travelled' to Summer Bay to appear, as special guests, at the fictional drug forum organised by students. The cast

Funds awarded for community action

The Special Minister of State, John Della Bosca has announced the allocation of 58 grants to help local communities take action against drugs.

The Drugs and Community Action Strategy Special Fund, now in its second year, represents an additional \$1.4 million over four years to NSW communities. More than \$330,000 has been allocated to Community Drug Action Teams (CDATs) across NSW this year.

The additional resources provided through this grant program will greatly assist drug action teams to develop local solutions to local problems.

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Editorial

There are now 66 Community Drug Action Teams (CDATs), 44 in regional areas. This is a real achievement showing the enormous interest communities have in tackling drug issues.

Allocations from the Drugs and Community Action Special Fund have helped CDATs across the State develop creative and innovative new projects, many of them targeting young people. This and future editions of *Drug Action* will highlight some of these fantastic locally driven projects. Congratulations to all teams involved.

Farewell to Kate Butler (Project Manager, Riverina-Murray Region). Since March 2000, Kate has guided the development and strengthening of local Drug Action Teams in the Riverina-Murray. More broadly Kate developed an innovative and widely accepted plan for the entire region. We wish her all the best.

The new Project Manager Karen MacLean starts in November. Karen has extensive experience in working with communities, most recently as the Regional Violence Prevention Specialist with the NSW Attorney General's Department and previously working for community-based organisations.

Yvonne Korn, Project Director, Community Drug Strategies

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Types of activities that have been funded include:

- youth activities and peer leadership projects
- arts, photography, entertainment and theatre projects involving local communities
- producing local information resources about drugs, eg information cards with the phone numbers of local services, and
- training opportunities so that CDAT members can become skilled to undertake the challenging tasks ahead.

Contact the Project Manager in your region for more information.

Regional Profiles

In this edition of *Drug Action* we profile the Drugs and Community Action Strategy regions of Coastal Sydney and the Hunter. For more information about CDATs in your area visit www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/drugs_action or contact the Project Manager in your region (contact details on page 6).

COASTAL SYDNEY

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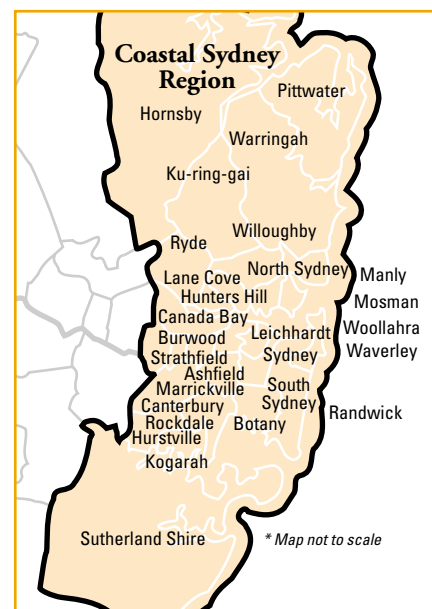
The Coastal Sydney region is densely populated and diverse. Covering 29 Local Government Areas it includes approximately one-third of the population of NSW.

CDATs already established in the region

- Glebe
- Kings Cross
- Pittwater
- Randwick (focusing on La Perouse, Matraville and Maroubra)
- Redfern/Waterloo
- Surry Hills
- Sutherland.

Other areas in Coastal Sydney that would benefit from the establishment of a CDAT include (but are not limited to) Hornsby, Warringah, Frenchs Forest/Davidson, Ryde/Eastwood, Manly, Newtown, Ashfield, Kogarah, Marrickville and Rockdale. A regional CDAT will also be formed in the northern area of Coastal Sydney and will cover 11 Local Government Areas.

If you are interested in finding out more about CDATs in these areas, please contact Wendy Williamson on 9228 3730.



Example of CDAT activities in Coastal Sydney

The **Glebe CDAT** formed in April 2001 and is having a busy first year. A comprehensive charter has been developed providing a firm foundation for the CDAT. The Team has developed an information card for young people, called the 'Glebe Crew Survival Guide'. The card provides young people with contact numbers and information for use in emergency situations. A local safety campaign is under way, local issues have been taken up, training undertaken and development of a comprehensive Drug Action Plan is well progressed.



Hitting the ground running – Glebe Community Drug Action Team.

HUNTER REGION

Project Manager – Anjali Boronowskis. Anjali also covers the Central Coast region and moves between the Gosford and Newcastle offices.

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02 4927 8799 (Newcastle)

Fax: 02 4324 2698 (Gosford)
02 4927 8798 (Newcastle)

E-mail: anjali@premiers.nsw.gov.au

In Newcastle, Anjali is located at Level 4, 251 Wharf Road Newcastle NSW 2300

CDATs already established in the region

Cessnock/Maitland Regional CDAT

Sub groups include CDATs for Maitland and Cessnock, an Aboriginal CDAT for the two Local Government Areas and a separate CDAT to look at post release issues.

Contact Fran Holz, Community Safety Officer for Cessnock and Maitland Local Councils.

Cessnock Council Tel: 4993 4100
Maitland Council Tel: 4934 9700

or e-mail: francesh@maitland.nsw.gov.au

Forster/Tuncurry CDAT

Contact Brian Ferguson Tel: 6555 6358

Gloucester CDAT

Contact Anjali Boronowskis.

Lake Macquarie

Contact Darlene Taylor Tel: 4921 0333

Newcastle City Council Safety Panel

Contact Barney Langford Tel: 4974 2000

Singleton Shire Council Community Safety Committee

Contact Fiona Saville,
Community Development Officer,
Singleton Shire Council Tel: 6578 7290

Upper Hunter Drug Action Group

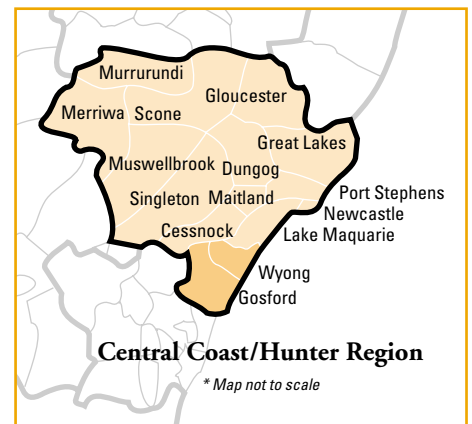
This group covers the Muswellbrook, Merriwa, Scone and Murrumbidgee Shires. Separate CDATs are to be established for each Local Government Area from February 2002.

Contact: Kim Manwarring,
Muswellbrook Shire Council Tel: 6549 3700

If you are interested in finding out more about CDATs in these areas, please contact Anjali Boronowskis.

Examples of CDAT activities in the Hunter

To help their community become more aware about drug issues, the **Upper Hunter Drug Action Group** has developed a website. The website contains information about the Upper Hunter Drug Action Project, information about drugs and local services, and links to other related sites. The project is funded by the Hunter Area Assistance Scheme. The website is at www.uhdrugaction.com



Breaking the cycle of drugs and crime

There is a significant link between drug use and crime. Many drug users rely on crime to pay for the drugs they use (eg property theft).

Drug-crime diversion gives offenders who use drugs the chance of undertaking treatment and/or education aimed at helping them to stop using drugs, and committing further crimes.

By targeting less serious drug offences it also aims to prevent a new generation of drug users committing drug-related crime. Drug-crime diversion does not change the legal status of drugs.

Five drug-crime diversion programs operate in New South Wales: Changes to the Young Offenders Act, Adult Cannabis Cautioning, Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment (MERIT), Youth Drug Court, and Adult Drug Court.

In this edition of *Drug Action*, we explain how the Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment (MERIT) works.

Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment (MERIT)

MERIT is a program where offenders with a drug problem undertake drug assessment and any required treatment as part of their conditions of bail.

The program was successfully piloted in Lismore and will be established in all New South Wales Area Health Service regions over the next two years.

How does MERIT work?

- Defendants must be eligible for bail, and show potential for treatment and rehabilitation. If the defendant fails to attend treatment, commits further offences, or does not comply with bail conditions, the Magistrate is notified and may stop the program. Defendants charged with violent or sexual offences are excluded.

- The Magistrates refer defendants to treatment programs as part of their bail conditions. MERIT is voluntary.
- Participants are case-managed by specially trained health and welfare professionals (the 'MERIT team').
- A drug treatment program is designed for the participant. The program may include:
 - detoxification
 - Methadone or other pharmacotherapies (medical treatments for drug dependency)
 - residential and other rehabilitation programs
 - individual and group counselling
 - programs to prevent the defendant using drugs again.
- The Magistrate receives regular reports on their progress until the end of the bail period (usually three months). The defendant's progress may be considered at final sentencing.

For more information contact the NSW Attorney General's Department. Tel (02) 9228 8307.

Action Around the State

CDATs in the **Illawarra** and **South-East** regions recently attended a regional CDAT conference. The conference program included a Community Participation Workshop, drug awareness training for participants, and a presentation from the Joynt Youth Action Youth Forum. Two representatives from each CDAT in the region were nominated to attend. The second day was open to all CDAT members.

Airds/Bradbury CDAT has established a combined homework and leisure program for local young people (years 5-6). The CDAT hopes to increase the educational opportunities for local students by providing after school homework classes and increase young people's exposure to positive adult and older peer role models through sport and leisure. The centre will run two afternoons per week, with a teacher on hand to help students with their homework. Local high school students will also be recruited to help them gain leadership skills through providing peer and homework support. Recreational activities will be held one afternoon per fortnight. Parents will also be encouraged to attend classes and leisure activities so they can assist their children and expand their social support networks.

Big Brother host Gretel Killeen was a special guest at a recently held Drug Education and Information Expo organised by the **Fairfield CDAT** for multicultural communities in Fairfield. Ms Killeen – a well-known comedian and author of children's books – presented prizes to the winners of an art and writing competition. Expression through the art and writing competition, which formed the centrepiece of the Expo, enabled young people in the area to creatively have their say about drugs and their impact. The winning written entries have been compiled into a collection which people can download from www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/drugs_action

The event was an excellent example of local and regional agency co-operation. Each agency provided drug-related information in English and community



Gretel Killeen (top right) with prize winners at the Fairfield Drug Education and Information Expo.

languages and were on-hand to answer questions from the many members of the public who visited the stalls.

Friday 28 September 2001 was a landmark day for the **Blue Mountains Drug Action Forum**, launching the Blue Mountains Drug Action Plan at an information street stall in Springwood.

The launch was attended by Bob Debus, NSW Attorney General and local State MP, Kerry Bartlett, local Federal MP, Commander Ray Filewood, Blue Mountains Local Area Command, Angeliqne Henson, Leader, Blue Mountains First and members of the Drug Action Forum.

The Plan focuses on youth, public health and safety, treatment and support, alternative approaches, community awareness and training and education. The Drug Action Forum aims to remain open and accessible to the community and to provide and share its information with the community and specifically to young people.

Key strategies used by the Blue Mountains Drug Action Forum include:

- holding regular information stalls on alcohol and other drugs
- holding public forums and debates around alcohol and other drug issues
- writing submissions in collaboration with local services
- providing advocacy and support around alcohol and other drug issues within the Blue Mountains community.

The *Drugs in our Town* exhibition – a community art project designed to explore the impact of drugs in Kyogle, was launched recently at the Roxy Gallery. Members of the community produced drawings, paintings, poems and other mediums expressing their ideas on the theme 'Drugs in Our Town'. The pieces were displayed together on a 4 metre by 2-metre piece of mesh with 200 individual squares. A grant from the Drugs and Community Action Special Fund enabled **Kyogle CDAT** to employ a workshop artist so that everyone, regardless of artistic ability, could join in.



Drugs in our Town exhibition.

Glen Innes Drug Awareness Committee

A brief history and development of a CDAT



Collection and disposal of old and unused medications has long been a useful GIDAC project.

Glen Innes Drug Awareness Committee has been active for a number of years and operates a resource centre on drugs and alcohol for the Glen Innes district.

In June 1987 the Glen Innes Drug Awareness Committee (GIDAC) held its inaugural meeting, attended by over 60 concerned residents including church leaders, teachers, farmers and graziers, local businesses, representatives from health services, youth and community services, local governments, and a (retired) alcohol counsellor. The formation of a 'grass roots' community group was somewhat an unusual development in 1987, but this group wrote a constitution, set subscription charges at an affordable level, and created a working fund of several hundred dollars from the membership of 56 individuals.

It is interesting that the objectives set then are still applicable today and endorse the current role of CDATs.

GIDAC's primary objectives are:

- to increase the community's understanding of the problems associated with the abuse of alcohol and other drugs
- to increase young people's understanding of the inherent dangers in the use of drugs, especially alcohol, and to encourage them to be involved in more fulfilling forms of social activity
- to decrease the harmful effects of this abuse on the local community
- to provide mutual support for others working in the problem area.

In addition to these primary objectives, general statements about emphasis on education, prevention, and the support of research and rehabilitation strategies are included in the original constitution.

Activities and Achievements

A number of projects then began, including:

- a submission for a drug and alcohol counsellor for the area
- a series of community forums addressing issues of substance abuse including pharmaceutical drugs
- a regular 'GIDAC' spot in local media, with educative messages for all from teenagers to retirees
- establishing a resource centre with information for parents on illegal and legal drugs and a 'help line' first-contact point service manned by volunteers for affected parents and others

- financial support to the Life Education service for the regional schools, and purchase/supply of additional material to school libraries and teachers.

In the mid 1990's, youth-orientated projects become prominent as the chair of GIDAC was then the local high school principal, who encouraged his teaching staff to become actively involved in GIDAC. Projects to address smoking, under-age drinking and healthy lifestyle foundations were undertaken.

The way ahead

In the late 1990's State and Federal funding efforts enriched the local regional health professionals' capabilities in prevention of substance abuse, and GIDAC's involvement and enthusiasm appeared to wain. The NSW Premier's Department initiative of establishing CDATs has however reinforced the notion and concept that many of the issues involved in substance abuse can be best dealt with in a context of local people helping to solve local problems.

In 2001 the GIDAC is linked to the NSW CDAT network and its office bearers see many advantages flowing from the co-operative efforts now possible among regional communities. GIDAC's 15 years of practical experience can be made available to assist other embryonic CDATs in the New England-North West area.

Des Bowlay, Vice President Glen Innes Drug Awareness Committee (GIDAC)

This is an edited version of an article written by Des Bowlay on behalf of the Glen Innes Drug Awareness Committee (GIDAC). For a full version of the article please refer to the Drugs and Community Action module in the communitybuilders website at www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/drugs_action

The Glen Innes Drug Awareness Committee has used funding from the Drugs and Community Action Strategy Special Fund to help re-establish the resource centre, and develop and distribute resources.

Multilingual health information

The **NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service** (funded by NSW Health) have a comprehensive **website** where you can download multi-lingual health information, plus a **Health fax-back service** which enables you to order faxed copies of health publications.

Over 400 publications on a variety of health issues, (including drug and alcohol issues) in up to 35 languages are on the website www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au The information is available in an easy to read format, accessed with Adobe Acrobat software.

To use the **Health fax-back service**, dial **1300 859 659** from a touch-tone phone and follow the instructions. You can request a fax-back catalogue, and obtain faxed copies of information in English and other languages.

NSW Health Drug Programs Bureau website

The Drug Programs Bureau is responsible for the development and implementation of drug and alcohol policies across the health system in New South Wales. Their website, www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/dpb includes information about current projects, drug and alcohol fact sheets and publications, information for health professionals and web links to other informative Australian and international websites.

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Kate Toohey, *Blue Mountains Community Drug Action Team*

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Who can I contact for more information?

If you would like more information about any of these Government responses to community drug issues, contact the central office staff, Project Manager in your region (see below) or visit the website www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/drugs_action

Project Managers can provide additional resources that explain the Strategies and the work of the Community Drug Action Teams in more detail.

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