

# d The Schools

## Avoid the pitfalls of drug and alcohol

ONE stupid decision can have consequences that last a lifetime and having worked with young people facing court on drink, drug, assault and rape charges, two Toowoomba solicitors, Adair Donaldson and Peter Shannon, decided to provide young people with the information they needed to make more responsible choices.

Mr Donaldson will be in Longreach next week to present a series of seminars entitled "Putting Youth in the Picture" to school and college students, sporting clubs and teachers, police and the general public.

"We believe we can make young people more responsible for their own actions if they are aware of the pitfalls and develop strategies to deal with them," Mr Donaldson said.

What started as a warts-and-all presentation to school leavers in Toowoomba and Dalby grew to include a series of films showing common scenarios like a bar-room fight, use of illegal recreational drugs, underage drinking, binge drinking and sexual assault, that can have devastating legal and social consequences for young people and their families.

"Putting Youth in the Picture" is making audiences young and old sit up and take notice.



Adair Donaldson (right), as professional actors present scenarios during the filming of *Putting Youth in the Picture*.

"We have now presented to more than 3,500 students, parents, athletes, employees and employers and the response has been overwhelming," he said.

"Audience reaction to the presentations has driven us to develop a training package as we believe that this is an opportunity for communities to come together and take ownership of the issues - to come up with a solution together rather than yet another government advertising campaign being imposed."

The role alcohol plays in poor decision making is seen every day in court, but the program did not preach abstinence, he said

"Nor are we suggesting

we have the solutions.

"What we can do is interact with the audience and provide them with information, so that hopefully when the time comes they will make the right decisions.

"This is particularly important for young people in regional areas who are more likely to have to leave the support and guidance of their family at an earlier age."

Mr Donaldson said he was looking forward to bringing the program to Longreach as his partner, Peter Shannon had grown up in the town.

The public is welcome to two presentations on Wednesday April 1: a discussion from 3.30-4.30pm at Longreach State High School and at a forum

from 6-8pm at the Longreach Agricultural College auditorium.

The forum will include a panel comprising a school-based nurse, a police officer, Ian Dempster a local solicitor and Dean Workman and Rebecca Elliott from the Rural Young Male Alcohol Group.

Mr Donaldson also gets four volunteers from the audience to participate in a "blind drink test" on the night.

It is a sobering thought that the social cost of alcohol and illicit drug abuse to Australian society in 2004-05 alone has been estimated at \$24.6 billion

"This is not a youth problem, this is our problem," he said.

## Fundraising blitz needed for Canberra trip

YEAR 9 students at Longreach State High School have raised

A meeting of parents has been called for Tuesday March 31 to

have already undertaken, according to teacher Michelle Jensen.

g  
their  
s and  
rt.  
e all