

'Putting You in the Picture'

A unique educational program has been developed in regional Queensland to help communities deal with issues confronting youth. 'Putting You in the Picture' uses a series of authentic but confronting movie scenarios to show how young people can become involved in life altering incidents as a result of poor decision making. The issues presented and discussed include sexual assault, a bar-room fight, use of illegal recreational drugs, binge drinking and underage drinking at a party featuring all of these behaviours. The program was created by solicitors Adair Donaldson and Peter Shannon after years of seeing rural youth involved in life changing situations. Using their knowledge and experience Adair and Peter believe they can make young people more responsible for their own actions by becoming more aware of the pitfalls and developing strategies to deal with them. The result is 'Putting You in the Picture' which is making audiences young and old sit up and take notice.

"We have now presented to more than 3,500 students, parents, athletes, employees and employers and the response has been overwhelming. 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. We are not preaching abstinence" Adair 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."

Support for the program is growing with those on the front line being the strongest supporters of this regionally produced campaign. Linda Evans Head of Senior School at Fairholme College in Toowoomba is convinced that the training package can make a difference. "As an educator it is rare to come across a training resource that is unique, is able to connect with youth and to be able to make a difference in a short time frame. This presentation can."

It is not just educators, police and health professionals who are supportive of the initiative. The National Rugby League has purchased licences to use the training package for all players competing in their competition in 2009/10 and more large private corporations look set to follow. Wayne Bennett, AM, has also thrown his

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support behind the initiative. "This concept is masterpiece. All parents, youth and communities should take the opportunity to be involved and promote this project. It challenges communities to come together to discuss, confront and take ownership of these issues facing our society today."

With the response to date Mr Donaldson remains hopeful that all communities throughout Australia will take the opportunity to implement the program. "What started as a way of bringing about change in our local community has now led to an opportunity to bring about change throughout Australia. As expressions of interest have come from South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales, as well as all over Queensland, this doesn't look out of the question."

To find out more about the initiative contact Adair Donaldson on 07 4659 9277 or email adair@provincelawyers.com. A feature story on Putting you in the picture is available on the ABC's Stateline Website at <http://www.abc.net.au/australiawide/stories/2008/200803/s2187744.htm>.

Editor's Note: This article came about due to an email from Carol Wilson, Meandarra Qld. Carol saw the presentation at Fairholme College, where she has 2 daughter boarding, in Years 8 and 12. Carol describes the presentation as 'truly wonderful' and 'a valuable for parents as children' and wants to spread the fantastic work being done by Adair Donaldson.

I contacted Adair and he was kind enough to write a piece for Pedals.

Below: Adair Donaldson (foreground) oversees filming of a scenario to be used in the 'Putting You in the Picture' Programme.

