

The Morning Bulletin

OPINION

Taking stupidity out of decisions

ANOTHER week and another youth makes a poor decision.

The alleged stabbing of a 15-year-old boy outside Yeppoon High School is the latest in a string of violent events on the coast which have resulted in a number of people facing serious criminal charges.

While the accused await justice, their victims may never recover from the physical and emotional scars.

Paul Bambrick, president of the school's P and C, described the latest incident as a one-off for the school, but said there was a wider youth problem causing concern on the coast.

"We need to be engaging youth around Yeppoon - there is not a lot to do," he said.

"It's about finding solutions, picking up the people who drop out of the system."

Yeppoon is not alone in facing up to problems with young people who make poor decisions which impact heavily on themselves and others.

Every week our young people are being hurt - and sometimes killed - because someone made a poor, split-second decision.

One man who is trying to make young people think more about the consequences of their actions, especially under the influence of alcohol and drugs, is Adair Donaldson (see story Page 35).

He is bringing his outstanding youth education program, Putting Youth in the Picture, to Central Queensland over the next two months.

I watched his presentation two weeks ago and was blown away by its quality.

It uses a series of extremely confronting, realistic movie scenarios which are based on real-life cases.

They show how impulsive decisions can result in life-altering consequences.

The issues presented and discussed include sexual assault, a bar-room fight, the use of illegal recreational drugs and binge drinking.

What makes this program effective is the way the stories relate to teenagers.

It makes them think about situations they or their friends have been in, or could be facing.

One of Adair's big targets is the teen binge-drinking culture which is responsible for so many young people making poor decisions which ruin lives.

If you have the opportunity, please watch this program.

Who knows, if enough people get the message maybe we can all make a difference.



By Frazer Pearce, editor



MEET THE TEAM

Our newest columnist, Ingrid is back on Monday exploring links between the global financial crisis and an unexplained proliferation of cushions in her home. Could Mr Rudd's urgings to spend be causing a massive surge in soft furnishings?

Ingrid Just - Columnist

Editor | Frazer Pearce
Chief-of-Staff | Darryn Nufer
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NEWS TIPS | 4930 4282

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YOUR

Take services away so we're all equal!

MAYOR Brad Carter states he can't support one system for part of the region and another system for the rest.

This is interesting given that, at the moment, some areas have sewerage, gutters, bitumen roads, a dump, library, parks, town water, rubbish disposal and various things we do not have at Mount Chalmers.

So if he doesn't support differences, is he going to remove these facilities from other areas so they are more like us?

We were aware these facilities were not here when we moved here and we live without them.

We also pay a little less (literally) in rates than those who live in areas where the facilities exist.

His statement is ridiculous in the extreme and he should think before making another one any subject.

The reason we do not have, nor want, a rubbish disposal service is that the trucks only operate on designated roads. This would mean some people in this area would need to leave their bins about 3km from their houses.

We have had this debate for around 20 years but this seems to be ignored. Those who ignore history are doomed to make the same mistakes.

We are quite happy with the 12 vouchers we get each year that allow us one trip a month to a transfer station.

If we exceed this number of trips, we pay. We pay amounts based on load size so we are contributing in the same manner as people who live in other areas of the shire. To run a truck around the area collecting rubbish would almost certainly cost more than the present system.

Mr Carter, please don't embarrass yourself any further and leave our voucher system alone.

A. Nicholson, Mt Chalmers.

Punishment missing from court penalties

WHERE is justice?

An 18-year-old woman appeared in a CQ Magistrates Court recently facing two counts of breaching probation and one of contravening a police direction.

In the past, she threatened to kill her partner with a knife, failed to attend a drug counselling course that was part of her sentence, stole the car and wallet of a man who offered her accommodation, drove the car to a place

600km away where it was found with



A soldier enjoys one of the gifts given to Australian troops at Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan, by Governor-General Quentin Bryce. The author says it is impossible to find a republic that works as well as Australia's system and that republicans also want to change the flag.

Republicans unable to accept majority's wish

THE republic "sabre" is again being rattled, with the same rhetoric: "Getting rid of royalty and the flag".

I have never been enamoured with the royal family and, as far as I'm concerned, the question of royalty does not come into the equation.

Even though our system of governance has been prostituted by politicians and bureaucracy, it has served this country for the past 200 years and we have survived.

The flag! Well, that's our flag. It is known and res-

pected throughout the world and was/is looked upon as hope and freedom in times of world aggression since it first flew over our nation. So keep your bloody hands off it!

What form of republic would the republic hackers have us adopt?

The American republic system? No bloody way!

We have enough corruption in our governance as it is. We do not need to copy the American criminal republic system.

If you look at republican governments around the world, they are less stable

governance systems than ours.

Anyway, this republican push is irrelevant, because the republic question has already been trounced by a majority "No" vote in a previous referendum and this verdict should be accepted.

If the league of republican protagonists cannot accept the majority decision, then all I can say is "bugger off" to a country under republican governance and see if you are any better off!

N.W.H. Timms, Bungundarra.

drugs inside and did only 13 of the 150 hours of a sentence of community service.

When she appeared in court again recently, she was also re-sentenced for the original charges of stealing, unlawful use of a motor vehicle, drug possession and unlicensed driving.

She was given 14-day jail terms, wholly suspended, for the stealing and motor vehicle charges, a seven-day suspended term for the drug charge and a two-month suspended sentence for the DVO (probation) breach. And she was fined \$300 for unlicensed driving. Think about that.

This woman was brought before the court on fresh charges for offences committed after the car and drugs offences.

In the meantime, she had not fulfilled the requirements of her sentence for the car and drugs offences.

The point of a suspended sentence is to deter people from offending again, because an actual punishment will apply if further offending causes the suspended sentence to be invoked.

Granted, this woman's re-sentencing appears to be a slightly different situation - involving new sentences - but surely it should serve the same purpose, especially considering she had not fulfilled her community service.

What does it prove to re-sentence someone with a suspended sentence? The only actual punishment she received was a fine that went nowhere near covering the expense of her offences.

Some cars cost more to hire for the time she had the stolen vehicle in her possession, regardless of costs of fuel she used from the stolen car, inconvenience to the victim and involvement of

police and courts.

The magistrate said: "She thumbs her nose at authority." But does the court demonstrate its authority?

And the magistrate said: "What does she expect the court to do - pat her on the back and say well done, young lady, go on your way?" But isn't that what just happened?

James Brecknell, Kawana.

Cause of crime wave not difficult to find

TEEN selling drugs big time (TMB, 13/3).

Sentence - immediate release.

Why bother wondering why we have a crime wave when it appears there is little or no punishment for crime?

N. Gardner, North Rockhampton.

More letters on Page 34

QUOTE OF THE DAY

She spent so much time fighting the stigma of AIDS; someone like