

KYNETON/SUNBURY

Forum tackles use of 'ice'

Barry Kennedy

FORMING community partnerships, talking to families and learning more about the drug are among the key ways to combat booming use of methamphetamine 'ice'.

That was the message at a forum in Kyneton last Wednesday, which outlined how the drug was being increasingly linked to growing mental health issues and a surge in property and family violence.

Organised by the Macedon

MEETING GIVES RESIDENTS AN INSIGHT INTO DRUG'S EFFECTS

on Ranges Local Safety Committee, the forum featured Inspector Ryan Irwin and Crios O'Mahony from research and advocacy body, the Penington Institute.

Insp Irwin said annual March data for the Macedon Ranges showed crime had increased 13 per cent, with drug offences up 52 per cent, and crime against the person up 31 per cent.

He said it was evident the addictive drug had played a role in the crime rise.

"People here would have heard of how the communities of Geelong, Mildura and Ballarat are being affected by 'ice'," Insp Irwin said at the forum.

"I don't think we have a problem as significant as those areas, but it is here."

He said 'ice' was a whole-community concern and,

more importantly, a health issue.

Mr O'Mahony said Australians were the biggest users of amphetamines and methamphetamines in the world, with towns and regional communities places where its associated problems were often more visible.

"It's been seen as a cure-all and people are doing it for everyday reasons, such as

doing an extra shift, losing some weight, or even cleaning the house," Mr O'Mahony said.

Mr O'Mahony outlined how the drug worked and how naturally occurring chemicals, such as dopamine and epinephrine (the body's natural fight-or-flight reaction), were affected by the drug, and also the risks and reactions associated with prolonged use.

He said breaking an 'ice' addiction was a harrowing experience for the user.

Meanwhile, Sunbury Community Health Centre will host a drugs and alcohol forum featuring ex-AFL player and reformed drug user, Gavin Crosisca, and Alcohol and Drug Help chief executive, Belinda Walsh.

The forum will be held at Sunbury Memorial Hall on July 30, 7-9pm.

For help with drug addiction, call Family Drug Help on [1300 660 068](tel:1300660068).