

Ice app helps break a habit

By Matt Crossman

Sunbury community leaders hoping to develop an Australian-first smartphone app to connect ice users with mentors are calling on residents and businesses to help get the concept off the ground.

A total of \$60,000 is needed to take "Ice Breaker" from the prototype stage and put it in the hands of local people desperate to end the cycle of their drug use.

Bruce Howard, proprietor of the Angry Butcher Bike Shop, said flow-on benefits of the Sunbury Community Health-supported project would quickly recoup costs.

He said that if the app got 20 people off ice, it would have paid for itself.

Not that the small group of business people,

health workers and police involved in the project are seeking to limit its spread in any way.

"People always say if we can save one person it will be worth it," Mr Howard said. "Well, that's not my philosophy - I want this thing to save everybody."

The free app will provide information for ice users who have been apprehended or are keen to put a stop to their drug use.

As well as detailing help available locally, the app will link users with approved mentors.

"You don't have to be Einstein to see what's going on in the community," Mr Howard said. "We've got a huge problem with ice. What we want is for people to be able to tap into information that can help them change.

"My grand plan would be that every single police station in Australia could have a mentoring role."

The app will be completely anonymous, meaning users won't have to fear apprehension. Its content will focus on hope - a theme close to Mr Howard's heart.

"Seven years ago I lost my wife to cancer and I was contemplating no longer being on the planet," he said.

"I've got three daughters I've raised ... we always speak of hope. We want this app to show users that recovery from dependence is possible."

Sunbury Community Health community partnership and engagement officer Erin Callejan said the idea had great potential. To donate, phone 9744 4455.



BRUCE HOWARD