



Bruce Howard is working with others on a mobile app aimed at helping those with ice addiction.

Picture: KYLIE ELSE

Group gets hi-tech in fight against ice

Barry Kennedy

A GROUP of Sunbury residents aim to develop a mobile app and website to guide and support residents with methamphetamine addiction, and their families.

The concept called Ice-breaker has the support of Sunbury Community Health, which aims to assist in sourcing the \$60,000 needed to professionally develop the online resource.

The app, possibly an Australian first, would detail the experience of ice users in overcoming addiction as well as listing the local resources which support users and their families.

Group spokesman Bruce Howard said the philosophy behind the work was that recovery from addiction was

CITIZENS UNITE TO DEVELOP APP TO COMBAT ADDICTION

possible, and mentoring and other community supports were a powerful way to overcome addiction.

"I became a widower and single dad of three kids seven years ago and I am incredibly grateful to the Sunbury community for the support they gave me," he said.

"That experience made me really community-focused and my sense now is there is a big struggle out there with ice right now with a strain on health and families and police."

While in its initial stages, a web and app developer is on board and a non-live concept has been planned out.

Mr Howard said sponsorship and funding would be needed to take it further, but when developed it could be an Australia-wide resource with localised contacts and resources.

Meetings by the group in coming weeks will seek support while Sunbury Community Health is also on the lookout for appropriate funding.

For almost 18 months Mr Howard, the proprietor of the Angry Butcher bike shop, has had an informal program called Bike 2 Brain involving nothing more than a mountain bike ride for a different experience, "in the moment".

"I've told Sunbury Community Health I will take people out for a bike ride if they want to give it a try," he said

"Every now and then someone turns up at the shop and as soon as they park the car, it's a win ..."

"I've had some special moments and some scary ones too when I've taken out these guys, but bike riding has been really important to me in my mental health day to (this) day."

Sunbury state Labor MP Josh Bull told Leader he was keen to learn more about the concept, adding he was well aware of the devastating effects on local families.

Sunbury councillor Jack Medcraft said the app was timely given the growth in ice usage locally.