

Cartoon: Noah Jeffreys

Don't be alone if you're feeling low

EDITORIAL

By **ZANE ANDREWS, JACK BENIC, JACK OWEN** and **BRAYDAN HALLET**

THE worrying statistic that one in every five teenagers experiences depression before they reach adulthood should be a wake-up call for many in the Hunter.

Depression is more than just feeling upset or sad – it damages a person's mental and physical state and can make them feel guilty, worthless and often results in isolation from others.

However depression is a normal part of life despite the fact that it doesn't feel like a 'normal' state of being.

Adolescence is a time when teenagers begin to develop their personalities, sense of self and become more curious about the world that they have grown up in which leads to increased rates of risk-taking behaviours. These risks can include under-age drinking, reckless driving and drug abuse, all of which have repercussions that can make us feel isolated from family, friends and the rest of society which contributes to feelings of depression.

Teenagers are no stranger to the constant pressure of doing well in

school, maintaining a certain image, and peer expectations. This pressure affects some more than others. It can go unnoticed by many adults as most teenagers will hide this information thinking that depression is embarrassing or a sign of weakness.

There are a numerous ways to manage and understand adolescent depression. The easiest way is to ask for help and there are many avenues available for teenagers to talk about their depression issues. This includes people such as parents, grandparents and friends that they trust enough to discuss these issues with. There are also free helplines that are open 24-hours a day such as Headspace, Kids Helpline or Teen Line.

Youth worker David Hanson said "Teenagers often feel very stressed about many things such as school, fitting in with peers, and their future. Sometimes this can spiral out of control and lead to anxiety and depression when teens feel they have nowhere to turn to and no one to help. Our services provide an access point for teenagers to find the help and support they need."

The stigma of mental illness is slowly being removed through public awareness campaigns and this is enabling more people to take control of their depression and manage their feelings.

The importance of safety first online

By **GRACE REAY, EMILY DAVIDSON** and **TEMIKA ATKINSON**

WHILE the internet is an exciting and useful place for teenagers it can also be a dangerous place if they are not careful and many admit they don't know how to protect themselves online or what their rights are.

Every time that teenagers access online sites and apps they need to remember that they could experience cyberbullying, be exposed to inappropriate or harmful content, and that they could unknowingly, or deliberately share personal information.

Cyberbullying is when a person bullies another person using electronic technology. Cyberbullies use mobile devices and computers, social media and websites to post mean text messages, spread rumours via emails and/or social media, distribute embarrassing pictures and create fake profiles.

Using social media and other online activities means that children and teenagers can be cyberbullied anywhere and anytime.

Not all websites are suitable for kids and teens as some contain inappropriate content that may be sexually explicit, violent, prohibited or even illegal.

There are a number of ways to protect children online including using internet content filters, discussing the kinds of sites that are



Most teenagers are active online these days. They must be careful of the information they share.

they can steal your identity, pretend to be you on social media and even access your finances. To ensure you are not a victim of identity theft don't give out personal details about yourself or your family, understand the importance of using strong usernames and passwords that don't reveal anything personal and use a different username and

password for each online account. OK to explore, and those that are not and then exploring the internet together and bookmark websites for them that you have approved.

Your online identity is created by your personal details and if the wrong person has that information

By following these guidelines teenagers will be able to experience all the good things that are available online and avoid many of the pitfalls that can trap the unwary and uninformed.

It's time to stop rubbishing our region

By **LOGAN CONNELLY, ROHAN PEARSON, ANGUS HUTCHINSON** and **BRODIE COLLETT**

THE Cessnock and Kurri Kurri areas have recently seen a large increase of illegal dumping over the last few years and it is affecting more than just the environment.

Council costs are increasing each year as they battle to clean up the rubbish that is dumped by people who don't care about the environment or the community. NSW local Governments are estimated to spend \$10 million a

year removing and properly disposing of illegally dumped materials and landfilling.

Not only does it create an eyesore for bushwalkers, locals and visitors it also pollutes waterways, kills native vegetation, attracts vermin, blocks access to areas for vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians, and is a major burden to landholders.

Cessnock Council gives all ratepayers free tip



Too much rubbish is getting dumped in the bush.

vouchers each year but this does little to combat the problem.

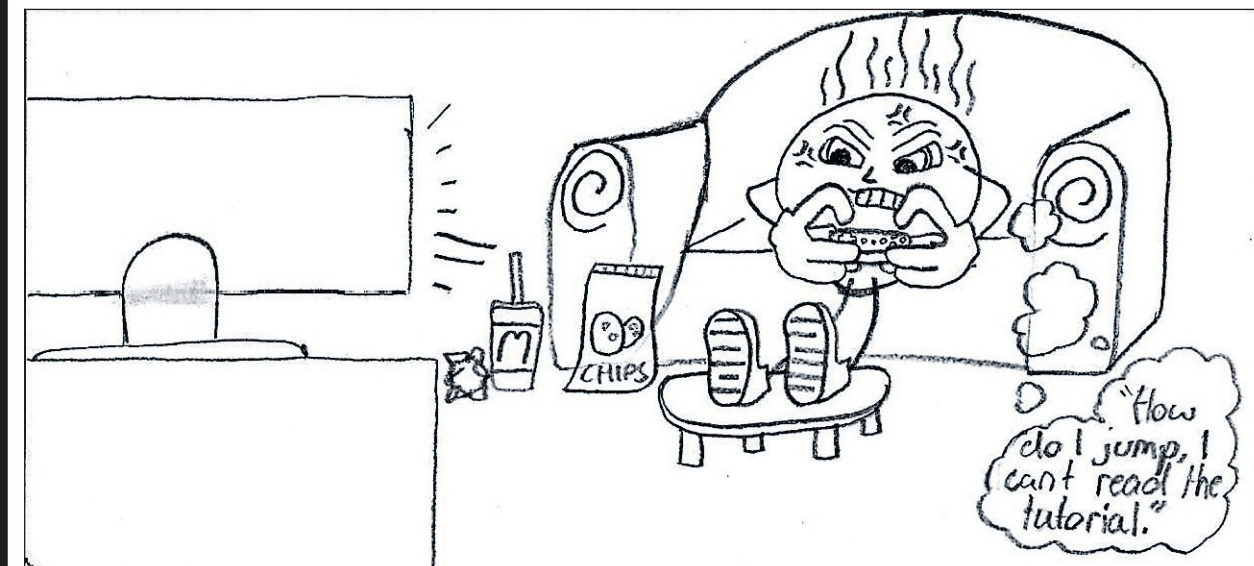
Options such as CCTV are being discussed to pre-

vent illegal dumping and the public are encouraged to report any suspicious activity they see in their area.

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