

Drowning a bright future with booze

EDITORIAL

By LINCOLN BERRY and
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AS a minor, I have noticed that alcohol is the drug choice among youths. Each year more than 5000 people under the age of 21 die from excessive or unnecessary use of alcohol.

As a result, underage drinking is a leading public health problem in this country.

Recent research shows that 40.2 per cent of children from the ages of 12-15 have consumed alcohol in the last 12 months and 30.4 per cent have obtained this alcohol from their parents.

This shows how easy it is to access alcohol, even though selling it to minors is an offence.

Drinking alcohol during adolescence can severely stunt growth and may cause a large variety of liver and brain problems after excessive use.

After researching such statistics it is easy to come to the conclusion that teenagers seem to think an "innocent childhood" is overrated, without realising the countless amount of consequences of alcohol, including health issues and strain on relationships.

So why do adolescents drink? As children move from adoles-

cence to young adulthood, they encounter dramatic physical, emotional, and lifestyle changes.

Children who begin to drink at a very early age (before 12) often share similar personality characteristics that may make them more likely to start drinking.

Young people who are disruptive, hyperactive, and aggressive as well as those who are depressed, withdrawn or anxious are at a greater risk for alcohol problems.

Today, alcohol is widely available and aggressively promoted. Accordingly, alcohol use continues to be regarded by many people as a normal part of growing up.

Yet underage drinking is dangerous – evident by the number of alcohol-related car crashes, homicides, suicides and injuries.

People who begin drinking early in life run the risk of alcoholism as well as placing themselves in greater jeopardy of risky sexual activity and poor performance in school.

American congressman Xavier Becerra has been quoted as saying that "it is critical that parents and other trusted adults initiate conversations with kids about underage drinking well in advance of the first time they are faced with a decision regarding alcohol".

It is vital that Australians consider the effects of our binge drinking culture on those who are yet to touch a drink.



Cartoon: Kai Webber



UPGRADE: Pluim Park renovations are now complete.

Picture: Brendan Huxley and Branko Bojanic

Pluim Park is ready to play

By STANLEY YU, BRENDAN HUXLEY, BRANKO BOJANIC and JORDAN VILENSKY

WITH the Pluim Park upgrades now complete, local and professional teams are lining up to use the pitch.

Members of the NSW state Parliament, including Premier Barry O'Farrell, along with local members Chris Spence, Darren Webber and Chris Holstein, handed over \$1.8 million for the upgrade.

Pluim Park now has a new drainage system, upgraded playing surfaces, a new office space, change rooms and an extended car park.

The park will now benefit thousands of footballers on the Central Coast and provide enhanced facilities for the Mariners National Youth League to use.

Gosford City Dragons under-18s player Bowden Hartshorne said: "The pitch looks superb, I can't wait to go out and have a run around. Hopefully it will give me the same feeling professional footballers get when they walk out onto a football pitch."

Since the upgrade, Pluim Park has already hosted a Socceroos training camp – the first time the Socceroos have come to the Central Coast.

Hartshorne added: "It was a great experience watching the Socceroos train... hopefully this upgrade will open up more opportunities for professional teams, such as the Mariners or other A-league teams, to train or even play matches here."

Facelift for an ageing epicentre

By CAMERON GREEN, SHANE McNALLY and COREY NASH

SINCE the release of the Gosford city master plan, there has been much discussion on whether it should go ahead.

Although the plans indicate a desire to improve Gosford, some residents fear the side effects of this improvement.

Concerns centre on whether the increase in tourism will bring more noise and crowd the streets, and where the original inhabitants and facilities of Gosford will move.

Gosford was once the epicentre of the Central Coast, but it has long been in decline.

The current plans under discussion include a facelift to the Gosford waterfront, an arts and entertainment precinct, and revitalising the city core.

The council wants Gosford to be the ideal location for family days out, social meetings and destination tourists.

Some plans include an upgrade to Mann Street retail, a playground, a health and fitness zone, and Gosford Harbour precinct. The new areas promise to be clean, with greenery to break up the concrete jungle.

There is no doubt that if these plans go ahead, Gosford will be a nicer place for visitors as well as current residents.

For now, it seems Gosford residents will just have to wait and see.

Time to put their finest feathers forward

By EDEN TWYFORD, RHIANNON CUNNINGHAM, MICHELLE MONDEL and TAHLIA ATKINSON

THE 32nd Annual Show of the Central Coast Poultry Club took place on May 26.

For the last 30 years many schools in the region have participated in the show. It exhibits as many as 1400 chickens each year, making it one of the largest poultry clubs in NSW.

The chickens are judged on specific criteria such as feathers and grooming, and can be entered in open or junior categories. Show secretary David

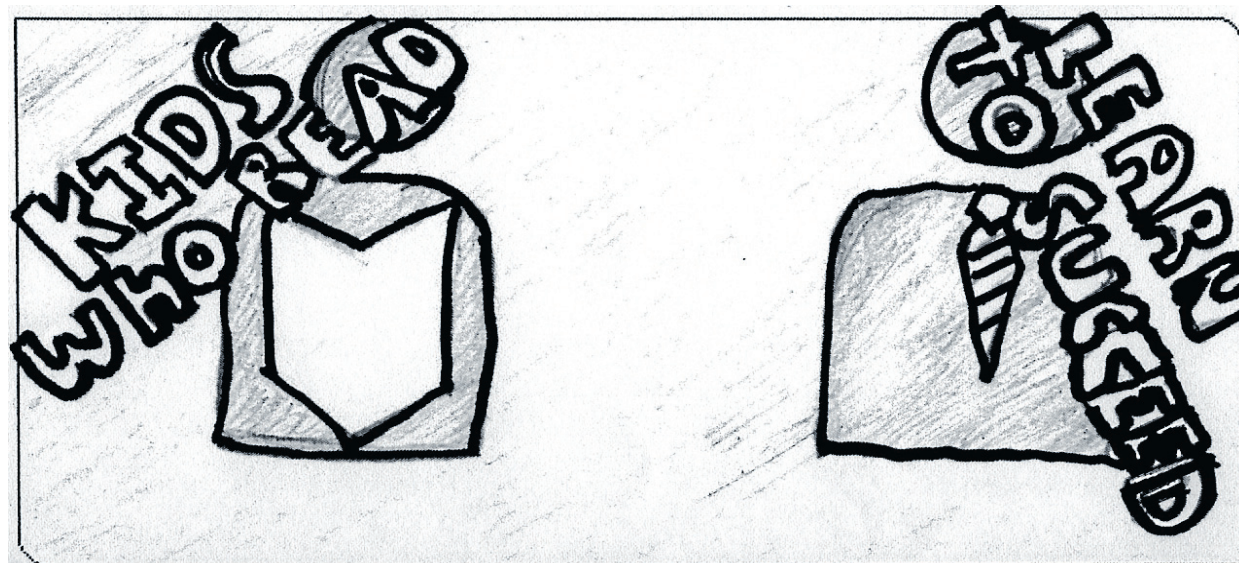
Gaggin is a proud supporter of the show and the involvement of local schools. Some of the regular school participants include Lisarow High, Berkley Vale and Narara Valley High schools.

Narara Valley High School has a fine reputation at the show, with students winning the soft feather bantam hen exhibit as well as being reserve champion for the junior exhibit.



GROOM: Shanley Roberts and Tatiana Pirie washing the chickens for show. Picture: Eden Twyford

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