

Education is at heart of ice fight

DENIS PETERS AND TARA FRY

COMMUNITY heavy weights, including high school principals and leading health professional showed their support for a local initiative to help prevent the use of 'ice' in the community at a meeting yesterday.

Leading Senior Constable Paula Cutler attended the advisory meeting to speak about the Great South Coast Ice Challenge and a project developed by the Southern Grampians Ice Committee which is made up of local youth and students from Monivae College to help educate young people about methamphetamines and the effects of using such substances.

Ldg Sen Const Paula Cutler said she has teamed with a group of passionate locals to create the game 'D-Force' which is at school kids to help educate them about 'ice' use in the hope it will prevent usage later in life.

The Southern Grampians Ice Committee are steering the project and have teamed with the Information Technology and Psychology departments from Deakin University in Burwood for five years to develop a program that can address the needs of the community.

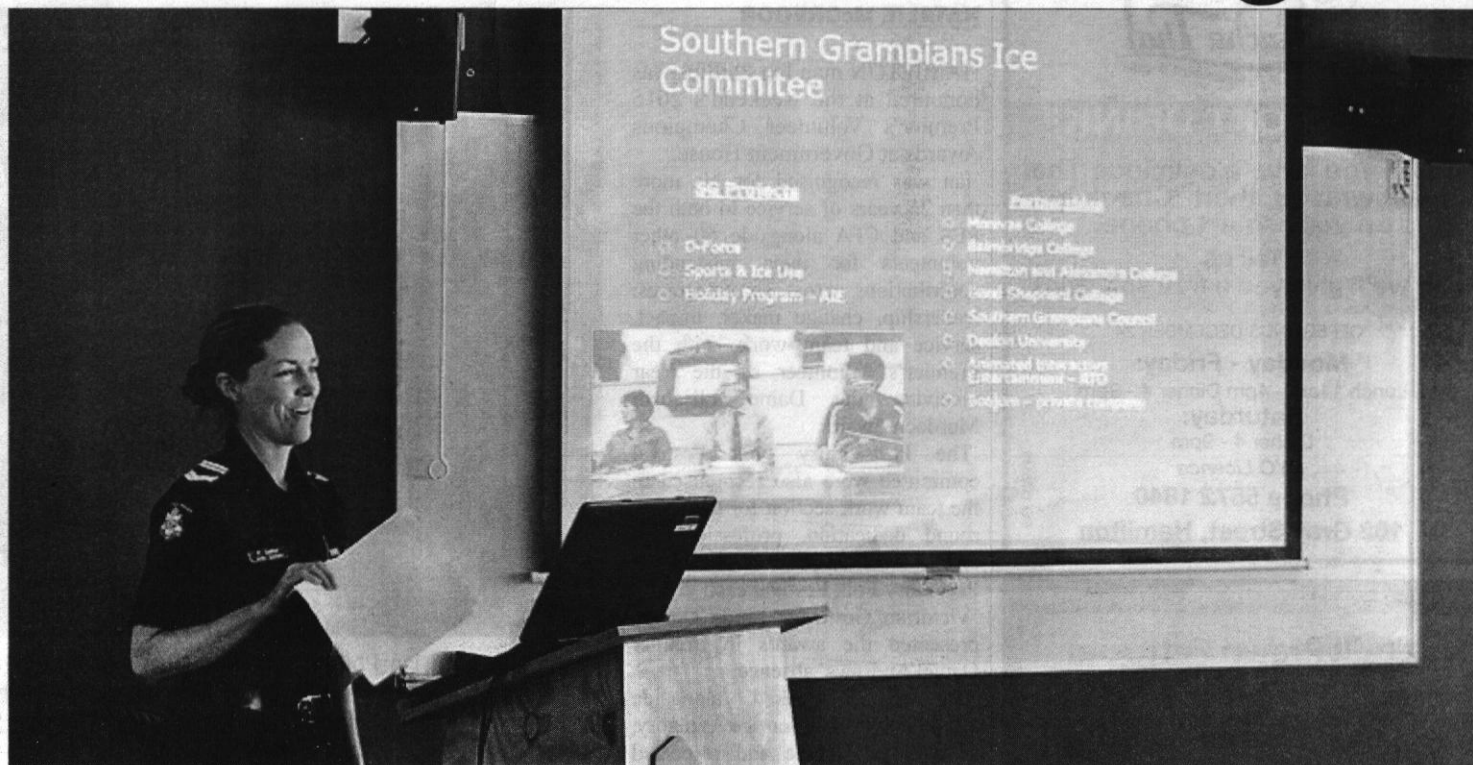
The game will be created in collaboration with students from Deakin University and students from district schools to create an educational program that will be a part of school curriculum in years seven and eight in the future.

Ldg Sen Const Paula Cutler advised the room of about 20 people that research shows, "Victoria has the lowest rates of methamphetamine use in Australia, but South West Victoria and Barwon has the highest rate of treatment entry for amphetamine use for 15 to 24 year olds."

These alarming statistics left shocked expressions on the faces of those present.

She said that the drug 'ice' is "so much more potent than any drug we've ever experienced before" and has created a "culture shift" in the local community.

The project will see Deakin University students visit Hamilton in early 2017 and work with students from schools to develop an engaging and



LEADING Senior Constable Paula Cutler brought her enthusiasm to the HDSC advisory meeting yesterday to talk about a game being developed to help educate young people on the effects of drug use. Photo: TARA FRY.

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educational game which will remain appealing to young people in the community.

This will be the first game of its kind on a world wide scale with similar concepts developed in America and as close as Geelong previously.

In 2014, Geelong experienced an enormous increase in the use of 'ice'. This led to a group of dedicated community members working with local employers to create a phone application that provided information on methamphetamine usage.

The application was used by employers in the city who made it compulsory for employees to complete before each day of work. This saw a dramatic decrease in crimes related to 'ice' use

in the area.

Ldg Sen Const Paula Cutler told the Spectator that it is, "incredibly exciting for the Hamilton district" being able to initiate something that "may give people all around the world some hope and opportunity."

The project is still in the early stages of creation and will continue to be developed in the coming months.

Representatives from local organisations that were present at the meeting offered assistance with funding, marketing and administration assistance to ensure this project can run smoothly.

HDSC board chairman Peter Ogilby's passion for the project was evident when he told the room

"the region needs Hamilton, but Hamilton needs to region more" suggesting that this project, along with others in Hamilton will not be successful without contribution from surrounding areas.

Ldg Sen Const Paula Cutler spoke on behalf the Southern Grampians Ice Committee and asked for assistance from the public. She said that the group needs urgent assistance, being committee members and funding to help develop the exciting project which will benefit the future of the community.

Anyone wanting more information, or would like to be involved is encouraged to contact Leading Senior Constable Paula Cutler at paula.cutler@police.vic.gov.au