



**Ready for a ball**  
Keilor's Andrew Payton has been selected to represent Australia in the inaugural Special Olympics International Cricket Cup in Mumbai, India, on November 6-13. The all-rounder was one of three Victorians selected in the 15-man squad. Find out more, page 103.

Picture: Joseph Feil

# Drug problem still rife

By Cameron Tait

CANNABIS, inhalant abuse, trans-generational drug and alcohol problems remain prevalent among the region's youth.

Some users are as young as 13.

DAS West Western Health youth outreach team manager Richard Marks says although heroin use is slightly down, many youngsters still do not seek treatment for ecstasy addictions.

The service reaches out to

western suburbs youth aged between 10 and 22. It offers counselling for drug, alcohol, mental problems, violence and sexual abuse.

The service's counsellors also make regular school visits in the shire to break down some of the barriers and tell students about the dangers of substance abuse.

"We get a lot of referrals from family members who notice their kids are having trouble at school or in their job and are heading off the rails," Mr Marks said.

"Alcohol continues to be the drug of choice because it's legal and easily accessible."

"There's been a shift away from heroin because of a reduction in supply and the negative consequences associated with it."

The most concerning trend within Melton shire is trans-generational drug use: both parents and their children are users.

"In some situations it's seen as acceptable by parents," Mr Marks said.

"Some parents are unemployed, isolated and marginalised, and we've even seen cases where it's stretched across three generations."

"It's really up to the parents to seek treatment as well and that's part of our job — because we try to work with the families and determine why their kids are taking drugs in the first place."

Mr Marks said a higher pressure on teenagers to succeed in school and in all

walks of life — combined with depression, anxiety and problems at home — often led to drug problems.

"For many young people it's still commonly associated with having a good time, peer pressure and trying to fit in."

Mr Marks said early intervention was still critical to prevent the harmful and potentially deadly consequences of drug addiction.

Help/details: DAS West, 8345 6682.

## Socceroos' honour

A PUBLIC consultation by Brimbank Council suggests St Albans residents are strongly in favour of the council honouring soccer heroes Mark Viduka, Kevin Muscat and the 2006 Socceroos World Cup team.

A statement issued by the council's media office stated 300 people attended a recent weekend sausage sizzle in St Albans Square hosted by Mayor Natalie Suleyman and Kororoit MP (Manufacturing and Small Business Minister) Andre Haemeyer.

"Some 89 per cent of those surveyed agreed the council should publicly honour the soccer heroes in some way," the council stated.

The council and Mr Haemeyer would discuss the proposal with Viduka and Muscat's managers and with the Melbourne Victory soccer club in the coming weeks, Cr Suleyman said.

Ideas so far submitted include a plaque or monument in St Albans Square, the renaming of the square, a 'Greet Your Heroes Day', a festival or the introduction of sporting awards in their honour.

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