Campaign to stamp out alcohol abuse, violence

EXCLUSIVE
Cathy O’Leary
Medical Editor

A major anti-violence campaign targeting Perth’s northern and eastern suburbs is being launched today amid growing concerns about rising violent crime, alcohol abuse and antisocial teenagers.

The plan, backed by more than 30 agencies across health, education, corrective services and police sectors, calls for more health nurses to help troubled children, compulsory alcohol and drug education in schools and more public transport after midnight to stop loitering.

It singles out alcohol as a major cause of violence and calls for tighter controls on the number and opening hours of liquor outlets. It also highlights young women becoming perpetrators of violence.

The campaign takes in the Health Department’s north metropolitan region that includes Northbridge, Joondalup, Wanneroo and Stirling, the Perth Hills and western suburbs such as Subiaco. The Injury Control Council of WA, which is leading the push, wants a higher police presence.

Chief executive Deborah Costello said there was an urgent need to make the community safer.

“Having a strong police presence and appropriate levels of enforcement can be a major factor in reducing violence and antisocial behaviour,” she said. “However, for this to be successful every effort must be made by police to develop relationships with the community.”

Police Minister Rob Johnson said rapid population growth was the biggest issue in the north-west metropolitan police district.

“The strategy recommends entertainment precincts have more effective controls around alcohol access and consumption and police will continue to work with licensed venues in the area to reduce alcohol-fuelled crime,” he said.

Luke Adams, who survived critical head injuries after being assaulted in Northbridge in May, backed the strategy. The former Swan Districts footballer, 20, said he had come close to death and was using the Luke Adams Foundation to educate high school students.

“I had to learn how to do the fundamentals of life again like speaking, walking and feeding myself,” Mr Adams said.

McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth director Mike Daube said governments were “dancing around the fringes” when it came to alcohol misuse.