



# Binge drinking tackled at the coalface

By JANENE CAREY

THE project aiming to address the culture of teenage binge drinking in 'Boozeville 2350' has kicked off its work for this year with a brainstorming session at Armidale High School.

Titled *5 in a row* (the definition of binge drinking), the initiative will engage young people in producing a range of lively, multimedia artworks, all designed to raise awareness and stimulate community dialogue about alcohol-related behaviours.

It will culminate with an interactive live event scheduled for the weekend of June 24 showcasing the short films and other media produced.

Beyond Empathy, the community arts organisation behind the project, brought digital media specialists Michela Ledwidge and Mish Sparks to Armidale last week to undertake a scoping exercise.

"The point of the brainstorming with the students was to draw out what's important to them in their real life environment here in Armidale," Mish said.

"What are the places that are significant to them, and what are

the types of media that are of most interest. So that when we come to develop the design for the final live media experience that will be happening here in June, we know what media and what locations will be most attractive."

Mish and Michela's company, MOD Productions, recently spent several months working with young artists from western Sydney to develop 'Detours and Destinations', an immersive arts experience that ran for three days at the Sydney Opera House.

It featured video displays controlled by a pressure-sensitive glow-in-the-dark dance floor, and SMS, Twitter and game controls which triggered visual displays of artwork and text telling the real-life stories of the 10-15 year olds from Campbelltown and Blacktown.

The students at Armidale High School also had the opportunity to meet Anna Cater, who is the *5 in a Row* producer.

Like Mish and Michela, Anna brings impressive professional experience to the project.

She has worked on ABC's

*Background Briefing* and *Four Corners* programs and her credits as a film producer include the award-winning films *Frank Hurley - the Man Who Made History*, *Outsourced!* (also known as *1-800-INDIA*), *Honeybee Blues* and *Dick Smith's Population Puzzle*.

Anna pointed out that '5 in a Row' was not setting out to provide easy answers to the issue of binge drinking, but rather to inspire both adults and young people to think about alcohol-related behaviours and their consequences.

"This project isn't intended to solve any problems, it is just intended to get a community talking. To raise awareness about the amount of alcohol that we all consume on every social occasion possible," she said.

Students from all of the high schools in Armidale will be involved creating short films, texts and interview-based documentaries that tell stories about alcohol use and misuse and explore risk-taking and protective behaviours.



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Year 10 Armidale High art students toss ideas around with visiting digital media specialists from MOD Productions. Pictured are Eleanor Prokop, Tara Fitzgerald, Mish Sparks (Mod Productions), Nicholas Kelly and Jackson Newberry-Dupé