

## City's drinking stories revealed

### YOUNG MAN:

"Alcohol hasn't played the best role in my life. There are a lot of heavy drinkers in the family who have drunk themselves to early graves. Yes, it runs in the blood and I wish I knew how not to drink. Um, I better get to the bottle shop."

By JANENE CAREY

ONCE it was used to transport horses - now it's being used to round up stories about alcohol from a cross-section of the Armidale community.

You walk up the ramp, push the curtain aside, and enter a small, private space furnished with a three-legged stool and a big red button.

A sign on the wall says: "Tell us about the role of alcohol in your life, and for your family and friends."

It's like a confessional booth, but with one important difference: what you say isn't confidential.

You are talking to a video camera

and your story might end up being included in an exhibition exploring alcohol-related behaviours and their consequences.

The 'Just One Less' mobile video booth is part of a film-making initiative that aims to encourage the community to talk about, and take responsibility for, youth binge-drinking and risk-taking behaviours.

The vox pops will be used in the interactive multimedia show, *5 in a Row*, being staged in June by Armidale-based community arts organisation, Beyond Empathy.



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Coordinator Narelle Jarry and lead artist Jonathon Larsen outside the 'Just One Less' mobile video booth

# Locals tell all on their experiences with booze

## CONFESSIONS

**YOUNG MAN:** "Alcohol definitely surrounds me. It's not something I particularly enjoy as it's something that causes you to lose control and I always like to be in control."

**MIDDLE-AGED:** "It's a gift of God, abused it can be very bad. It can relax and make a good time or it can mess up things."

**YOUNG MAN:** "I don't really drink much; none of my friends have reached the level of being considered an alcoholic."

**YOUNG MAN:** "Socially alcohol is important. A good way of loosening up after a hard day and socially lubricating interactions."

**YOUNG MAN:** "Alcohol hasn't played the best role in my life. There are a lot of heavy drinkers in the family who have drunk themselves to early graves. Yes, it runs in the blood and I wish I knew how not to drink. Um, I better get to the bottle shop."

**MAN FROM THE MIDDLE EAST:** "Alcohol is prohibited in my country because I am Muslim. We are not allowed to drink alcohol."

**YOUNG WOMAN:** "Unfortunately alcohol plays a very, very big role. I sometimes think it rules my life. I wish it didn't but I have tried. It makes things easier; it's always been a daily thing for as long as I remember. It's not only just a social lubricant but also a way for me to let go of everything."

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Since February 14, the mobile video booth has been roaming around town, recording shoppers in the Mall, students at the University of New England, and teenagers at various high schools.

Today, it's scheduled to be at The Armidale School from 12.30 to 1.30 and at Duval High School from 1.40 to 2.40.

Tomorrow, it will be parked near the Goldfish Bowl cafe in the morning, at the Skate Park from 1.30 and then at Midnight Basketball in the evening.

After signing a release form, and getting parental consent if they are under 18, people slip inside and speak to the candid camera about their experiences with alcohol.

"So far we have recorded about 70 stories," said Anna Cater, who is the producer for

the *5 in a Row* multimedia project.

"People are being very generous in telling their stories, and also very candid. Without any other presence in the booth, they seem to become quite confessional."

The retro-fitted horse float was lent to Beyond Empathy by Sally and Peter Strelitz from Milly Hill Lamb.

"It has turned out to be the perfect vehicle for the booth and also fits in nicely with the rural location of Armidale," Ms Cater said.

"It's quite a high tech fit-out inside the old float. A local builder Dave Howe did a fantastic job turning the float into the booth."

A curly wig, a red mask, and a hat are available as optional identity-hiding accessories, and people who are particularly camera-shy can choose to give permission for only their voice to be used.