

‘What I won’t accept is people running away’

GP’s drug action plan

Brenton Cherry

NORTHERN beaches GP Themis Garagounis knows teenagers will take drugs – in fact he accepts it.

But instead of another preventive initiative, the experienced GP has decided upon a different approach.

Yesterday Dr Garagounis, who runs a practice in Warringah Mall, launched a new drug awareness program, *3 Minutes: all it takes to save your mate* at Dee Why RSL in front of a group of students from years 10-12.

The seminar is based on an acceptance that teenagers will experiment with drugs and therefore aims to give them the skills and knowledge to know what to do in an emergency.

The program will also deal with the subject of recognising when friends are taking drugs and what to do about it. Teens will learn how to detect telltale behaviour and how to intervene or just be a good listener.

“Drug education is working but not in the right way,” Dr Garagounis said.

“These kids know what they are taking and the effects but not what to do if something goes wrong.

“That’s where the whole three minutes thing came in because that’s how long they have to act before the brain dies.” Dr



WHAT TO DO IN A CRISIS

- If your mate is vomiting, they are alive. Turn them on the side, don’t leave them on their backs.
- Ask your mate what they have taken, then call an ambulance
- Don’t run away – stay with them and wait for the ambulance

Garagounis said while he had noted a decline in smoking and alcohol consumption among northern beaches teenagers, more were taking drugs.

“People will take drugs, we have to accept that.

“What I won’t accept is people running away if something goes wrong.

“If your mate drops to the ground do not run, see if they are OK.”

Dr Garagounis, who has more than 22 years experience in helping families and individuals cope with the side effects of casual and habitual drug and alcohol use, said he hoped to introduce the program into schools.



Should the 3 Minutes program be introduced to schools?

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Themis Garagounis has launched a new drug awareness program.

Picture: SIMON CHILINGWORTH



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Dave Musgrove, who spoke on behalf of the “Freedom Riders” at Warringah Council, said Willoughby Council had managed to work with riders to build two facilities and there was no reason why Manly Council could not do the same thing.

“It is clear that there is a need for (these tracks), but if they keep closing them down it will just encourage more unofficial tracks to be built,” he said.

Manly Council shut down an unofficial bike park at The Grove in Seaforth in 2008, although it redeveloped the property and reopened it three years later as a sanctioned track.

Mr Musgrove said The Grove track had been built by riders over eight years and “bulldozed in two minutes”, and the new, official track only catered to beginners.

Mr Wong said there would be “a lot of work to be done” if the council was to reopen the Freedom track as an official bike park.

He said the “Freedom” situation was different to that of The Grove as the Seaforth bike track was located within a reserve.

“This is on private land owned by the council, so we have an obligation to do whatever we need to do as far as any possible liability implications,” he said.