

MEDIA RELEASE



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Embargoed until 5am Thursday, 4 December - News editors Dr Hickey is available for pre interviews. Please contact Sandra Kingston 0422 005 485.

Sports clubs part of solution to underage drinking

Sporting clubs should be seen as part of the solution to underage drinking, rather than being seen as the problem, a Deakin University researcher believes.

Dr Chris Hickey, from the University's School of Education is one of four researchers exploring different aspects of alcohol use by young people aged between 14 and 24 years of age. The research is part of a wider investigation into the cultural drivers of young people's drinking, funded by Drinkwise.

His initial findings, to be presented this Thursday, December 4, show the tensions rural sporting clubs face trying to comply with the law which demand no person under 18 years of age can be served alcohol.

"There is tension in rural communities because the sporting club is one of the main social centres - you will have under and over 18s mixing. At the clubs we interviewed, the parents and people we spoke to know underage drinking is taking place."

"The clubs are well trained in Responsible Serving of Alcohol practices, but this doesn't provide them with any solutions about how to adopt a harm minimisation approach to the problem of underage drinking."

"We came across a number of settings where Clubs are okay with young people under 17 being allowed to have moderate amounts of alcohol with the consent of their parents," he said.

"The parents we spoke to were happy with this approach. They know their son's or daughter's are going to consume alcohol and are more worried about them doing it in spaces where there is no moderation or surveillance. "At least in a Club setting there are adults around who will monitor their consumption rather than have them go down to the river and do the same thing.

"It is seen as a way they can learn about responsible drinking. "

Dr Hickey said the research came at a time of increasing concern and panic around young people drinking alcohol, and the precarious place sporting is this process.

"The people we spoke to were very measured in their calculations," he said. "For these people, supervised alcohol consumption was seen as a responsible approach to a tough issue. Perhaps it is time that sporting clubs were seen as part of the solution, rather than the problem."