

Mr BROCK (Frome) (15:55): I would like to talk today about a conversation on drugs, alcohol, youth and their safety. It was a recent forum that I held in Port Pirie. The theme was, as I said earlier, a conversation on drugs, alcohol, youth and their safety. This was born out of a community concern following an overdose in March this year and also of two serious adverse reactions to drugs taken by local young people in our community.

I wanted to get a message out to encourage all young people to make informed choices about drug and alcohol use and the likely consequences of risky behaviour. We all understand that adolescents are hard-wired to take risks, so I wanted to mitigate these risk by setting up a forum which would be interactive but also allow frontline agencies such as the South Australian Police, Drugs and Alcohol Services SA and South Australian Ambulance Services to offer their resources or, if you would like, to offer their tools to assist with decision-making, abstinence being an option, and that being the first option.

It must be emphasised that not all young people engage in risky behaviour or take drugs. However, I wanted to make a clear message in the community that said, 'Look after yourself and look after your mates.' The theme of the forum was pared back to grassroots levels so that the focus was not on violence.

Prior to the forum, I had a number of parents approach me with their personal stories and concerns. This representation was increased following the forum and these concerns were very, very heartbreaking and very, very frank. It was very apparent that, aside from the initial trauma that may occur with engaging a risky behaviour, the long-term effects are devastating at many levels. These include emotional, financial and social implications.

Regrettably, some events mean that the individual affected may no longer be able to enjoy a normal and productive life. This also has significant consequences for loved ones. Approximately 180 people attended the forum, ranging from students, parents, caregivers and also grandparents. The cultural diversity of Port Pirie and regions was also represented very well in the audience.

Questions asked of the panel members were well-considered and the responses ensured that most left the forum better informed about the risks associated with drugs and alcohol misuse. The positive feedback from the community has been very, very heartening. I am confident that we were able to make a difference. Our local media, including radio, television and the press, were very supportive and gave great coverage of the event.

I must also thank the Premier for his support of this forum and ministers Rankine, Hill and Portolesi for their assistance. The local representatives from the agencies charged with the delivery of essential services to our community, including Health, Drug and Alcohol Services SA, South Australian Ambulance Service, South Australia Police and the Department for Education and Child Development, were critical in the forum's success. Those who participated must be congratulated for their professional approach.

Thanks also to the staff of the Northern Festival Centre in Port Pirie and Uniting Care Country SA Port Pirie for their tremendous support, and also Dr Andrew Jayaprakash who represented the local medical practitioners. I also wish to recognise minister Kenyon for officiating at the forum and my EO staff, particularly Dianah Mieglich, who worked very, very hard bringing this forum together. It was not easy.

In closing, I thank the community of Port Pirie for their great interest and their encouraging comments following the forum. It is my intention to continue with these community conversations in my electorate in the new year.