

Hands Up Mallee aims for significant social change

WHILE in many people's eyes Mildura is a great place to live, unfortunately, it is also one of the most disadvantaged areas in Victoria.

In fact, it's the third most disadvantaged town/city in the State, according to figures produced by Hands Up Mallee (HUM) - an initiative of the Northern Mallee Community Partnership.

According to HUM, Mildura's rate of teen pregnancy, family drug and alcohol problems and juvenile crime are all double the State average, while Mildura is the second-highest ranked city in Victoria for family violence, and has child protection rates three times the State average.

While "sobering", these statistics have inspired the locally-based organisation to do its part in turning the situation around, and they are calling for community support to achieve their goals.







HUM is drawing on the experiences, expertise and knowledge of groups and organisations from every sector of the community to tackle the causes of social disadvantage. This includes working with non-profit groups, social services, businesses, community members and groups, philanthropic groups and government.

HUM chair, Teresa Jayet, said the initiative has a key role advocating for the alignment of State and Federal



Children - Our Community Data



-  Teen pregnancy is double the State average
-  1 in 5 mothers smoke during pregnancy, also double the State average
-  74 percent of babies are breastfed on leaving hospital, while 50 percent of babies are breastfed at three months
-  1 in 50 children are overweight at Prep, and 1 in 5 are obese at 18 years
-  1 in 3 children are not read to by their parents each day
-  1 in 5 parents reported concerns about their child's speech at prep (2015)

A snapshot of Mildura Local Government Area community data compiled by the Hands Up Mallee initiative (sources available at www.handsupmallee.com).

policies and resources to achieve large-scale social change.

"We need to take ownership of the problems facing our community and every person, every organisation, needs to do its part," she said. "We as a community have the most knowledge about the

issues we face day in, day out, what works and what must change.

"We need to hear the thoughts and ideas from people across our whole community, especially people living with the issues daily."

HUM is working towards social change by gaining "an accurate pic-

ture" of what the community's needs and priorities are, with Ms Jayet saying community input is critical.

"Every person in our community can become part of the solution by visiting www.handsupmallee.com and completing a survey about priority issues and ideas

• **CALL TO ARMS:** Hands Up Mallee deputy chair, Florence Davidson, Northern Mallee Community Partnership executive officer Cheree Jukes and Hands Up Mallee chair, Teresa Jayet, are calling for community support to help turn around the region's "sobering" community statistics.

for addressing them," she said.

"The website also has more data about our community's challenges, and a Conversation Kit people can use to start talking with their friends, family and other networks about them.

"HUM staff are keen to meet with local groups and organisations about the initiative and to host conversations to gather more feedback."