

**INQUIRY INTO STRATEGIES TO REDUCE ALCOHOL
ABUSE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN NSW**

Name: Mr Jordan Howe

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My take on the issue of Young People and alcohol use is for harm minimisation. I believe taking a 'don't drink alcohol' approach comes across as preaching and may make you seem old fashioned to many young people. As a Youth Worker I'm often hearing kids say to me or their friends 'I'm going to a party tonight and I'm going to get smashed'. I say to them that the choice is theirs and although under age drinking is illegal and you are well aware you shouldn't do it that mum dad and the police can't watch your every move so ultimately it is up to them. I explain the damage of alcohol to a growing body and mind then will say 'look if you do decide that you're going to drink at the party or whatever I'd suggest you take your time' I explain that if they attempt to show off and skunk or drink way too fast they will likely get sick or make a fool of themselves whereas if they take it easy they can judge the effect of the alcohol is having on them and decide to slow down and still be able to have a good time. I worked for over 10 years with the Dept of Juvenile Justice and have seen first hand the damage alcohol and drug abuse can have on young people and will often explain this. Because I'm not playing parent or teacher kids usually respect what I'm saying and hopefully follow the advice. If they are into things like sport explaining to them that most sports stars don't drink at all. A positive realistic approach to teenage drinking is needed and can be very beneficial in my experience. They have all heard the 'Drink and Drugs are Bad' theme 1000 times so a more personal and honest approach with harm minimisation in mind I feel is the only way to go for most kids. I hope this is of some help