

MAD but meaningful

Service helps tackle drugs

by **ROBERT SULLIVAN**

WHEN the Blacktown/Mt Druitt Community Health Service introduced a drug and alcohol program two years ago, it was called MAD for short.

It stood for Making a Difference, but the MAD acronym was apt in other ways.

For at the time the idea of addressing drug problems in a community health organisation was considered strange.

Deputy director Louise Calper said the service

had not realised the impact of drugs on community health.

"We have a wide range of services connected with families, however, we never used to cover drug and alcohol issues," she said.

"We did not realise the importance of drug and alcohol issues in regards to community health.

"Now we have a new program and this provides a more wholistic approach."

Ms Calper was speaking at a forum on drug and alcohol management held in Blacktown recently.

Coinciding with the annual general meeting of the Blacktown Alcohol and Other Drug Family Services (BADFS), the forum had a theme of "communication and collaboration".

Speakers reiterated the same point — that organisations had to see the bigger picture when managing drug abuse.

Blacktown Council's director of community and recreation services, George Coward, said council would soon venture into developing social policy.

Mr Coward said the council would prepare a social plan covering children, women, seniors, people with disabilities, Aborigines and people of non-English speaking

background. "We think that the family is very important and it concerns us when they have problems such as substance abuse," he said.

"We have a vision for Blacktown to be a happy and healthy city."

Collaboration was the theme of a talk by Blacktown police local area commander Superintendent Dennis Ballard.

Mr Ballard said he dreamed of the day when welfare professionals accompanied police on sensitive assignments.

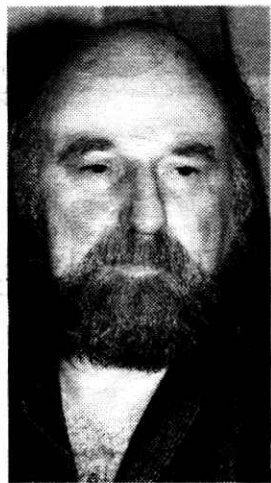
"Unfortunately, that's a bit of an impossible dream," Mr Ballard said.

"The mission is to have police and the community working together ... to make NSW the safest state in Australia."

Family Drug Support founder Tony Trimmingham said organisations had to realise that parents were the best experts on their children's problems.

"The old approach is that it was the agency's problem, and they were going to deal with it their way," Mr Trimmingham said.

Mr Trimmingham said the Federal Government wanted families and communities to become more accountable in dealing with drug problems.



Tony Trimmingham