

ABC North West WA Interview Transcript

Thursday 9th March 2017

5.10 mins

Interview with Joseph Dunstan (Journalist, ABC North West WA) and Catriona Coe (Drug Education Coordinator, School Drug Education and Road Aware [SDERA])

Joseph: *What's your response when you hear the phrase 'ice epidemic'?*

A drug research team headed to Carnarvon tonight say the use of extreme language to describe the drug's impact on our communities is in fact paralysing teachers, parents and community leaders from acting. That we've built up such a scary image of the drug the people no longer feel the confidence to do something about it. That's where the School Drug Education and Road Aware group known as SDERA is hoping to make a difference. Catriona Coe is the Drug Education Coordinator and she joins us this morning. Morning Catriona.

Catriona: *Morning Joseph. How are you doing?*

Joseph: *I'm well thanks. What have you been hearing from regional community about (ah) the way that people perceive the issue of ice in their town?*

Catriona: *Yeah, pretty much as you said. There's, the language that's being used is generating a lot of fear. People saying to us that we're afraid we don't know what to do, we're just really worried. Even people for whom drug use may be an issue within the family have said us we felt we just couldn't talk about it. We didn't know where to go. And people need to talk about it. They need that opportunity.*

Joseph: *And you're going to be coming to Carnarvon tonight. You'll be at the Carnarvon Christian School between 6:16 pm and 8 pm. Who do you want to come along and what will you be telling them?*

Catriona: *Any parents, family members, grandparents, carers anyone who have kids. We work with school communities, so our clientele are school-based staff. They get their chance to the sessions we are running the next day.*

So anyone in the community who wants to know more about what's really going on around methamphetamine I suppose to dispel those myths. To understand more about what they can do - a lot of which is trusting what they know and bringing it all back to communication.

Joseph, one of the big things that people forget is that drug use can be just like any other health issue. We don't need to be experts in the drug. We just need to talk to the person in front of us to understand more about what they need and what we can do to help them.

So we're there to provide information, facts, but also reassurance, and some tips on how to engage and open up those conversations.

Joseph: *Ah Catriona you've travelled right through regional WA, what sorts of stories have you heard from teachers at schools or from parents about the way they've been dealing with this issue of ice addiction in their community.*

Catriona: *In the communities. We have heard a balanced argument which I think that's what you'd expect to hear with any health situation. So for some people there is what you have referred to as that sense of paralysis. If you're stigmatised and less able to go out there and talk about it and feel a bit*

isolated and that's when some guidance and some contextualising of the problem because facts can be skewed if they are not contextualised and you can't get understanding.

And what we are doing at SDERA with schools too is helping schools to understand that because some people just say what do we do around this issue? Do we just have to move the student who may have a problem out of the school situation. And of course, the answer is no.

Drug use is complex. The behaviours that drive it are complex. And what you need is a plan. A plan for what to do to keep the student engaged and for staff to develop again the confidence around this drug use issue just like they would deal with an alcohol issue. Which by the way causes more harm than methamphetamine in our communities. A plan to help them understand what to do and that's what SDERA are there for. To help both parents of children, school communities and people within the school to have a plan and to know that they do have the skills and we can help them enhance those skills to help anyone who might be struggling with this issue.

Joseph: *And I guess Catriona if there are people listening who are in the middle of it what sorts of supports or resources are available to them if they are a parent, teacher or someone in the community group or a business owner maybe?*

Catriona: *Sure. I think you have summed it up really well Joseph in terms of the fact that drug use and issues around that can affect anyone. There is always hope. There are lots of services available in particular through the Mental Health Commission, the Community Alcohol and Drug Services. Now they're available state-wide and I met with workers from those agencies across the state who are doing great work. Presenting for treatment might be scary or opening up and just picking up the phone and contacting might feel frightening but there is so much good work being done. People with issues around this drug can get help and can get better; we just don't hear this message too often when it is being discussed broadly.*

Joseph: *Catriona Coe, great to hear that message and to have a chat with you this morning. Thanks for your time.*

Catriona: *Thank you Joseph for your time. Have a good day.*