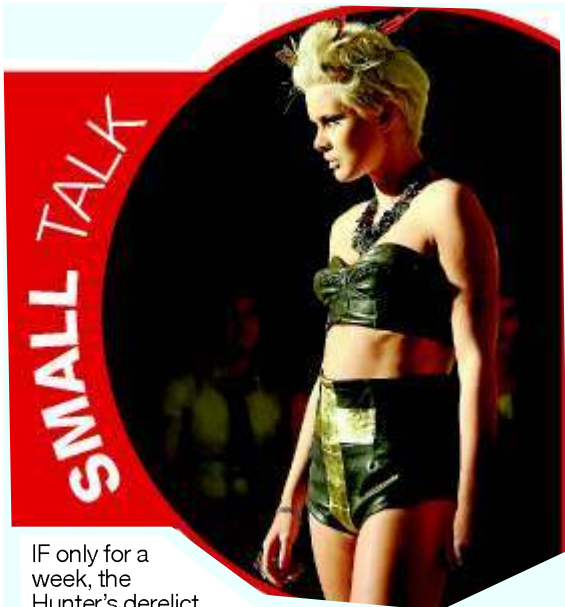




the word

with **Tyron Butson**



IF only for a week, the Hunter's derelict became designer and the rundown went runway as Newcastle Fashion Week took the city by storm. Last Saturday's closing night saw Newcastle designers including **Alex Norrie** on show with a range of swimwear and other funky gear at The Store in Newcastle West. It's the second year for Newcastle Fashion Week and **Louise Mackay** was once more the extravaganza's director. Key designers for 2010 included **Melanie Ritchie**, **Sheena Murray**, **Audrey Designs** and **Velvet Hummingbird**.

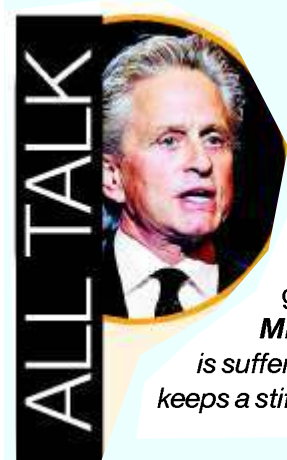
DITCH the suit and tie and kick off those stilettos for a good cause today. Get casual as part of **Dress Down Drug Free Day** to support **Hunter Life Education**. Dress Down is an annual awareness and fund-raising event to help provide children and young people with the knowledge and skills to make healthy lifestyle choices. "Hunter Life Education is focusing on the negative impacts of binge drinking and drug abuse among young people in the Hunter," Hunter Life Education chief **David Baker** said. To make a donation visit hunterlifeeducation.org.au or 1300 554 246.



JOAQUIN Phoenix has apologised for his deranged appearance on **David Letterman** TV chat show last year. The actor appeared on Letterman's *Late Show* wearing sunglasses and sporting an untidy beard and then offered a series of mumbling answers to Letterman's questions about his decision to give up acting to pursue a rap career. Phoenix has now admitted that it was all part of an elaborate piece of performance art.



Letterman said he took no offence, saying: "It was so much fun. It was batting practice, you know what I mean? Every one of them was a dinger." Phoenix said last year he was giving up acting for a rap career. He actually was filling a role for filmmaker friend **Casey Affleck**. This week, he was clean-shaven, with trim hair and no sunglasses.



Life is not all ha-ha-ha. But I am in good spirits. I'm an optimistic guy. Nothing has deterred me from my belief that I am going to beat this.

Michael Douglas, who is suffering from cancer, keeps a stiff upper lip.