



# Teens want drug talk

## Parents urged to 'open up'

AUSTRALIAN parents should be more open with their kids about drugs, according to a study which suggested many teens were left with unanswered questions.

Dr Jennifer O'Dea, Associate Professor in Health Education and Nutrition at the University of Sydney, said new research had shown teens saw their parents as key sources of information on illicit drugs as well as smoking and alcohol.

Yet for many young people this curiosity was not addressed, raising concerns the lack of information could make them more susceptible to peer pressure or marketing.

"They want to know why people do it, they want to know what people find attractive

about it, and what bad things can happen, and they want to have a conversation about it with the people that are the most important in their lives - their parents," Dr O'Dea said.

"Parents, I think, shy away from it because they are frightened they might give the wrong answer ... they find it hard to have the conversation, but the kids are saying any conversation is better than none at all."

The qualitative research took in the views of year 6 and year 10 students who had taken part in the Life Education program - a not-for-profit, non-government initiative that sees caravans visit schools across the country to provide lessons in legal drug awareness and other wellbeing

advice.

Dr O'Dea said while the research indicated the Life Education service had a "very positive impact on students and their families" it also showed many parents should be doing more.

"Parents think, 'we're not going to go there', but I think it's better to go there and talk about what you expect from your children - it helps them to weigh it up," she said. AAP

