



Forum a celebrated success



UNITED FRONT: Michael Parker (Liquor Accord representative), Phillip Penfold (Maitland City councillor), and Rob Walsh (school liaison police officer). Back: Students Melissa Gordan and Jess Mather, Megan Marshall (Francis Greenway High School head of welfare), Dr Elizabeth Middlebrook, and Wendy Birrell (hypothetical facilitator from Hunter Life Education).



By **MEGAN CUNNEEN**

THE Safer Celebrating forum educated, informed and enlightened the community about the risks and responsibilities involved in teenage parties.

The event, held last week at the Woodberry Family Centre, featured a panel of experts including a doctor, police officer, business owner and young people, acting out the scenario of an out of control party.

The interactive and educational workshop was organised by Hunter Life Education and Catholic Care.

Catholic Care Families with Adolescents Education and Resource project officer Kristy Durand said the night went really well.

"We didn't get as many parents as we wanted but a big surprise was the amount of young people that came along. It was great

to see them there because information about reducing risks at teenage parties is just as important for young people as it is for parents," Mrs Durand said. "Having so many young people there generated really good discussion after the presentation between the panel members and the young people."

Mrs Durand said the teenagers enlightened the adults to what really happened at parties, what the trends were and even what drinks were popular.

"The feedback on the evaluation sheets all came back pretty positive. The young people especially were able to identify that the evening's presentation was very insightful and their comments were able to give us some direction on how we can better support them, such as providing them with education around building their confidence in addressing drug and alcohol issues with their friends and family," she said.