Expecting change

TASTE OF PARENTHOOD: Helps teens make wise choices

EVERY parent knows having a child is as life-changing as it gets but how do you explain that to someone that hasn’t experienced it?

A workshop on the Coffs Coast this week aimed to help youth workers, health professionals and community leaders answer that question as part of the Core of Life program.

The national program provides teenagers a hands-on taste of what pregnancy, giving birth and caring for a newborn is like, preferably before they are expecting a child.

In a room full of people hoping to help 14 to 17-year-olds make informed choices, Helen Lambert spread knowledge on the best ways to communicate the facts.

"It's about the real picture of falling pregnant and becoming a parent and the changes to a person's life with regard to that from social to relationships and financial," Helen said.

"It's delivered through role playing and story telling."

The program has been run in other areas for more than a decade, with success measured in things like a reduced number of teenage pregnancies as well as an increase in people seeking support services when it does happen.

Participants in the workshop will now go on to deliver the Core of Life program to young people through schools in the area and places like the Bellingen Youth Hub or Coffs Harbour Youth Centre.

The program aims for long-term cultural change. "Usually it takes about three years to see results," Helen said.

"The results show young people more readily access support services available to them."

LIFE CHANGER: North Coast Medicare Local health equity project officer Rowan Lunney, AMIHS’s Emma Knight and Eli McGuire and NCML’s Helen Lambert present the Core of Life program to Coffs Coast youth.

PHOTO: GEMIMA HARVEY