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THE mining industry is 'kidding itself' if it doesn't think it has a substance abuse problem, according to Sideeffect chief executive David Hobbs.

"The mining industry has the same problems as building, construction and the transport industry when it comes to the use of illicit and synthetic substance abuse," he said.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime *World Drug Report 2017* puts Australia among the largest consumers of meth in the world and a study from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre showed regional areas account for 40 per cent of methamphetamine-related deaths; Sideeffect is tackling this statistic.

"Synthetic drugs in the resources sector and other Australian workplaces are the rise, with workers increasingly seeing synthetic drugs as an acceptable alliance in their careers," Mr Hobbs said.

"This is now a \$4.4 billion problem in Australia and needs to be cleaned up."

"We are finding more and more that high stress jobs with tight deadlines, lack of work/life balance, and lack of support are leading people to take drugs, particularly of the amphetamine variety, in order to 'achieve' the goals that are set for them, or that they may set for themselves.

"It can quickly become an accepted workplace culture, spreading like wildfire."

While mining companies have strict anti-drug and alcohol policies and rigorous testing already, the issue with synthetic drugs is that many still go by undetected because of their chemical makeup.

"All of these drugs are out there to mimic

other illicit drugs at a fraction of the price, the dangers are prolific, as there is no quality control and it is highly dangerous," he said.

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Mr Hobbs said he hoped once people heard that drugs such as meth contained battery acid, phosphorous, and lime – all things that you'd buy at Bunnings – they would reconsider going down that path.

"Unlike pharmaceutical drugs, no measurements were used during the manufacture, making the finished product different in compound every time that they are made," he said.

"We inform people what's in these substances, what the outcomes will be both short and long term and what they have got to remember."

Sideeffect conducts drug education programs across Australia, which have been developed with unforgettable content that is confronting, memorable and educational.

"We leave a lasting impression that will hopefully be there when or if someone is offered a synthetic substance to take," Mr Hobbs said.

"Mental illness, psychosis, job loss, community safety, family abuse, a feeling of isolation and disconnect; synthetic drugs have a whole bag of tricks that we need to start spreading the message about."

In November, Sideeffect undertook a course in Bunbury for apprentices at ABN group, including a drug education talk, and an assessment with a group of modules and questions related to synthetics drugs.

"It's been running for about a year, it's been road tested and it's different to other curriculums because there is a video that's very emotional that we show that's the story of Preston Bridge," he said.

"We're ready to get involved with other mining companies.

"We already do work with Rio Tinto, with

THE SIDEFFECT STORY

Sideeffect is a not for profit organisation born from the tragic loss of 16-year-old Preston Bridge in 2013 when he jumped from a balcony after taking a synthetic drug known as 25iNBOME at his school ball.

The organisation was founded by Preston's father Rodney Bridge, along with former Eagles champion Chris Waterman and corporate businessman David Hobbs, with the aim to educate young people about the dangers of synthetic drug use.

"Sideeffect is the legacy of my son who lost his life at the age of 16 by making one uninformed decision," Mr Bridge said.

"Let's stop our kids from playing Russian roulette and arm them with knowledge."

In 2015, Mr Bridge infiltrated Chinese drug gangs exporting to Australia and saw firsthand the deadly ingredients used in the production of synthetic substances.

The dangerous stunt proved that large quantities of synthetic drugs could easily be smuggled into the country undetected by sniffer dogs.

Sideeffect believes education is key to putting a stop to Australia's synthetic drug problem, and is now ready to fill that void.

testimonials from them coming back very strong, and we would like the phones to ring for other people from mining and construction to get on board and give us a hand."

Sideeffect is also launching an Orange Card initiative that will be rolled out across Australian workplaces to ensure employees have a strong understanding of synthetic drugs and the negative effects on work and personal life.



THE ORANGE CARD
PROUDLY SUPPORTING SIDEFFECT

More information can be found at www.sideeffect.org.au.