

# Help is in the mail

**SARAH LAW**

A SIMPLE yet effective method to help problem drinkers has taken a local research team to the finals of the National Drug and Alcohol Awards.

The Westmead team devised a unique, cheap and high impact method to curbing excessive drinking.

Associate professor Sitharthan Thiagarajan, Dr Frances Chua and Sara Lam developed the world-first initiative which enables those with a drinking problem to express their concerns by mail.

The statewide program is called Controlled Drinking by Correspondence.

Prof Thiagarajan said the lack of face-to-face contact is a major advantage.

"We are tapping into people's own strengths," Prof Thiagarajan said.

"There is no stigma in-



**Sitharthan Thiagarajan, Frances Chau and Sara Lam have devised a program to curb excessive drinking.**

volved because it's done by mail."

Those registered with the program receive four fortnightly mailouts tailored to their individual habits which provide tips on how to control their intake.

"A lot of people do not need to abstain. They just need to take it easy," Prof Thiagarajan said.

Dr Chau said one of the most remarkable results of their program was the high female participation rate.

While other drug and alcohol programs have a female participation rate of 7 to 14 per cent, "60 per cent of our participants are female," she said.

For more information, call 1800 006 577.