

Friday, 18 November 2016

## Having fun and staying safe at 'Schoolies'

The thousands of teenagers arriving at the Gold Coast to celebrate 'Schoolies' might be feeling both trepidation and excitement, but staying safe and having fun can go hand in hand by remembering a few basic safety tips.

'Schoolies' week starts in Queensland on 19 November as a rite of passage for many young graduates. Celebrations will take place at locations around Australia and overseas, with more than 30,000 school leavers expected to converge on Surfers Paradise alone.

According to Head of Client Services and Kids Helpline (KHL) Brendan Bourke, Schoolies is an important celebration and KHL would like young people to enjoy it and remember it for the rest of their lives for the right reasons.

"There're a lot of great things about Schoolies. It's a chance to relax after an intense time of exams and worry about doing well, as well as celebrate with good friends, school life ending and a new exciting stage of life that's about to begin," Mr Bourke said.

"While for many this is a terrific celebration, it's also important think about safety. We frequently hear of 'Schoolies' attracting people who are not teens who prey on the inexperience of some young people and the heightened availability of alcohol and drugs is also something to be aware of.

"We want young people to stay safe while having a great time and urge them to think about what they are doing, look out for their friends and remember there is always help at any time of the day or night through KHL."

KHL has a few 'Top Tips' for Surviving Schoolies:

1. Stay in a group and look out for your friends.
2. Think about safety in your room - avoid balconies if you have been drinking and lock doors, especially at night.
3. Don't swim or try and sleep on the beach at night.
4. Watch your drinks, and never leave them out of your sight. Drink lots of water.
5. Stay in touch with your parents and carers.
6. Remember it's ok not to drink or take drugs, even if all your friends are.
7. Take some time out occasionally.
8. Think about what you or someone else is taking pictures of or videoing - social media means this could go anywhere.
9. Go with your gut - if you're uncomfortable with a situation, opt out.
10. If you are feeling unsafe or coerced, remember it's OK to talk to the Police or another person there to help.
11. If you are worried about anything any time of the day or night, you can call **Kids Helpline 24/7 on 1800 55 1800**.

"KHL is here to talk about anything. If you are feeling unsafe or are just not sure about what to do in a situation when at Schoolies contact us. If you want to talk things over when you come home from Schoolies we are also here to chat," Mr Bourke said.

KHL is there for young people to talk to 24/7 from anywhere in Australia. It is Australia's only national 24/7 counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years - free call **1800 55 1800** or [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au).

ENDS

### INTERVIEW/PHOTO/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES

- Brendan Bourke, **yourtown** Head of Client Services/KHL
- KHL Counsellors
- VNR footage available of Kids Helpline call centre

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