

MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2015

Schoolies prepare for annual rite of passage

The annual Schoolies pilgrimage is almost here and for many, the rite of passage can be filled with as much trepidation as fun.

It's that time of year again when thousands of teenagers descend on the Gold Coast for the annual rite of passage called "Schoolies".

"Schoolies Week" starts in Queensland at the end of this week (November 21) and that also means the Red Frogs are on stand-by, final exams have been taken and the locals are preparing to clear out.

Despite all the talks, all the messages about drinking responsibly and all the worry from parents, organisers say one of their biggest challenges is dealing with alcohol abuse.

An Australian study from Flinders University has found no amount of safe-alcohol messaging will deter schoolies from binge drinking.

Kids Helpline General Manager Wendy Protheroe said youth, excitement and intoxication could lead to risk-taking and inappropriate behaviour but young people should know there was always someone to talk to.

Ms Protheroe said there was also enormous pressure to have a good time and that may mean taking part in activities they may feel unprepared for, or pressured into.

Kids Helpline is there for young people to talk to 24/7 from anywhere in Australia.

Ms Protheroe said counsellors are prepared for calls from teenagers ahead of and during the celebrations.

"Schoolies is an important celebration for many young people and we want them to be able to enjoy it and remember it for the rest of their lives for the right reasons," Ms Protheroe said.

"We 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."

Schoolies celebrations will take place at many locations around Australia and overseas, with more than 30,000 school leavers expected to converge on Surfers Paradise alone.

Up to 70,000 revellers from across the country will mark the end of their school years throughout November and December.

Kids Helpline has offered its top 10 tips on making sure young people remember Schoolies for all the right reasons.

Kids Helpline Top 10 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.



media release



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. Go with your gut – if you're uncomfortable with a situation, opt out.
9. If you need to speak to someone at any time of the day or night, call Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800).

Kids Helpline is Australia's only national 24/7 counselling and support service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years – free call 1800 55 1800 or online at www.kidshelp.com.au

ENDS

INTERVIEW/PHOTO/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES

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- Kids Helpline counsellor

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