



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Schoolies Week

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.31 a.m.), by leave: At the end of this week, more than 23,000 young Queenslanders will take part in a rite of passage—Schoolies Week. This celebration marks the end of the years of high school and heralds the beginning of a new phase of a young person's life. It is an exciting and challenging time as young people take on university, other study or work. It can also be a time for some sadness as friends farewell each other, the teachers who have invested so much in them and the schools where they spent so many years. So school leavers have every reason to mark this important occasion. And the Queensland Government wants to help ensure these celebrations are safe and happy for everyone involved.

My Government is happy to support and fund a number of initiatives designed to keep schoolies entertained, and safe, as they celebrate. The Sunshine and the Gold Coasts are the favourite destinations for many school leavers, and so that is where we have targeted our resources. On Friday, the Health Minister, Wendy Edmond, will help launch the Sunshine Coast Schoolies Week Festival. Queensland Health has produced a video for the launch, and that will be screened Statewide.

The festival began in 1993 as a community effort to deal with concerns about the celebrations and to redefine Schoolies Week as a positive celebration. It is organised and managed by the Sunshine Coast Community Drug Awareness Network, which is partly funded by the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. What we see now is a week-long celebration featuring safe, alcohol-free, quality entertainment for schoolies. This year, students will be able to choose from events such as dance parties and movie nights. And apart from partying safely, they are also expected to spend more than \$1.5m during the celebrations.

Of course, the Gold Coast is another popular place for schoolies to party. On Friday, the Emergency Services Minister, Merri Rose, will be on the Gold Coast talking about the dangers of drugs and announcing initiatives designed to help our young people. We have already—that is, the Government—contributed \$25,000 to the management of schoolies celebrations on the Gold Coast. The money will be spent mainly on safe entertainment, ambulance care and security. The Gold Coast City Council will match our contribution, and the Surfers Paradise Central Management Association will come up with another \$5,000.

As well as traditional Schoolies Week events, the program on the Gold Coast features "chill-out" zones in Surfers Paradise for the month of schoolies and on Friday and Saturday nights throughout the year. As well, the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care has provided the Gold Coast Police Citizens Youth Club with a non-recurrent grant to buy a bus to use during schoolies celebrations and to promote activities. Money has also been provided for the North Stradbroke Island Schoolies Week.

That is some of what my Government is doing to help make Schoolies Week fun and safe. As the Premier of this State, I want to send a personal message to all the young people who will be graduating from high school this week: have fun, but party safely. And as a father of three, I urge all parents to take five minutes to talk to their children and encourage them to be part of organised activities and to use alcohol wisely.