




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Schoolies Week

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.04 am): Next week will see the beginning of the schoolies holiday period, with tens of thousands of year 12 school leavers expected to converge on popular tourist destinations throughout Queensland. While our government does not encourage young people to attend schoolies, we are committed to ensuring that the schoolies holiday period is as safe as possible for school leavers, local residents, businesses and the wider community.

The Queensland government will be delivering local community safety responses at the Gold Coast, Airlie Beach and Yeppoon as part of the statewide Safer Schoolies Initiative, a whole-of-government initiative led by my department of communities. Additional police, emergency services, local law and licensing officers will also be patrolling schoolies locations. Chill-out zones and first-aid treatment centres will be available to support the safety of vulnerable young school leavers.

In addition to specialist support services, more than 1,000 dedicated volunteers will be giving up their time to help deliver vital safety and support services during schoolies. I was so pleased to hear that this year half of the volunteer workforce will be represented by returning volunteers who come back year after year to help keep young people safe. This includes Joan and Greg Darlington, who will be returning to volunteer for the third year. Both Joan and Greg do street patrols and walk-homes at the Gold Coast during schoolies week, sometimes finishing at 2 am, to ensure vulnerable schoolies are kept safe. Before they signed up to volunteer they did not believe in the tradition of schoolies. However, both Joan and Greg now support young people coming together to celebrate the end of their schooling and think they are very well looked after due to the Gold Coast schoolies community safety response.

We will also see Kat Deacon returning to schoolies as a volunteer for the eighth time. Kat started working with Red Frogs in 2008 to pursue her passion for helping young people. Kat will be returning to Australia from overseas specifically to work with Red Frogs at schoolies and will be leading a team of 35 volunteers in the 24-hour Red Frogs call centre.

To further strengthen our commitment to keeping young people safe, this year we are partnering with Our Watch to support the current domestic violence campaign 'The Line' to encourage healthy and respectful relationships by challenging and changing those attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence against women. Our Watch will have a visual presence at schoolies on Saturday, 21 November where they will engage with young people through the distribution of key messages focused on respectful relationships.

I am really look forward to visiting the Gold Coast to meet the wonderful volunteers and see the response in action. Keeping Queenslanders safe is one of the Palaszczuk government's highest priorities, and I thank all those involved in the delivery of the schoolies community safety responses for their hard work in looking after our young school leavers.