

Question on Notice

No. 2021

Asked on 7 October 2010

MR FINN asked the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women (MS STRUTHERS)—

Will the Minister inform the House of preparations for Schoolies Week to provide a safe experience for Yeerongpilly's young people attending this event?

ANSWER

Preparations for Schoolies Week 2010 are underway to ensure young people are kept safe. There are four key locations in Queensland where young people congregate to celebrate Schoolies Week—the Gold Coast, Airlie Beach, Magnetic Island and Yeppoon—and we can expect the majority of young people from Yeerongpilly to head to the Gold Coast for their celebrations.

On the Gold Coast this year, the Department of Communities will again work with Crime Stoppers Queensland to coordinate about 250 local volunteers and manage schoolies headquarters. Rosies Youth Mission, Drug Arm Australasia and Christian Youth Council will also be at Surfers to support young people with three recharge zones.

The well-known Surfers Paradise Chill Out Zone will operate with extended hours this year. Whether it is for a bandaid, a bottle of water or a bucket, staff and volunteers at the Chill Out Zone will work into the early hours of the morning to help vulnerable young people when they need it most.

The RACQ has also agreed to continue its long association with Schoolies and run free2go buses. The free2go buses will give school leavers a safe and free public transport option between the precinct and accommodation venues as far north as Main Beach and south to Broadbeach.

Around 100 staff and volunteers from these organisations will work on the Gold Coast during Schoolies. They will be joined by more than 600 Red Frogs volunteers.

In 2010, the Queensland Government has also provided funding of \$40,000 to the Whitsunday Regional Council for Airlie Beach, \$20,000 to Red Frogs Australia for services on Magnetic Island and \$20,000 to the Rockhampton Police Citizens Youth Club near Yeppoon to help keep young people safe at these locations during Schoolies Week. A further \$610,000 in funding has been provided to deliver the Gold Coast Schoolies Community Safety Response.

While the Queensland Government does not promote or encourage attendance at Schoolies, it is important that those attending are provided with a safe environment and there is minimal disruption to the local community.

The Department of Communities in partnership with other Queensland Government agencies and a number of non-government organisations, will also deliver over 250 school education presentations in high schools. These presentations outline students' rights and responsibilities while attending Schoolies and provide important information on key safety strategies which aim to minimise risk and harm.

The department has also developed key communication materials focusing on proactively educating and informing Schoolies and their parents before Schoolies activities commence. The Schoolies Information Booklet and the Parents Guide to a Safer Schoolies Booklet are available to school leavers and their parents living in the Yeerongpilly electorate, as well as the rest of Queensland at the website www.schoolies.qld.gov.au. These materials focus on safety, personal responsibility and respecting the local community.

To further enhance safety at the four Schoolies locations, an identification system is being implemented. Access requirements will be in place where Year 12 school leavers must

provide student photo ID to access diversionary activities and support services. Official Schoolies wristbands will reinforce the message that the Schoolies Community Safety Response activities and services are for Year 12 students only—

No valid ID = No wristband = No access. No exceptions.

The Queensland Government currently provides the general public with information on Schoolies activities and will extend the hours of operation of the Schoolies Hotline (phone 13QGOV or 13 74 68) during Schoolies. This hotline will provide a 24/7 contact point for information and referral for Schoolies, their parents and the general public.

Through the Safer Schoolies initiative, the Queensland Government is working to create positive and safe environments for young people and communities in Queensland during the Schoolies period.

I thank the honourable Member for his strong support for the Government's efforts to keep our young people safe and supported during Schoolies Week celebrations.