

Question on Notice

No. 2029

Asked on 7 October 2010

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

QUESTION

Will the Minister outline the measures that are being undertaken to provide a safe environment during Schoolies Week this year?

ANSWER

Preparations for Schoolies Week 2010 are now well underway. There are four key locations in Queensland where young people congregate to celebrate Schoolies Week—the Gold Coast, Airlie Beach, Magnetic Island and Yeppoon.

On the Gold Coast where the majority of Queensland's schoolies head for, the Department of Communities will again work with Crime Stoppers Queensland this year 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.

I am also pleased to advise 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.

As the honourable Member well knows, the Queensland Government does not promote or encourage attendance at Schoolies, however 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 will also deliver over 250 school education presentations in high schools, working in partnership with other Queensland Government agencies and a number of non-government organisations. 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 across the State online at www.schoolies.qld.gov.au. These materials focus on safety, personal responsibility and respecting the local community.

The Queensland Government also 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.

The Queensland Government remains committed to supporting the safety of schoolies and local communities during Schoolies celebrations. As I have said previously, I would particularly like to express my appreciation for the work of the non-government organisations and hundreds of volunteers who contribute each year to the Safer Schoolies Initiative and who help the Government to provide supportive and safe environments for Queensland's school leavers.

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