

Media Release

85% of 'schoolies' expect to binge drink: Parents urged to have The Other Talk

14 November 2013

Parents of young people celebrating 'schoolies', 'leavers' and end-of-school-year parties should make time to have The Other Talk about alcohol and other drugs before the celebrations start.

Julie Rae from the Australian Drug Foundation says parents can play a key role in reducing their teenagers' risk of alcohol and drug related harm by simply talking to them.

"We know 'schoolies' is seen as a high risk time for alcohol-related harm. Research in 2011 showed that more than 85 per cent of young people attending 'schoolies' expected to drink more than 5 alcoholic drinks a night¹," she said.

"Sending a child off to celebrate the end of their secondary school education at a 'schoolies' or 'leavers' event can be a worrying time for a parent," Ms Rae said, "because ultimately, we all want our children to be safe."

"This year we've created a dedicated online portal so parents can get informed about drugs and alcohol and find tips about how to have honest and open conversations with their children."

"In the lead up to the event it's a good idea to have The Other Talk - the one about drugs and alcohol - and discuss some of the tips for staying safe and having a good time during 'schoolies'."

Ms Rae said young people are particularly vulnerable to harm from alcohol because:

- The brain is still developing during the teenage years and drinking alcohol during this time may damage the brain and lead to health complications later in life.
- The earlier a child is introduced to alcohol the more likely they are to develop problems with it later in life. Young people should therefore delay their first drink for as long as possible.

"My advice to parents is: visit www.TheOtherTalk.org.au and get the information you need to have The Other Talk with your child," Ms Rae said.

"Remember you do have influence talk to them about the risks and harms of alcohol and other drugs, stress the importance of looking out for their friends, avoid risky situations and planning ahead."

"It's never too early to start talking about drugs and alcohol with them, so even if your child is too young for 'schoolies', have The Other Talk, but do so in a way which is suitable for their age and understanding."

... /2

¹ Jones S, Barrie L and Robinson L 2011 [Expectancies, Gender Roles and Social Norms of Recent School Leavers](#), Australia: Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education.

TIPS FOR SAFER SCHOOLIES CELEBRATIONS

- **You don't have to drink to have fun** – make sure you create good memories at schoolies not bad ones.
- **Have a plan for the week** – find out about activities so alcohol doesn't become the main focus for the celebration.
- **Stay on the right side of the law** – giving your friends who are under 18 alcohol can be illegal.
- **Take extra care overseas** – if you're drinking alcohol in Indonesia (Bali) or Thailand avoid cocktails and spirits that can be contaminated with methanol. Stick to bottled beer.
- **Eat, drink water** - if you drink alcohol make sure you eat too, and drink water between alcoholic drinks.
- **Avoid risky situations** – drugs and alcohol affect your judgment.
- **Be a good friend** – don't leave your mates on their own.
- **Alcohol and swimming don't mix** – don't swim when you've been drinking or taking drugs.
- **Come prepared with ID** – carrying a fake ID is against the law and you can be fined.
- **Think before taking drugs** - there's no safe level of drug use and you have no way of knowing what you're taking.
- **Never carry or consume illegal drugs overseas** – some countries have tough penalties for people arrested with drugs, including life imprisonment or death.
- **Drugs affect everyone differently** – just because a friend has taken a drug and is OK doesn't mean it will have the same effect on you.
- **Budget** –if you plan to drink, have a budget for alcohol and stick to it so you don't run out of money for other things.

KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET IN TROUBLE

- **Ask for help** – such as police, volunteers (like Red Frogs), and youth workers.
- **Learn basic first aid** – if a friend is drunk or sick, stay with them. If they want to lie down, put them on their side in case they vomit.
- **Call triple zero (000)** – if someone passes out or looks like they're in trouble. Paramedics don't need to involve the police.

For more safe 'schoolies' tips and suggestions for how to have The Other Talk visit www.theothertalk.org.au/safe-partying-tips-for-schoolies

Julie Rae (@raejul) is available for interview.

Media Enquiries: Jennifer Willis or Tara Oldfield - 0430 948 380, media@adf.org.au

Celebrating more than 50 years of service to the community, the Australian Drug Foundation is one of Australia's leading bodies committed to preventing alcohol and other drug problems in communities around the nation.

The Foundation reaches millions of Australians in local communities through sporting clubs, workplaces, health care settings and schools, offering educational information, drug and alcohol prevention programs and advocating for strong and healthy communities.

Alcohol & drug information
Community programs
Policy and advocacy
Workplace services