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AMA WARNS SCHOOL LEAVERS TO PROTECT THEIR HEALTH AND REPUTATION DURING SCHOOLIES WEEK

AMA Vice President, Dr Stephen Parnis, said today that the AMA is urging school leavers celebrating Schoolies Week around the country to ensure their celebrations are memorable for all the right reasons.

Schoolies Week is being celebrated in Queensland this week, with activities in other States commencing this weekend.

Dr Parnis, an emergency physician, said end-of-school celebrations should not involve visits to hospital emergency departments or embarrassing images being circulated via mobile phones.

“Many school leavers have worked hard to complete their studies, and their desire to celebrate with friends is understandable,” Dr Parnis said.

“But small and often innocent mistakes can lead to young people spending time in the emergency department or in other unwanted situations. There are occasional tragedies.

“Marking the end of school and the beginning a new stage of life should be about positive experiences and good memories, not accidents or misadventures.

“Many of the problems that arise during Schoolies Week are related to alcohol.

“Binge drinking is harmful and puts your own health at risk. It can also lead to poor judgement that puts other people at risk of harm.”

The AMA is also cautioning school leavers to be aware of the humiliating and harmful stories and images that can be instantly circulated via smart phones and social media.

“It’s important for young Australians to keep an eye out for their friends,” Dr Parnis said.

“If they’re drinking too much and acting inappropriately, let them know. If they are involved in a dangerous or risky situation, help them out or find someone who can.

“School leavers should also be cautious and careful in matters relating to their sexual health.

“Poor decision making, especially under the influence of alcohol, can result in a range of regrettable problems, like sexually transmitted infections.

“Young people should talk to their partner openly and honestly about safe sex.

“Getting through secondary school and preparing for a new chapter in life should be an exciting time, and worthy of celebration.

“Taking simple precautions to look after their health, and the health of their companions, will make Schoolies Week celebrations memorable for school leavers – for all the right reasons,” Dr Parnis said.

The effects of alcohol on school leavers during Schoolies Week is clearly illustrated in 2013 research conducted by not-for-profit organisation, Drug ARM Australasia, with:

- 75.2 per cent reported being drunk;
 - 41.1 per cent reported having a hangover;
 - 26.4 per cent reported vomiting;
 - 20.5 per cent reported having passed out; and
 - 24.6 per cent reported having have been injured due to excessive consumption of alcohol.
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