

# **School Leavers' Celebrations on Rottnest Island: Formative Evaluation Report**

**Troy Bogaards**

**Richard Midford**

**Fiona Farrington**

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Institute, Curtin University of Technology for the School  
Drug Education Project, Western Australia**

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**Copies of the report can be obtained from:**

The Administrative Assistant  
The National Drug Research Institute  
GPO Box U1987, Perth, WA 6845

Telephone: (08) 9426 4222  
Facsimile: (08) 9486 9477

Email: [enquiries@ndri.curtin.edu.au](mailto:enquiries@ndri.curtin.edu.au)

Web: <http://www.curtin.edu.au/curtin/centre/ndri/>

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

School leaver celebrations in Western Australia mark the completion of 12 years of schooling. The celebrations occur during late November/early December and last for approximately 10 days. Intense socialising is the key objective of school leavers and anecdotal reports from previous celebrations indicate that this is facilitated by excessive consumption of alcohol, resulting in potentially risky behaviour. School leaver celebrations have developed a particular reputation for excessive alcohol consumption and high-risk behaviour and while to date there have been no deaths, there is concern that this is a likely outcome unless some prevention measures are taken. One of the popular destination for leavers (16-17 year olds) to mark this milestone is Rottnest Island, located 20 kilometres off the coast to the West of Perth.

In America, college students have been participating in 'Spring Break' activities (the US equivalent of school leavers' celebrations) since 1938 when the first College Swim Forum was held in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Researchers looking at this North American phenomenon have found that binge drinking, other drug use, violence and sexual promiscuity go hand-in-hand with student celebrations at beachfront destinations. Obviously the negative impact on the community of these occurrences is enormous and has led to public outcry and condemnation to relevant governmental bodies and connected authorities. As a consequence, the festivities are controlled to the point where many of these infamous locations no longer remain an attractive party destination for the majority of college students.

To date, there have been only **three** substantial Australian studies that have attempted to investigate drug and alcohol consumption connected with school leaver celebrations and both of these have been conducted on the Gold Coast. These studies indicate that over half the students that were interviewed consumed alcohol everyday and that the majority of these, especially the males, did so to the point of intoxication.

In response to the perceived problems associated with the school leaver celebrations at a number of popular holiday locations in Western Australia, the School Drug Education Project (SDEP) received funding from the National School Drug Education Strategy, through the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) to investigate the school leaver phenomenon. The 'Leavers Live', School Community

Transition Project aims to identify, promote and support viable local community strategies to reduce the problems associated with the celebrations for the school leavers and the host community.

The purpose of this formative study is twofold. Firstly, to gain an understanding of behaviour that occurred during the course of the school leaver celebrations and the impact of this behaviour on the host community and on the leavers themselves. Secondly, to use this understanding of what occurs during the leavers' celebrations to recommend an integrated range of activities that would be attractive to school leavers and act to reduce high-risk drinking and associated harm. Rottnest Island was selected as the site for the study because of its popularity with 'leavers', its compact holiday area and its accessibility from Perth. Responses were gathered from firstly, the 1999 school leaver population themselves (questions were asked of the school leavers at various times and locations before, during and returning from their stay on Rottnest and the responses were grouped accordingly) and the major business and service provision stakeholders on the island. Additionally one of the researchers spent five days living on Rottnest during the celebrations and documented activities that occurred during this time.

The school leavers interviewed had high expectations about what the celebrations at Rottnest would involve. These expectations seemed to stem from the media focus on the island during leavers' week and the reputation the island has gained for excessive alcohol consumption and high-risk behaviour during this period. Given these huge expectations, it appears that with each year of leavers, comes the need to have a celebration bigger and better than the last.

Clearly alcohol plays a major role in these celebrations and the impetus to drink on the island is heightened by a number of important factors. Firstly, school leavers are going to the island with the express intention of meeting and socialising with others of their age. Secondly, the vast majority of both male and female leavers have pre-purchased a large proportion of their alcohol requirements before departing and are therefore going to the island with the definite intention of consuming most of what they have brought. Thirdly, the large amount of alcohol that each individual has bought over with them seems to be indirectly proportional to the amount of activities that they presume will be on offer at the island. In other words, most of the respondents interviewed believe

alcohol will definitely be the key interactive tool and that most 'activities' of a social nature will somehow involve alcohol either before, during or after. The fact that there are few actual activities organised to enhance the socialisation process means that many leavers feel there is nothing else to do but drink.

As a result of the large amount of alcohol available and the lack of alternative activities, many leavers are regularly engaging in high-risk drinking and potentially harmful behaviour. This was supported by the field researchers' observations that school leavers were using speed-drinking methods such as 'funnels' to rapidly increase their alcohol intake over a short period of time. Additionally, the field researcher observed leavers' intoxicated behaviour in and around their accommodation, the settlement area and the hotel area. This behaviour included verbal harassment and abuse, physical violence, vomiting, injuries caused by impaired coordination and hangovers.

Nearly all males interviewed had seen or experienced first hand physical violence of some degree and indicated that there was a definite increase in tension after dusk. Respondents definitely attributed this to the amount and intensity of the drinking that is being done during the day. Once boredom set in, many big groups of intoxicated males went looking to start trouble. Although most of the aggressive behaviour displayed by the males tends to be verbal and at most, some pushing, although the field researcher did actually observe males being punched for no particular reason. In addition, the field researcher observed that violent or potentially violent situations arose when older males (19 – 20 year olds) entered the area where the leavers congregated, with the express purpose of causing trouble. Key informants confirmed that it is these older males who often caused the trouble for which the leavers were blamed.

As on the Gold Coast, female respondents experienced an enormous amount of sexual harassment, although, due to little visible Police presence, many incidents tended to be dealt with by the leavers themselves. In most cases, the perpetrators suffered no adverse consequences for their behaviour. Most of the sexual harassment towards females was verbal, becoming very abusive as day turned into night and males became intoxicated. The females seemed far more aware and concerned about the potential harms associated with excessive alcohol use than the males. In particular, the female

leavers interviewed were very aware of problems they may face when socialising with or near drunken males and had strategies planned to deal with these harms. These strategies involved staying in or around groups of known people and being very vigilant with their own alcohol and other drug intake.

The young people spoken to at Rottnest were very wary of discussing their illicit drug use and only really felt comfortable talking about their marijuana use. Under 5% of both males and females indicated they had bought the drug over with them and only 15% of males and 6% of females admitted to smoking some during their stay on the island. Designer drugs such as ecstasy, speed and cocaine were condemned by most respondents at Rottnest, with many believing they have no place there due to the relaxed, mellow atmosphere of the island.

Comments from key informants supported the survey findings, that few leavers were using other drugs. The Police reported no illicit drug arrests, although the leavers did indicate that Dexamphetamine was readily available. Although illicit drug use did not appear to be prevalent on the island the field researcher got a sense that more occurred than was admitted and the potential harm from such use can not be ignored.

When questioned about activities that they would find attractive, the majority of leavers identified some type of activity that involved music. The most requested activity was dance music played by DJ's in a 'low-key', purpose-built location. It was clear the leavers wanted somewhere to dance and socialise with their friends. The leavers consistently commented that night-time activities tended to be heavily alcohol-based due to a decided lack of attractive alternatives. Music oriented events would take the emphasis off alcohol and punctuate otherwise continual binging. If conducted with a discrete Police presence, these events could become a 'safe' area where leavers could socialise and dance without the threat of their intoxicated peers causing them duress or harm. Given that the majority of leavers stayed on the island for between two and five days it is apparent that a range of day and night time activities should be organised over the entire week of celebrations. It is important to note that the majority of leavers indicated that they had chosen Rottnest because of its relaxed atmosphere, free from the restrictions imposed on them by months of study and the pressure of exams. It is clear therefore, that for activities to be attractive to leavers they should be relatively low key, involve music and impose few rules and restrictions.



The following recommendations for school leaver intervention activities at Rottnest are based on information gathered from the 1999 school leavers and key informants and observations made by the field researcher.

## **ABBREVIATED RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Activities - Day and night***

- 'Laid back' dance tent with portable dance floor and live 'DJ' created dance music.
- Transportable Radio station playing requested music and holding competitions, skate demonstrations, beach fashion parades, give-aways, etc.
- Free low-key beach activities during the day including beach cricket/volleyball.
- Flyer put up in each cottage or bungalow that tells leavers what's on, where and when.

### ***Food***

- Set-up food stalls at night selling a range of convenience foods.
- Canvas food and drink companies to sponsor a daily 'recovery breakfast' or 'sausage sizzle'.

### ***Police***

- Speak to schools with Ranger/Environmental Officer and 'Leavers Live' project officer.
- Select additional officers with good youth skills and emphasise pre-emptive contact.

### ***Availability of alcohol***

- Cease home delivery services from liquor retailers on the island.
- More thorough ID checks at all liquor vending outlets, including the hotel.

### ***Medical Aid –Sobering up centre***

- 'Sobering-up/Chill-out' tent with beds and first aid qualified personnel.

### ***Other Recommendations***

- Parents sent a booklet that clearly outlines potential harms existing on Rottnest.
- 'Leaver ID' cards issued to all leavers that have booked accommodation on the island.
- More equipment available to hire for use in cottages and chalets.
- Increased portable lighting in critical locations.

## INTRODUCTION

School leaver celebrations in Western Australia mark the completion of 12 years of study by leavers from both public and private secondary schools. The celebrations occur during late November/early December and last for approximately 10 days. One of the popular destinations for leavers (16-17 year olds) to celebrate this milestone is Rottnest Island, located 20 kilometres off the coast to the West of Perth. Intense socialising is the key objective of school leavers and anecdotal reports from previous celebrations indicate that this is facilitated by copious consumption of alcohol. As Rottnest has increasingly become one of the preferred celebratory locations, media interest has increased, with stories tending to highlight the excesses that accompany the celebrations. As a result the school leaver celebrations at Rottnest have developed a particular reputation for alcohol consumption and high-risk behaviour. Although this may be unpalatable to the Rottnest community, this reputation makes the island intrinsically attractive to adolescents. Although to this date there have been no deaths, many stakeholders are concerned that this is a likely outcome, if excessive alcohol/drug intake remains a part of the celebratory activities. Like Queensland's Gold Coast 'Schoolies Week' celebrations, pressure has been exerted from various Government and education agencies to implement strategies to provide alternate social activities, as a way of reducing the emphasis on drinking. As well as the legal ramifications of underage drinking (most school leavers are 16-17 years of age), there are also concerns about the potentially harmful interpersonal violence and health consequences of excessive consumption.

In America, college students have been participating in 'Spring Break' activities (the US equivalent of school leavers' celebrations) since 1938 when the first College Swim Forum was held in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Two particular groups of researchers who have undertaken the first empirical study of this phenomenon in North America are Smeaton *et al* [1] and Josiam *et al* [2]. In two separate reports, they analysed the same data on binge drinking at the beachfront destination of Panama City Beach, Florida. Josiam *et al* [2], whose study of 795 respondents vacationing over a 7 day period in March 1995, indicated that, "The majority of females (56.5%) reported a frequency of being intoxicated which ranged from 'never' (9%) to 'several times' (24.2%). Among males, the majority (75%) reported a frequency which ranged from 'everyday'

(40.5%) to 'always' (21.4%).” (P 507) Analysing the same data, Smeaton *et al* [1] reported that,

*“Men consumed significantly more drinks than women the previous day and the previous night. When we combined the two time intervals, the average man reported consuming 18 drinks the previous day, and the average woman consumed 10 drinks. More than 90% of the men reported at least one-binge-drinking episode and nearly 70% reported two. Among the women, nearly 80% binged the previous day.”* (P 249)

Josiam *et al* [2] found that there also seems to be an underlying link between this excessive alcohol consumption and increased sexual activity,

*“Males had five times as many partners during their spring break than during the week before.”* (P 505)

As an aside Josiam *et al* [2] noted that,

*“... the number of sexual partners for males is likely to be an indicator of the 'success' of their spring break holiday. Even males with an on-going relationship at home might feel that they have to prove such 'success' to themselves and their male peers.”* (P 506)

Josiam *et al* [2], introduced their report by giving an interesting history of the 'Spring Breaks' gradual increase in popularity; its rise to its infamous worst and the reaction from the communities that caused the marked decrease in the student reveller population. They described how the fairly soft beginnings of the gatherings have developed into drunken, anti-social sex romps with severe impact on holiday communities. This is evidenced by the researchers' comments that,

*“... in more recent times spring break has become known for more extreme behaviour such as binge drinking, drug taking and sexual promiscuity. In 1985, 7 student revellers died in Fort Lauderdale after overdosing on drugs and alcohol. Furthermore, riots occurred during the spring break periods in Palm Springs in '86, and in Daytona Beach in '89.”* (P 502)

Obviously the negative impact on the community after these occurrences was enormous and this led to a public outcry to relevant authorities. As a consequence, the festivities were controlled to the point where it no longer remained an attractive party

location for the majority of leavers. Josiam et al [2] provided evidence of this by specifically referring to an example of this community action at one of the most popular beachside locations in Florida. They stated,

*“Perhaps the best known example of that is of Fort Lauderdale. Following several years of uncontrollable crowds and the student deaths of 1985, the city of Fort Lauderdale decided to literally ‘close down’ spring break in the later part of the 1980s. In 1985, the city had received a record of 350,000 spring breakers. By 1991, that had dropped to less than 30,000.” (P 502)*

To date there have been three substantial Australian studies that have attempted to investigate drug and alcohol consumption connected with school leaver celebrations and all of these have been conducted on the Gold Coast. One study indicated that 58% of male school leavers and 53% of female school leavers had drunk alcohol within the previous 7 days (Stanton et al [3]). In another study, Smith and Rosenthal [4] surveyed 1796 young people from Queensland, NSW, and Victoria about their alcohol and marijuana use during Schoolies Week at Surfers Paradise, Queensland. They found that over 75% of males and 60% of females reported getting drunk, most or every day or night of the holiday, with more males reporting getting both drunk and stoned.

In the most recent study, Zinkiewicz et al [5] stated that,

*“In the previous 24 hours around 65% of respondents drank alcohol, over 50% took this to the point of drunkenness and around 25% suffered a hangover. Consistent with general Australian prevalence statistic.....males were heavier drinkers and suffered more negative consequences such as hangovers, vomiting and passing out.” (P 284)*

Interestingly, Zinkiewicz et al [5] also surmised that,

*“Perhaps as a consequence of their greater use of alcohol and other drugs, males in this study were more likely than were females to report having been in a fight, hassled by adults and cautioned by Police. However, females were more likely to report having been sexually harassed.” (P 284)*

Regarding other drug use Zinkiewicz et al [5] reported that the level of use of marijuana (in the previous 24 hrs) was much higher in their study, equating to nearly a third of males and 17% of females. This level of use is somewhat higher than prevalence rates in Australian population surveys, with Stanton et al [3] indicating that 19% of males and 15% of females in the general population had used marijuana in the

previous 7 days. Zinkiewicz et al [5] concluded by stating that in line with previous studies by Smith and Rosenthal [4] and Makkai and McAllister [6], males in the present study were heavier users of marijuana than were females. In relation to ecstasy and other designer drugs, 6.6% of males and 3.6% of females reported using these during the previous 24 hours. In contrast, Stanton et al [3] found that only 1% of both male and female leavers had used ecstasy within the previous 7 days.

In response to the perceived problems associated with school leaver celebrations, the SDEP applied for and received funding from National School Drug Education Strategy, through DETYA, to investigate the school leaver phenomenon. The 'Leavers Live' project aims to identify, promote and support local community strategies to reduce harm to school leavers and the community where the celebrations take place. To facilitate this, the project aims to develop and trial a model program at Rottnest Island, which will be designed to engage the school leavers in attractive, but low risk celebratory activities as a means of reducing the negative impact of the celebrations.

*Key goals of the 'Leavers Live' project are:*

- investigate the perceived needs, motives and concerns of school leavers when participating in school leaver celebrations;
- investigate the perceived needs and concerns of key local community stakeholders regarding school leaver celebrations;
- nurture a range of local community strategies during school leavers week; and,
- produce a handbook to assist school communities provide strategies for safe school leavers' events, including drug-free celebratory activities.

The recent history of school leaver celebrations indicate that problems occur in other locations apart from Rottnest. Leaver celebrations now routinely occur in a number of coastal locations, including Coral Bay, Lancelin, Busselton, Dunsborough and Margaret River, with the last two becoming particular popular in recent years.

The demonstration 'Leavers Live' project will be conducted on Rottnest because of its accessibility and compact nature, but an important purpose of the project will be to make its findings available to other communities that host school leaver celebrations, to assist in making this annual event safer for both the school leavers and community residents alike.

The Community Team at Curtin University's National Drug Research Institute received funding to evaluate 'Leavers Live'. This report focuses on the formative evaluation of the project, which consisted of an extensive field survey of the target group during leavers week celebrations, participant observation during this same period and interviews of key Rottnest community stakeholders.

### **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- To identify school leavers' alcohol and other drug use experiences; alcohol and other drug-related harms that are of particular concern; harm reduction strategies used by school leavers and possible potential interventions likely to be effective with school leavers.
- To identify key commercial stakeholders perceptions of the level of alcohol and other drug use by school leavers; the types of harms of concern to key stakeholders; and potential interventions that are likely to be effective with school leavers and acceptable to the community stakeholders.
- Using the information gained from the school leavers and key stakeholders, recommend a range of alternate activities and strategies that can be implemented at Rottnest.



## METHODOLOGY

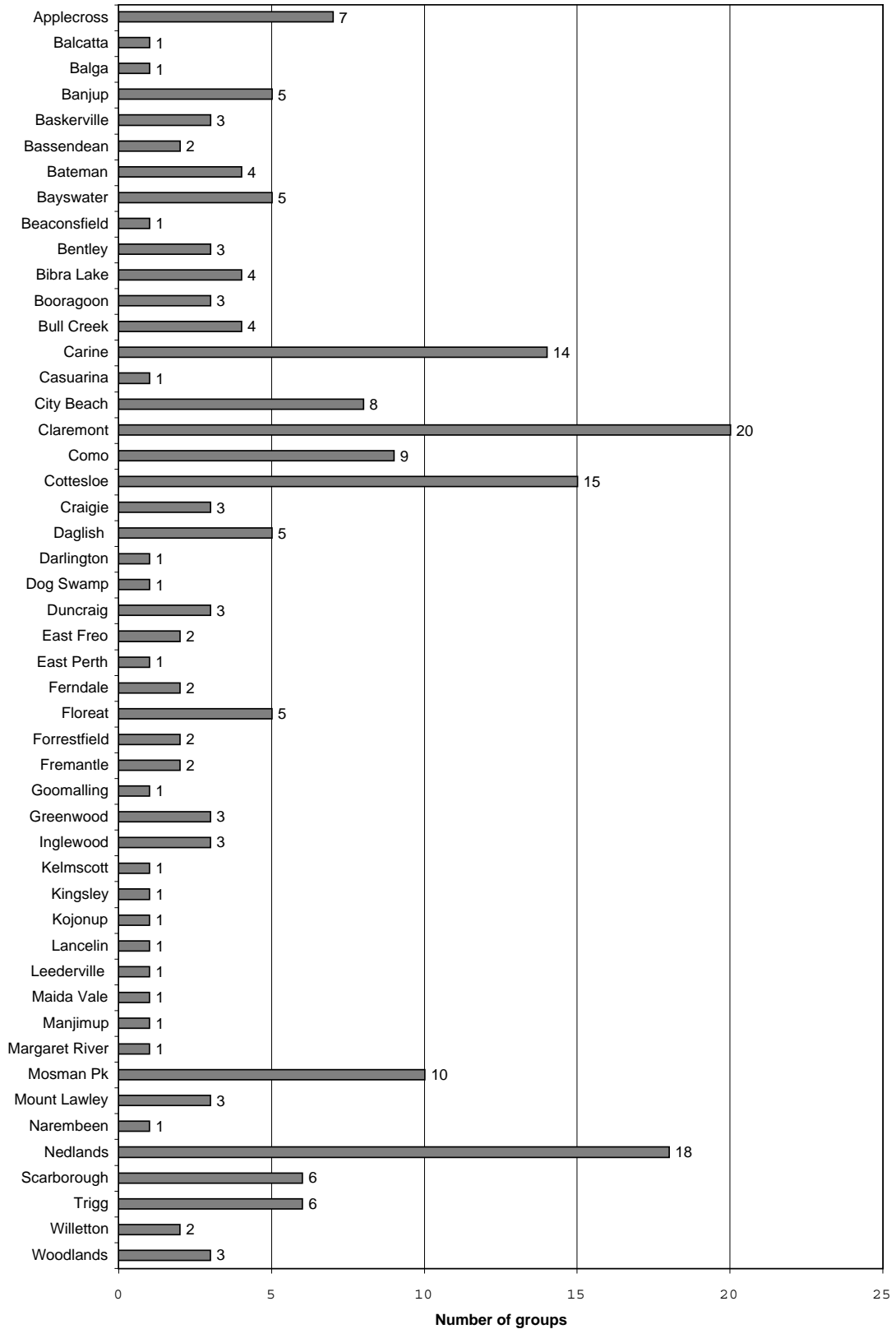
The purpose of this formative study was to gain an understanding of behaviour that occurred during the course of school leaver celebrations and the impact of this behaviour on the host community and on the school leavers' themselves. Responses were gathered from firstly, the 1999 school leaver population themselves and the major business and service provision stakeholders on the island. Additionally, the field researcher spent five days living on Rottnest during the period of the celebrations and documented activities that occurred during this time. Each of these evaluation methods has a number of weaknesses. However, when used in combination they offer a check on accuracy and consistency of information and provide a global perspective on the phenomenon being studied. This approach has been termed 'triangulation' by Guba and Lincoln (1981), because it relies on information from several different investigative components.

## DATA GATHERING METHODS

1. *School Leavers* – This group of respondents, who were allocated the most amount of research time, were asked about their intended and actual celebrations on Rottnest Island at various times during the leavers' week celebrations. Data was collected by randomly interviewing 254 young people of both genders, who identified themselves as 1999 school leavers. Of the 254 respondents, 115 female leavers (45.3%) were interviewed when in same gender groups; 85 male leavers (33.45%) were interviewed when in same gender groups; and, 54 leavers (21.25%) were interviewed as mixed gender groups (in this situation specific gender numbers were not noted due to time constraints and the group dynamic). While 3% of the sample were over 18, the majority were 17 (82%) or 18 (15%) years old and school leavers. All respondents were Western Australian residents who tended to come from predominantly mid to high socio-economic areas (this is evidenced by the attached Table 1). Approximately 96% of respondents had finished high school in 1999 and came from both public and private schools.



**Table 1: Rottnest Study Group 1999  
Postcode Distribution**



Respondents were approached by one of four field workers in various locations both on and off the island. The ferry companies would not permit the gathering of data while the vessels were travelling but interviews were allowed while the craft were berthed. Respondents were approached by one of the field workers before (Jetty), during (various locations in the settlement area, including beaches) and returning (Jetty) from school leaver celebrations held at Rottnest Island in Western Australia between 24 and 28 November 1999. The refusal rate was approximately 1% overall.

The questionnaires each contained no more than 12 questions. However, these were used more to guide the data gathering from the school leavers rather than them being asked verbatim. Demographic data collected were home postcode, gender, group type, number of respondents, location and whether they were a school leaver or not. Respondents were then asked the following questions: why they chose Rottnest Island; their expectations; what activities they would like; activities they did the day/night before; whether the activities involved alcohol or drugs; if they planned to use them; expenses for their stay; concerns about personal safety; strategies to keep safe; rating of the night before; best/worst parts of the night; emotional harms; parental warnings; length of stay; whether behaviour changed over successive nights; whether in control of planned events; alternative activities if no alcohol or drugs; whether planning was easy or difficult to stick to; whether more or less expensive than initially thought; and, what changes to make the experience better, safer, cheaper, fun or more relaxed.

The interviews were conducted in informal settings and were designed to allow the respondents the opportunity to present information on their own terms. The field workers asked the questions and wrote down the responses in point form, rather than using tape recorders, in order to increase the likelihood of respondents being at ease with the data collection process. Groups were approached rather than individual respondents, as they seemed less intimidated and open to answering the questions when in the company of their peers. All

interviews were completed in an hour or less and respondents remained anonymous except for the group's postcodes.

2. *Major Stakeholders* – The composition of this group was decided on with the help of Rottnest Island Authority staff. In total, twelve business proprietors and service providers were specifically canvassed due to their high profile and intense contact with school leavers. Several days were set aside in March for the interviews and all the interviews were conducted on the island over a period of 48 hours. The process was relatively structured with the same seven questions asked of each stakeholder. These covered issues pertaining to: stakeholders/visitors perception of the school leavers; behaviour in previous years; impact on Rottnest; and, ideas/suggestions for an intervention. A copy of the interview instrument is contained in Appendix 1. During the course of the interview the researcher wrote down each response in point form. Each interview was held in the stakeholders' choice of surroundings and all responses were kept completely confidential between the researcher and the stakeholder. Assurances were given to the stakeholders that only group data would be reported. Interviews lasted no more than an hour and all respondents were guaranteed feedback once results were collated and a report produced.
  
3. *Participant Observation* – One of the project's evaluators undertaking Leaver interviews was provided with living quarters in the middle of the school leaver accommodation for the period of the celebrations. Spending four nights on the island, this researcher was able to experience the activities and celebrations first-hand before, during and after the interview process. The opportunity to mingle and rub-shoulders with school leavers proved invaluable in not only seeing and hearing what was actually being experienced, but in gaining the trust and respect of the group. This was very evident due to the fact that each time the researcher ventured outside his abode, the call would be heard, "Hey, there's the survey guy!" Many respondents spontaneously approached the researcher to both be interviewed for the first time and also to provide additional experiences after having been interviewed previously.

## SCHOOL LEAVERS SURVEY INSTRUMENT

There were four slightly different questionnaires that were administered, depending on the day and time the leavers were interviewed. An “Early Days” questionnaire (Appendix 2) was administered both at the island and on the first day; a “Coming Night” questionnaire (Appendix 3) was used from day one to day four; a “Day After” questionnaire (Appendix 4) was utilised from day two to day five; and, a “Last Days” questionnaire (Appendix 5) administered on days four and five.

## ANALYSIS

1. *School Leavers* – Questionnaires were collated by the main field evaluator. All responses to each question were coded into themes. The resulting themes were then placed into a matrix that identified: the theme; the group (ie. male, female, mixed) that identified each theme; and, the number of times the theme was identified by each group. This then clarified which themes were the most commonly identified for each of the 21 different questions. Themes that were repeatedly identified across at least 3 groups were recorded as common themes and tabulated with corresponding figures for each group. The range of common themes were then reported for each question, using illustrative quotes from leavers that were representative of the consensus of respondent’s comments. Themes that were identified in only one of the three groups were identified as different themes and tabulated as such. Quotes have not been reported because of the low response numbers.
2. *Major Stakeholders* – Questionnaires were collated by the main field evaluator. Responses to each of the seven questions were scrutinised for common themes and these were then summarised in terms of how well they represented the opinions and experiences of the whole group or special interest sections within the group.
3. *Participant Observation* – Over the course of 5 days, observational notes were taken by the field evaluator on events that illustrated the nature of school leaver celebrations on Rottnest Island. At the time, what was seen and heard in relation to school leavers was recorded without interpretation. Subsequently,

comparisons were made between such important topics as: expectations vs. actual happenings; planned activities vs. actual activities; estimated alcohol and other drug consumption vs. actual alcohol and other drug consumption; perceived harms vs. actual harms; and, stated harm prevention strategies vs. actual harm prevention strategies. The field evaluator was able to easily relate his first hand findings to the responses provided by the school leavers and make comparison between the two. This was found to be very useful in terms of validity checking and increasing confidence in the findings and recommendations of this report.

## RESULTS

### SCHOOL LEAVERS

Questions were asked of the school leavers at various times and locations before, during and returning from their stay on Rottnest and the responses are grouped accordingly.

#### **Question 1: Why Rottnest? (Pre-departure/Arrival question)**

When asked why they chose to go to Rottnest, the leavers were quite consistent in many of their reasons. The majority of young people indicated that they went to Rottnest to socialise and party with their friends and to meet other young people.

*“Everyone’s there, everyone else goes there.”(Male)*

*“Last time to see everyone together.”(Female)*

The majority did not specify meeting members of the opposite sex as a reason for going to Rottnest, although those that did were quite explicit in their expectations.

*“Pick-up sex for one night.”(Female)*

*“Out to get laid man!”(Male)*

Many of the young people interviewed suggested they went to Rottnest, because it was easy to get to and it did not involve any driving.

*“No one wanted to drive to Dunsborough, because it was too far and too risky.”(Female)*

In addition, Rottnest appears to be preferable to other locations, because of the availability of accommodation and being perceived as a cheaper option. The safety associated with no driving on Rottnest was a strong theme, with the perception being that no real harm could happen at Rottnest.

*“Worst that can happen is fall down.”(Male)*

Many young people indicated that the relaxed lifestyle at Rottnest was the reason they chose to go there and this was in line with their aim of releasing the stress built up during their final school exams.

**Summary Matrix : Common Themes**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
To socialise with other leavers	41	21	5
Easy access / No driving	23	12	7
Relaxed, fun lifestyle	18	7	8
Good memories of past experience	3	12	1
Tradition	6	3	3
Isolated and concentrated	5	4	3
Safer	4	2	1
To get drunk	2	1	1
Better than down south	2	1	0
Swimming	1	1	0

The young people interviewed did identify a number of sex specific reasons as to why they chose to go to Rottnest and this is evidenced below in the following table:

**Summary Matrix : Different Themes**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Someone else organised it	3		
Cheap holiday	3		
Lived here	2		
Go ferrel	1		
Mobile phone works	1		
Away from east coast	1		
Decided one year ago	1		
Conned into it	1		
Away from study	1		
Like going overseas	1		
Surfing		2	
Looking after sisters		2	
Known for its partying		2	
Missed out last year		1	
Why not?		1	
Dunsborough next week		1	
Don't get to go often		1	
Haven't been before		1	
Heard its good		1	
Age no factor		1	
Few days off		1	
Residents tolerate you			1

**Question 2: Expectations? (Pre-departure/Arrival question)**

Leavers were asked what they wanted from the Rottnest experience and the vast majority had the same intentions in mind. Most expected to relax, have fun and hang out with both old and new friends.

*“Relax, unwind; kick back.”(Female)*

*“Fun with mates; have fun.”(Male)*

A large majority of males and female leavers also indicated they intended to drink, with the boys in particular appearing more focused on getting drunk while the girls



showed much more interest in the beach, swimming, partying and meeting new people.

*“Getting MAGGOT; Funnelling in a BIG way; Get wasted.”(Male)*

*“Swimming, Beaches, Working on my tan!”(Female)*

While both made it clear they wanted to meet members of the opposite sex, many more boys than girls indicated that they intended having sex.

*“Chicks; Chasing women; Girls; Taking advantage of drunk girls!”(Male)*

*“Getting some fine loving!”(Male)*

Due to the reputation Rottnest has gained as a destination for leavers week celebrations it was almost an across the board expectation that the leavers were going to have a very good time no matter what.

*“Hell stories; Memories; Experience to remember; To blow me away!”(Male)*

Below is a table showing leavers common expectations of Rottnest:

**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Relaxing / Unwinding	19	14	3
Partying / Socialising with friends	19	12	4
Fun / Good time	18	18	4
Getting drunk / Drinking	10	18	5
Sex / Meeting opposite sex	10	17	3
Swimming / Beach / Sun	16	2	2
Meeting new people	7	2	1

Leavers were also able to indicate some different expectations for their time at Rottnest as shown below:

### Summary Matrix: Different Themes

Theme	Females	Males	Mixed
See people from primary school	4		
Totally away from home hassles and study	3		
Looking after quokkas	3		
Having sex with boyfriend	2		
Look at guys	2		
Last time with school buddies	2		
Away from normal responsibilities	2		
Hopeful certain girls will be there		3	
The overall experience		3	
Biking		1	
Relaxed scene		1	
Girls!		1	
No sex because has a girlfriend		1	
Celebrate 12yrs of study that's over		1	
Nice time away from Perth/ Getting away			2
Scenery			1
No driving so safer			1
Eat Red Rooster everyday			1

### **Question 3: Activities leavers would like to see made available. (Pre-departure/Arrival question)**

The leavers were quite forthright in stating what they wanted to do with their time and most agreed that anything music related was considered a great way to increase their enjoyment on the island.

*“We really need DJs and a dance tent” (Female)*

*“This place would rock if a few local bands played a concert!” (Male)*

*“There's nowhere to dance and hangout with our friends” (Female)*

Additionally, most commented on the lack of ‘cool’ things to do, see in the afternoons and this brought about comments like the following.

*“Rotto is really boring during the day and even at night!” (Female)*

*“They should put on fashion/streetwear parades or have skate demos for us” (Male)*

*“Why can’t they have more fun things on the beach like one of those water trampoline things!” (Female)*

It is also interesting to note that there were some leavers who indicated that leavers week should be left as informal and non-structured as possible due to the structured nature of their 12 years of schooling.

*“Who wants to go in Beach Cricket or Volleyball competitions, we’ve just finished doing that crap at high school!” (Male)*

*“They shouldn’t organise anything too much as all we want to do is kick back and relax” (Female)*

*“Why don’t they just let us make our own fun?” (Female)*

*“We didn’t even know any of this stuff was on and anyway, who the hell wants to skull choc milk at 12 midday!” (Male)*

The common themes the leavers voiced are outlined in the table below:

**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
DJs / Dance tent / Concerts	40	12	10
Water Sports eg. Para-sailing, Jet skis, H2O Tramp.	10	4	4
Nothing (Informal)	6	5	1
Fashion parades	1	1	1

Several different themes were also raised by those interviewed:

**Summary Matrix: Different Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Spa / Masseur	2		
Waterslide		1	
Ice cream eating competition		1	
Free mini-golf		1	
Pool competition		1	
Skate demo		1	
Wet T-shirt competition		1	
Surfing / Snorkelling clinics			2
Socialising area			1
Environmental concern tours			1
Bouncy castle			1

**Question 4: Last night's activities? (On-island question)**

Leavers were asked what they got up to the night before and most stated that they had consumed alcohol in varying quantities.

*"Funnelled 'til I spewed" (Male)*

*"Drank a heap of piss and am paying for it now!" (Male)*

*"Got really drunk and passed out!" (Male)*

Apart from drinking, those interviewed indicated that they did a lot of walking around and socialising at both old and new friend's places.

*"Got really tired moving from place to place all night." (Female)*

*"Hung out at our mates place so ours wouldn't get wrecked!" (Male)*

*"Cruised up and down with a huge group of drunken idiots!" (Male)*

Lastly, sex was admitted to by only a few of those leavers we interviewed and this was only because the others in the group knew what went on and embarrassed them into owning up.

*"Got with best friend's boyfriend!" (Female)*

*“Experimental sex with a Catholic girl!”(Male)*

*“Scored with a random!”(Female)*

Leavers’ common responses are tabulated below:

**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Drinking	17	18	5
Walked around	10	5	1
Went to pub	7	2	0

Those interviewed also did some different things during the evening:

**Summary Matrix: Different Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Beach / Swim	3		
Dancing	2		
Looking at boys	1		
Bed early	1		
Beaten up		1	
Smoked cones		1	
Experimental sex		1	
No sleep		1	
Protecting cottage		1	
Abusing people from behind our wall		1	

**Question 5: Did last night involve alcohol/drugs? (On-island question)**

Leavers were asked about their alcohol and drug intake the previous night and most were quite happy to admit that it involved alcohol of varying quantities. They were however, somewhat more reluctant to divulge their drug use for fear of potential consequences, but after guaranteeing anonymity, some were open about what drugs they had used.

*“Shit yeah mate, about 3/4’s of a carton and 1/2 a bottle of Jack’s!”(Male)*

*“Not much really, about 3 or 4 beers the whole night.”(Male)*

*“Um, yep, a bottle of Passion Pop & a few lines of whizz.”(Female)*

Most tended to drink just the one type of alcohol, but some were prepared to drink anything they could find to achieve their desired result. However, some were not sure of how much they drank, because of participation in ‘Funnel’ and ‘Submarine’ drinking games.

*“Drank mostly EB all night and then I don’t remember?”(Male)*

*“I only drink wine because beer bloats me out!”(Female)*

*“I started on beers but when the funnels came out I think they were pouring red wine in there because my spew was pretty dark!”(Male)*

It is of interest to note that of the alcohol consumed, females were much more partial to drinking spirits compared to beer, which they only tried if offered or if their drink of choice ran out. Males on the other hand usually began on beer and switched to spirits once they became bloated or sick of the taste.

Below is a table of common leaver responses:

**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Yes to alcohol	15	15	2
Consumed spirits	15	9	1
Consumed beer	8	8	1
Bought alcohol with them	8	4	1
No to chemical drugs	6	3	1
Yes to ecstasy	2	1	1

From the different themes table below it is noteworthy that only female leavers admitted that they didn’t drink to excess and that only males admitted to purchasing take-away alcohol from the pub:

**Summary Matrix: Different Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Didn't drink to excess	7		
Pub drinking	2		
Bought take-away alcohol from the pub		6	
Yes to marijuana		5	
Not offered drugs		1	
Drank in-house		1	
Forgot intake		1	
Hangover		1	
Funnels (Skulling game)		1	
Submarines (Skulling game)		1	

**Question 6: Do you plan to drink alcohol/use drugs? (Pre-departure, Arrival question)**

Of all respondents questioned there was an almost unanimous acceptance that most were going to drink alcohol during their stay on the island. A lot were organised enough to have either purchased this themselves or had a parent, older sibling or friend consent to purchasing it for them.

*"For sure man, that's what we're here for!"(Male)*

*"Alcohol loosens us up, sets us free to party!"(Female)*

*"We brought plenty of booze with us on the boat so hopefully it'll last!"(Male)*

*"My parents bought us ours and also gave us some money in case we run out!"(Female)*

As far as when the leavers intake would begin, most seemed to be waiting for someone else to initiate drinking activities for the day/evening and they would then make a decision on how they felt at that particular time.

*"I don't want to start too early otherwise I'll be pissed before I know it!"(Male)*

*"All of us girls only want to start drinking when we come back from the beach."(Female)*

*“Depends what it is, I’ll probably have a few beers this arvo and then have a break before really getting on it tonight!”(Male)*

*“I’ll start a few hours before I go to the pub so I don’t have to buy too many drinks there.”(Female)*

When questioned regarding whether they would be consuming to excess, the males were much more confident about how much they thought they would drink. In stark contrast, the females were very conservative with their predictions. In fact they tended toward abstinence or at most the standard daily allowance for women (2 standard drinks/day).

*“I’ll be going steady early but then as the day progresses I’ll be going harder!”(Male)*

*“Mate, I’ll drink as much as it takes to have a good time!”(Male)*

*“Probably won’t drink at all during the day and have only 1 or 2 at night.”(Female)*

*“I want to try not to drink too much otherwise you never know what can happen over here!”(Female)*

As in question 5, when asked directly about their intended drug intake most seemed very reluctant to actually admit they were definitely going to take something. Males however, were quite prepared to disclose their intended use of marijuana, whereas females were not.

*“Yes to mull but no way to any chemicals!”(Male)*

*“There’s no way, I’m totally freaked by the whole scene!”(Female)*

*“Drink sure but Rotto’s not really the place for drugs, especially chemicals.”(Male)*

The table below shows some common themes of the leavers predicted alcohol/drug consumption:



**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Yes to alcohol	22	16	6
Will drink spirits	15	14	5
Will drink consume beer	13	13	6
Drink in-house	10	9	3
Moderate intake	9	2	1
Bought alcohol over from mainland	5	8	1
Drink to excess	1	8	1
Drink everyday	7	7	2
Yes to marijuana	1	6	3
Try & get into pub	2	5	2
Hangovers influence intake next day	5	2	1
Start drinking at lunchtime	3	4	1
Start drinking in afternoon	3	3	1

Leavers also divulged some different themes that they had planned as evidenced in the table below:

**Summary Matrix: Different Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Try not to get too drunk	5		
Get older crew to buy	3		
No to free drugs	3		
Yes to free drugs		4	
Yes to Dexamphetamine ( <u>Dexy's</u> )		2	
Yes to Speed (Whizz)		1	
If buying drugs, must know <u>seller</u>		1	
If given drugs, prepared to onsell		1	
Start drinking whenever			1
Prepared to poly-drug use			1

**Question 7: Expenses (How much will you spend on accommodation, food, alcohol?) (Pre-departure/Arrival question)**

This question was very difficult to critically analyse due to a number of confounding variables. Firstly, the question was asked before the leavers had begun their experience at Rottnest, not during their stay. Secondly, leavers had mostly pre-paid

their accommodation as part of a large group and consequently had no idea as to the cost of their share. Thirdly, a lot had brought large quantities of food and alcohol (from a group kitty) to take over to the island. Consequently, unless they were one of the few who had actually done the purchasing, they had no idea what had been spent on their behalf (especially if some of the kitty was leftover to spend on the island).

From information gathered, it appears most females were prepared to spend (for the duration of their stay) between \$10-\$50 on food; anywhere from \$20-\$70 on alcohol; \$20-\$100 for incidentals/emergencies and \$20-\$200 (including bond) on accommodation. Some female leavers had \$100-\$200 to spend on clothing. A lucky few had parents who booked them into the Rottnest Lodge (unbeknown to the management until they arrived to check in). By way of explanation, the Lodge provides the only motel standard of accommodation on the island.

Male leavers interviewed were generally prepared to spend more for both food and alcohol but not as much on accommodation. The breakdown for the duration of their stay equated to between \$10-\$100 on food; \$10-\$150 on alcohol; \$10-\$70 on incidentals; and \$0-\$80 on accommodation. None had brought extra money to purchase clothing.

Overall leavers seemed unsure of what their total spending would be at Rottnest for the time they'd be there. Some thought the island was expensive and this was mainly based on what they'd heard and so bought a more than adequate amount of money to last them. Others believed the island to be much cheaper than down south and this also was mainly based on hearsay rather than personal experience. Unfortunately some bought as little as \$50 to spend and so seemed more vulnerable to things becoming uncomfortable for them.

**Question 8: Own concerns about personal harms/safety? (Pre-departure/Arrival question)**

The genders were quite divided in their perception of the dangers that possibly existed for them on the island. Females responded with most concern about their physical and sexual well being/safety. Drunk males breaking into their living quarters and the threat of violence and rape were uppermost in their minds.

*“Crazy, drunk guys barging into our place and wrecking it!”(Female)*

*“Stray, unsavoury blokes bothering us for sex!”(Female)*

*“Being taken advantage of when I’m pissed!”(Female)*

Male leavers on the other hand were all quite confident that within their group environment that they’d be adequately shielded and protected from any harms. The bigger the group the more they felt assured that they were not in any danger.

*“Know plenty of crew over here so no worries mate!”(Male)*

*“We’re a big group who know how to stick together!”(Male)*

*“Bring it on, let them come bro’ we’re ready!”(Male)*

From responses gathered it seems the females had thought about the harms and the consequences a lot more than the males and this is evidenced in the table below:

**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Violence / Drunk, violent people	25	1	2
Big group / no worries	0	7	6
Stolen gear	5	0	2
Sunburn / sunstroke	5	0	1
Alcohol poisoning / liver damage	1	0	1
Eviction	1	1	1
Drinking responsibly	1	1	0

In the summary matrix of different themes below, leavers showed considerable diversity in their concerns. A strong female theme was sexual safety, whereas males expressed that they could take care of themselves.

**Summary Matrix: Different Themes**

Themes	Females	Males	Mixed
Rape / sexual harassment / taken advantage of	15		
Vandalism	3		
No small groups	3		
Quokka safety	3		
Pill / condoms / unprotected sex	3		
Cut feet / glass / no shoes / hurting oneself	3		
Dehydration / hangovers	2		
Swimming when drunk / drowning	1		
Losing friends	1		
Dangerous snakes	1		
Mature enough to look after ourselves		2	
Try not to poly-drug use		1	
Driving dinghy drunk back to boat		1	
Tough guys who're in charge		1	
Quokka soccer		1	
Getting alcohol confiscated		1	
Getting arrested		1	
Losing bond		1	

**Question 9: Have you planned any strategies to keep you safe? (On-island question)**

Male respondents were generally quite responsible in answering this question and tended to think more laterally about their answers. The bravado was still there but the males were very aware of how pro-active they should be to avoid possible harms rather than knowing specifically what might happen to them.

*“Hang in a big group with people we know well.”(Male)*

*“Think about safe drinking like drinking H2O between drinks.”(Male)*

*“Hang around the house when you're really pissed!”(Male)*

The female leavers were again much more aware than the males of what could happen to them if they became too intoxicated and so their responses were somewhat more specific and certainly in tune with the reputation of the island.

*“Don’t walk around on your own and watch each other’s backs.”(Female)*

*“Screen predator, random guys very closely!”(Female)*

*“Drink lots of H2O, use mixers with spirits, and carry condoms.”(Female)*

Overall both genders were seemingly on top of what they should do to remain as safe as possible but none really considered how many of these strategies were possible when excessive alcohol, drugs or both were consumed.

*“Just hope I have a real good night without any scars!”(Male)*

*“We’re really relying on each other to let your mate know how he’s doing and maybe whether they should slow down and go a bit steady.”(Male)*

Common themes are highlighted below:

**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Stay in big groups / don’t stray / help each other	25	8	3
Spread drinks out / drink plenty of H2O	8	7	2
Screen predator guys / avoid weird older guys	6	1	2
Try to prevent gear / alcohol being stolen	4	2	1
Wear sunscreen / stay out of the sun	4	1	0
Carry / use condoms, pill	3	4	2
Hang around the house when drinking a lot	3	3	0
Don’t street drink	2	0	1
Wear shoes	1	1	0
Avoid pub area	1	0	1

Below are some of the varied strategies leavers intended using to protect their well-being and that of their friends:

### Summary Matrix: Different Themes

Themes	Females	Males	Mixed
Ring home everyday / carry mobile phone	3		
Eat well	2		
No sex	2		
Meet up @ certain times / meet away from accom.	2		
Be positive to cops	2		
Stick with boyfriend	1		
Tell friends where your going	1		
Know about other accommodation	1		
If in any danger, run!	1		
Don't leave house @ night	1		
Leave trouble / fights alone		2	
Mellow attitude / low profile		2	
Lock the door!		2	
Plenty of Berocca		1	
No real drink plans-Friends will monitor my progress!		1	
First aid kit		1	
Only draw out money from the ATM during the day			1
Keep away from drunk gangs			1

**Question 10:** Was it a good / great / fantastic night or a disaster? (Why?) (**On-island question**)

Responses to the above question tended to be fairly hazy overall due to it being asked in the morning and when most seemed more focused on recovering rather than trying to remember what occurred. The female leavers tended to be more positive about the nights events and were mostly satisfied. This was perhaps due to their alcohol intake being less.

*“Great because danced & hung out with our friends all night.”(Female)*

*“Good night because met lots of people and did lots of things.”(Female)*

*“Perfect way to end school as won't see everyone together again!”(Female)*

The male leavers were not as enthusiastic about their evenings activities and if anything seemed a little bored due to the amount of moving about they did, which

didn't seem to yield anything different. In other words they didn't ever seem to find what they were looking for.

*“Great because got pissed, got lucky and woke up.”(Male)*

*“Started off OK but dwindled as the night went on due to the constant movement.”(Male)*

*“Good night because drunk enough to still remember the night's highlights/funny parts without losing it.”(Male)*

The responses to this question by females and males were in stark contrast. It appeared that if the female leavers were able to meet new people and escape anything sexually confronting happening, then they were happy and relieved. The male population were at the opposite end of the scale. They were very disappointed if, out of all the new people they met, a sexual liaison did not eventuate.

*“Alright but disappointed because girl not easy enough!”(Male)*

*“Girl was Catholic therefore no sex!”(Male)*

*“Chicks worried about getting raped so no luck!”(Male)*

The table below shows common themes for the leavers' nighttime happenings:

**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Great because met new people / friends / got drunk	11	2	0
Average / No major dramas / Nothing special	5	1	0
Fantastic cause got drunk AND woke up!	3	3	1
Pretty average because passed out	2	1	0
No sex so disappointed	2	2	0
Average night of running around	1	1	0

Leavers different reactions, impressions of the previous night's activities are listed in the themes table below:

### Summary Matrix: Different Themes

Themes	Females	Males	Mixed
Everyone went to bed early	1		
Had better in Perth	1		
Great way to end school	1		
Annoying because young people snuck into pub?	1		
Not so great because hair was set on fire!	1		
Great because teased mate & his new girl		1	
Took photos of girl action		1	
Terrible because friend smashed bottle of Bourbon		1	
Helped console / comfort girl		1	
Pretty poor really		1	
No expectations so alright		1	
Horrible because of hangover!		1	

#### **Question 11: Best parts of the night? (On-island question)**

The socialisation process seemed by far the most popular part of the leavers' night and this certainly appeared fuelled by the amount of alcohol being drunk. Most felt they needed at least some alcohol to facilitate their interaction as they believed it broke down barriers such as feeling shy and self-conscious.

*“Hanging out with friends and dancing in the street!”(Female)*

*“Getting into relaxed mode and meeting new people.”(Male)*

Female leavers interviewed were very enthusiastic about the conversational aspect of their evening and commented on how many long sessions they had with both new and old friends.

*“Big talks with girls and boys and giggling about stuff all night!”(Female)*

*“Deep & meaningful with ex-boyfriends and finding out their emotional position.” (Female)*

The majority of males spoken to were a lot less concerned about conversing and relied heavily on actions to fuel the enjoyment of their night. Alcohol was high on the list of



necessities for a fun night and with many drinking excessively, most perceived their night to be a great deal better than it was for someone sober.

*“Whole night ‘cause so pissed everything seemed really funny!”(Male)*

*“Yeah baby, it was the getting wasted and mingling that rocked my evening!”(Male)*

Although not confessed to on a large scale, many more males than females said sex was the ultimate goal of their evening but because a lot of them drank so much, many said they invariably ruined their chances (females admitting to being VERY selective).

*“Looking for, zoning in and scoring some girl action!”(Male)*

*“Loved it ‘cause got a root with a babe!”(Male)*

The table below shows common themes for the best parts of the leavers’ evening:

**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Mingling / Dancing / Meeting new & old friends	15	5	2
Drinking	2	5	1
Atmosphere	5	1	1
Having sex	2	3	0
Going to sleep	1	1	0

Leavers different examples of the best aspects of their previous night are listed in the themes table below:

### Summary Matrix: Different Themes

Themes	Females	Males	Mixed
Intense conversations with ex-boyfriend	2		
Going to the beach	2		
Watching guys try to impress us	1		
BBQ @ dusk	1		
Big learning curve	1		
Playing guitar	1		
Everyone visiting us	1		
Nude gift down the street		2	
Giving mates a hard time because bored		1	
Night cricket		1	
Meeting drinking partners		1	
Fallen in love		1	
No vomit on streets			1
Flexibility of cops			1

#### **Question 12: Worst parts of night? (On-island question)**

This question evoked a lot of feeling from all the leavers due to the intense nature of the night's events. Female leavers were particularly vocal about the threatening behaviour they received courtesy of the many drunk males.

*"Hassled for sex by really pushy, annoyingly persistent blokes!"(Female)*

*"Walking on your own through where guys yelling disgusting stuff out!"(Female)*

*"Rude boys pinching our ass, touching us up every chance they got!"(Female)*

*"Guys being really gross with out of order comments!"(Female)*

Those males interviewed made comment on the amount of tension in the air and the amount of violence they saw or were exposed to.

*"The guy being fully chased, caught and beaten stupid by about 10 guys!"(Male)*

*“Little idiots throwing stuff and breaking bottles everywhere!”(Male)*

*“Unknown, aggressive people coming into our house!”(Male)*

The table below shows common themes for the worst parts of the leavers’ evening:

**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Fights / violence / tension in the air	3	19	2
Unwanted, offensive verbal hassles / sleazy, drunk males	15	3	0
Friends vomiting / feeling ill / needing looking after	10	3	0
Bored / waiting for something to happen	3	2	3
No sleep	3	3	0
Injuries to feet	2	0	1
Strict ID checks	1	0	1
Dirty house on arrival	1	0	1

Leavers’ different examples of the worst aspects of their previous night are listed in the themes matrix below:

**Summary Matrix: Different Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
No street drinking ie. fines	3		
Friends going off with random guys	2		
Not enough beds	2		
Eating / queuing for Red Rooster	2		
Friend ate all our food	1		
Guys being idiots	1		
Seeing stalker	1		
Cleaning up	1		
Beer getting stolen	1		
Mad guys in boats / on pushbikes		2	
Wallet / bike stolen		2	
Not drinking		1	
Not having enough marijuana		1	
Hangover		1	
Snobbish chicks		1	
Unequipped bungalows			1

**Question 13: Any emotional harms? (On-island question)**

When asked this question both male and female respondents seemed ambivalent as to how what they'd seen or had happen to them would psychologically affect them. Most tended to play down or not make comment regarding long term effects of their exposure to the leavers celebrations.

*"No just quite sad for some of the guys!" (Female)*

*"Not yet but guilt is sure to set in on some level later!" (Female)*

*"Already screwed in the head!" (Male)*

*"Being popular helps integration!" (Male)*

The table below shows common themes for any emotional harms leavers may suffered:

**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
No / none really	13	8	2
Seeing fights	0	5	1

Below are some examples of different themes for any emotional harms that affected leavers:

**Summary Matrix: Different Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Guilt / nothingness feeling	2		
Felt sorry / sad for the guys	1		
Already screwed in the head		1	
Attached to a bottle		1	
Sad to come home alone - again		1	
Calm			1

**Question 14: Any parental/guardian warnings on harms? (Pre-departure/Arrival question)**

This question was answered more seriously by the female leavers as they were perceived by their parents to be in much more danger of something going wrong. Most advice centred around not drinking excessively and protecting each other from harm.

*“Don’t overindulge or mix your drinks.”(Female)*

*“Have fun but don’t overdo it!”(Male)*

Interestingly enough, of the few warnings given to boys, most related to control and sensible drinking with hardly any reference to aggression or fighting. Results in the previous question unfortunately show that this was in fact the actual consequence of a lot of the night time drinking experiences for many male leavers.

*“Keep yourself in control & try not to get on TV!”(Male)*

*“Stay away from trouble & don’t get arrested!”(Male)*

It seemed that the majority of leavers that had been spoken to by their parents were probably the least likely to get in any trouble due to their already responsible outlook. Unfortunately those not given any parental warnings were the ones that indeed did seem capable of endangering themselves and others.

*“If I lose the tent or the esky dad’s gonna kill me!”(Male)*

*“Parents more concerned about the bloody quokkas than me!”(Male)*

The table below indicates themes for common parental/guardian warnings leavers may have received:

**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Consume alcohol sensibly	17	4	1
Don’t do anything silly or that you’ll regret	16	4	0
Don’t get arrested	2	3	1
Wear sunscreen / don’t get sunburnt	3	2	1
Lock up all your valuables	2	2	0

Below are some examples of different themes for any parental/guardian warnings leavers may have been given:

**Summary Matrix: Different Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Meet up often / stick together / watch each others backs	8		
Stay away from seedy guys and private school boys	5		
Take / use contraception	4		
Don't lead guys on / be promiscuous / get raped	3		
Wear shoes / no accidents	3		
No to drugs / offered drugs	2		
Drink milk b4 you drink alcohol / drink H2O after	2		
Don't drink	1		
Call us regularly	1		
Don't swim when drunk	1		
No real talk – parents cool, know I'm responsible		3	
Have a good time		2	
No fighting		2	
Don't street drink		1	
Don't get on telly		1	
Grandma disappointed and worried			1

**Question 15: How long do you plan to stay? (Pre-departure / Arrival question)**

All but a few leavers interviewed had accommodation organised prior to arriving at the island and it appeared that the longer the leavers stayed on the island the better the quality of their accommodation. The cheapest places were the cabins located in tentland and leavers stayed here for only one or two nights. Those leavers staying on the island for between three and five nights arranged accommodation in bungalows, villas and cottages in the Thompsons Bay area. A lucky few were fortunate to be booked into the lodge by their parents and were staying there for four nights.

The table below indicates the amount of time that leavers commonly arranged to stay:

**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
4 nights	8	6	1
3 nights	4	2	1
2 nights	2	1	0

Below are some examples of length of stay specific to the type of group:

**Summary Matrix: Different Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
5 nights	3		
1 night			1

**Question 16:** Has your approach / behaviour changed over successive nights or are you going harder? (**On-island question**)

This question provided some interesting responses, more so from the female leavers, many of whom, were almost defiantly not heeding the advice given by their parents.

*“Went harder each night because else was going hard!”(Female)*

*“We’ll be drinking more tonight because we become way more sociable!”(Female)*

Other female respondents had some fairly harrowing experiences that changed their approach to their alcohol intake and partying in general.

*“Pretty mellow to finish off after a couple of big nights!”(Female)*

*“Low key drinking tonight, just happy to look after friends!”(Female)*

Male leavers somewhat predictably emphasised their drinking prowess in their answers.

*“Go hard or go home!”(Male)*

*“Go harder because we can!”(Male)*

Some responses though did little or nothing to hide the real agenda behind a change in their drinking regime.

*“Try different approaches to score women and lower standards to guarantee a return!”(Male)*

*“Not drink as much so can get a root!”(Male)*

In all, apart from the obvious bravado, both sexes in actual fact did slow down or vary their intake due to either: a bad experience early on; financial constraints; concentrating on the opposite sex; or that they were basically sick of the taste or the lack of control they experienced once drunk.

Below is a table that indicates themes for common behavioural approaches over successive nights by leavers:

**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
No, going harder / drinking more tonight	10	4	1
Yes, plan to drink less tonight	5	4	0
Not really, about the same every night	3	3	0
Slow down because chasing sex / responsibilities to others	2	3	0

Below are some examples of different behaviour / approaches leavers adopted during their experience:

**Summary Matrix: Different Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Don't know, depends on how much I drink	3		
Sleep more / eat more food so can last longer	2		
No real peer-pressure to drink	1		
Peer –pressure from guys to drink ie. Funnels, shots	1		
Don't mix pot and beer		1	
Won't walk around with any more stupid signs on my back		1	



**Question 17: Are/do you feel in control of the planned events tonight? (On-island question)**

When asked the above question, leavers of both sexes seemed somewhat reluctant to answer with authority and many turned to their peers to gain some feedback on how they should respond. Many appeared to be following a 'see what happens' approach with little or no real planning involved. This tended to reflect the main goal of their celebration, which was to have a lot of fun with others in the 'coolest' way possible. The 'unknown' was attractive because it may bring a new experience.

Males seemed more comfortable the bigger their group was, although another factor was individual loss of control by some group members. A large group of out of control individuals was not seen as desirable in terms of membership. In stark contrast, females felt little or no peer pressure to conform to the alcohol intake of the biggest drinker in the group & if anything, tended to look after each other no matter what their consumption.

The most incisive response came in the form of the following statement:

*"It depends on the self-image of the person!" (Male)*

An interesting final point to note was that only one male group raised the issue of peer pressure and all agreed there was none!

*"Peer pressure no way, what's that?" (Male)*

**Question 18: Alternative activities if chosen alcohol / drugs aren't available? (ie. Alcohol-free day?) (Pre-departure/Arrival question)**

This question tended to cause leavers some confusion as they hadn't considered it as an option. Female leavers mostly admitted they either would have an alcohol-free day or planned to have one anyway. No real alternative activities had been planned by them but they were fairly confident they could find enough to occupy their time.

*"Watch the boys have funnel races." (Female)*

*“Find a cool place to hang out and just chill.”(Female)*

Male leavers reacted with great hilarity when asked this question and nearly all were only prepared to take the alcohol-free option once they'd tried every other means of acquiring alcohol. Interestingly, alcohol-free meant they were probably going to take some type of illicit drug instead and only a very small minority were confident of having a completely drug-free day.

*“Yeah sure, today we're smoking pot instead!”(Male)*

*“No way couldn't do it; alcohol-free is not on our minds at all!”(Male)*

Overall having an alcohol-free day was considered quite an ostracising option because, although it was a great individual cleanser for one's body and mind, many (especially the male leavers) felt the group would reject them because they weren't drinking. Females were less likely to think this because their alcohol consumption was generally a lot less and the peer-pressure to drink was also considerably lower.

**Question 19:** Is control or planning easy or difficult to stick to? (**On-island question**)

Ironically most leavers surveyed answered yes to it being easy to keep to their plans, even though many had no real plan in place other than wanting to have a really good time. The majority seemed very goal oriented, but with only a vague idea of the process they would use to reach it. Nearly all groups spoken to, said that they hoped they could get through the overall experience of school leaver celebrations on Rottnest with no serious or negative ramifications for them personally.

**Question 20:** Cost? (More or less expensive than initially thought?) (**Departing question**)

Responses concerning cost were sought at the end of the leavers' experience, but still tended to be quite loosely substantiated. Main constraints on each opinion was the initial amount each student was given; how many provisions had been brought over to the island; amount of alcohol consumed; and, length of stay. All these factors tended to guide whether the island was thought to be cheap or costly. Obviously spending habits and priorities varied immensely according to past experience.

A few leavers also tended to compare Rottnest with going down south (Dunsborough, Margaret River, etc) and this affected their answer somewhat. They thought that the down-south experience was fraught with much more danger due to the driving, easier access to alcohol and drugs (due to amount of outlets and price) and less restrictive nature of the various locations. They felt that this increased amount of freedom would invariably lead to the greater possibility of accidents or even death due to the temptation of driving carloads of themselves and their friends around while intoxicated.

**Question 21:** Any changes to make experience: better, safer, cheaper, more fun/relaxed?  
(Departing question)

Student responses here were very comprehensive and both sexes put forward many well thought out suggestions. They were mostly interested in any free products that could be given out as this would obviously reduce their costs and leave them more funds to spend on their priorities. Most popular items were food and drink followed by condoms and healthcare/sanitary products. Activities suggested mainly involved things to do in the afternoons and evenings and almost always concerned music in various forms.

The Police presence seemed well received, although some thought they could be a little less restrictive on street drinking and concentrate on the violence that was seen at night. A second 'free' nursing post (ie. one that didn't charge \$15 for a prescription) was also requested as well as better toilet/shower/locker facilities and a much wider range of healthier and economic food choices.

Below is a summary matrix that indicates themes for changes leavers would like to see:

**Summary Matrix: Common Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Centralised socialising/hangout spot with music	14	10	5
Free food / drinks / condoms / healthcare products	12	8	4
Better, healthier, more economical foods available	5	8	3
Sausage sizzle / recovery breakfast (gold coin donation)	3	3	1
More street lighting	2	1	3
Second free nursing station	2	1	2
Lockers	2	1	0
Discount bike hire	1	0	1

Some examples of different changes leavers would like to have happen at Rottnest are listed below:

**Summary Matrix: Different Themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
Cheaper accommodation eg. big tentland	3		
Deck chairs / sun beds / umbrellas for hire	2		
More toilets / showers	2		
Water truck to keep people / roads cool & clean	2		
Lockable cupboard in each abode	1		
Lower priced food & drink for leavers ie. discounts	1		
Toilet paper vending machine	1		
Beachside bar with waitpersons	1		
Discount ferry tickets	1		
Better advertising of events	1		
Better beds / pillows	1		
More keys to each abode	1		
Beer served in plastic cups at pub	1		
Clean roads more often		3	
More security personnel walking around		2	
Ice cream eating competition		1	
Skate demonstration / ramp		1	
Stereos for hire in-house		1	
Pool tables		1	
Buses running every 30 minutes		1	
Free H2O at the pub (sponsored)		1	
Longer pub hours			2
Radio station on island for the week (Prizes, giveaways)			1
Bouncy castle / Moon walk			1
Information / help tent			1
Fridge magnets with info. attached to each fridge			1
Fire extinguishers in old units			1
Get rid of asbestos in old units			1

*Key Stakeholders* were surveyed three and a half months after the school leavers celebrations were held. This was to give stakeholders time to make a fair assessment of the overall behaviour and impact the leavers had on themselves and the island community.

The following results relate to questions asked at Rottnest Island between 14 March and 16 March 2000. Twelve stakeholders were interviewed, including the Police, HealthCare staff, Environmental workers and representatives from six major business houses located in and around the settlement area.

**Question 1:** How are school leavers perceived by Rottnest residents and visitors and is this a fair perception?

Responses reflected a resident's point of view, as almost all stakeholders were residents themselves and tended to gauge visitor viewpoints from word of mouth and observation rather than from direct experience. Most thought the leavers were viewed in quite a negative light due to their general behaviour, attitude and language. Residents understood why leavers choose Rottnest as their place of celebration but did not like the behaviour that accompanied the celebration process of finishing school. Associated with this was the anticipation of problems and this tends to create uneasiness in the weeks leading up to the school leavers celebrations. Upon arrival this changed to exaggerated vigilance on petty issues that would normally go unnoticed at other times during the year.

*“Nightmare because of behaviour, language and attitude.”*

Some business owners recorded up to double their daily turnover during this period and despite appreciating the extra profit, they found it extremely taxing on the nerves and patience. The eating and drinking establishments obviously benefited most, in stark contrast to some other businesses, which actually experienced a marked downturn in trade. In such cases the leavers week is a double negative: reduced income and increased stress.

*“Seen as a pain in the ass.”*

The media was attacked for consciously baiting each year's leavers to create havoc and live up to, or even surpass the behaviour of previous years. Visitors were told when booking accommodation for this period, that the leavers would be invading the island during their chosen time, but it was commented that the media did a much more thorough job of scaring the majority of visitors away. They were very put off and shocked by the reported behaviour of leavers and so preferred to not risk destroying their holiday by booking either side of the school leavers week.

*"The visitors are scared off by the media hype."*

Overall, respondents saw the celebrations as an event that was here to stay and that they should try to embrace rather than fight against it. The reputation the leavers have during this time was thought by the majority to be richly deserved and some leavers were seen to be going out of their way to live up to or earn that reputation each year. They created a massive extra workload, especially with the amount of littering and vandalism that occurs, but also inject much needed income for many businesses. In all, the school leavers are seen as a necessary evil that most stakeholders are prepared to put up with each year, primarily because of the income.

*"Deserve their reputation!"*

**Question 2:** What are your impressions of last year's school leavers' behaviour? Was it better or worse than previous years? Can you give me some examples of what they did?

General perception was that this year's group was the best behaved group of leavers for quite a few years, but with the behaviour that occurred in '98, it was fairly easy to look good by comparison. Negative expectations of the leavers were created by two major incidents in the previous year. These were a major diving accident and the student caught (and eventually prosecuted) for kicking a quokka. These events really marred the '98 celebrations and the bad press put pressure on the '99 group.

*"Diving accident in '98 added to overall bad vibe and compounded schoolies dilemmas."*

Businesses were generally better prepared in 1999 through efficiently planned forecasting of staff, stock and hours required to maximise profits and effect smoother running. Stress levels were high for staff, because of the added workload. Some occasionally felt threatened, but none of the minor incidents or disruptions was of any abiding concern. Leavers seemed to both have money and be willing to spend it, which benefited most businesses on the island.

*“Quite good behaviour considering years previous.”*

Service providers noted a definite increase in the amount of rubbish, especially around the settlement area. Fauna was basically left alone, but this was obviously due to the cruelty incident the previous year. Leavers were very drunk and rowdy, but tended to remain within the main settlement area and Thompson’s Bay, where the majority were staying. Only three arrests or summons were issued and these were all for alcohol-related offences. Damage to property was minimal although approximately fifteen leavers were evicted for breaking into accommodation. Some 71 infringements (\$100 fine) were issued for various minor offences but leniency was exercised towards leavers sleeping on the beach.

*“Abusing protected property ie. 8 guys sitting on old shingled roof and wouldn’t get down when told!”*

Alcohol was identified by most stakeholders as the main ingredient in all behavioural problems. The other major issues identified were the power of the group dynamic and individual leavers’ lack of responsibility. Over a Six-day period 50 incidents were dealt with at the nursing post, of which all were alcohol-related. Approximately 31 of the treated group were under 18. Hype and panic accounted for many of the call-outs and from these no real serious incidents were recorded. Only 11 physical assaults and 4 cases of unprotected sex were dealt with and one was presumed to be sexual assault (rape), although charges were not laid. Only one pushbike related incident was recorded.

*“Many illicit drug affected kids came through the door merely looking for a bed.”*

Apart from the small element of any large group that always goes out of its way to cause damage or trouble, the '99 leavers were a fairly well-behaved group according to the majority of stakeholders interviewed. Only a few isolated incidents occurred during the celebrations and these weren't on a scale that influenced this general consensus. Comment was made that it is the university leavers who cause the majority of problems and damage and unfortunately this gets blamed on the school leavers because they're younger and more conspicuous.

**Question 3:** What impact do school leavers have on your business/service? Good or Bad?

The leavers were felt to have a tremendous economic impact on the island for the duration of their stay. The staffing levels of most businesses doubled; hours worked increased therefore overtime and extra shifts were implemented to handle the extra workload. Accordingly staff stress levels are at there highest during this period.

*“Huge impact on the island generally!”*

Most hospitality areas reported a reasonable to enormous increase in trade, without too many behavioural problems. Stock losses were negligible and some vandalism occurred to external furniture/fittings, but on the whole the cash flow increased more than compensated for these negative aspects.

*“Their behaviour is OK when purchasing although they're very messy with their rubbish and there is the bit of vandalism they cause.”*

A negative impact tended to be felt more by the service providers, with one stating that a four week period was required to initially prepare for, react to and repair the island environment due to the school leaver celebrations. An environmental worker estimated that Rottnest's celebrations may be the most expensive in the world. The high financial burden to the taxpayer is deemed acceptable by the parents of the school leavers' concerned because of the perceived safety bonus. It would appear parents in WA seem very relaxed about sending their children to the island in favour of any other destination, due to the reputation it possesses as a safe environment.



*“Heavy impact because of rubbish they create and vegetation they interfere with.”*

*“Everyone is on edge due to massive influx of people!”*

The Police obviously felt the leavers impacted on them the most due to the need to supervise, manage and control leavers at their worst. It was felt that violence wasn't as much an issue as the damage they could do to themselves while being intoxicated. The Police considered that the problem lay mostly with the stray, random element that came to the island for mostly negative reasons and certainly to create as much havoc as possible. The blame for this behaviour is however typically attributed to the leavers and their poor reputation is continually reaffirmed.

*“Not violent, but they get so drunk that they're a danger to themselves.”*

*“Not hard to control and no real difference from big weekend crowds.”*

Due to the increased media hype in the period before leavers' week occurs, the island community is always very aware of the impending invasion. While there is some anxiety, the island community believes that it is always well prepared for the stress ahead. It is an annual occurrence that all stakeholders feel they have adapted to or are in the process of coming to terms with. A few however, said they would love to see the celebrations banned from happening on the island and would be more than happy to see them sent back to the mainland somewhere!

*“Tragic that they only come here to get pissed.”*

*“Very happy if they went somewhere else!”*

**Question 4:** What do you think about having an intervention on Rottnest aimed at making school leaver celebrations safer for both the leavers themselves and for others on the island?

This question tended to bemuse respondents at first due to the fact that they wondered who the leavers had to be protected from other than themselves? Respondents were certainly mostly in favour of some type of intervention, but didn't really have many ideas as to the form it should take. Some business holders were only in favour of

giveaways, for example, if they didn't impact directly on their sales. These provisos obviously identified the very real concern about protecting profit, market share and ultimately business viability.

*“Safer from who, themselves!”*

Service providers were all in agreement that some measures definitely needed to be put in place, but that everything attempted previously was not well received or attended at all. Respondents suggested that whatever is organised for the school leavers needs to be well planned and implemented; mainly with the knowledge that they need to vacate the area at some point and return to their accommodation. This was a major concern due to street drinking and the damage done on the way back to accommodation.

*“It would let them blow off steam away from everyone else!”*

It appeared that alcohol was considered by all those interviewed as the main cause of the islands problems and if its consumption could be controlled or limited somehow then this would certainly make some difference to the overall situation. Everyone also agreed this was also the most difficult aspect to control and none were forthcoming with ideas that made achieving this outcome more feasible. Banning the leavers or certainly their alcohol was suggested as possibly the only method to achieve an acceptable intervention for some, while others mentioned alcohol-free events as an effective intervention strategy.

**Question 5:** What do you suggest would make the school leaver celebrations safer for both the student and the rest of the community on Rottnest?

Everyone except one respondent made suggestions about interventions that should be put in place with answers varying greatly between making cheaper food available to having a huge dance party on the cricket oval. Everything from increased security and lighting to handing out free water at various locations was put forward, although most agreed that cost and time needed to be factored in, as well as whether the island infrastructure could handle the proposed activities.

*“Put a concert or dance party on the cricket oval and let them go for it!”*

An interesting comment from one stakeholder drew attention to the fact that they thought not much more could be done due to entrenched, alcohol focused risky behaviour by leavers. They felt that it was through these risky drinking practices that the harm is created. Again it was emphasised that if alcohol deliveries to accommodation and parents buying alcohol for the leavers, before they arrive, could be stopped and discouraged then this would greatly decrease problems on the island. More responsibility for their actions was strongly recommended for both the celebrating leavers and their parents.

**Question 6:** Is there anything else you would like to add?

The fact that most leavers seem very ambivalent about organised activities made some stakeholders believe that if activities were organised, they would not be very well patronised. In saying this they had no other reasonable suggestions, other than agreeing that a night-time dance party would definitely give the leavers a focus for their energy.

A few of those interviewed also made mention of the possible ramifications associated with the Rottnest Island Authorities (RIA) ‘duty of care’ responsibilities. Legislation sees this agency in the unenviable position of possibly facing legal action if a student comes to harm at an event they have sanctioned. While everyone admits all due care would be taken, at what point do the stakeholders relinquish responsibility to the leavers themselves?

Some stakeholders also saw it as more than just an economic loss, if the celebrations were banned on the island, as they felt nowhere else has this much control over young people who were consuming such large amounts of alcohol. Some suggested that the island be booked out entirely for school leavers so they can celebrate without directly affecting any other group’s holiday? RIA was also encouraged to provide armbands to both identify school leavers as well as the location of their accommodation in case of any problems.

**Question 7:** Would you be prepared to feed in your ideas/suggestions for the development of an intervention for the 2000 school leaver celebrations?

Of the fourteen stakeholders with whom I requested an interview; twelve agreed to speak to me; one refused; and, one never returned my calls. Of the twelve interviewed, everyone agreed to be involved in the development of an intervention for the year 2000 leavers' celebrations with all being interested in the idea of forming a committee to meet on a regular basis to formulate ideas.

Comments were also made that the whole business community should get behind the project, as it is an initiative that benefits both leavers and stakeholders and helps lift the profile of what is a much-maligned annual event on Rottnest.

### **Participant Observation**

Throughout the five days the field researcher was on the island, he observed the leavers' in various alcohol-related situations and their resultant behaviour:

“Before departure and on arrival it was astounding how much alcohol was actually being transported to the island. This gave me a clear indication of how much drinking would be done although, when surveying the leavers, most did not say that alcohol consumption would be their top priority. Mornings were quiet, with only the hardcore few opening beers in front of their mates and girlfriends to impress them. After the first night some looked like they hadn't slept much at all, but generally, many had a lot of energy during the day. Almost everyone I walked near was interested in what I was doing and many were more than happy to relate stories and provide information to answer my questionnaires. The most co-operative groups were those consisting of four or five girls. Most male groups tended to exaggerate and mixed groups appeared to make eye contact with the opposite sex to gauge their reaction to the question before attempting to answer it.

Late morning/early afternoon happenings consisted of a constant stream of leavers walking between accommodation, beach, cafés and the main settlement area. Many unwisely tried to walk in 30 degree plus heat without shoes so painful running on bitumen became the order of the day. By mid to late afternoon most were gathered in

front of either their own or another's cottage to participate in the pre-evening parade and 'warm-up' Olympics. By this I mean they were sufficiently intoxicated to be drawing attention to themselves in a way that would perhaps seem enticing to girls and threatening or provocative to other guys ie. basically, they were doing some serious showing off! Activities by this stage of the afternoon consisted of big groups of rowdy, shirt-less and often times abusive males sitting or standing behind the front wall of their accommodation baiting other groups who wandered past. Comments obviously varied depending on the gender of the group, but mostly things were said to provoke a reaction from some or the entire passing group. 'Scoring Signs' were held up as girls walked by and these were considered to be the most offensive method of demeaning females. This harassment affected many females' decisions about when and where to move around the settlement area.

Once dusk approached a clearing of the streets was noticed for an hour or so before the leavers reappeared having showered, smelling of various scents and mostly wearing more night oriented attire. They seemed more excited than during the day as they briskly moved up and down in front of my abode, with most carrying opened or unopened alcohol, which they half-heartedly attempted to hide from the Police patrols that randomly wandered by. As it became darker one sensed the tension increase, especially on the Friday and Saturday night, as the leavers became drunker and louder. Older males (aged approximately 19-22), started to appear after the sun had gone down and many seemed to be scoping the throng of passersby for an excuse to 'make something of it' (ie. start a fight for no particular reason).

By 10pm the streets were filled with very drunk young men and a few girls who mostly walked very quickly in pairs, looking down at the ground, to their chosen destination. I witnessed big gangs of male youth physically and verbally provoking each other and on the odd occasion, walking past someone and seemingly punching them for no reason. It was not an area to hang around if you were on your own, drunk or vulnerable. The noise continued into the night and I remained awake until around 2am every morning just watching people walking (and staggering) up and down the road in front of my cottage."

## DISCUSSION

The young people and key stakeholders interviewed in this study were generally keen to express their opinions about the 1999 school leavers celebrations and were quite consistent in many of the issues they identified. This study indicates that school leavers gather at Rottnest Island, at the end of their final year of schooling, with the express purpose of socialising and relaxing. Although the young people interviewed in this study generally indicated that they intended to consume alcohol to enhance the socialisation process, the majority did not state that their sole purpose for going to Rottnest was to drink excessively. The leavers reported that relaxing and unwinding was high on their list of priorities, but also hoped to interact with many old friends and meet new friends. Many young people indicated that the relaxed lifestyle available at Rottnest was an important reason they chose to go there and this was in line with their aim of releasing the stress built up during their final school exams. Similar studies highlight the importance of the reputation of the location and expectations of the experience as determinants of where leavers go to celebrate. Zinkiewicz et al [5] states,

*“It is likely that the reputation that the Gold Coast holds as a Schoolies Week venue, as well as a general holiday locale, attracts young people who expect and are prepared to engage in high-risk behaviours such as binge drinking.” (P 284)*

Observing ‘Spring Break’ celebrations in Florida, Josaim et al [2] found that leavers often have a heightened sense of anticipation to their upcoming holiday. This is given weight by their inclusion of a direct quote from a WWW spring break message site that clearly indicates the activities teenagers expect to be involved in while there.

*“Listen up people; it seems that Jacksonville and Daytona Beach are having their beach parties at the same time (April 12-13), but we ALL know how and why we’ll be there! In plain English, to F\*\*\*, drink and smoke!” (P 502)*

The school leavers involved in this study had high expectations about what the celebrations at Rottnest would involve. These expectations seemed to stem from the media focus on the island during leavers’ week and the reputation the island has gained for excessive alcohol consumption and high-risk behaviour during this period.

Given these huge expectations, it appears that with each year of leavers, comes the need to have a celebration bigger and better than the last. This celebration is facilitated by the consumption of large quantities of alcohol and, at times, extends into drug taking. The resultant behaviour includes sexual promiscuity, sexual harassment, violence and other risky behaviour. If social activities were organised from the time revelers arrived, then the emphasis on early and quick consumption of alcohol might be reduced. This is supported by comments from key stakeholders that indicate leavers are very excited when they board the ferries for Rottnest with a definite intention of 'running amok' and because there are few activities organised, that is exactly what happens.

Clearly alcohol plays a major role in the celebrations. The majority of respondents interviewed said their time at the island would involve alcohol consumption of varying degrees and males tended to be more intent on excess consumption than females. Females freely indicated that alcohol consumption would invariably take place, but on a much lesser scale. However, males tended to exaggerate their level of alcohol consumption while excess female consumption was mostly denied. This is consistent with findings from similar studies, including Zinkiewicz et al [5], that concluded males tend to consume more alcohol than females,

*“Consistent with general Australian statistics [6], while there was no difference in the proportion of males and females calling themselves non-drinkers, males were heavier drinkers and suffered more negative consequences such as having a hangover, vomiting and passing out.” (P 284)*

This pattern of heavier drinking by males is also supported by the observations of the field worker who repeatedly observed many more intoxicated males than females. This has implications for intervention activities, which may need to be different for males and females.

The impetus to drink on the island was heightened by a number of important factors. Firstly, school leavers were going to the island with the express intention of meeting and intensely interacting with many others, both known and unknown to them. Secondly, the vast majority of both male and female leavers had pre-purchased a large

proportion of their alcohol requirements before departing and were therefore going to the island with the definite intention of consuming all of what they had brought. Thirdly, the large amount of alcohol that each individual had brought over with them seemed to be indirectly proportional to the amount of activities that they presumed would be on offer at the island. In other words, most of the respondents interviewed believed alcohol would definitely be the key interactive tool and that most 'activities' of a social nature would somehow involve alcohol, either before, during, or after. The fact that there were few actual activities organised to enhance the socialisation process meant that many leavers felt there was nothing else to do but drink. When asked if they had considered alcohol-free activities, some females indicated they might have an alcohol-free day. However the vast majority of males ridiculed this possibility, stating that if alcohol was not available they would take other drugs.

The actual quantity of alcohol consumed by leavers in one session was difficult to ascertain due to the poor recollection by the young people interviewed about their previous drinking sessions. Generally, respondents appeared much more interested in the end goal of their celebrating rather than the quantity of alcohol involved in the process leading up to it. The leavers indicated that if their supply of alcohol ran out they had no difficulty in accessing more alcohol on the island. The leavers purchased it themselves, got older friends to buy it from the hotel or utilised the home delivery service available from one of the general stores on the island. Although there is little that can be done to control the amount of alcohol that the leavers bring onto the island, perhaps tighter controls on the sale of alcohol to minors on the island could be implemented. Although the Police presence did prevent some leavers from entering licensed premises, due to identification checks, other leavers indicated that it was quite easy to gain entry to the hotel if you had fake identification or looked of age. The field researcher observed many leavers gathering around the external wall of the hotel watching and waiting for their opportunity to sneak in. The leavers were visibly drunk and noisy, like their peers inside the hotel, but caused no real trouble, although the Police presence aided control.

As a result of the large amount of alcohol available and the lack of alternative activities, many leavers were regularly engaging in high-risk drinking and potentially harmful behaviour. This is supported by the field researchers' observations that school



leavers were using speed-drinking methods such as ‘funnels’ to rapidly increase their alcohol intake over a short period of time. Additionally, the field researcher observed leavers’ intoxicated behaviour in and around their accommodation, the settlement area and the hotel area. This behaviour included verbal harassment and abuse, physical violence, vomiting, injuries caused by impaired coordination and hangovers. Although the Police made no arrests they warned plenty of leavers about street drinking and issued a number of fines for this offence. In addition, the Nursing post attended to 50 alcohol-related incidents over a six-day period, with 31 of the treated group being under 18. Interestingly, leavers spoke of some confusion caused by a misleading sign on the door of the first-aid post that stated a \$15 charge would be levied on all patients. In the fine print it stated that the charge was only incurred when a prescription was issued but this may have still been a deterrent to leavers who weren’t coherent enough to read or comprehend this statement. Taking this into account, it is possible that more sick, injured or assaulted leavers might have sought treatment if it hadn’t been for this sign.

It was clear from observations and interviews with leavers that the males were at risk of involvement in violent situations either as the victim or the perpetrator. This is similar to other studies that indicate that young males become aggressive and are at risk of violence in varying degrees due to their alcohol use [5]. Concerning violence on the Gold Coast, Zinkiewicz et al [5] found that,

*“...nearly a third of males, as well as over a fifth of females, reported being hassled by adults. Between 10 and 15% of participants were hurt or injured. It appears that a significant amount of conflict may occur during Schoolies Week, despite findings [7] that few school-leavers expect this to be the case.” (P 284)*

Interestingly, when spoken to on arrival at the island, the majority of males predicted that they would not experience any serious harms due to them being with large groups of friends. However, when interviewed a few days later most had changed their opinion. Nearly all males interviewed had seen or experienced first hand, physical violence of some degree and indicated that there was a definite increase in tension after dusk. Respondents definitely attributed this to the amount and intensity of the drinking that was being done during the day. Once boredom set in, many big groups of

intoxicated males went looking to start trouble. Often recounts of incidents involving violence tended to be exaggerated due to their excessive alcohol consumption and hazy recollections. Although most of the aggressive behaviour displayed by the males tended to be verbal and at most, some pushing, the field researcher did actually observe males being punched for no particular reason. In addition, the field researcher observed that violent or potentially violent situations arose when older males (19 – 20 year olds) entered the area where the leavers congregated, with the express purpose of causing trouble. Key informants confirmed that it was these older males who often caused the trouble that the leavers were blamed for. Surprisingly, many males hadn't considered any strategies to deal with potential harms. Due to this, some males became victims of unwanted aggression and some suffered physical harm and emotional trauma because of this.

As on the Gold Coast, female respondents experienced an enormous amount of sexual harassment, although, due to little visible Police presence, many incidents tended to be dealt with by the leavers themselves. In most cases, the perpetrators suffered no adverse consequences for their behaviour. No serious incidents were reported to the Police although four sexual assaults were reported to the nurse. Most of the sexual harassment towards females was verbal, becoming very abusive as day turned into night and males became intoxicated. On some occasions however, intoxicated males attempted to follow through on their verbally stated intentions. The females seemed far more aware and concerned about the potential harms associated with excessive alcohol use than the males. In particular, the female leavers interviewed were very aware of problems they may face when socialising with or near drunken males and had strategies planned to deal with these harms. These strategies involved staying in or around groups of known people and being very vigilant with their own alcohol and other drug intake.

When questioned about what emotional harms they'd experienced, both male and female respondents seemed somewhat ambivalent. Most tended to play down or not make comment regarding long term effects of their exposure to the leavers celebrations. Any reactions given were quite vague and non-specific.

The results from this study clearly indicate that, activities need to be effectively designed so that they alleviate boredom, take the focus off drinking excessive amounts of alcohol and provide both genders with a safe environment in which they may socialise. Observations by the field worker indicated that the majority of girls did not drink to excess during the day whereas the boys did. Given this, perhaps during the day more male oriented activities could be organised to reduce their day time drinking, thereby making the night-time activities less influenced by earlier alcohol consumption. Furthermore results from the respondents indicated that they firmly believed leavers week should be left as informal and non-structured as possible due to the structured nature of their twelve years of schooling.

Concerning other drugs, the young people spoken to at Rottnest were very wary of discussing their illicit drug use and only really felt comfortable talking about their marijuana use. Under 5% of both males and females indicated they had bought the drug over with them and only 15% of males and 6% of females admitted to smoking some during their stay on the island. Observations by the field worker indicated that some marijuana use did occur, with cannabis 'joints' being passed around in the confines of accommodation. Designer drugs such as ecstasy, speed and cocaine were condemned by most respondents at Rottnest, with many believing they had no place there due to the relaxed, mellow atmosphere of the island. This is consistent with similar studies that found that designer drug use levels by both male and female leavers were much lower compared to cannabis consumption [5]. Almost all leavers said they wouldn't use any of the above-mentioned drugs even if offered them for free and everyone was wary of trying to transport them to the island for fear of getting arrested and evicted. In addition to the much heavier penalties for possession and use, leavers indicated that they did not want the added embarrassment of being caught in front of their peers.

The requirement of a \$1000 bond for accommodation also appeared to be a major deterrent to use of illegal drugs, because of a fear of eviction if caught. Comments from key informants supported the survey findings, that few leavers were using other drugs. The Police reported no illicit drug arrests. Discussions with leavers did indicate that Dexamphetamine was the only other freely sold and distributed drug. They appeared more relaxed in talking about this drug due to its legal status if supplied on

prescription. However, the leavers buying the drug on the island were doing so illegally and the field researcher observed several leavers who appeared to be under its influence. Although illicit drug use did not appear to be prevalent on the island the field researcher got a sense that more occurred than was admitted and the potential harm from such use can not be ignored. The leavers typically found themselves in situations where their judgement was impaired due to alcohol and risk-taking behaviour was prevalent. Mixing other drugs with the alcohol would only heighten the risk. It was clear however, that alcohol was overwhelmingly the drug of choice for the majority of young people interviewed and observed. Given this, it is apparent that interventions need to focus on reducing potential alcohol-related harm.

When asked about their level of satisfaction with the nights' activities, many leavers had no clear idea what to expect other than "something will happen" and therefore, initially, were left in the morning, feeling like they had a relatively good night when something occurred.

Obviously, as the nights progressed there were comparisons with previous nights' activities or happenings. Repetition of drinking binges (leading to overindulgence and sickness for some), walking around and general boredom arose constantly as negative themes. Observations made by the field researcher confirmed that the many leavers, particularly males, in the absence of something to do, constantly walked up and down the street and this often resulted in verbal and physical abuse. The leavers indicated that the best parts of the night's happenings included socialising with old friends and meeting new ones and this was deemed to have been significantly enhanced due to the amounts of alcohol consumed. It is of interest to note that, because of this excessive intake, many respondents' memory of the previous night's events was quite hazy. This obviously affected their overall judgement and possibly led them to believe that they had a much better night than they actually had. Dancing was another high point of most evening activities as was sex for the few who reported this behaviour.

When questioned about activities that they would find attractive and engaging, the majority of leavers identified some type of activity that involved music in one form or another. The most requested activity was dance music played by DJ's in a 'low-key', purpose-built location. It was clear the leavers wanted somewhere to dance and

socialise with their friends. Concerts by West Australian rock bands were also requested as well as skate demonstrations and fashion parades, both accompanied by dance-oriented music. The leavers consistently commented that night time activities tended to be heavily alcohol-based due to a decided lack of attractive alternatives. Music oriented events would certainly take the emphasis off alcohol and delay the negative effects of over indulgence. If conducted with a discrete Police presence, these events could become a 'safe' area where leavers could socialise and dance without the threat of their intoxicated peers causing them duress or harm. Given that the majority of leavers stayed on the island for between two and five days it is apparent that a range of day and night time activities should be organised over the entire week of celebrations. It is important to note that the majority of leavers indicated that they had chosen Rottnest because of its relaxed atmosphere, free from the restrictions imposed on them due to months of study and the pressure of exams. It is clear therefore, that for activities to be attractive to leavers they should be relatively low key, involve music and impose few rules and restrictions. Key stakeholders were mostly in favour of the idea of a formally structured musical event, but a few were concerned as to whether the infrastructure could handle the large scale events that were being suggested by the school leavers. The obvious choice of venue was the island's cricket oval, but due to the sprinkler system and depth of grass cover, concerns about wear and tear were raised, especially if there was going to be two or three events staged there in succession. A portable dance floor of substantial size could alleviate this problem and allow for quicker regrowth of the utilised area.

It was clear from interviews and observations that the leavers had money to spend, but due to the lack of activities most spent their money on alcohol. The predicted costs of holidaying on the island varied from not a lot to several hundred dollars. This obviously depended on the individual themselves; what they were prepared to spend and for what purpose. Prices on Rottnest were obviously somewhat higher than the mainland, but in general leavers seemed to have a mindset that made them mostly indifferent to the prices of goods and services. Many couldn't tell the field researcher the price of most articles they were asked about, except for alcohol. Not surprisingly, entertainment facilitated by alcohol consumption was a very high priority on most leavers' agenda. Not many that were spoken to had food or accommodation higher than alcohol on their list of priorities, although most felt a lot more comfortable about

socialising and partying in general with the knowledge they had somewhere to sleep. Those leavers who did not have accommodation organised tried to play down the fact that they didn't have anywhere to stay but it was obvious that it was definitely a cause for concern. Sources spoken to from the nursing post said 'out-of-it' leavers were constantly wandering through the door feigning sickness just so they could get to lie down for a few hours. Unfortunately for them they were sent on their way rather quickly. Perhaps a supervised sobering-up tent for school leavers not in need of medical attention but too intoxicated to be unattended could be established as a low cost safety measure.

Many leavers interviewed were highly dissatisfied with the availability and choice of food, suggesting that better quality food with a bigger range of healthier options be made available. When interviewed regarding the availability of food, stakeholders advised the researcher that all businesses had met in October and agreed to make a concerted effort to specifically cater for school leavers. Afterwards they admitted, that their efforts had consisted of offering only marginally longer than normal trading hours on the Friday and Saturday night with the actual selection and price of food being offered, not being changed that much at all. The field researcher observed huge queues outside one food outlet in particular on both of these nights and spoke to plenty of drunk, desperately hungry young people in line. When they were questioned about this, many said that they were only there because there was no other choice.

Males in particular had bought a limited amount of food to the island with them and had no real intention of cooking it. Those that were confident or drunk enough tried to use their lack of kitchen expertise as a way of meeting girls. Some were surprisingly successful in this ploy. In order to reduce the potential harms associated with over-indulgence with alcohol it is apparent that a wider range of hearty, low cost and convenient food choices should be made available for leavers. By making this food available, leavers would not only have more choice and a cheaper alternative, they would also most probably be more likely to eat. This would be a useful harm reduction strategy because the food would slow the absorption of alcohol.

According to the leavers interviewed, parents seemed to happily send their children off to the island. This may be due to parents' perceptions of the island as a controlled

environment. This however was only really the case for motor vehicles and driving. The reality was that the leavers were actually in a more focused environment with the majority of those in that environment intent on celebrating. This increased the peer-pressure to indulge excessively in alcohol and other high-risk behaviour. Many parents, particularly of male leavers, gave little or no real warnings to their children other than those concerning the \$1000 bond or behaviour that might, in any way, embarrass the family name or reputation. It appears that these parents were not aware of the level of alcohol consumption and the resultant behaviour that occurred during the leaver's celebration. This might in part explain why the male leavers hadn't considered the potential harms associated with their alcohol use and planned strategies to reduce or avoid these harms. Many females however indicated that their parents had discussed with them the potential harms associated with their and others alcohol use. Consequently these females had strategies planned to reduce or avoid these harms. The findings from this study suggest that all parents should be informed about the reality of the celebrations on the island. This may encourage parents, particularly parents of male leavers, to talk more seriously to their children about the potential harms and realistic strategies that they might employ to keep themselves safe.

The comments from leavers and key informants and the field researcher's observations indicate that many leavers' behaviour while on Rottneest was out of control. It was due more to good luck than good management on the part of the leavers, that more serious harms were not reported. Clearly a well-targeted range of interventions, covering the whole leavers celebratory period, need to be developed that address the over emphasis on alcohol as the only way to celebrate. Some of these activities should aim to provide alternative activities to drinking; and some need to take into account the difference in alcohol consumption and harms reported by males and females. They also need to take into account the reasons why leavers go to Rottneest and the types of activities the leavers have identified as attractive. Lastly, harm reduction strategies such as the availability of food and 'Sobering-up' centres need to be considered.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations for school leaver intervention activities at Rottneest are based on the information gathered from the 1999 school leavers and key informants and observations made by the field researcher. Activities need to be based on what the leavers REALLY want, as unstructured as possible without losing control. There should be minimal rules and restrictions, and above all, the activities should be FUN! Where possible additional funding and sponsorship should be sought from appropriate organisations. During the week of the celebratory activities publicity should be sought to indicate the benefits that can derive from such prevention interventions, as this is likely to boost future involvement by other communities in such programs.

### *Activities - Day and night*

- 'Laid back' dance area that is free or low cost and open every night (Wednesday 22/11 to Saturday 25/11) for the first week of leavers. Live 'DJ' created dance music being played from 8pm until 12pm. Set-up the tent with a portable dance floor. Hire a different DJ for each night and perhaps have two available for Friday and Saturday night. NO or minimal charge for entry (depending on sponsors and cost recovery). Minimal 'low-key' security inside tent and negotiate with Police to provide a presence in the general vicinity. Erect a few portable toilets and make available a variety of food stalls in close proximity to the tent area. Set-up a drinks stall selling Soft Drinks and Energy drinks (eg. Red Bull and 'V') and bottled water. The venue would be alcohol-free but patrons should be allowed to come and go as long as they are not visibly affected by alcohol. Anybody affected by alcohol would be refused admittance until sober.
- Transportable Radio station (eg. 96fm) on island from Wednesday to Sunday playing requested music and holding competitions, skate demonstrations, beach fashion parades, giveaways, etc for leavers to participate in. Announcers could also give constant reminders of what activities are happening each day.



- Free low-key beach activities during the day including beach cricket/volleyball – NOT competition; perhaps make equipment available (10am – 6pm) with one person to facilitate.
- Flyer put up in each cottage or bungalow and/or a central noticeboard that tells leavers what's on, where and when.

### ***Food***

- Set-up a variety of food stalls next to the 'laid-back' dance area tent (located in the amphitheatre area between the main settlement and the leavers' accommodation). Have them selling a variety of pizza, pasta, kebabs, stir-fry, Mexican, and salad dishes. Pricing should be attractive but commercially viable.
- As well as the low cost stalls, sponsors such as smallgoods manufacturers, beef producers, the WA Egg Board, bread producers and fruit Juice/soft drink suppliers could be approached to be part of a free or subsidised 'recovery breakfast' (from 8am 'til 10am in the morning) and a 'sausage sizzle' (from 5pm 'til 7pm at night). The first 'Recovery Breakfast' would occur on Thursday 23 November and would happen every morning until Monday 27 November. The 'Sausage Sizzle' would also be held from Thursday until Monday night but this would of course depend on sponsorship, volunteers and leaver interest. Volunteers would run the preparation, cooking and cleaning duties in shifts with leavers being asked for a gold coin donation for several different charities (ie. volunteers would be supplied by the charities being donated to as these charities would be sharing in funds raised from the donations).

### ***Police***

- Speak to schools again along with Ranger/Environmental Officer and, perhaps, the 'Leavers Live' project officer, so contact and rules are established early and leavers realise that Rottnest has both easily identifiable security and an element of surveillance. Invite interested parents to attend so they have an adult perception of the real harms associated with leavers' celebrations at Rotttnest.

- Consider having more Police on the island, but they should have the same attitude as those posted in 1999, with emphasis on maintaining friendly contact and issuing warnings instead of eviction and fines. Encourage leavers to work with the Police to ensure they have an ‘uninterrupted’, safe time at Rottnest.

### ***Availability of alcohol***

- Cease home delivery services from liquor retailers on the island.
- More thorough ID checks at all Liquor vending outlets, including the Hotel.
- Educate parents about the role they can play managing their childrens’ alcohol consumption on Rottnest

### ***Medical Aid –Sobering up centre***

- ‘Sobering-up/Chill-out’ tent with beds and qualified volunteer personnel (set up next to the Nursing post for ease of access) to provide comfort and respite for those leavers who are not sick or injured but too out of it to be left unattended for any length of time. Could also have qualified personnel on hand to offer free advice and counselling for those leavers who are needing/wanting it.

### ***Other Recommendations***

- Parents of pre-booked leavers sent a booklet that clearly outlines the happenings and potential harms existing at the celebrations on Rottnest. Produced to help facilitate communication between parents and leavers regarding strategies to employ to maximise fun and minimise risk.
- ‘Leaver ID’ cards issued to all leavers that have booked accommodation on the island. This allows entry into dance area, recovery breakfast/sausage sizzle and ‘Sobering-up/Chill-out’ tent. Also can be used as a discount card at participating locations.
- More equipment available to hire for use in cottages and chalets such as pillows, sheets, blankets, eskies, water dispensers, etc.

- Increased 'portable' lighting set up between leaver's accommodation area and main settlement area.

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## **APPENDICES**





## APPENDIX 1

### Major Stakeholder's Questionnaire – Rottnest March 2000

1. How are school leavers perceived by Rottnest residents and visitors and is this a fair perception?

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2. What are your impressions of last year's school leavers' behaviour? Was it better or worse than previous years? Can you give me some examples of what they did?

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3. What impact do school leavers have on your business/service? Good/Bad?

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4. What do you think about having an intervention on Rottnest aimed at making school leaver celebrations safer for the both the students themselves and for others on the island?

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5. What do you suggest would make school leaver celebrations safer for the students and the rest of the community on Rottnest?

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6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

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7. Would you be prepared to feed in your ideas/suggestions for the development of an intervention for the 2000 school leaver celebrations?

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**APPENDIX 2**

**EARLY DAYS (Pre-departure? En Route?)**

**Secondary School Students' Questionnaire – Rottnest 1999**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sex:** MALE FEMALE

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Group Type:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sample number:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Leaver:** YES NO **Other** \_\_\_\_\_

1) Why Rotto? (Any other options considered?) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) Expectations? (What do you want from the Rotto experience?) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) What sort of activities would you like made available to you? (Sports, Games, Clinics?)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) Do you plan to drink/use drugs? (Access? Where? How much? How often? When?)

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5) Expenses? Allocation for Accommodation/Food/“Entertainment” How much do you plan to spend on alcohol or other drugs? Which has priority? \_\_\_\_\_

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6) Own concerns about potential harms/safety? (Physical, Emotional, Sex specific, Law)

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7) Have you any strategies in mind to reduce potential harms? (Plan of attack/action? Leaders?) \_\_\_\_\_

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8) Any Parental/Guardian warnings on harms? (Consequences? Contact with home?)

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9) How long do you plan to stay? (Location – Bungalow, Tent, Hut, Lodge?) \_\_\_\_\_

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### APPENDIX 3

#### THE COMING NIGHT

##### Secondary School Students' Questionnaire – Rottnest 1999

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sex:** MALE FEMALE

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Group Type:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sample number:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Leaver:** YES NO **Other** \_\_\_\_\_

1) Why Rotto? (Any other options considered?) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) Expectations? (What do you want from the Rotto experience?) \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

3) What are you planning to do this afternoon/evening?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) Are you going to drink Alcohol/take Drugs? (What sort? Access-How? Where?)

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5) Any concerns about possible/potential harms/safety?

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6) Have you planned any strategies to keep you safe? What? \_\_\_\_\_

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7) What other activities would you like to see organized if possible?

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8) Alternatives if “chosen” Alcohol/Drugs aren’t available? (Any Alcohol-free days/nights?)

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9) Are/do you feel in control of the planned events tonight? (Why/Why not?)

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10) Is control or planning easy or difficult to stick to? (Why/Why not?)

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## APPENDIX 4

### THE DAY AFTER

#### Secondary School Students' Questionnaire – Rottnest 1999

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sex:** MALE FEMALE

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Group Type:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sample number:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Leaver:** YES NO **Other** \_\_\_\_\_

1) Why Rotto? (Any other options considered?) \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) Expectations? (What do you want from the Rotto experience?) \_\_\_\_\_

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3) What did you get up to last night? (Any Regrets/Remorse/Guilt?)

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\_\_\_\_\_

4) Did it involve Alcohol/Drugs? (What sort? How much? Access?)

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5) Was it a good/great/fantastic night or a disaster? (Why?)

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6) Best parts of the night? \_\_\_\_\_

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7) Worst parts of the night? \_\_\_\_\_  
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8) What exactly made it bad? (Physically sick, Violence, Unwanted sexual advances, etc)  
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9) Any Emotional Harms? \_\_\_\_\_  
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10) How could your experience have been improved? \_\_\_\_\_

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11) Has your approach/behaviour changed over successive nights or are you going harder? (Why? Peer Pressure?) \_\_\_\_\_

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## APPENDIX 5

### LAST DAYS (Pre-departure? En Route?)

#### Secondary School Students' Questionnaire – Rottnest 1999

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sex:** MALE FEMALE

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Group Type:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sample number:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Leaver:** YES NO **Other** \_\_\_\_\_

1) Why Rotto? (Any other options considered?) \_\_\_\_\_

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2) Expectations? (What do you want from the Rotto experience?) \_\_\_\_\_

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3) What did you get up to? (How do you feel – Physically? Mentally?

Conscience/Guilt?)

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4) Did your activities/experiences live up to your expectations? \_\_\_\_\_

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5) High points about your experience? \_\_\_\_\_

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6) Any low points? \_\_\_\_\_

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7) Ways to improve the experience? (Activities that should be offered?)

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8) Any low points? \_\_\_\_\_  
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9) Cost? (More or Less expensive than initially thought? How much did you spend on alcohol and other drugs? How did you offset shortfall?) \_\_\_\_\_  
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10) What sorts of harms/dangerous behaviour did you see/have happen to you?  
(Physical, Emotional) \_\_\_\_\_  
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11) What things can reduce these harms/behaviours?

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12) Any changes to make experience: Better, Safer, Cheaper, more Relaxed?

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