

**School Leavers' Celebrations on Rottnest Island
(Leavers Live): Evaluation Report**

**Nicole Young
Fiona Farrington
Richard Midford**

**This Report was prepared by the National Drug Research Institute,
Curtin University of Technology for the School Drug Education
Project, Western Australia**

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Copies 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

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

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	vii
SUMMARISED RECOMMENDATIONS	xi
INTRODUCTION	1
OTHER RESEARCH	2
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 'LEAVERS LIVE' INTERVENTION	4
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	6
METHODOLOGY	9
DATA GATHERING METHODS	9
ANALYSIS	12
LIMITATIONS	13
RESULTS	17
SCHOOL LEAVERS	17
STAKEHOLDERS	42
POLICE AND NURSES DATA	49
The Media	50
The Hotel	51
The Chill Out Tent/ Nurses Station/ St John of God Ambulance	53
The Police and Security	53
Geordie Bay Settlement	54
The Leavers	54
DISCUSSION	57
RECOMMENDATIONS	67
Heritage Common	67
Chill Out Tent	68
Messages to Leavers and Parents	69
Food and Water	70
Security, Rangers and Police	70
Other	71
REFERENCES	73
APPENDIX 1	75
APPENDIX 2	79
APPENDIX 3	83
APPENDIX 4	87
APPENDIX 5	91

APPENDIX 6	95
APPENDIX 7	99

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Breakdown of survey instruments used in both years and numbers interviewed	14
Table 2: Gender make-up of groups interviewed in each year	14
Table 3 : Gender and status of those interviewed.....	15
Table 4: Age and gender of non-leavers interviewed.....	15
"Its where everyone goes." – Male	18
Table 5: Police figures for 1999 and 2000	49
Table 6: Nursing figures 1999 and 2000	50
Figure 1: Home suburb of Rottnest Study Group 2000	11

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Western Australia school leaver celebrations occur in late November/ early December and last between a week to ten days. The leavers' celebrations mark the end of twelve years of schooling and the completion of intense tertiary entrance examinations. The 16 - 17 year old students, regard the celebrations as a release following the pressure of their final.

One of the traditional and most popular destinations for leavers' in Western Australia is Rottnest Island, located 20 kilometres off the coast of Perth. Rottnest is considered the premier destination by leavers due in part to its reputation for excessive alcohol consumption and high-risk behaviour. In recent years this perception has been fuelled by media attention focusing on the negative aspects of the celebrations. In addition to the legal concerns associated with underage drinking there are also concerns about the potentially harmful consequences of excessive alcohol and other drug consumption that accompany the leavers celebrations. Furthermore the host community is disrupted each year because of the associated antisocial behaviour.

Due to these concerns, in 1999 the School Drug Education Project (SDEP) received funding from the National School Drug Education Strategy to investigate the school leaver phenomenon. The National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) received part of this funding to undertake a formative evaluation of school leaver celebrations on Rottnest Island. The research findings were presented in a technical report *School Leavers' Celebrations on Rottnest Island: Formative evaluation report* (Bogaards, Midford & Farrington, 2000a). The preliminary research NDRI conducted in 1999 included a comprehensive literature review of young people's abuse of alcohol and other drugs at holiday destinations around the world (Bogaards, Midford & Farrington, 2000b). There have been three substantial Australian studies that have investigated drug and alcohol consumption connected with school leaver celebrations on the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast in Queensland (Stanton, Walker, Ballard & Lowe, 1997; Smith & Rosenthal, 1997; Zinkiewicz, Downey & Curd, 1999). All of these studies found high levels of drug and alcohol use during school leaver celebrations.

In response to the risks perceived during “schoolie celebrations” (as they are known in the Eastern states) harm reduction interventions have been carried out in Queensland over the past few years. *“The meaning, madness and magic of Schoolies Festival”* (Ballard, Curd & Roche, 1998) examines the development and outcomes of the Sunshine Coast Schoolies Week strategy. This intervention was an excellent reference point for the Rottnest project, in particular taking note of the intersectoral nature of the strategy, and the evolution of initiatives into a highly valued youth festival.

In 2000 the SDEP received further National School Drug Education Strategy funding to develop and implement the “Leavers Live” intervention on Rottnest Island. This intervention was based on the 1999 formative research and was developed by the SDEP in consultation with various stakeholders and community agencies. NDRI received further funding in 2000 to evaluate the “Leavers Live” harm reduction intervention coordinated by the SDEP during the main week of end of school celebrations on Rottnest Island in 2000. The following summarises the key components of the intervention:

- Police talks to school leavers prior to leavers’ week
- Information sent out by Rottnest Island Authority (RIA) to all leavers holding bookings
- Extensive activities program developed in conjunction with RIA and Melville Youth Advisory Council including beach activities sponsored by *100% Control* including volleyball and other competitions
- \$1000 deposit required to acquire accommodation (RIA and Rottnest Lodge)
- Information tape – *100% Control* messages and music for ferry trip (RIA and 96FM)
- Chillout Tent coordinated by Rottnest Island Nursing Post and RIA staffed with volunteers from Drug Arm
- Rottnest Island rangers visit and brief of all leavers in accommodation
- Discounted \$5 *Recovery Breakfasts* at the tearooms.
- De-licensing of section of the Rottnest Hotel to form an underage dance area where bands and DJs performed during the afternoon and evening. These were sponsored by Healthway (*100% Control*), Office of Youth Affairs and Rottnest Island Authority.
- Coloured wrist bands for over 18’s entering the Rottnest Hotel

- Stopping of alcohol home deliveries
- Increased security staff at Rottneest Hotel
- Extended trading hours for many Rottneest food outlets
- Late Night sausage sizzle in settlement area.
- Rottneest Island Police and Rangers Sausage Sizzle (food donated by local businesses).

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the impact of the intervention on 2000 leavers and the Rottneest community. Similar to 1999, the evaluation involved interviews with leavers and key informants, police and nurses station incident data and participant observation.

In both the 1999 and 2000 studies the leavers' expectations were the same; to have fun, relax and unwind after a hectic exam period and to celebrate the milestone of school graduation and passage into independence and adulthood. Although the intention to drink to excess was clearly present in the minds of both males and females, when asked about general expectations and intentions of the Rottneest celebrations and specifically the coming night, alcohol consumption featured far less often in 2000 than in 1999. This may be an indication that intervention strategies in 2000 were successful in de-emphasising alcohol as a key component in the celebration process. It should be noted that the aim of the intervention was to shift the celebration focus off alcohol and to reduce alcohol related harm rather than directly targeting alcohol consumption. In addition when asked generally about last nights' activities far fewer leavers in 2000 indicated they consumed alcohol or spent the night just walking around than did their 1999 counterparts. Again this indicates that the intervention activities may have been successful in shifting the emphasis of the celebration from alcohol. Furthermore when specifically asked about what constituted the best part of the night, although a similar amount of leavers in both years identified socialising, far fewer in 2000 identified drinking. Perhaps most significantly in 2000 no respondents reported that they were bored during the evening. This marked a substantial change from 1999 and again supports the success of the intervention.

Similar to 1999 the harm reduction strategies that the 2000 leavers planned to use were generally not well considered, with both sexes relying almost solely on their friends to afford them protection from the whole range of possible and actual harms. However, in 2000 leavers appeared to experience less violence and sexual harassment. Although it is not clear why this occurred, perhaps the combination of the police visits, their proactive approach on the island and the intervention activities prepared leavers better to be able to cope with potentially harmful situations and to foster a sense that their behaviour was being monitored. Furthermore perhaps the intervention de-emphasised alcohol use enough to reduce harm. Of concern is that more leavers in 2000 reported illicit drug use. However, most leavers seemed to have arranged their drug purchases prior to arriving on Rottnest suggesting that the increase is more likely to be a reflection of greater drug use amongst the youth of the community and not a reaction to the intervention strategies.

Leavers were generally appreciative of the efforts made with the Leavers Live intervention in 2000. Their suggestions for improvement and expansion of the initiatives indicated a good degree of acceptance of the project overall. The Rottnest Hotel de-licensing and provision of bands was not as well received as had been hoped with both stakeholders and leavers suggesting it was a good idea but needed modification. Food initiatives were very well received with the sausage sizzle being appreciated as a low cost option for eating while drinking in the evening. There was a lot of evidence to suggest that the school visits and sausage sizzle event conducted by the police did much to foster a spirit of respect and cooperation between the leavers and authorities on the Island. The recovery breakfasts were also very well patronised, however still more food options are required in order to reduce the effects of excessive alcohol consumption.

The Chill Out Tent was widely regarded as the highlight of the intervention. Only positive comments were recorded about it. The volunteers who staffed it were consistently patient and compassionate and the nurses station was relieved of a considerable burden as minor complaints were dealt with within the tent. The importance of this facility in terms of reducing potential harms can not be overstated.

Other components of the intervention such as the beach activities, police visits, ranger's talks, competitions, advertising and promotion contributed to reducing boredom and increasing positive contact between the leavers and the host community. Most young people were appreciative of the efforts made, but even those who were critical of the details were still clearly aware that they were being looked over by a cohesive community. The advance preparation and coordinated, engaging approach adopted by the community fostered a greater degree of tolerance and mutual obligation. In turn this acted to reduce excessive behaviour on Rottneest in 2000.

SUMMARISED RECOMMENDATIONS

The following summary of recommendations to retain or modify the 2000 intervention strategies are based on the information obtained from the 2000 leavers and key informants.

- The de-licensed area at the hotel could be abandoned and replaced with a centralised area for music and dancing at Heritage Common.
- During the day a portable radio station or DJs could provide low key entertainment, run competitions and advertise activities.
- The Chill Out Tent initiative was a huge success and should be included in subsequent years. This initiative could be improved if the tent was larger with more volunteers.
- The police visits to schools were an outstanding success and should be continued in subsequent years and extended to include parents.
- A message like the 100% Control Healthway message used in 2000 should be promoted in subsequent years.
- The coordinated media approach was very effective in 2000 and should be repeated.
- The extended trading hours of food outlets played an important role in minimising intoxication late at night and should be repeated
- The recovery breakfasts were also a great success and would benefit from wider advertising and more options (recovery sausage sizzle – mid morning).
- Greater food availability is required. Food vans selling a variety of reasonably priced filling meals (e.g. baked potatoes, kebabs or hot dishes with rice) at Heritage Common.
- The sausage sizzles were utilised well and also provided valuable food to intoxicated leavers late at night and should be continued.

- Water needs to be made much more readily available out in the settlement. Free water dispensers or bottled water would be ideal.
- Tension levels will be kept at a minimum if all authorities follow the firm but tolerant policing adopted by the Rottnest Police on the island.
- The rangers could in future leave rubbish bags be left at the front of the houses with a notice explaining that vouchers for free food will be given in exchange for bags of rubbish collected.
- Extra lighting is still required in many areas, especially tentland.
- A bus providing transport around the settlement in the evening would increase attendance at activities.
- Whatever is done in terms of accommodation periods in 2001, it is important that all intervention initiatives are available for the entire time that leavers are present on the island.

INTRODUCTION

In Western Australia school leaver celebrations occur in late November/ early December and last between a week and ten days. The leavers' celebrations mark the end of 12 years of schooling and the completion of intensive tertiary entrance examinations. The 16 - 17 year old students, regard the celebrations as a release following the pressure of their final exams. They look forward to the celebrations as a chance to unwind, socialise (possibly for the final time) with old school friends, make new friends and mark their passage into independence and adulthood (Bogaards, Midford & Farrington, 2000a).

One of the traditional and most popular destinations for leavers' in Western Australia is Rottnest Island, located 20 kilometres off the coast of Perth. Rottnest is a holiday island providing a range of family style accommodation. During the school leaver period over 4,000 young people occupy almost all the accommodation in the main settlement of the island. School leavers also holiday at a number of locations up and down the coast from Perth. However Rottnest is considered the premier destination and the media has generally focused on the Rottnest celebrations. Each year there is media coverage of the excessive alcohol consumption and antisocial behaviour that accompanies the arrival of the leavers on Rottnest. The images and reports of leavers consuming large quantities of alcohol, along with anecdotal accounts from former participants make Rottnest both an attractive destination among adolescents wishing to celebrate the end of exams and a focus for community concern.

In addition to the legal concerns associated with underage drinking there are also concerns about the potentially harmful interpersonal violence and health consequences of excessive alcohol and other drug consumption that accompany the leavers celebrations. To date there have been no deaths on Rottnest during the leavers' period, however many stakeholders are concerned that this is a likely outcome if the high-risk behaviour of the leavers cannot be curbed. Furthermore the host community suffers damage and disruption each year because of the antisocial behaviour induced by high levels of alcohol consumption.

Due to these concerns, in 1999 the School Drug Education Project (SDEP) sought and received funding from the National School Drug Education Strategy to investigate the school leaver phenomenon. The National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) received part of this funding to undertake a formative evaluation of school leaver celebrations on Rottnest Island. The aim of this research was to assess the nature of the Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) use and harm associated with these end of school celebrations and make recommendations about interventions most likely to reduce the identified harm. The research findings were presented comprehensively in a technical report *School Leavers' Celebrations on Rottnest Island: Formative evaluation report* (Bogaards, Midford & Farrington, 2000). Evaluation data was presented from a range of sources and a series of recommendations were made on the basis of this information regarding strategies and activities that could form part of an intervention to reduce alcohol and other drug-related harm during subsequent school leaver celebrations on Rottnest Island. (1999 Recommendations included as Appendix 1) The immediate intention of these initiatives was to reduce the alcohol harm experienced by leavers and the host community on Rottnest during the 2000 leavers' celebrations. The longer-term goal was to evaluate the intervention to inform other holiday communities looking to reduce the impact of leavers' week.

In 2000 the SDEP received further National School Drug Education Strategy funding for the "Leavers Live" intervention on Rottnest Island. The recommendations made in the formative evaluation report formed the basis of this intervention. This report follows on from the previous research and presents the evaluation of the "Leavers Live" harm reduction intervention coordinated by the SDEP during the main week of end of school celebrations on Rottnest Island in 2000.

OTHER RESEARCH

The formative research NDRI conducted in 1999 included a comprehensive literature review of young people's abuse of alcohol and other drugs at holiday destinations around the world (Bogaards et. al., 2000b). The American 'Spring Break' phenomenon was examined as an example of an event involving high risk drinking amongst young people. Spring Break has been an American tradition since 1938 and provides useful insights, which can inform Australian prevention measures. Josiam et al (1998) for example looked at the impact of Spring Break celebrations on Panama

Beach in Florida. Here local community eventually launched initiatives to control celebrations after a number of years of uncontrollable crowds and multiple student deaths.

A recent study (Bellis, Hale, Bennett, Chaudry, Kilfoyle, 2000) involved surveying 846 British individuals with a median age of 20 years while visiting Ibiza, Spain. Similar to what has been observed on Rottneest the Ibiza study noted that,

“... young people’s risk taking is likely to increase as individuals escape the constraints of family and workplace. (p 236)

It was found that young people’s drug use and sexual behaviour differed substantially while on holiday abroad, with illicit drug consumption increasing up to 15 fold as compared with levels monitored in Britain before departure. Approximately 54% of respondents indicated they had had sex while in Ibiza with 26.2% having sex without a condom and 23.2% with more than one sexual partner (p 241). The patterns of behaviour amongst this group of young Europeans were clearly identified as high risk.

“While the potential for substance related ill health is dramatically elevated in Ibiza, harm minimisation measures in such resorts remain scarce. Equally although holiday companies attract a sexually active cohort, safe sex messages are either absent or ineffective.”(p 235)

The paper recommends short-term harm minimisation measures such as educational leaflets, information on seeking medical assistance abroad and easy access to condoms (p 242). There is also a suggestion that the behaviour patterns begun in Ibiza may become entrenched, providing further incentive for intervention.

“... although this research identifies significant changes in young people’s substance use while abroad, further research is needed to examine any long term changes in substance use behaviour that may persist after individuals return to the UK.”(p242)

There have been three substantial Australian studies that have investigated drug and alcohol consumption connected with school leaver celebrations on the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast in Queensland (Stanton et. al., 1997; Smith et. al., 1997; Zinkiewicz et. al., 1999). All of these studies found high levels of drug and alcohol use during school leaver celebrations. The highest levels recorded were those in Smith and Rosenthal’s

study which found 75% of males and 60% of females reported getting drunk most or every day or night of the holiday.

In response to the risks perceived during “schoolie celebrations” (as they are known in the Eastern states) - harm reduction interventions have been carried out in Queensland over the past few years. *“The meaning, madness and magic of Schoolies Festival”* (Ballard et. al., 1998) examines the development and outcomes of the Sunshine Coast Schoolies Week strategy. This intervention was an excellent reference point for the Rottneest project, in particular taking note of the intersectoral nature of the strategy, and the evolution of initiatives into a highly valued youth festival.

“... ‘Schoolies Festival’, a well-supported and highly regarded youth event that included an artful rite of passage ceremony...provided students, media and the general community with some understanding of the meaning and motivation behind Schoolies Week behaviour. It serves to provide a unique community based model for effectively transforming dysfunctional behaviour and negative perceptions utilising positive, supported and sustainable strategies.” (p 1)

“Schoolies on Straddie – the alternative experience” (D’Arcy & Foran, 1998) describes another collaborative project for schoolies on North Stradbroke Island in 1997. This project was of interest because it dealt with an intervention in an isolated geographic area similar to Rottneest Island. D’Arcy and Foran’s evaluation of the success of their intervention activities - aimed at reducing risk-taking behaviour by participating in safe, healthy activities - gave an indication that it was well received. Sixty-three percent of respondents rated the activity as excellent, 33% as good, 5% as okay and 0% as bad. (D’Arcy & Foran, p3)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ‘LEAVERS LIVE’ INTERVENTION

The outcomes of NDRI’s formative evaluation in 1999 included identification of school leavers’ alcohol and other drugs use experiences, alcohol and other drug-related harms that were of particular concern, harm reduction strategies used by school leavers and possible interventions likely to be effective with school leavers. Major stakeholders were also interviewed in 1999 in order to gain an appreciation of potential interventions that were likely to be effective with school leavers, achievable in the

particular circumstances of Rottnest Island and acceptable to the community stakeholders.

The School Drug Education Project in consultation with various stakeholders and community agencies implemented an intervention on Rottnest Island during the school leavers' celebrations in 2000. The collaborative nature of the intervention was integral to its success, with individual agencies taking responsibility for different components. For instance the Rottnest Island Authority worked with the Melville Youth Advisory Council and the Rottnest Hotel in order to provide the live entertainment in a specially de-licensed area. Most of the strategies involved in the intervention followed the recommendations of the Formative Evaluation Report produced by NDRI. The following is a summary of all components of the Leavers Live project compiled by The School Drug Education Project.

- Police talks to school leavers prior to leavers' week
- Parents of leavers – information available for school newsletters via School Drug Education Project newsletter
- Information sent out by Rottnest Island Authority (RIA) to all leavers holding bookings
- Extensive activities program developed in conjunction with RIA and Melville Youth Advisory Council
- \$1000 deposit required to acquire accommodation (RIA and Rottnest Lodge)
- Information tape – *100% Control* messages and music for ferry trip (RIA and 96FM)
- Chillout Tent coordinated by Rottnest Island Nursing Post and RIA – staffed with volunteers from Drug Arm
- Rottnest Island rangers visit and brief of all leavers in accommodation
- Beach Breakout – beach activities sponsored by *100% Control* including volleyball and other competitions
- Discount snorkelling
- Discounted \$5 Recovery Breakfasts at the tearooms.
- De-licensing of section of the Rottnest Hotel to form an underage dance area.

- Coloured wrist bands for over 18's entering the Rottnest Hotel
- Stopping of alcohol home deliveries
- Increased security staff at Rottnest Hotel
- Extended trading hours for many Rottnest food outlets
- Late Night sausage sizzle in settlement area.
- Rottnest Island Police and Rangers Sausage Sizzle (food donated by local businesses).
- Alcohol and other drugs pamphlets and displays at Nursing Post
- Injuries related to alcohol – research conducted by Health Department of WA, Injury Control supported by the nursing post
- Provision of sunscreen – Chill Out Tent, Nursing Post, Beach Breakout
- *100% Control* competition
- Filming of harm reduction strategies by Edith Cowan University Communication and Media students, and production of short film
- Bands and DJs – afternoon and evening – sponsored by Healthway (*100% Control*), Office of Youth Affairs and Rottnest Island Authority
- Research looking at the impact of the interventions/ strategies – National Drug Research Institute.

The purpose of this report is to assess the impact of the collaborative “Leavers Live” Project implemented by the School Drug Education Project on Rottnest in 2000, and to assess the harm reduction impact of the intervention on 2000 leavers and the Rottnest community.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. Gauge the effectiveness of the intervention strategies in reducing alcohol and other drug-related harm on Rottnest Island during School Leaver Celebrations.
 - 1.1. Compare school leavers' alcohol and other drug-related experiences and harms in 1999 and 2000;
 - 1.2. Assess the harm reduction strategies used by school leavers in 2000 compared with those employed in 1999;

- 1.3. Investigate attendance at and appreciation of the intervention strategies and activities by school leavers.
 - 1.4. Investigate key stakeholders' experience and perceptions of the Leavers week in 2000 as compared with 1999.
2. Recommend "Leavers Live" intervention strategies that would be useful to repeat or modify, and suggest additional strategies/ activities that could be implemented at Rottneest.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to evaluate SDEP's "Leavers Live" intervention conducted on Rottneest Island during school leaver celebrations in 2000. The methodology used in the formative study carried out in 1999 was followed as closely as possible in order to provide meaningful comparisons between the data gathered over the two years.

Similar to 1999 responses were gathered from the school leaver population and the major business and service provision stakeholders on the island. Once again the field researcher spent 5 five days living on Rottneest during the period of the celebrations (22nd – 28th November 2000) and documented activities that occurred during this time. In this way the study combined a number of evaluation methods. This research approach is termed 'triangulation' by Guba and Lincoln (1981) was found to be effective in 1999. It was repeated in 2000 because it seemed to provide a global perspective of the phenomenon being studied, while offering a check on the accuracy and consistency of the data gathered by each of the evaluation methods.

DATA GATHERING METHODS

1. *School Leavers*

This group was allocated the most amount of research time, and were asked about their intended and actual celebrations on Rottneest Island at various times during the leavers' week. The random sample was kept as demographically similar to 1999 as possible. The same number (250) of school leavers were interviewed using the same four survey instruments as the previous year. Some questions were altered slightly and additional questions relating to the activities introduced as part of the intervention were included also.

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.

The field researchers approached groups of young people on the island as they gathered during the day in various different areas - usually where food and drink were being sold. During the leavers period there are very few other visitors to the island and all of the young people interviewed were on the island to participate in the celebrations that have become known as "Leavers". Groups were approached rather than individuals, as the young people seemed less intimidated and more open to answering the questions. The surveys were used to guide and prompt discussion rather than being administered verbatim. Responses were recorded as thoroughly as possible although at times this was difficult as a number of respondents answered the questions simultaneously. Generally a response would be given by one or two members of the group with the other group members agreeing and building on that response with their own experiences. Occasionally a respondent would add an opinion in contradiction or in variance to a response a peer had given. *100% Control* hackey sacks were used as incentives for participating in the survey and the refusal rate in 2000 was zero.

The people interviewed in both years came from similar suburbs around the Perth Metropolitan area. Like 1999, the suburbs with the greatest number of respondents were those from mid to high socio-economic areas. In 2000 however, a small (6%) proportion of leavers indicated they had travelled to Rottnest from rural areas.

Excludes:
15 persons from
regional centres

Figure 1: Home Suburb of Rottnest Study Group 2000

2. *Major Stakeholders*

Nine of the twelve stakeholders interviewed in 1999 were interviewed again in 2000. Four additional stakeholders were interviewed in 2000. The stakeholders were identified with the help of the Rottnest Island Authority and included business providers and service people who experienced considerable contact with the leavers.

Several days were spent on Rottnest two weeks after the leavers' period. It was thought the short time lapse would give the stakeholders enough time to reflect on events while still occurring soon enough for it to be fresh in their memories. Like 1999 the interview process was relatively structured with formal appointments being arranged before hand. The same nine questions were asked of all stakeholders (Appendix 6) and there was opportunity at the end of the interview for any extra comments or suggestions. Responses were recorded in point form. Each interview was held in the stakeholder's suggested surroundings and responses were kept completely confidential.

3. *Participant Observation*

NDRI's field researcher spent five days living on Rottnest during the leavers' period. Accordingly the researcher experienced first hand the intervention activities and could wander through the festivities talking informally with leavers, stakeholders and staff involved in the conducting the activities. Each morning observations from the previous evening were recorded in point form on a portable computer. Similar to what occurred in 1999 the leavers began to recognise the researcher and other staff involved in the intervention. In 2000 the profile of the researchers was increased due to the intervention staff wearing *100% Control* promotional clothing. Young people often approached the researchers to ask for promotional gifts or to tell further stories they considered relevant.

ANALYSIS

1. *School Leavers*

The field researcher collated Questionnaires. All responses to each question were coded into themes. The resulting themes were then placed into a matrix that identified: the theme; the group (i.e. male, female, mixed) that identified each theme; and, the number of times the theme was identified by each group for responses gathered in

1999 and 2000. 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. Themes repeated less than three times are omitted from the report. 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 in 2000.

2. *Major Stakeholders*

The field researcher collated Questionnaires. 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 researcher on events that illustrated the nature of school leaver celebrations on Rottneest 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 attendance; 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 researcher was able relate her 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.

LIMITATIONS

Every attempt was made to mirror the methodology used in 1999 so that meaningful comparisons could be made using the data gathered in 2000. A number of variations occurred between the two years and need to be borne in mind when making comparisons.

In 1999 more pre-departure surveys were conducted than in 2000. This was because it was considered to be more important for the 2000 research to gauge how young people felt about the impact the intervention was having on them as opposed to what their expectations of the experience were (see Table 1).

Table 1: Breakdown of survey instruments used in both years and numbers interviewed

Individuals	Mixed Group		Same Sex Group Males		Same Sex Group Females		Total	
	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000
Early Days	19	22	35	19	57	9	106	50
Coming Night	16	38	17	30	6	14	40	82
Day After	8	54	34	12	33	12	80	78
Last Days	10	16	7	14	8	10	25	40
TOTAL	53 (21.2%)	130 (52%)	93 (37.2%)	75 (30%)	104 (41.6%)	45 (18%)	250	250

Interestingly in 2000 a much higher percentage (52%) of leavers were interviewed in groups of mixed gender than in 1999 (21.2%) (see Table 2). There is no ascertainable explanation as to why this difference arose. While this point is worth noting, the overall number of males and females interviewed was fairly even (47.2% female, 52.8% male) and the difference in the make-up of the groups is not considered to have substantially influenced the data because similar responses were gathered from all three groups on most questions.

Table 2: Gender make-up of groups interviewed in each year

	Mixed Gender Group	All Male Group	All Female Group	Total Leavers Surveyed
1999	21.2%	37.2%	41.6%	250
2000	52%	30%	18%	250

The most notable difference between the respondents in 1999 and those in 2000 was the number of actual school leavers. In 1999 approximately 96% of interviewees had finished high school that year while in 2000 the number was 62%. Many more of the non-leavers were male rather than female (see Table 3), with the largest group being first or second year university students celebrating the end of their exams at the same time as the school leavers. Males were more likely to be above school leaver age and

seemed to be attracted by the possibility of interacting with the younger female leaver population (see Table 4).

Table 3 : Gender and status of those interviewed

Male non-leavers	68	51.5%
Male leavers	64	48.5%
Female non-leavers	26	22%
Female leavers	92	88%

Table 4: Age and gender of non-leavers interviewed

Age	Female non-leavers	Male non-leavers
15		1
16	2	1
17	3	6
18	14	40
19	4	13
20		5
21	1	
22		
23		1
24		1
TOTAL	24	68

It is important to note that a large proportion of the young people interviewed (especially males) on Rottneest during the intervention were not first time school leavers, but were either university students celebrating the end of their exams or apprentices and other young people taking time off work to join the festivities. However the majority of responses made by non-leavers were similar to those made by leavers. In addition according to the Rottneest Island community the proportion of leavers to non-leavers in both 1999 and 2000 was perceived as similar.

There were different interviewers in each year and so interviewing style varied. This difference had two noteworthy affects on the research. Firstly in 2000 interviews were completed faster - taking between 20 to 40 minutes while in 1999 they often took

closer to an hour. With less time per survey being spent with each group fewer responses or comments by individual leavers for each question were recorded in 2000.

Secondly a male researcher completed a majority of the surveys in 1999 with the assistance of a female, while in 2000 both the primary researcher and the assistants were female. This difference is thought to have affected the kind of responses gathered on particular questions, especially those relating to discussions about sexuality and alcohol and other drug consumption.

RESULTS

The results are presented in three sub-sections. The first sub-section reports the findings from the interviews conducted with leavers. The second sub-section presents the results of the interviews conducted with key stakeholders and the third sub-section reports the field researchers participant observations.

SCHOOL LEAVERS

This section presents leavers' perceptions of their experiences on Rottneest during the celebration period. They were generally keen to express their opinions and remarkably consistent in many of the issues they identified, the most common of these are reported in this section. Many of the themes that emerged from the student responses were common across all groups. Interpretive discussion and quotes have been used to further illustrate a theme.

Summary tables from each interview question have been included. These tables reflect the number of male, female and mixed groups that identified each theme in both 2000 and 1999. They provide a quick reference point for comparisons between the groups and the 1999 responses. It should be noted that N refers to the total number in the groups interviewed, but the figures in the columns indicated the number of responses. The discrepancy between the column total and the N total comes about because not everybody in a group expressed an opinion.

Why leavers chose Rottneest?

1999 = 250 Respondents (**Q.1 Early Days, Q.1 Coming Night, Q.1 Day After, Q.1 Last Days**)

2000 = 50 Respondents (**Q.1 Early Days**)

Summary Matrix : Common Themes

Theme	Females		Males		Mixed		Total Comments	
	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000
	n=104	n=9	n=93	n=19	n=53	n=22	n=250	n=50
To socialise with other leavers	41	4	21	4	5	2	67	10
Easy access / no driving	23		12	3	7	3	42	6
Relaxed, fun lifestyle	18		7	1	8	1	33	2
Good memories of past experience	3	1	12	1	1	1	16	3
Tradition/ reputation	6	1	5	2	3	2	14	5
Isolated and concentrated	5	1	4	1	3	2	12	4
Safer	4		2		1		7	
To get drunk	2		1		1		4	
Better than down south	2		1	1			3	1
Someone else organised it	3						3	
Cheap holiday	3						3	
No adults/ parents		1				2		3
Plan to go down south later				2		1		3
To supervise			2			1	2	1

Like 1999 most leavers identified their purpose as being to socialise with other leavers and to celebrate the end of exams. Rottnest's reputation as a popular destination for the celebrations was commonly mentioned.

"Its got a reputation for being the best for leavers." – Female

"Its where everyone goes." – Male

A number of young people mentioned Rottnest as place to be independent of adults, and to assert their rite of passage into adulthood.

"No adults in Rotto really." – Male

"Away from your parents" - Female

Those respondents who were not leavers identified some of the reasons why they were joining in the celebrations.

"Last year was the best and we are coming again." – Female

"I'm being sent to supervise." – Female

"We're older this year." - Male

Again in 2000 respondents held an opinion of Rottnest as a safer destination than other options because of its confined geography and lack of cars.

"Enclosed area" – Male

"No driving, less likely to have road accidents." – Mix

A new theme that emerged in 2000 was that some young people were planning to go to multiple leavers' destinations. It is interesting to note that these expectations were held before media reports about friction at the other locations had occurred.

"Doing both, going down south later." – Mix

"Going to Dunsborough and Bremer next week." – Male

Leavers' expectations of the Rottnest experience

1999 = 106 Respondents (**Q.2 Early Days**)

2000 = 50 Respondents (**Q.2 Early Days**)

Summary Matrix: Common Themes

Theme	Females		Males		Mixed		Total Comments	
	1999 n=57	2000 n=9	1999 n=35	2000 n=19	1999 n=19	2000 n=22	1999 n=106	2000 n=50
Have fun / good time	18	3	18	4	4	3	40	10
Relaxing / unwinding	19	2	14	3	3	4	36	9
Partying / socialising with friends	19		12		4	3	35	3
Drinking	10		18	3	5	6	33	9
Sex / meeting opposite sex	10	1	17	5	3		30	6
Swimming / beach / sun	16	1	2		2	1	20	2
Meeting new people	7	1	2	1	1	1	10	3
See people from primary school	4						4	
Away from home hassles & study	3						3	
Looking after Quokkas	3						3	
Hopeful certain girls will be there			3				3	
The overall experience			3				3	

The same patterns as 1999 were found in 2000 with regard to expectations. Primarily leavers wanted to relax, unwind and socialize. The event was seen as a significant occasion, marking a transitional phase.

“Unwinding from the year.” – Female

“See everyone together for the last time from other schools.” - Mix

“Turn into adults now.” – Male

Again drinking was a major theme associated alongside expectations of a party atmosphere.

“Get really slaughtered constantly.” – Male

“Get pissed, get paraplegic.” – Male

In 1999 males showed more intention to get drunk than females, who were more interested in getting a tan or relaxing. In 2000, while no females in all female groups

mentioned drinking as an expectation, girls in mixed groups did express their intention to drink heavily.

“I don't plan to remember anything from when I get off the ferry until I get back on.” – Female in Mixed group

“Drink every day and all night – relax and get rid of stress” - Female in Mixed group

Another difference in the female responses in 2000 as compared with 1999 was that women openly stated their intentions to have sex, while in 1999 their comments were more restricted to socializing with males. Once again the males were explicit about their sexual intentions. Neither males nor females mentioned sex or meeting the opposite sex whilst in mixed groups.

“New boy for sex – a casual thing.” – Female

The usual – get drunk, get girls.” – Male

Activities leavers would like to see made available

1999 = 146 Respondents (Q.3 Early Days, Q.7 Coming Night)

2000 = 132 Respondents (Q.3 Early Days, Q.2 Coming Night)

Summary Matrix: Common Themes

Themes	Females		Males		Mixed		Total Comments	
	1999 n=63	2000 n=23	1999 n=52	2000 n=49	1999 n=35	2000 n=60	1999 n=146	2000 n=132
Music eg. DJs / Dance tent / Concerts	40	6	12	5	10	13	62	31
Water Sports eg. Para-sailing, Jet skis, H2O Tramp	10	1	4	2	4	4	18	7
No organised activities	6	3	5	1	1	1	12	5
Fashion parades/ Miss Rotto quest/ Wet Tshirt	1		1	3	1	2	3	5
More sausage sizzles		1				3		4
Drinking games/ competitions				2		4		6

This question was asked both before departure and after arrival at the island. The pre-departure responses were similar to what was recorded in 1999, with young people most commonly requesting music related activities, and a number expressing reservations about whether organised activities fitted in with their expectations of leavers' celebrations.

"Some bands, don't really want to do activities – just sit on the beach and hang out with friends." – Female

"No organised activities." - Male

Interestingly once on the island, and having usually been exposed to some of the arranged activities this reluctance to participate in organised activities arose far less often, with most leavers making suggestions for improving the initiatives rather than being unreceptive to them. This was in stark contrast to the 1999 responses, which were commonly unreceptive both at pre-departure on-island stages.

"Bands at heritage common" – Male

"No, I like what is on now – DJs are great." – Male

"I didn't know where the sausage sizzles were – more food up this end of the street." – Mix

Last night's activities

1999 = 80 Respondents **(Q.3 Day After)**

2000 = 78 Respondents **(Q.1 Day After)**

Summary Matrix: Common Themes

Themes	Females		Males		Mixed		Total Comments	
	1999 n=33	2000 n=12	1999 n=34	2000 n=12	1999 n=13	2000 n=54	1999 n=80	2000 n=78
Consumed alcohol	17	3	18	1	5	7	40	11
Walked around	10	2	5	3	1	4	16	9
Went to Rottneest Hotel	7		2	1		5	9	6
Went to beach	3	1				1	3	2
Consumed cannabis			1	1		2	1	3
Experimental sex		1	1			1	1	2
Just talked / interacted		2		1		2		5

The 2000 responses mirrored those in 1999 with people most commonly indicating they had spent their evening drinking, and walking around. However it should be noted that although these were the most common responses far fewer 2000 leavers indicated they engaged in these activities. A number of people were specific about the fact that they had stayed at home to drink for the evening.

“Walked up and down the streets” – Male

“Stayed at the house and drank” – Male

“Drinking the whole arvo – waked around with friends I knew. Just stayed at someone’s house drinking and relaxing.” – Mix

In 2000 there was no mention in any of the reports of ‘funnelling’ which was a common theme in 1999. Drinking games still featured but were less frequently mentioned.

“Played drinking games and yelled out at random.” – Mix

Interestingly fewer people in 2000 reported attending at the Rottneest Hotel, with some respondents making it clear they did go but were disappointed.

“Walked down to the pub but nothing was happening, so walked back to our friend’s house. Lay down on the tennis courts and looked at the stars.” – Female

Alcohol and Drug Use

1999 = 80 Respondents (Q.4 Day After)

2000 = 128 Respondents (Q.4 Day After, Q.7 Last Days)

Summary Matrix: Common Themes

Themes	Females		Males		Mixed		Total Comments	
	1999 n=33	2000 n=22	1999 n=34	2000 n=26	1999 n=13	2000 n=71	1999 n=80	2000 n=128
Consumed alcohol	15	17	15	12	2	23	32	52
Consumed spirits	15	5	9	6	1	8	25	19
Consumed beer	8	4	8	3	1	3	17	10
Brought alcohol from mainland	8	5	4	3	1	7	13	15
Expressed aversion to drug consumption	6	5	3	1	1	4	10	10
Did not drink to excess	7			2		2	7	4
Bought take-away alcohol at Rottnest		2	6	3		4	6	9
Consumed cannabis		3	5	1		8	5	12
Consumed illicit drugs (exclude cannabis)	2	4	1	7	1	2	4	13
Drank alcohol at Rottnest Hotel	2					1	2	1
Parents supplied alcohol	1	1				1	1	2

In both 1999 and 2000 alcohol far outweighed other drug consumption.

“Drank a lot – enough to sink a battleship” – Male

*“I went through almost an entire carton – bloody sloshed I’ll tell you that”
– Mix*

More young people in 2000 indicated they consumed alcohol than in 1999, however fewer indicated they consumed spirits and beer. However, a number of groups reported mixing alcohol ingredients in order to get drunk.

“Bolan - it’s a mix of Paul Newman caesar salad dressing, champagne, red wine, and white wine.”

Like 1999 females tended to drink more spirits than the males. However in 2000 females were more likely to report drinking both beer and spirits than they had in

1999. The males who drank spirits mostly did so in conjunction with beer consumption, while females were far more likely to report drinking pre-mixed spirits than their male counterparts.

“Baileys and vodka, champagne, midori, beer – basically everything” – Female

“Bought Bacardi Breezers here – not too badly expensive – 4 for \$10” – Female

“Bourbon and coke - we bought it with us – also drank beer and vodka” – Male

Interestingly in 1999 only females reported making conscious decisions not to drink to excess, while in 2000 it was the males and those in mixed groups who reported staying in control.

“Drank not too much – we weren't drunk though we were fairly hypo.” – Mix

“I didn't drink that much – it was the night before.” – Male

In 2000 there was a slight increase in number of people who reported buying alcohol on Rottneest. The reports made seemed to involve some degree of bravado and respondents looked upon attaining alcohol as an achievement - whether it was by buying it themselves or having access to a friend of legal age who purchased it on their behalf.

“Bought alcohol from Rottneest – I got it without being asked for ID” – Male

“We bought it in Perth – no trouble, and then an 18 year old got us some here.” – Mix

Parents were also a major source of the alcohol that was consumed each evening. Some parents had provided certain alcohol deliberately, while others had supplied money for alcohol, or leavers had taken it from home without their knowledge.

“My parents bought us six ruskies.” – Female

“Took a bottle of bourbon from home.” - Male

In both years it was common for respondents to make a point of saying they felt strongly about not taking illicit drugs.

“No, we’re not druggies – drugs are out” – Female

“We are a drug free zone.” - Mix

In 2000 there was an increase in the number of people who admitted to taking illicit drugs, with a higher number of people reporting they had taken illicit ‘chemical’ substances other than marijuana.

“Yes, drugs from my friends” – Male

“The E I took was a dud” – Male

“Rotto equals drugs – speed, ecstasy, everything except heroin – oh and pot but that’s the normal thing - do we breathe air?” - Mix

*“Someone bought speed over and we had it one night and in the morning”
– Female*

Planned alcohol and drug use

1999 = 146 Respondents (**Q.4 Early Days, Q.4 Coming Night**)

2000 = 132 Respondents (**Q.4 Early Days, Q.3 Coming Night**)

Summary Matrix: Common Themes

Themes	Females		Males		Mixed		Total Comments	
	1999 n=63	2000 n=23	1999 n=52	2000 n=49	1999 n=35	2000 n=60	1999 n=146	2000 n=132
Plan to drink alcohol	22	11	16	18	6	14	44	43
Plan to drink spirits	15	2	14	6	5	8	34	16
Plan to drink beer	13	1	13	12	6	4	32	17
Plan moderate intake of alcohol	14	3	2	1	1	2	17	6
Brought alcohol from mainland	5	7	8	10	1	5	14	22
Plan to drink to excess	1	1	8	11	1	7	10	19
Plan to use cannabis	1	1	6	3	3	5	10	9
Plan to request older people to purchase alcohol	3	2					3	2
Definite plan to avoid drugs	3	5		3		2	3	10
Plan to use illicit drugs (exclude cannabis)		1	3	2		3	3	6
Parents supplied alcohol	1	1	1	1		3	2	5

Like 1999 there was an almost unanimous acceptance that most were going to drink, with respondents having made plans to bring or attain alcohol well in advance. Many more leavers in 2000 bought their alcohol with them from the mainland with parents and siblings being identified again as the major source.

“We’ve got a boat full of grog – 5 cartons and 5 bottles of bundy” – Male

“My grandfather gave me a lot of money for alcohol so I will just get it there.” – Male

“Lots of people’s parents and friends get it for them.” – Mix

While most leaver in 2000 planned to drink, far fewer planned to drink spirits than in 1999. In addition planned consumption of alcohol and other drugs in moderation was less common than in 1999. Very few leavers expressed an intention to stay in control, and greater numbers of predominantly male leavers revealed they intended to get as intoxicated as possible.

“Yes, not much though and we are getting it there.” – Female

*“Next three days just melting my mind – last year I took speed and acid” –
Male*

A similar proportion of leavers in 1999 and 2000 planned to use cannabis however planned to use other illicit substances. More leavers in 2000 had a definite plan to avoid illicit drugs.

Concerns about personal harms/ safety

1999 = 146 Respondents (Q.6 Early Days, Q.5 Coming Night)

2000 = 132 Respondents (Q.5 Early Days, Q.4 Coming Night)

Summary Matrix: Common Themes

Themes	Females		Males		Mixed		Total Comments	
	1999 n=63	2000 n=23	1999 n=52	2000 n=49	1999 n=35	2000 n=60	1999 n=146	2000 n=132
Violence / Intoxicated people	25	3	1	3	2	8	28	14
Rape / sexual harassment / taken advantage of	15			1		7	15	8
Big group / no worries		2	7	5	6	1	13	8
Stolen gear	5	2			2	1	7	3
Sunburn / sunstroke	5				1	1	6	1
Pill / condoms / unprotected sex	3	1				3	3	4
Cut feet / glass / no shoes / hurting oneself	3	2		1		3	3	6
Eviction	1		1		1	1	3	1
Vandalism	3						3	
Quokka safety	3						3	
May not drink responsibly	1		1	1		2	2	3
Alcohol poisoning / liver damage	1				1	1	2	1
Shark				1		3		4

The clear gender division with regards perceived dangers on the island in 1999 was not as clear in 2000. Those in mixed groups were most likely to identify violence and

sexual harassment as of the most concern. Interestingly females interviewed in all female groups did not mention sexual harassment as a concern at all while it was brought up in the mixed groups fairly regularly. However, twice as many respondents in 1999 indicated they were concern about sexual harassment and rape.

“Waking up with someone you don’t know” – Male

“I’m concerned about being raped or abused.” – Mix

“My friends getting raped” – Mix

Twice as many respondents in 1999 were concern about violence. Males were worried about violence in around the same proportions as females in 2000.

“People get way too drunk and get violent.” – Female

“Worried about people running around bashing us up.” – Mix

Males interviewed in 2000 perceived that there were no dangers to be worried about so long as they stayed in large groups, however fewer expressed this than in 1999.

“No, we’ve got big guys, its gonna be breezy.” – Male

No, strength in numbers.” – Male

Specific alcohol related harm such as alcohol poisoning figured low on the list of potential harms, however a number of people mentioned they were concerned about their ability to drink responsibly without identifying the exact consequences if overindulgence.

“I don’t want to be overly trashed.” – Mix

“Getting too drunk.” – Male

Cut feet was a major concern once leavers had experience of the island, and it seemed to be a larger concern than in 1999, while sunburn was worried about less.

“Broken glass everywhere.” - Female

Harm reduction strategies

1999 = 146 Respondents **Q.7 Early Days, Q.6 Coming Night**

2000 = 132 Respondents **Q.6 Early Days, Q.5 Coming Night**

Summary Matrix: Common Themes

Themes	Females		Males		Mixed		Total	
	1999 n=63	2000 n=23	1999 n=52	2000 n=49	1999 n=35	2000 n=60	1999 n=146	2000 n=132
Stay in big groups / don't stray / help each other	25	10	8	7	3	9	36	26
Spread drinks out / drink plenty of H2O	8	2	7	2	2	4	17	8
Screen predator guys / avoid weird older guys	6		1	1	2		9	1
Try to prevent gear / alcohol being stolen	4	1	2	1	1	1	7	3
Wear sunscreen / stay out of the sun	4		1	1		1	5	2
Carry / use condoms, pill	3		4	1	2	3	9	4
Hang around the house when drinking a lot	3		3	1			6	1
Don't street drink	2				1		3	
Avoid trouble / fights			2	2	1	1	3	3
Ring home everyday / carry mobile phone	3					1	3	1
Eat well	2			1			2	1

Despite relatively few people identifying overindulgence in alcohol as a potential harm, the second most common response in both years regarding strategies to stay safe was responsible drinking, although far fewer identified this in 2000.

"This year I am going to have a 2 litre jug of water with me so I can go the all night marathon." – Male

"As long as you stay in control and don't get yourself into a stupid situation." Female

Staying together was the most common response across all groups in both years, however again fewer made this response in 2000.

“Stick together” – Male

“Watching out for friends at night.” - Female

And lastly although cut feet were a much more common concern in 2000 – no one mentioned the relatively simple harm prevention strategy of wearing shoes.

Last night's activities

1999 = 80 Respondents (Q.5 Day After)

2000 = 78 Respondents (Q.5 Day After)

Summary Matrix: Common Themes

Themes	Females		Males		Mixed		Total Comments	
	1999 n=33	2000 n=12	1999 n=34	2000 n=12	1999 n=13	2000 n=54	1999 n=80	2000 n=78
Great because met new people / friends / got drunk	11	2	2	1		4	13	7
Average / No major dramas / Nothing special	5		1	1		3	6	4
Fantastic cause got drunk AND woke up!	3		3		1		7	
No sex so disappointed	2		2			2	4	2
Pretty average because passed out	2		1				3	
Average night of running around	1		1				2	
Disaster	1		1	1		4	2	5
Expectation that other nights will be better		1				5		6

Females in both years were more likely to have been satisfied with the evening's activities although approximately twice as many in 1999 made this response. In 1999 it was suggested this may have been due to less alcohol consumption, and because

females tended to be satisfied and relieved if they were able to socialise, have a good time and avoid trouble.

“Fantastic meeting all new people the same age.” – Female

“Great night.” – Female

Unlike 1999 no one in 2000 indicated they had a great night due to intoxication only. Getting drunk was only identified as a positive aspect of the evening's activities if it was a consequence of socialising. Males and those in mixed groups were more likely to say that their night was a disaster or hadn't lived up to their expectations. This was often due to not being able to find a sexual partner or poor sexual performance if they did, overindulgence in drugs or alcohol or a general inability to make 'something happen' resulting in boredom.

“Disaster – couldn't get it up.” – Male in mixed group

“Had pot at about 2.00am - that wrecked my evening.” – Male in mixed group

Best part of evening activities

1999 = 80 Respondents (Q.6 Day After)

2000 = 78 Respondents (Q.6 Day After)

Summary Matrix: Common Themes

Themes	Females		Males		Mixed		Total Comments	
	1999 n=33	2000 n=12	1999 n=34	2000 n=12	1999 n=13	2000 n=54	1999 n=80	2000 n=78
Mingling / Dancing / Meeting new & old friends	15	5	5	5	2	13	22	23
Drinking	2		5	1	1	1	8	2
Atmosphere	5	1	1		1	4	7	5
Having sex	2	1	3	1		1	5	3
Going to sleep	1	1	1				2	1

Most leavers in all groups rated socializing and hanging out with their friends as being the highlight of their evening. In 1999 this socializing process was associated with becoming intoxicated. In 2000 this was far less common, with leavers in all groups making little mention of the role alcohol played in facilitating their interactions.

“Meeting just so many people.” – Female

“The best part of the night was when people weren’t drunk yet.” – Mix

“Being with your mates.” – Male

Negative experiences

1999 = 105 Respondents (Q.7 Day After, Q. 8 Day After, Q.10 Last Days)

2000 = 118 Respondents (Q.7 Day After, Q.8 Day After, Q.10 Last Days)

Summary Matrix: Common Themes

Themes	Females		Males		Mixed		Total Comments	
	1999 n=41	2000 n=22	1999 n=41	2000 n=26	1999 n=23	2000 n=70	1999 n=105	2000 n=118
Violence / tension/ vandalism/ home invasion	6	8	18	15	3	12	27	35
Sexual harassment	15	3	2		1	9	18	12
Physically sick/ Hangovers	6		4	3		5	10	8
Lack of sleep	1	1	5	2	1	3	7	6
Nothing bad	3	1	3		1	4	7	5
Injuries to feet/ glass on the ground	3		1	3	2	4	6	7
Bored / waiting for something to happen	3		1		1		5	
Stopped by police/ security	4			3		6	4	9
Others vomiting	1	2		2	2		3	4
Looking after sick friends	1	1			1		2	1
Injuries excluding feet		2		1	1	1	1	4
Things stolen			1	2			1	2

The respondent's tones became quite serious when speaking about the negative experiences they had experienced the night before. Violence and tension were identified as the most common negative experiences. Females in 2000 similar to 1999, were quite vocal about feeling threatened by drunk people. Surprisingly in 2000 these comments were made more often in mixed groups than they were in all female ones.

"Saw someone throwing tomatoes at a girl." – Mix

"Seemed like there was a lot of attitude." – Female

"Saw someone smash their chimney off and kick it all over the road." – Mix

"Unwanted sexual advances – guys hiding in the dark." – Mix

"Some comments but you expect that." – Mix

Males reported mixed emotions about dangerous behaviour they had witnessed or participated in. Some were affected by their experiences of violence, while others reported it with a kind of bravado. It is interesting to note though that even when males were speaking of violence in positive terms it was in response to the question about what exactly had made the night bad.

"Boys starting fights – acting tough while drunk – they just get really destructive and don't care." – Male

"Good brawl outside our house." – Male

"Saw a girl jus after a guy had hit her – she was pretty upset." – Male

Although still common fewer respondents identified sexual harassment as a negative experience in 2000. No one in 2000 reported that the night was bad due to boredom, as compared with a considerable number in 1999.

Parental Warnings

1999 = 106 Respondents **(Q.8 Early Days)**

2000 = 50 respondents **(Q.7 Early Days)**

Summary Matrix: Common Themes

Themes	Females		Males		Mixed		Total Comments	
	1999 n=57	2000 n=9	1999 n=35	2000 n=19	1999 n=19	2000 n=22	1999 n=106	2000 n=50
Consume alcohol sensibly	17		4		1	2	22	2
Be careful/ Avoid behaviour that will cause regret	16	1	4	2		2	20	5
Avoid arrest	2		3	1	1		6	1
Wear sunscreen	3		2		1		6	
Lock up valuables	2		2				4	
Stay in groups/ look after one another	8			1			8	1
Stay away from sleazy males	5						5	
Take/ use contraception	4			1			4	1
No real talk		2	3			1	3	3
Don't get on television			1	1		1	1	2
Referred to media reports as warnings		1		1		1		3
Watch out for sharks/ do not harm quokkas				3		1		4

In 2000 far fewer leavers reported parental warnings that mentioned sensible alcohol consumption than in 1999. In fact leavers claimed that twice as many parents warned their children about the dangers of a shark attack than alcohol related harm.

“Don't get eaten by a shark” – Male

Overall there were far fewer warnings altogether in 2000 and parents were more likely to advise avoidance of emotional harms like shame and regret rather than physical dangers. The media coverage prior to departure seemed to feature in the warnings parents gave also. Some leavers took pride in reporting in front of their peers that their parents trusted them and didn't need to give them warnings, while others made a joke of their parent's warnings. It seems probable that the reported and actual warnings were considerably different and that peer pressure affected the responses to this question.

“My parents said you know what to expect and trust me not to nag.” – Female

“They gave me the paper and said forewarned is forearmed.” – Mix

“They’re old fashioned and think we are snorkeling and stuff” - Female

“Don’t be disgraceful on TV” – Mix

“My Dad cut out the newspaper articles and stuck them on the fridge.” – Female

“No, they just said ‘Don’t get on the news’” – Male

“I get the same talk every time I walk out the door.” - Male

“Have a good time – don’t get too smashed – make sure you wake up in the morning.” - Mix

Length of stay

1999 = 106 Respondents (**Q.9 Early Days**)

2000 = 50 Respondents (**Q.9 Early Days**)

Summary Matrix: Common Themes

Themes	Females		Males		Mixed		Total Comments	
	1999 n=57	2000 n=9	1999 n=35	2000 n=19	1999 n=19	2000 n=22	1999 n=106	2000 n=50
4 nights	8	1	6	1	1		15	2
3 nights	4		2		1		7	
2 nights	2		1			1	3	
5 nights	3	1		3		2	3	6
6 nights		1		1		2		4

More young people in 2000 indicated they were staying for a longer period than in 1999.

Changing Approach

1999 = 79 Respondents (Q.6 Day After)

2000 = 78 Respondents (Q.13 Day After)

Summary Matrix: Common Themes

Themes	Females		Males		Mixed		Total Comments	
	1999 n=33	2000 n=12	1999 n=34	2000 n=12	1999 n=13	2000 n=54	1999 n=80	2000 n=78
No going harder/ drinking more tonight	10	3	4	3	1	6	15	12
Plan to drink less tonight	7		7			6	9	6
The same as previous nights	3	1	3	2		4	6	7
Don't know/ See how I go	3	2					3	2
Settle down after tonight						3		3

In 2000, similar to 1999 twice as many leavers were planning to go harder than the night before as those who were intending to slow down. However, less young people made this response in 2000. Because the majority of surveys were completed on Saturday morning there were a number of people who indicated that they would have one final big night and then attempt to slow down. By the weekend many leavers were beginning to develop 'rules' about the time of day they would allow themselves to start getting intoxicated and what exactly they would consume.

There was not the same gender split as 1999 with males and females both as likely to report drinking more or slowing down as the other. Nevertheless comments indicating a degree of bravado were common and occurred more often in mixed groups than any other.

"I think I'll just have an average night and take it as it comes." – Female

"Big night tonight but on Sunday will settle down – stomach needs a break." – Mix

"Harder because it is the last night." – Female

*“Becoming less excessive – first night went hard and now cooling down.”
– Mix*

“Go harder or go home – that’s our motto.” – Mix

“Can’t drink anymore – had too much.” - Mix

“Not harder tonight – then we’d be dead. No smoking marijuana – just the alcohol.” – Mix

Ways to improve the experience

1999 = 104 Respondents (**Q.10 Day After, Q.7 Last Days, Q12 Last Days**)

2000 = 118 Respondents (**Q.12 Day After, Q.6 Last Days, Q13 Last Days**)

Summary Matrix: Common Themes

Themes	Females		Males		Mixed		Total Comments	
	1999 n=41	2000 n=22	1999 n=41	2000 n=26	1999 n=23	2000 n=70	1999 n=105	2000 n=118
Centralised gathering area with music	14	3	10	1	5	4	29	8
Free food/ drinks/ condoms/ healthcare products	12		8	2	4	2	24	4
Better/ healthier/ cheaper foods	5	2	8		3	1	16	3
More/ some sausage sizzles	3	1	3		1	1	7	2
More street lighting	2	2	1		3	1	6	3
Second free nursing station	2		1		2		5	
Lockers	2		1				3	
Extra activities	1	1	2	5	2	1	5	7
Cheaper/ better accommodation	3					1	3	1
More toilet paper	1	1		1			1	2
Better advertising	1	5		2		1	1	8
Less policing/ no fines		2		2		2		6
Underage area needs improvement/ no good						4		4
Pub open longer		1		3		2		6
Security and police were good		1		1		1		3
No more activities		1		1		1		3

Suggestions mentioned in 1999 such as the second free nursing post were obviously met in 2000 and did not reappear. In addition, far fewer respondents in 2000 identified the need for a centralised gathering area indicating that the 2000 intervention had met this need. Similarly far fewer respondents in 2000 suggested improvements to food availability or choice. Most of the suggestions were for elaboration of the activities or slight changes that would make them better.

A much larger proportion of leavers indicated they would like to see additional activities in 2000 than in 1999, reflecting the positive response to the initiatives overall.

"Bands at heritage common." – Male

"It was a good thought (de-licensed area) but everyone felt gay being in there – it would be better if they didn't segregate it." – Female

Fines were obviously unpopular with leavers protesting that they were treated differently during their exam celebrations than at other times.

"We don't get fined at Perth when we have parties and stuff so why here?" Mix

A larger proportion of leavers in 2000 indicated that better advertising of activities was required. This suggests that the leavers were keen to know what activities were planned.

Attendance at and evaluation of intervention activities

Question 2 Day After, Q.5 Last Days = 118 Respondents

Summary Matrix : Common Themes

Theme	Females	Males	Mixed	Total
Didn't like hotel initiatives	1	9	6	16
Liked hotel initiatives	3	5	7	15
Didn't know about activities	3	3	2	8
Appreciated Chill Out Tent/ First Aid	1		4	5
Appreciated food initiatives	4	1		5
Didn't attend any activities	2	1	1	4
Went to the beach activities			4	4

The most widely attended intervention activity was the music at the hotel held in a de-licensed area created especially for the leavers period. The young people were fairly evenly divided between appreciating the activities and disliking the arrangements.

Many of the negative comments about the hotel were to do with personal music preferences rather than the idea of providing music at all. Others were unhappy with the concept of the underage area.

"The pub was brilliant – just happening" – Mix

"Didn't like the bands and the music – I prefer hip hop" – Male

"Hip hop was rotten" - Mix

"I went to the pub and watched a band from the licensed area. It was quite good actually. I think it was a good idea. I'm not sure about the underage part though – being segregated you felt a bit stupid – they called it a crèche" – Female

"The bands were alright but the underage thing sucks" – Female

There were a number of people interviewed who did not know about the activities at all and some suggested better advertising and promotion.

"No we didn't know they were on – we only got here yesterday" – Mix

"Didn't know about them. We got pamphlets and stuff but I guess we needed more prompting" – Mix

"Didn't hear about the beach activities" – Male

The food initiatives were very well received. Leavers mentioned the student breakfasts, the sausage sizzles and extended trading hours. In both 1999 and 2000 leavers asked for greater variety and availability of food.

"The food being available was good coz otherwise everyone was drinking on empty stomachs" – Female

"The Breakfasts being available was a good idea – and the sausage sizzle. Food things are a good idea." – Female

"I've eaten a sausage sizzle every day." – Male

"Need vans selling food." - Female

The Chill Out Tent seemed to be recognized as an activity by a number of the respondents. They expressed appreciation of both the concept and the staff. It was interesting to find the tent being mentioned under a question about organised activities, and this would seem to show that the Leavers were aware of the intervention as a whole project rather than isolated events.

“Chill Out Tent – there was lots of free milo and just talking to everyone else.” – Male

“I think the people there are really nice. They are volunteers. They should have it every year.” – Female

STAKEHOLDERS

The major stakeholders were interviewed three weeks after the leavers' celebrations to allow for reflection and consideration of the period. In all 13 stakeholders were interviewed consisting of seven major businesses and 5 representatives from authorities such as police, nurses, rangers and Rottnest Island Authority (RIA).

All of the people interviewed were aware of and had participated in some way in the intervention in 2000. On the first day of the Leavers' period a gathering of all stakeholders was arranged by the Leavers Live Project Coordinator in a cottage on Rottnest. It was apparent that the stakeholders felt the expectations they held for the success of their efforts in 2000 were realistic and optimistic. It was mentioned a number of times by different people how much work, organization and liaison had gone into trying to address some of the historical problems experienced on Rottnest during the leavers' celebrations. A sincere hope that this work would see a more manageable situation on the island was expressed. The tone of this meeting was positive and energetic. The fact that such a large group of stakeholders were willing to participate was in itself a positive outcome of the collaborative approach taken to develop the intervention. There was a feeling of camaraderie, and the researcher observed some stakeholders meeting and greeting each other in this setting for the first time.

Three weeks later there was a different tone amongst the stakeholders with many being slightly disappointed with the actual outcomes. However, overall everyone was positive about the fact that they had participated, and could identify benefits of approaching the leavers' period as a collective.

Question 1. What are your impressions of this year's school leavers' behaviour? Was it better or worse than previous years? Can you give some examples of what they did?

Some of the stakeholders were on the island during leavers' for the first time in 2000 and so were unable to draw a comparison between previous years. Those who had been involved previously indicated that the group was much the same as in other years. The behaviour of the 1998 leavers still stood out in a number of stakeholders' memories as being the worst on record. This is consistent with the 1999 research that indicated that year was considered to have been the best behaved group for some time.

"Not last year but the year before was very very bad."

"Overall much the same as the previous year but much better than the years before that."

There was a common theme of better overall behaviour that had been marred by a particularly costly vandalism bill. A number of expensive light poles had been destroyed along with a break in to an unoccupied cottage that resulted in a great deal of damage.

"Physical confrontation with police and amongst themselves was pretty good. Damage done by six or seven people was very bad and so it tarnishes the group as a whole."

"Anecdotally a well behaved group with isolated incidents which were very bad."

Both the authorities and businesses commonly mentioned litter and vandalism, with some respondents reporting similar levels to other years while others considered it to be worse.

"Litter this year was reportedly a lot worse. Predominantly red rooster containers and broken glass from spirit bottles."

"On par with other years in terms of litter and damage."

"Seems to get worse every year – rubbish, abuse, drunkenness, noise."

Most businesses reported good trading with less trouble than in previous years. Those few whose businesses suffered financially during the period were more likely to report behaviour as having been worse than in previous years. This was consistent with what was also observed in 1999.

"Very good, we did the late trading thing – they didn't give a lot of trouble."

"In here just as good as last year – plenty of money and not a lot of theft."

"Behaviour was exceptional here – saw no drug abuse but had in previous years. Last year they didn't patronise us as much – this year they did."

Question 2. Are there any reasons you can identify as to why the 2000 leavers behaved the way they did as distinct from other years?

All the businesses responded similarly to this question, by either saying they couldn't think of any reason for differences or that the behaviour was similar in both years.

"Nothing really different – good both years."

The police accounted for the better attitude towards them to be due to their pro-active visits to schools before exams, warning students about what was expected of them and what to expect from the authorities.

A number of respondents considered the intervention initiatives to have impacted positively. Some also mentioned that these efforts had been begun in 1999 and were expanded in 2000.

"The steps taken this year and previous years."

There was some degree of acceptance that damage and bad behaviour was always going to occur no matter what measures were put in place.

"Kids just do random damage – drunken behaviour."

"Much the same behaviour – they still drank, were very noisy and made a lot of mess. They were supportive of the initiatives but didn't actually get down to some of the events."

Those that considered the 2000 period to have had particular problems provided explanations as to why that was. For example, there was a good degree of concern among the authorities about a large influx of unexpected leavers who were able to avoid being sent home by claiming they were staying on boats.

The nurses identified the biggest reason for problematic behaviour was a lack of education about risky behaviour and its consequences.

"The leavers don't perceive their drunkenness to be a problem."

Question 3. Did you feel supported in your activities on the Island during the Leavers' period? By who and how?

Almost all representatives of the authorities felt that they had been supported by someone else in their efforts, and that the team approach had helped make them feel more in control. It was interesting to note that a number of responses indicated they had received positive support while also managing to maintain a degree of independence in the handling of their particular area.

"Huge amount of support meant we weren't swimming against the tide."

"More security meant less assaults and the hotel was really supportive giving water and encouraging more responsible drinking. It just felt better to know that we were trying to address it together."

"We tend to do our own thing quite a bit, don't rely on other people too much. Prior to the event support and communication during the event was good."

There was also a sentiment that while the support was good to have, the liaison process took a lot of time and resources.

"Good to have a banner, but more difficult to coordinate."

Businesses felt less supported and included in the intervention overall than the authorities, with responses ranging from complete support to nil. Many mentioned the police and security as their main support system.

"Nothing, completely off our own back."

"100% support from everyone."

"We felt supported by the schoolies, the Leavers Live but the RIA made no direct comment to us."

Question 4. Was the leavers' period what you thought it would like this year?

Why/ Why not?

Businesses were positive about the period overall. This may have been due to less overall involvement in the intervention resulting in lower expectations. The businesses' responses to this question were either that the period was better or the same as what had been expected. Once again the amount of profit generated during

the leavers' period considerably affected responses, with those doing good trade being the ones reporting better than expected behaviour.

"You expect the worse - it really was quite good."

"Better than expected – better organized, more adult in mannerisms."

"Expected more problems – maybe because we were well prepared."

"Oh yeah – no surprises."

"Knew there would be less activity – still as much rubbish as always, nothing surprising."

The authorities' expectations were overall fairly high, due to the amount of time and effort they had invested in developing the intervention. This seemed to result in an overall mild disappointment that radical changes in behaviour did not occur, although this was usually also tempered by reference to at least one positive achievement.

"Yep, well I was hoping for a bigger change in behaviour."

"I did expect the hotel to be better but the Chill Out Tent exceeded all expectations."

"Probably reduced drinking but increased drug taking – maybe didn't reduce harm."

Question 5. Do you think the intervention made the Island safer for the leavers and for the community? How?

Responses to this question varied substantially between both businesses and authorities. Some of the authorities were reluctant to admit there had ever been a threat to safety on the Island, while others acknowledged that some greater degree of safety had been attained. No one considered the work was complete, and all saw room for improvement.

"It was better for those who were prepared to avail themselves of the facilities. There is always a minority group determined to put themselves at risk."

"Yes. The chill out tent made it safer."

"Don't know that it did – can't see that it made a major impact on how hey felt – probably the same as other years."

“There wasn't really a threat to anyone's safety or to the Island anyway – if it happens it happens, you can't stop it. The work put in though made it smoother.”

The businesses were clearly divided between the majority who considered that the Island was safer in 2000 (5) and the minority who didn't perceive much difference at all (2). None reported feeling less safe than previous years.

“Not much difference.”

“Yeah definitely especially the increased police and security presence.”

Question 6. What do you suggest would make school leaver celebrations better for the students, and the rest of the community on Rottneest?

Once again businesses that suffered financially during the period were those who responded negatively. This differed from 1999 when a number of stakeholders suggested banning leavers altogether. In 2000 this was only suggested once, indicating a greater acceptance of the leavers' period and the control that can be exerted over it.

“Don't think they should let them on the island.”

The businesses in general seemed to have less specific ideas on ways to improve the period than the authorities. Again, this is probably due to less overall involvement in planning and implementation of initiatives. However most businesses encouraged the development of the program in general terms.

“Maybe just trying lots of things – 40% work.”

“Do the same things or more with things to keep kids occupied.”

Those who were more actively involved in the planning process had much more to say about ways to improve the initiatives.

“They need some opportunity to dance, dance, dance -let steam off.”

“More discipline and moved off as soon as they do something wrong. Bands and music were good.”

“Accommodation bookings need to be face-to-face – making them sign documents. Get an event on the common or school oval.”

“Look at the litter issue, better lighting in some areas, more security and police.”

Question 7. Do you think it would be worthwhile to take a similar approach to the Leavers' period again? Why/ Why not?

The authorities were overall very positive about the measures taken in 2000. All but one respondent recommended building on the work that had been done while also incorporating the lessons learned. None suggested abandoning efforts altogether. This provided another contrast to 1999 when a number of people expressed reservations about whether any initiatives could make a substantial difference.

“Yeah, I think it was positive. There was less opposition in the community to the school leavers – generally a much better approach.”

“Liaison between agencies and close management – the work has been beneficial.”

“Don't know – similar but it needs to be different. It is evolving and we need to change as the leavers change.”

“Yeah we can improve on what we've done.”

“No – don't need all the entertainment. It is money and resources that could be put elsewhere like providing more nurses and extra security.”

“If you don't it will just go back 10 years – it just gets bigger and better.”

There was a degree of detachment amongst businesses towards the initiatives, with answers referring to the organisers in the third person. Some mentioned a desire to become more readily involved, and overall the tone was generally positive.

“They will probably try something else.”

“It doesn't do any harm and it probably helped a bit.”

“If there is any way we can get involved we'd be more than supportive.”

Question 8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

The stakeholders used this question to make a general summary of their experience. Common themes were a degree of acceptance of the inevitable, understanding of the leavers and their purpose for being there and a commitment to keep trying to assert some control. These comments marked quite a dramatic contrast to the attitude in 1999 that was much more about intolerance and crackdowns and feelings of the community having been invaded. In 2000 the pro-active 'welcoming' approach

seemed to have helped empower the stakeholders and make them feel much more in control. In addition this approach may have improved the rapport between the community and the leavers.

“It’s a contained area and safer for the leavers to come here than anywhere else. We’d like to make it good for them. They are good kids generally and we support them.”

“It was all pretty tame – they are going to come over and drink.”

“Some kids enjoyed themselves really well and some were little buggers – that’s the way it goes.”

“Need to start planning earlier – it isn’t going to go away.”

“You can plan as much as you like but at the end of the day you’ve got to work with the kids that come over to make it good. Need to embrace the partying and make it as comfortable for all as possible.”

Some stakeholders also used the opportunity to praise each other for the good work done, reinforcing the team approach and the demonstrating the bonds working together has quite obviously created or reinforced within the community.

“Really good that SDEP coordinated and got people interacting.”

“The community is here and is cohesive so it can be easily managed.”

POLICE AND NURSES DATA

Table 5: Police Activity during Leavers’ Week 1999 and 2000

Rottneest Police Figures	1999	2000
Liquor Infringements	52	30
Liquor Cautions	284	917
Island Evictions	8	23
Arrests		7
Summonses	4	5
Juvenile Cautions	5	11
Cannabis Cautions	N/A	2

It is clear that the police adopted an intensive cautioning regime in relation to liquor rather than issuing infringements. This resulted in almost three times the number of cautions being issued in 2000 as compared with 1999. This policy of intensive cautioning was explained to the leavers during the school visits by police.

All of the people arrested in 2000 were over 18 years of age and so it is unlikely that they were school leavers. Cannabis cautions were not possible in 1999.

Table 6: Nursing Post Occasions of Service during Leavers' Week 1999 and 2000

Nursing Post Data	1999	2000
Alcohol Intoxication	13	11
Other Drug Intoxication	7	2
Injuries	170	203
Sexual Counselling	12	10
Total Occasions of Service	365	329

In 2000 there were slightly fewer occasions of service at the Rottnest Island Nursing Post where intoxication was the major reason for presentation. This is an encouraging trend, although in both years the numbers were very small.

The number of injury presentations rose from 1999 to 2000 with lacerations to the feet being a common problem in both years. Alcohol is likely to have been a contributing factor in these injuries and it is a concern that injury presentation at the Nursing Post increased in 2000 despite provision of a range of harm reduction measures such as the Chill Out Tent.

Participant Observation

The field researcher recorded observations each day during the Leavers' period. Similar to 1999 this work helped to provide a reference point to contrast expectations, plans and reported activities with reality.

The Media

On the first day media reports played a significant role. As in other years the media were keen to find reports relating to the Leavers celebrations. A coordinated approach to the media was orchestrated by the School Drug Education Project and this resulted in the "West Australian Newspaper" leading with the headline 'Rotto Ready' and including an account of the measures that had been taken in 2000 to try and bring

celebrations under more control. During the first couple of evenings TV news reports were screened including interviews with the SDEP coordinator and the Rottnest Police. These reports were overall very positive and supportive of the initiatives.

Although media attention is usual during this time, 2000 was the first year that positive messages about control and preparedness were delivered. This coverage had a number of lasting effects on the 2000 Leavers' period overall. Firstly the headline seemed to prompt parents to add their own warnings and this was confirmed by respondents to the pre-departure question on parental advice. Secondly leavers were aware that they were coming to a community that was trying new ways of dealing with them during their celebrations. It was observed that this knowledge seemed to tone down the "them and us" attitude that was more prevalent in other years and made the leavers somewhat appreciative of the efforts made. Lastly some inaccuracies in the reports, created expectations amongst the leavers that were not realistic. These were mainly that there was a 'hangover' or 'dry out' tent that would provide free food and spare beds and that police were employing a 'three strikes and you're out' rule. Throughout the week leavers continually made reference to the misinformation they felt they had been given and there was no doubt about the confusion it caused.

Despite the initial positive influence the media exerted, it was not long into the celebrations when investigative style journalists arrived and began searching for footage of leavers out of control. The researcher observed an incident in the accommodation area where a fight broke out and a cameraman arrived minutes before security. Eventually the media attention on Rottnest was superseded by problems with leaver's behaviour in Dunsborough (south of Perth). The headlines and news reports that were generated from the violence and clashes between leavers and police in that area were eagerly read and talked about amongst leavers on Rottnest. There was a suggestion by some Rottnest stakeholders that that coverage seemed to incite some of the vandalism that occurred on Rottnest at the end of the leavers' week.

The Hotel

From the very first day the hotel was the hub of leaver activity around which most of the activities centred. The extra security and the identification armbands they used to

mark those people who were over 18 seemed to be working well. There were long lines at times but the reports from 1999 of leavers using fake IDs and sneaking past security did not seem to be as prevalent in 2000. The researcher observed a very firm but fair handling of the leavers by the security despite anecdotal reports from leavers that they had been treated unfairly or that their alcohol had been 'stolen' from them.

The bands and entertainment were scheduled originally between 7.30 and 9.30pm, however the first night saw it take until 8.30 for a reasonable sized crowd to gather. To the hotel's credit they responded to this circumstance by shifting the program back slightly to go on a little later into the night. This caused some concern amongst RIA staff who had given the directive to cease entertainment by 9.30pm in order to encourage leavers to get back to their accommodation area. The researcher observed that even with the slightly later hours of entertainment leavers still dispersed from the hotel relatively early and the only noticeable effect seemed to be increased numbers in attendance during the entertainment. The hotel also fairly quickly realised that the de-licensed area was too large and moved their fencing to extend the licensed area instead.

Water was provided to leavers in the de-licensed area when it was asked for, however not many leavers seemed to realise they could do so. Since it is common on the mainland for hotels to charge for glasses of water it may have been helpful to advertise that water was available if required. The bar in the de-licensed area sold energy drinks and other non-alcoholic beverages, however it was almost always quiet with few purchases being made.

Saturday night saw the largest crowd gather in the de-licensed area. There was a lot of manic dancing and the researcher observed a number of leavers grinding their jaws seeming to indicate that some illicit substances had been consumed. Three separate leavers approached the researcher on Saturday night at the hotel to report that they were under the influence of illicit drugs. The tone on Saturday night was far less violent and friendlier than Friday evening that could be consistent with ecstasy use. On Sunday quite a number of people reported using ecstasy on the "Day After" survey, although similar to 1999 the researcher felt that not as many people admitted to using drugs as would seem to be indicated from observation that evening.

The Chill Out Tent/ Nurses Station/ St John of God Ambulance

The staff at the Chill Out Tent were always patient and maintained their helpful attitude despite many intoxicated people vomiting and demanding treatment. Their dedication and persistence was rewarded with the researcher overhearing a number of leavers praising them and returning on subsequent nights to say thank you. The nurses station did become slightly crowded on a few occasions although there was no doubt that the chill out tent was alleviating much of the burden experienced in previous years. The nurses also showed considerable fortitude when dealing with the continual stream of injuries. This observation ran contrary to some reports of nurses being grumpy and scolding leavers. The St John Of God ambulance people reported mainly treating cut feet and provided support that was valuable at the other end of the settlement to the nurses station and chill out tent.

On Sunday evening the nurses station was unattended early in the evening and the chill out tent was closed for the first time. During this time the researcher and the SDEP coordinator witnessed a number of intoxicated youths lying on the ground about the settlement area. There was nowhere to take such people and the valuable role the Chill Out Tent had played was highlighted.

The AIDS council group walked around each evening though the throng of people on the look out for anyone in distress or being harassed. The researcher accompanied them on their rounds a number of times. While the AIDS council staff made only a few approaches to leavers that looked like they may need assistance, it was observed that their presence on the streets was valuable and seemed to provide the leavers with a sense that they were being watched over and not just patrolled.

The Police and Security

The police were observed a number of times having conversations with leavers in a non-confrontational and often friendly manner. This was consistent with reports from leavers that the police had been overall open and fair. On the other hand the extra security guards employed by the RIA were out on the streets being quite strident. The researcher observed them forcefully stopping leavers and searching them for alcohol in

a manner contradictory to the police's approach. Again this observation was consistent with leavers' reports of unfairness during the data collection.

On Sunday night the researcher walked through the crowded streets for almost an hour and a half without seeing any security personnel despite an active search. It is possible that there were security out of sight however it seems more likely that the security was being launched in waves rather than maintaining a constant presence.

Geordie Bay Settlement

The researcher travelled by bus to the Geordie Bay settlement after receiving a number of informal reports that it was possible to buy alcohol there without ID. The researcher witnessed two groups of young people looking as if they were underage travel the inconvenient distance out to Geordie Bay to purchase a carton of beer and then catch the bus back to the settlement. However it was not possible to determine if these young people were underage.

The Leavers

Whilst being interviewed a number of leavers revealed they had read the reports about the 1999 research. Males especially took exception to the statement made in one report that all males experienced violence and often went to some pains to point out that was not true of their experience.

Like 1999 the researcher observed large quantities of alcohol arriving on the island on the transport ferries and on private boats. Multiple cartons of beer were stacked in the baggage crates each day. This volume of alcohol was present despite leavers not mentioning alcohol as their top priority when surveyed.

Energy levels during the day were fairly high at first, and the mornings were quite busy with the comings and goings of people arriving and greeting friends. However like 1999 these energy levels dwindled later in the week and by Saturday and Sunday little activity occurred in the settlement until the middle of the day.

There was an unexpected influx of “freshies” as the leavers called them. These were leavers that arrived on Sunday and Monday to take up a three-day lease on the cottages. Apparently this was a new strategy trialed by RIA in 2000 to try to break up the leavers’ period and make it less intensive. Unfortunately what it seemed to do was inject new energy into what was by then a weary population of revellers. In addition the Leavers Live team were not aware of the strategy and so Sunday and Monday evenings were spent without the Chill Out Tent, sausage sizzles or extended trading hours for food outlets. It is difficult to say definitively, however it is the opinion of the researcher and the Leavers Live team that it is not a coincidence that it was on these nights that the most serious vandalism occurred. The value of the intervention initiatives seemed to be highlighted by the fact that more harms and damaged appeared to occur on the days when there were no intervention activities.

In 1999 the researcher observed a lot of violence. This was not the case in 2000. In total three fights or scuffles were witnessed and anecdotal accounts seemed less prevalent. The researchers avoided Tentland in both years. This area was poorly lit and had an atmosphere of tension surrounding it. It is possible that violence occurred in this area but was not observed.

Overall there was a chaotic atmosphere associated with the street celebrations each evening. Like 1999 large groups of young people were seen wandering about, and two main streets were packed with people partying and dancing to music being played loudly from a number of cottages. It was most common for houses on the corner of streets to become places where large numbers of leavers gathered. Some leavers were very well organised with disco lights at one house and a strobe and dry ice machine at another.

In 1999 drinking games were commonly witnessed by the researcher and the use of funnels particularly. In 2000 no such observation was made. Although leavers did mention playing drinking games when interviewed, ‘funnelling’ was not amongst the accounts.

The 15 minute or so walk that separated the settlement from the hotel where the activities were being held proved to be the greatest obstacle to participation. Leavers

felt they had to leave the action in order to get to the hotel where increased security measures meant they would not be able to buy alcohol. This coupled with a crackdown on street drinking and large volumes of broken glass on the roads appeared to make the journey less appealing to leavers. There was some talk at one stage of trying to organise a bus to ferry leavers in and out of the settlement but this did not eventuate.

Sexual harassment of women and holding up scoring cards as females walked by groups of males was observed in both years. A number of young women reported feeling very intimidated by this practice and that it affected their movement about the settlement. A disturbing account of a sexual assault was brought to the attention of the researcher, however the victim could not be persuaded to report it or seek support from the nurses station or chill out tent.

DISCUSSION

The young people's main purpose for travelling to Rottnest in November in both years was clearly to socialise with other leavers, and mark the transition from school to independence. Rottnest's reputation as a destination for leavers' celebrations seems to be maintained by tradition and beliefs popularly held by parents, leavers and the general community that the geography of an island and lack of vehicles afford a higher level of safety than other alternatives. Among the 2000 leavers however, a new trend emerged suggesting that some leavers were intent on celebrating at other destinations (requiring car travel) once the Rottnest celebrations subsided. In both years leavers indicated that easy access to Rottnest and the lack of vehicles influenced their choice of destinations. In addition to the statements about vehicles being absent the 1999 leavers indicated a general perception that Rottnest is a safer place for school leaver celebrations than elsewhere, interestingly this general perception did not arise in 2000. There is no evidence to suggest that any less harm is experienced at Rottnest than at other leavers' destinations, and in fact both the 1999 and 2000 studies identified a number of harms experienced on Rottnest by leavers.

In both the 1999 and 2000 studies the leavers' expectations were the same; to have fun, relax and unwind after a hectic exam period and to celebrate the milestone of school graduation and passage into independence and adulthood. These expectations are in line with the expectations of other end of school celebrations around Australia. (Zinkiewicz et al). Similar to 1999 the expectation was that drinking would be strongly associated with the socialisation process, and the intention to drink to excess was clearly present in the minds of both males and females. Males and females also openly stated that they had expectations of sexual experiences while on Rottnest. This was a new development in 2000 because in 1999, females were more likely to restrict their comments to saying they wanted to socialise with males rather than to engage in sexual relations. This may simply be because the researcher in 2000 was female while in 1999, the researcher was male. The female leavers in 2000 may just have felt more comfortable confiding overt sexual intentions to another female than to a male.

It was clear that like 1999, alcohol consumption was a major feature of the 2000 celebrations. When the leavers were specifically asked about their alcohol use and

intended use more leavers in 2000 indicated they consumed alcohol than in 1999 although far fewer indicated they drank spirits. There were similar numbers of leavers in both 1999 and 2000 who planned to drink alcohol but again fewer in 2000 planned to consume spirits. In addition, less leavers in 2000 indicated they planned to moderate their alcohol intake and more planned to drink to excess. Although actual levels of alcohol consumption in 1999 and 2000 were not assessed, it appears that the amount of alcohol the leavers consumed in the two years was similar. It should also be noted that a much larger proportion of the 2000 sample were not leavers but first or second year university students which may have impacted on their planned use. In particular, females in 2000 seemed to report drinking more alcohol than their counterparts in 1999. It was observed that females were more likely to stay in control than the males in 1999, while this was not the case in 2000 with members of both genders claiming to have both stayed in control as well as becoming intoxicated. These differences may be a result of the 2000 researcher being female therefore eliciting more realistic responses from females and less exaggerated ones from males. It may also be due to more mixed gender groups being interviewed in 2000 resulting in females trying to match their male peers' experiences. Interestingly when both sexes were asked about general expectations and intentions of the Rottneest celebrations and specifically the coming night, alcohol consumption featured far less often in 2000 than in 1999. This may be an indication that intervention strategies in 2000 were successful in de-emphasising alcohol as a key component in the celebration process. It should be noted that the aim of the intervention was to shift the focus of the celebration off alcohol and to reduce alcohol related harm without necessarily lowering alcohol consumption.

In addition when asked generally about last nights' activities far fewer leavers in 2000 indicated they consumed alcohol or spent the night just walking around than did their 1999 counterparts. Again this indicates that the intervention activities may have been successful in shifting the emphasis of the celebration from alcohol. This is further supported by leavers' comments that indicated they talked and interacted with other leavers without mentioning that alcohol facilitated this socialisation process. When asked about their level of satisfaction with the previous night some 2000 leavers did identify getting drunk while socialising. However, the amount of young people who suggested this was far fewer than the previous year. Unlike 1999, no 2000 leavers indicated that it was a good night purely because they became intoxicated. Again this

tends to support the success of the intervention strategies in reducing the importance of excessive alcohol consumption in the celebrations. In fact many leavers indicated that they expected other nights to be better, perhaps an indication that they were looking forward to other planned activities. Furthermore when specifically asked about what constituted the best part of the night, although a similar amount of leavers in both years identified socialising, far fewer in 2000 identified drinking.

Perhaps most significantly in 2000 no respondents reported that they were bored during the evening. This marked a substantial change from 1999 and again supports the success of the intervention. By eliminating boredom the danger of exacerbating anti-social, destructive and excessive behaviours is considerably reduced. The decline in the incidence of vandalism and intoxication requiring medical treatment in 2000 is almost certainly linked to leavers not becoming restless and bored in the evenings.

In 1999 the researcher observed many leavers trying to gain entry to the hotel with a significant number succeeding. Attendance at the hotel by leavers in 2000 was much lower than expected even though there was a delicensed area made available especially for underage people. The reasons for this decline seem most likely to be a combination of the increased security at the hotel, making it almost impossible for underage drinkers to enter the licensed area, coupled with street drinking crackdowns by police and security. In addition leavers indicated that the hotel was a long way from the main settlement area where the majority of young people congregated. Perhaps also as a result of a crackdown on underage and street drinking there were far fewer reports in 2000 of 'funnelling'. This binge drinking activity usually occurs outside in highly visible circumstances and so increased police and security either discouraged it or drove it inside and out of sight. Although binge drinking and drinking games were mentioned less frequently in 2000 they still pose a significant threat to the health and well being of the leavers.

Acquiring alcohol did not seem to be a problem for those respondents who were underage. Although some young people indicated that they bought alcohol on Rottneest, most had carefully planned their alcohol consumption, spending their budget mostly before arriving on Rottneest and very often with the assistance of parents or other family members. Although one small aspect of the 2000 intervention was aimed at

providing parents with information regarding the potential harms associated with large volumes of alcohol consumption through school drug education newsletters perhaps a more comprehensive parent approach needs to be adopted. Similar to the police visits to potential leavers, perhaps formal parent evenings need to be organised where parents are informed about the amount of alcohol that is consumed at Rottnest. Such an initiative could also focus on what harms are commonly experienced on Rottnest and dispel the beliefs mentioned earlier that Rottnest is a safe place to send children with large volumes of alcohol.

Of concern is that many more leavers in 2000 reported illicit drug use, with levels of cannabis use falling below that of other illicit drugs although increasing substantially on levels reported in 1999. This reported increase in use is consistent with the researchers observations, particularly on the Saturday night in the de-licensed area at the hotel where some young people appeared to be exhibiting the physical effects of an illicit stimulant. There is no clear explanation for why this occurred. Again perhaps the decline in street drinking and the lack of alcohol availability at the hotel led to increased drug use as leavers sought ways to enhance their experience without being fined. However most leavers seemed to have arranged their drug purchases prior to arriving on Rottnest suggesting that the increase is more likely to be in line with general patterns of drug use amongst the youth of the community and not a reaction to the intervention strategies. It should be noted also that the respondents in 2000 were also of a higher median age, with a much larger percentage of university students interviewed than in 1999. This may well have contributed the higher levels of illicit substances being generally available, used and reported. Future police visits to schools need to incorporate information about illicit substances and the potential harms especially as a result of poly drug use. Similarly this issue needs to be discussed with parents.

There were almost as many young people who expressed an active aversion to drugs and drug use as there were those who reported using drugs. More young people in 2000 stated they had a definite plan to avoid drugs than their 1999 counterparts. Both the police visits and parent information needs to reinforce this sentiment and help this group of young people maintain their resolve to resist illicit drug use.

Despite the increase in illicit drug use the drug of choice for the majority of young people in 2000 was alcohol. Similar to the previous year, due to the large amount of alcohol consumed the 2000 leavers appeared to be vulnerable to a range of potential harms. The 2000 researcher observed leavers intoxicated behaviour resulting in impaired coordination, verbal harassment, vomiting, hangovers and alcohol related injuries (predominantly cut feet). A certain tension was apparent as night fell however the frequent outbursts of violence reported in 1999 were not evident. This observation is supported by the nursing post data which recorded fewer incidents of assault requiring treatment in 2000 (though not a substantial decline) and the police figures (see Tables 5 & 6).

When asked on arrival, some leavers' held concerns about harms that they may suffer on Rottneest, indicating harassment, intoxicated people and violence as their major concerns. In 1999 it was predominantly the females who held concerns about their safety whereas in 2000 there was no clear gender division with both males and females expressing concerns equally. However, like 1999 when interviewed a few days later many more 2000 leavers expressed concerns about harms that they had either experienced or witnessed with violence and tension the most commonly identified. Observations made by the researcher however indicated that although there was a definite tension in the air at nightfall there appeared to be fewer violent incidents than were witnessed in 1999. Sexual harassment also appeared to be less prevalent in 2000. Although it is not clear why there appeared to be less violence and sexual harassment perhaps the combination of the police visits their pro-active approach on the island and the intervention activities prepared leavers better to be able to cope with potentially harmful situations and to foster a sense that their behaviour was being monitored. Furthermore perhaps the intervention de-emphasised alcohol use enough to reduce harm. However, there was little difference between the two years in the number of leavers who reported physical sickness and hangovers as negative experiences.

Similar to 1999 the harm reduction strategies that the 2000 leavers planned to use were generally not well considered, with both sexes relying almost solely on their friends to afford them protection from the whole range of possible and actual harms. Again the police visits and parent information needs to focus on informing leavers about what to expect, how to deal with violent confrontations and how to remain in control of their

own actions – such information provision could play a significant role in addressing these discrepancies. Parental education could encourage more active warnings and advice being given to leavers before departure. According to the leavers interviewed in 2000 very few parents provided their children with warning about potential harms or discussed harm reduction strategies. There is evidence to suggest that their peers being present at the time of interviewing may have affected the leavers' accounts of their parental warnings, however warnings from the police were fairly faithfully reported so this may or may not account for the seeming overall failure of parents to provide adequate warnings and or advice. Again this points to the need for a more proactive approach to educating parents about the leavers' celebrations. Although identified by only a few leavers, media coverage was found to assist parents in raising issues to do with safety on Rottneest with their children and a concerted media management campaign like the one employed in 2000 could to be an effective tool in opening up communication between the leavers and their parents.

Interestingly while alcohol related harm was not commonly mentioned as a potential problem, responsible drinking was the second most common harm reduction strategy. This suggests that leavers do realise that excessive alcohol drinking puts them at risk of the range of harms they specifically identified. The *100% Control* campaign on Rottneest in 2000 is likely to have supported and encouraged leavers to think in this manner. After a few days of celebrations it was apparent that the leavers began to tire of excessive alcohol and other drug consumption, due in part to feeling sick but also because of a lack of sleep. However, in 2000 a strategy to break the leavers period up and bring in small group separately at the end of the week, seemed to re-energise the original group who would otherwise have been taking their celebrations easier. Furthermore intervention strategies such as the chill out tent, extra food options and planned activities were not available at the end of the week to cater for these newly arrived leavers. It is not coincidental perhaps that the greatest amount of vandalism and damage to the community occurred at this time. If the leavers group were kept as a single unit the frenzied behaviour should be more likely to wind down towards the end of the week making the period safer for both the leavers and the community.

Leavers were generally appreciative of the efforts made with the Leavers Live intervention in 2000. Their suggestions for improvement and expansion of the initiatives indicated a good degree of acceptance of the project overall. The Rottneest Hotel de-licensing and provision of bands was not as well received as had been hoped with both stakeholders and leavers suggesting it was a good idea but needed modification. The most common suggestion was to move the entertainment to a venue that did not involve alcohol at all, so that leavers attending the activity did not feel singled out and segregated from the older participants who were legally allowed to drink and whom they try to emulate as part of their rite of passage.

Food initiatives were very well received with the sausage sizzle being appreciated as a low cost option for eating while drinking in the evening. The success of the recovery breakfast provided by the tea rooms would suggest a recovery sausage sizzle may also be well received. Other food alternatives are still required and the central area if constructed to hold entertainment could centre around the provision of food also. Vegetarian options as well as high volumes of carbohydrates are required to meet demands and reduce intoxication. Leavers in both years were unlikely to cook themselves during the period, which meant that most subsisted on Red Rooster for 5 or 6 days if they ate at all. The fruit packs provided at the general store and other ready-to-eat options were popular and sold out regularly. Increased volumes of these and other options would clearly be well received by leavers in subsequent years.

Security and policing received a mixed response from the leavers. The private security at the hotel was tight and very effective. The approach at that venue seemed to be highly tolerant and in control. There was a lot of evidence to suggest that the school visits and sausage sizzle event conducted by the police did much to foster a spirit of respect and cooperation. This good work seemed to be undermined to some extent by the extra security guards hired to patrol the accommodation areas. Some of these security guards (dressed as if they were police) were at times aggressive and short tempered. Friendly greetings by leavers used to a positive relationship with the police were met with authoritative dismissal and even harassment. The legal basis for these security guards searching leavers for alcohol on the streets is also questionable. Leavers responded well to the consistent and non-confrontational approach taken by the police and if this approach could be replicated by the security guards, potential

rebellious clashes will be more easily avoided. The absence of a constant security presence in the accommodation area however, is a cause for concern and perhaps a new approach needs to be considered so that leavers are aware of a constant monitoring of their situations and available assistance when required.

The Chill Out Tent was widely regarded as the highlight of the intervention. Only positive comments were recorded about it. The volunteers who staffed it were consistently patient and compassionate, the nurses station was relieved of a considerable burden as minor complaints were dealt with within the tent. Leavers used the area as a non-threatening place to gather and bring people for treatment or care who may have otherwise been left unattended. During the day AIDS council staff provided advice and assistance in relation to safe sex and sexual harassment issues, and a number of young people made use of these services who may have otherwise kept to themselves. The importance of this facility in terms of reducing potential harms can not be overstated.

Other components of the intervention such as the beach activities, police visits, ranger's talks, competitions, advertising and promotion contributed to reducing boredom and the fostering of a relationship of cooperation between the leavers and the host community. This is supported by the leavers comments that in 1999 indicated a considerable number were bored yet in 2000 no-one reported that their experience on Rottnest was negative due to boredom. Furthermore the majority of key informants indicated the intervention measures were important in developing and maintaining a non-confrontational interaction between leavers and authorities. In stark contrast in Dunsborough during the same week extreme levels of violence and vandalism marred leavers' celebrations as the revellers, the police and the community clashed head on. The "Leavers Live" intervention gathered stakeholders together and led to the community feeling more in control and supported during the Leavers period. The leavers themselves also responded to the coordinated approach, as it seemed to provide them with a common focus point. Some leavers did indicate that their experience would have been enhanced if activities had been better advertised. Most young people however were appreciative of the efforts made, but even those who were critical of the details were still clearly aware that the community had gone to some considerable effort to make the celebrations both safe and enjoyable. The advance preparation and

coordinated approach by the community fostered tolerance on Rottnest in 2000, which in return was met with greater cooperation by the leavers themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The "Leavers Live" intervention appeared to have been successful in terms of shifting the focus of the celebrations away from just alcohol consumption by providing the leavers with a range of activities and strategies that reduced the amount of alcohol related harm experienced by the leavers and the community. The formative evaluation carried out in 1999 was crucial to the development of the intervention ensuring it was based on the reality of young peoples' experiences. Consequently the intervention included strategies that directly targeted the concerns of leavers and provided activities that were identified as attractive to leavers. This resulted in reducing boredom and the focus on alcohol consumption as the only thing to do. The collaborative approach taken to include young people and the host community in the development and implementation of the intervention has resulted in a positive relationship developing between leavers and the community based on tolerance and cooperation. The process used in the development and evaluation of the Leavers Live project can be adapted by other communities wishing to develop intervention strategies for reducing the harm associated with the leavers celebrations. The following recommendations are based on the information obtained from the 2000 leavers and key informants and are intended to enhance the 2000 initiatives to make a similar project easier to implement in subsequent years.

Heritage Common

- The de-licensed area at the hotel could be abandoned and replaced with music at Heritage Common. In this way alcohol would be removed as a focus altogether and the central gathering place most commonly requested would be provided. A similar program of live local music in the evenings would draw leavers to the site, and extending the program would contain leavers in a manageable area for longer each evening.
- During the day a portable radio station or DJs could provide lower key entertainment and run competitions. This entertainment could be broadcast by radio and would provide a valuable communication tool for the Rottneest Community throughout the leavers' period. Furthermore it could be used to

advertise up coming events and food options. Media students in tertiary institutions may be interested on providing this service.

- Food vans selling a variety of reasonably priced filling meals (e.g. baked potatoes, kebabs or hot dishes with rice) would encourage leavers to eat and minimise intoxication. The sausage sizzle would also do well to be placed in this area. This area should be in the same proximity as that provided for music. Recovery sausage sizzles in the mid morning would also encourage more consumption of food.
- A central information booth providing details of discounts and activities for leavers would also be helpful in the central area.
- The Gold Coast initiative of raising a huge star as an icon for the Leavers' week could translate well in Western Australia. Heritage Common would seem a logical place for this to occur. The raising of the star is a celebrated event used at the beginning of the festivities to emphasise the coordinated approach being taken to receive leavers into the community, and in so doing fosters a spirit of cooperation from the outset. It provides a focus and helps the leavers to mark their rite of passage in a positive way rather than through more destructive means.
- Towards the end of the period when leavers are becoming tired and drained, alcohol free low-key activities would be appropriate. A cult film screened outdoors at Heritage Common (similar to what was done on Stradbroke Island) could be successful and encourage an alcohol free evening.

Chill Out Tent

- Obviously the Chill Out Tent initiative was a huge success and should be included in subsequent years. The tent would be better if it was larger with more volunteers assisting the youth.
- Provision of milo and cordial was well received, and it would be helpful if the community on Rottnest could donate those provisions in future.
- Legal advice on the provision of this service should be acquired to assure the volunteers of indemnity.

- The AIDS council attendance at the tent during the day was a positive influence. Given that the data suggests increasing sexual activity it is important that safe sex messages be prominent during the leavers celebrations. The Ibiza research especially emphasises that condoms and advice should be made available to every visitor on arrival.

Messages to Leavers and Parents

- The police visits to schools were an outstanding success and should be continued in subsequent years, continuing to focus on potential harms and realistic harm reduction strategies and fostering a spirit of cooperation between the police and the leavers.
- To support the police visits an education program for year twelve leavers about the dangers experienced during leavers' celebrations (e.g. potential harms and harm reduction strategies) would be a pro-active and helpful approach the Education Department could take. This program could also include information for parents of leavers as the School Drug Education Project has suggested, encouraging them to give sensible warnings and reduce the level of alcohol and money for alcohol that is taken to the celebrations each year. The parent education needs to be more pro-active however, with face-to-face contact instead of relying on parents reading information in newsletters they may or may not even receive.
- Increased awareness of the activities available on Rottneest would be helpful and as has been suggested above a central information booth, notice board and radio advertising would assist with this.
- A message like the 100% Control Healthway message used in 2000 should be promoted in subsequent years. The leavers often recalled it and the promotional items were very well received also. Other more simple but direct messages like warnings to wear shoes are required also. Free thongs would be an excellent promotional item for the Island in 2001.
- The coordinated media approach was very effective in 2000 and should be repeated if possible.

Food and Water

- The extended trading hours of food outlets played an important role in minimising intoxication late at night, as well as providing good profits for the providers.
- The recovery breakfasts were also a great success and would benefit from wider advertising. It may be wise to offer a recovery breakfast on Heritage Common nearer to the accommodation, as many leavers found they did not make it to the tearooms each morning before the breakfast was over.
- There is still a distinct need for more food to be made available. The majority of leavers are still subsisting on Red Rooster during their stay. As mentioned above food vans selling filling and nutritional meals on Heritage Common would be an excellent idea.
- The sausage sizzles were utilised well and also provided valuable food to intoxicated leavers late at night. The provider of this service for subsequent years should be reviewed as in 2000 there were a number of confrontations at the stand that could have been avoided.
- Water needs to be made much more readily available out in the settlement. Free self service water dispensers or bottled water would be ideal. The hotel was providing leavers with water if they asked for it, however due to charges for water by many hotels on the mainland leavers were reticent to ask. Clear advertising of where water is readily available would be helpful.

Security, Rangers and Police

- Extra security and police are clearly necessary during the leavers period. Those security guards brought in for the period should be included in all briefing sessions and be made fully aware of the coordinated and tolerant approach being adopted by the host community. Tension levels will be kept at a minimum if the firm but tolerant policing adopted by the Rottnest Police is followed by all authorities on the island.
- The rangers visits to houses seemed to reinforce that the leavers were being watched over and is a worthwhile initiative. Rubbish bags were handed out and

leavers were commanded to clean up each morning. This approach was too authoritarian and inherently unfair to the many leavers (and others accidentally commanded to participate) whom had not contributed to the mess but were made to feel as if they were being punished for bad behaviour. This approach runs the risk of inciting confrontation and disrespect of the Island authorities. It is recommended that in future rubbish bags be left at the front of the house (without waking the occupants) with a notice explaining that vouchers for free food will be given in exchange for bags of rubbish collected. Red Rooster indicated that they would be happy to provide vouchers in future years, and perhaps the sausage sizzle could be turned into an incentive scheme also.

Other

- Extra lighting is still required in many areas, especially tentland.
- The Leavers Live team and AIDS council patrolling the streets each evening was a positive contribution and many leavers were assisted in a variety of ways by them. Perhaps other youth workers could be encouraged to be part of a coordinated “watching over” scheme.
- There were a number of suggestions by stakeholders to try to limit the amount of alcohol brought to the Island, however the logistics of policing such an initiative make it unworkable. Educating parents appears the most realistic option in trying to reduce supply.
- At times the beach activities were well patronised and it would be positive to provide them in subsequent years. Other activities including roller-blading and skateboarding displays were suggested by leavers and would be popular by all accounts.
- A bus providing transport around the settlement in the evening would increase attendance at activities, and should be easily able to make a profit if provided.
- Whatever is done in terms of accommodation periods in 2001, it is important that all intervention initiatives are available for the entire time that leavers are present on the island.

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APPENDIX 1

1999 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!

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 allocate a few police outside for 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.
- Flier put up in each cottage or bungalow 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 Rottnest.

- Consider having more on the island, but they should have the same attitude as last year with more 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 Rottneest.

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 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 Rottneest. 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.

APPENDIX 2

EARLY DAYS (Pre-departure? En Route?)

Secondary School Students Questionnaire – Rottnest 2000

AGE	SEX	SUBURB	LEAVER?

Date: _____ **Time:** _____ **Location:** _____

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?

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

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

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

7) Did your parents discuss with you the possible harms that you might experience
(How to avoid? Consequences? Contact with home?)

8) Did police visit your school and give a talk about leavers week at Rottneest or any other location? Was it useful? Why/ Why not? How could it be made more useful / relevant?

9) How long do you plan to stay? Location?

APPENDIX 3

THE COMING NIGHT

Secondary School Students Questionnaire – Rottnest 2000

AGE	SEX	SUBURB	LEAVER?

Date: _____ **Time:** _____ **Location:** _____

1) What are you planning to do this afternoon/evening? Are you going to any organised activities? Why/ Why not? How did you find out about the activities? Do you know who is organising them? Sponsors? Message?

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

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

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

5) Have you planned any strategies to keep you safe? What?

6) Do you know about the nurses station/ Chill out tent? How did you find out?

7) Alternatives if "chosen" Alcohol/Drugs aren't available? (Any Alcohol-free days/nights?)

8) How did you decide what to do tonight? Do you feel in control of your plans?

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

APPENDIX 4

THE DAY AFTER

Secondary School Students Questionnaire – Rottnest 2000

AGE	SEX	SUBURB	LEAVER?

Date: _____ **Time:** _____ **Location:** _____

1) What did you get up to last night?

2) Did you go to any of the organised activities?

Night/ day ? Why not? OR Excellent, Good, OK, Bad? And Why?

3) What could have made the activities better? Do you know who organised the activities? Sponsors? Message?

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

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

6) Best parts of the night?

7) Worst parts of the night?

8) What exactly made it bad? (Harms? Physically sick, Violence, Unwanted sexual advances, etc)

9) Did you need medical help/ chill out tent?

10) Did you manage to eat any food while you were out last night? (Where from? Easy to find? Good? Reasonably Priced?)

11) Have you had breakfast this morning? (Where from? Easy to find? Good? Reasonably Priced?)

12) How could your experience have been improved?

13) Has your approach/behaviour changed over successive nights? Are you doing more/less partying? (Why? Peer Pressure?)

APPENDIX 5**LAST DAYS (Pre-departure? En Route?)****Secondary School Students Questionnaire – Rottnest 2000**

AGE	SEX	SUBURB	LEAVER?

Date: _____ **Time:** _____ **Location:** _____

1) What did you get up to on Rottnest? _____

2) Did your activities/experiences live up to your expectations? _____

3) What was the best thing about your stay?

4) What was the worst thing about your stay?

5) Did you attend any of the organised activities?

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Which ones? Night / day? Excellent, Good, OK, Bad? Why? Were they well advertised? Sponsors? Message?

6) Ways to improve the experience? Changes to make activities better ? Other Activities that should be offered?)

7) Did you drink/take drugs? (How much? When? Where? How Often? Access – How, Where? More or less than expected?)

8) What did you mainly eat / where did you get it from? Was it cheap/ expensive? What was good? What was bad? Suggested improvements?

9) Cost? (More or Less expensive than initially thought? How much did you spend on alcohol and other drugs? How did you offset shortfall?)

10) What sorts of harms/dangerous behaviour did you see/have happen to you? (Physical, Emotional)

11) What things can reduce these harms/behaviours?

12) Did you have to visit the nurses station/ chill out tent? Why Why not?

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

5. Were you aware of other activities undertaken as part of the intervention? Which ones?

6. Was the Leavers Period what you thought it would be like this year? Why/ Why not?

7. Do you think the intervention made the Island safer for the leavers and for the community? How?

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

9. Do you think it would be worthwhile to take a similar approach to the Leavers Period again? Why/ Why not?

10. Do you think interventions like the one at Rottnest in 2000 would be useful in other areas during Leavers' Celebrations? Why/ Why not?

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

APPENDIX 7

Nursing Post Injury Data

DATE OF INJURY	GENDER	AGE	URGENCY	PROBLEM
Wednesday - Day 1				
24-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 10 mins	Intoxication
22-Nov-00	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
Thursday - Day 2				
25-Nov-99	F	17	Can wait 60 mins	Accident
25-Nov-99	M	18	Can wait 10 mins	Assault
25-Nov-99	F	17	Can wait 10 mins	Intoxication
25-Nov-99	M	18	Can wait 30 mins	Violence
23-Nov-00	Female	18	Can wait 10 mins	Accident
23-Nov-00	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
23-Nov-00	Male	18	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
23-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
23-Nov-00	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
23-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
23-Nov-00	Male	16	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
23-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
23-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
23-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 60 mins	Intoxication
23-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 30 mins	Intoxication
23-Nov-00	Male	17	Can wait 30 mins	Intoxication
Friday - Day 3				
26-Nov-99	Male	18	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
26-Nov-99	Male	19	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
26-Nov-99	Male	18	Can wait 30 mins	Assault
26-Nov-99	Male	18	Can wait 60 mins	Assault
26-Nov-99	Female	17	Can wait 10 mins	Sexual Assault
24-Nov-00	Female	18	Life Threatening	Accident
24-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
24-Nov-00	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
24-Nov-00	Male	18	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
24-Nov-00	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
24-Nov-00	Male	28	Can wait 120 mins	Assault
24-Nov-00	Male	21	Can wait 60 mins	Assault
24-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 60 mins	Intoxication
Saturday - Day 4				
27-Nov-99	Male	16	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
27-Nov-99	Male	20	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
27-Nov-99	Male	16	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
27-Nov-99	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
27-Nov-99	Male	20	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
27-Nov-99	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
27-Nov-99	Male	18	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
27-Nov-99	Male	18	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
27-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
27-Nov-99	Male	18	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
27-Nov-99	Male	18	Can wait 120 mins	Accident

27-Nov-99	Male	22	Can wait 120 mins	Assault
27-Nov-99	Male	26	Can wait 30 mins	Assault
27-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Assault
27-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Assault
27-Nov-99	Male	18	Can wait 120 mins	Assault
27-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 30 mins	Intoxication
27-Nov-99	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Intoxication
27-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Intoxication
27-Nov-99	Female	18	Can wait 120 mins	Unprotected Sex
27-Nov-99	Female	18	Can wait 120 mins	Unprotected Sex
27-Nov-99	Female	18	Can wait 120 mins	Unprotected Sex
25-Nov-00	Male	19	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
25-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
25-Nov-00	Male	23	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
25-Nov-00	Male	19	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
25-Nov-00	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
25-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
25-Nov-00	Male	18	Can wait 30 mins	Assault
25-Nov-00	Male	19	Can wait 120 mins	Assault
25-Nov-00	Male	18	Can wait 120 mins	Assault
25-Nov-00	Male	18	Can wait 60 mins	Violence
Sunday - Day 5				
28-Nov-99	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
28-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
28-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 60 mins	Accident
28-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Assault
28-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Assault
28-Nov-99	Male	17	Life Threatening	Intoxication
28-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 30 mins	Intoxication
28-Nov-99	Female	17	Can wait 60 mins	Intoxication
26-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
26-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
26-Nov-00	Male	18	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
26-Nov-00	Male	17	Can wait 30 mins	Assault
26-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Assault
26-Nov-00	Male	19	Can wait 10 mins	Violence
Monday - Day 6				
29-Nov-99	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
29-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
29-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
29-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
29-Nov-99	Male	18	Can wait 120 mins	Intoxication
27-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
27-Nov-00	Male	17	Can wait 60 mins	Intoxication
Tuesday - Day 7				
30-Nov-99	Male	20	Can wait 10 mins	Assault
30-Nov-99	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Intoxication
30-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 10 mins	Intoxication
30-Nov-99	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Intoxication
30-Nov-99	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Unprotected Sex
28-Nov-00	Male	17	Can wait 120 mins	Accident
28-Nov-00	Female	17	Can wait 120 mins	Violence