

## SCHOOLIES INVASION

# Safe sex forgotten

**JEREMY PIERCE  
& BRITTANY VONOW**

HEALTH officials have warned of an STD epidemic among schoolies as sales of the morning-after pill spike following the first weekend of celebrations.

While highrise balcony high jinks, alcohol-fuelled violence and drug abuse are regular concerns, the rising threat of STDs has emerged as yet another risk facing revellers.

The national rate of chlamydia has more than tripled in the last dec-

ade with nearly 80,000 infections reported in 2011, up from 17,000 in 2001.

Monash IVF Senior Fertility Specialist Dr Kee Ong said reckless sexual behaviour exposed youths to the very real threat of STDs such as chlamydia, which can seriously affect fertility.

"I know the last thing these schoolies are thinking about is STDs and their future fertility, but this is a very real and serious health issue," he said.

Chlamydia is most prevalent in

people aged 15-29 and Dr Ong said an entire generation had forgot the safe sex mantra forged during the 1990s.

"The fear of HIV and AIDS really got people thinking," he said.

"The safe sex message is increasingly falling on deaf ears and we need to act now to avoid a potential fertility crisis in Australia.

"Our schools and universities have become a breeding ground for chlamydia."

Schoolies week used to represent one of the busiest weeks of the year

for Gold Coast chemists selling condoms, but judging by recent trends, it is no longer the case.

Surfers Paradise pharmacies have reported an increase in the sale of the morning-after pills, attributing the spike to Schoolies shenanigans.

One pharmacy said they had seen a marked increase of sales on Sunday morning while another said it was too early to tell but expected an increase in sales in coming days.

One pharmacist who worked at a Surfers Paradise store for several years but has since moved on said he

often saw an increase of three or four times the usual number of the pills sold in one day.

At least the safe sex message is reaching some. Two 17-year-old schoolies, who did not want to be identified, yesterday admitted condoms were part of their luggage.

"We've got some in our bag upstairs," said one. "I should probably keep one in my wallet, but you don't want to jinx yourself."

"It's not really at the top of my mind because you've got to pick up first."