

Schoolies week (language analysis of 3 herald sun articles)

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Schoolies week is becoming a major issue in Australia, with tens of thousands of kids going on holiday every year and enjoying the so-called 'booze and drug fest'. In recent years however, students seem to be taking more care and responsibility during schoolies week, and their behaviour has generally improved. In the opinion piece "Parents who just won't say 'no' to blame for schoolies scourge", published in the Herald Sun on the 25th of September 2010, Rebecca Wilson contends in an alarming and critical tone, that parents must accept responsibility for the growing schoolies epidemic, and must learn to stand up to their kids if we are to purge this harmful event out of our Australian culture. This is a major contrast to the viewpoint of Wes Hosking, whose opinion piece on the issue was published in the Herald Sun on the 27th of November 2010, in which he presents an optimistic and reasoned point of view, that schoolies does not deserve the bad reputation that it has developed, especially given the decreasing number of arrests and fights in recent years. A more specific issue of the behaviour of public school students vs.

private school students during schoolies, is addressed in a letter to the editor which was published in the Herald Sun on the 1st of December 2010, with Helen Campbell pleading with the reader to accept her viewpoint, that it is unfair to suggest that troublesome or poor schoolies behaviour is solely caused by public school students, when both sides are clearly to blame. In "Parents who just won't say 'no' to blame for schoolies scourge", Wilson utilizes a variety of persuasive language techniques to persuade her audience, which in this case is parents of students who have finished year 12, to support her point of view. She opens her article by recounting her

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personal experience of schoolies week in high school, when “ there were no wire barriers, dance raves, or identity bracelets” needed during schoolies week, and “ nobody’s life came to a standstill as a result of missing out”. By including this anecdote in the beginning of her article, Wilson instantly engages the reader, and gives them a picture of how schoolies has evolved over the years, from a “ quiet affair involving a couple of hundred school leavers”, to a “ booze and drug fest of the highest order”. The anecdotal evidence also encourages the reader to accept the writer as a credible source of information due to her personal experience in the matter, and the evidence she provides which show that “ at least a third of the kids involved [in schoolies] are underage”, enhances this effect by adding even more legitimacy to her arguments, convincing the audience to share in her point of view. Wilson appeals to the reader’s sense of fear throughout her article, and constantly makes statements that have negative connotations, such as “ police... are simply outnumbered and unable to cope with the insurgence”.

The word “ insurgence” relates the violence during schoolies to warfare, instantly ingraining a negative view, of schoolies as a dangerous event which places kids at risk, in the minds of parents. The caption, “ Battleground”, under the accompanying image of a drunken, handcuffed teenager being escorted by policemen, has the same negative connotation. The image itself also works to remind parents of the risks and dangers that are present during schoolies week, and of the reality that their children could find themselves in the same position as the boy in the image. The exaggeration and appeal to fear which are expressed with an alarming tone in the statement: “ blood-stained faces, unconscious teenagers on the beach, and

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reports of date rape are not uncommon”, work together to give the cumulative effect of unnerving parents and blowing their fears way out of proportion, making them believe that their children will almost certainly face the same fate. This sways the audience to agree with Wilson, that parents must understand that schoolies is not a rite of passage, and that it is in their power to decide whether their child can participate in this unnecessary and dangerous event or not. In contrast, in the opinion piece “ Schoolies’ impressive report card”, Wes Hoskins expresses his point of view that the behaviour of schoolies’ students in recent years has actually been quite sensible and responsible when compared to the selfish, drunken behaviour that is usually expected from them, and that teenagers should not be judged solely from their behaviour at schoolies anyway.

The accompanying image of a schoolies student carrying an overly intoxicated friend over his shoulder, supports Hosking’s opinion that students nowadays are literally “ shouldering responsibility” during their end of school celebrations. Although schoolies is not a test of any kind, the pun in the article’s heading cleverly uses the words “ report card” to make it seem as if students are actually being graded on their behaviour during schoolies. The fact that it is an “ impressive” report card supports Hosking’s contention that “ the latest breed of school leavers are a lot smarter than those of the recent past”, and that schoolies isn’t as bad as it is generally perceived to be. Hosking subtly launches a satirical attack on those who hold this negative view of schoolies, by making light of the issue through the use of humour and a slightly sarcastic tone, claiming that “ packing a poncho to shield against projectile vomit seemed a valid consideration” when going to the <https://assignbuster.com/schoolies-week-language-analysis-of-3-herald-sun-articles/>

Gold Coast, a hot-spot for schoolies students. This manipulates the reader to share in his ridicule of opposing views, and support his opinion that schoolies week does not deserve such a bad reputation.

Hosking persists with an optimistic tone, encouraging his audience to give schoolies students a chance by waiting to see “ how they deal with their new-found access to alcohol” throughout the year, rather than just basing their judgement on their behaviour during schoolies. He also provides statistics which state that “ 210 non-schoolies [have] already [been] arrested since Friday, while more than 13 schoolies found themselves in trouble”, suggesting that alcohol-fuelled violence is mainly caused by non-schoolies who join in on the celebrations, not the actual schoolies themselves. He also claims that “ arrests are down by half on last year, with only a handful of minor scuffles”. This use of evidence strengthens Hosking’s piece by adding legitimacy to his arguments and giving the reader hard facts that cannot be argued with. This forces them to agree with his point of view, that the majority of school leavers conduct themselves in a responsible manner during schoolies celebrations, and it is not fair to condemn these students as a result of their behaviour at this single event when they still have the following years to prove whether or not they can drink and act responsibly.

On a different note, Helen Campbell’s letter to the editor addresses Herald Sun readers who are familiar with the debate on schoolies, focusing on the issue of public school students being accused of being the main contributors o the wreckless behaviour displayed during schoolies. She uses a pleading tone to persuade readers to agree that “ to assume antisocial behaviour is

the exclusive domain of public schools is simply not correct". Campbell also asks a rhetorical question: " Why don't we hear more about these students, instead of all this end-of-year, alcohol-induced violence? ". This forces readers to wonder why there is so much emphasis on teenage alcohol-related violence, instead of the achievements of these young adults.