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Rotto teen risk

Blood-alcohol up to .204 condemned

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MEDICOS have expressed grave concerns after nine teenagers were treated for alcohol-related injuries at "pre-schoolies" festivities on Rottnest Island, including one with a blood-alcohol reading of 0.204.

Health advocates yesterday condemned the high alcohol intake, saying parents needed to ensure better supervision of their children and educate them about the perils of excessive boozing.

Fremantle Hospital and Health Service acting executive director Shirley Bowen said latest statistics showed that nine teenagers aged between 14 and 17 had been treated at the Rottnest Island nursing post for alcohol-related injuries and

severe intoxication between December 6 and 11.

The Sunday Times understands teenagers treated by nursing post staff registered blood-alcohol readings between 0.09 and 0.204.

Mike Daube, director of the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth, described blood-alcohol readings of 0.204 for children as "disturbing". "These are levels that are worrying for adults, let alone kids," Prof Daube said.

"What is so disturbing about this kind of drinking is that drinking by young people has both short-term and long-term consequences. There is now very clear evidence of the harmful impacts of alcohol on the developing brain.

"If they are drinking at that kind

of level, they are putting themselves at considerable risk. It's not just that they could do silly and dangerous things, but they could lose consciousness and be doing themselves real physical damage.

"It's a concern for the authorities. As a society we have to worry about where the parental responsibility lies."

Last week *The Sunday Times* revealed that gangs of school children dubbed "apprentice leavers" had gone on a rampage across the island as police tried to rein in a spate of underage drinking and petty crime.

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