

# Keeping Teenagers Safe by Alan Ball

One of the recurring issues parents have to face is parties. Should you let your sons attend or not? Here are some of the ideas I have gleaned from parents: –

- Insist on the address and phone number of the hosts.
- Call the hosts beforehand to get details (start time, end time, whether parent supervision will occur).
- Don't let your son go to a party where there is no parent supervision.
- Make sure there is a definite end time for the party.
- Make sure your son's mobile phone is charged and in credit.
- If you are hosting a party, consider having an informal dinner party with some of the parents of boys and girls who will attend – they can help you supervise.
- If your son is going to 'sleep over' either at the home of the party host, or with another friend, call those parents so that you are sure where your son will spend the night.
- Don't be afraid to exercise 'tough love' and say no to your son's attendance at a party about which you have some doubts. Once word gets around that you have said no, other parents might make the same decision.
- Call parents of your son's friends to ask them what they know about the coming party.
- Consider sharing the duties of dropping and collecting your son with other parents.

## For older boys who are going to parties or nightclubs

- Don't let your son drive unless he is going to spend the night at his host's house.
- Make it clear to your son and his friends that your house is a 'safe house' – they can all come home and sleep in spare beds or mattresses on the floor, and that none are to drink drive.
- Be prepared to drop your son (and possibly some of his mates) at the party or other venue.
- Keep a \$50 note in the front hall (or other easily accessible place in your house) so your son can always catch a taxi home (and possibly bring some of his mates with him).
- Eliminate the need for him to drink and drive.
- Make sure your son and his mates know your rules about driving and drinking (take their keys if you have to), so that they must use a cab to get home.
- Encourage the notion that your son's mates are welcome to sleep on the floor rather than take the unsafe risk of drink driving (as the driver or a passenger).
- Tell your son that you will come and get him at any hour of the night if he is out and in danger (either because of the company he has found himself in, or the fact that he cannot get a taxi). He must know that his (or his mate's call) at 3am is much better than a call from the police to say he has been injured.