

Topic 9

Party, party, party!

The invite:

I'm having a party. Come at 7 o'clock on Saturday 13 May. There will be food, drinks and music. Bring a friend if you want to. Ben.

Sharing the original invitation:

Sharon: Are you going to Ben's party on Saturday? Should be fun!

Charlie: Aren't his parents out of town? I heard that they're off to Perth for the weekend.

Sharon: That's good news! See you at the party then?

Andrew: Nothing to do on Saturday night? Don't worry. It's party time at 14 Willagee Road, Cooloongup.

The Chronicle

Sunday 14 May

Ben Markson is a teenager. His parents' home in Cooloongup, a small town near Perth, was trashed after he posted information about his birthday party online. Ben had expected 30 close friends, but news about the party leaked onto a social network site. Almost 400 gatecrashers turned up. The unruly mob ripped the garden gate off its hinges, smashed a window and burned a sofa.

The party spilled onto the street, and dismayed residents saw young people jumping on parked cars and sitting in the flowerbeds. Horrified neighbours called the police who arrived after 10 minutes.

When sergeant O'Toole and his partner arrived, their presence made the revellers angry. They threw rocks at the police vehicle. The police radioed for reinforcements. More police arrived with dogs and loudhailers and arrested three teenagers.

Ben's parents, Mike and Alice Markson, came home from Perth after calls from neighbours alerted them to the disaster at their house. The family spent all night cleaning up the mess.

Ben says that the party went wrong because people kept spreading the news via social media. "All I wanted was to have a good party. At first a few people I didn't know arrived and that was no problem. But then a lot of people from Perth arrived and I didn't want to let them in. But they came in anyway. Then more people kept coming. It was horrible."

Mr Markson said: "We got a call from our next-door neighbour just as we were leaving for the theatre. On the phone we could hear music and the sound of breaking glass. I said to my wife we've got to return home immediately. Ben is a sensible boy – he knows not to post a party invitation on a social network site. Maybe one of his friends posted the party information. Luckily nothing valuable was stolen and nobody was injured."

A spokesperson for the police said that they responded to a call from concerned neighbours at 11 o'clock on Saturday night. "We used loudhailers and dogs to move everybody away within 20 minutes. Officers remained in the area for a while to provide reassurance to residents, and to ensure that revellers didn't return."

Bob Hall, the mayor of Cooloongup, said: "It's the first time that this has happened in our town. We've been lucky. Every weekend thousands of young people all over Australia turn up at the house of someone they don't know, and want to party. Because of this technology teenagers can get together fast."