

# Nine month snapshot: Townsville Drink Safe Precinct trial

## Background to the establishment of Drink Safe Precincts

The Queensland Government is committed to achieving healthy and vibrant night time economies where people can relax and have fun in a safe environment.

In 2010, the Queensland Government announced an important two year trial of Drink Safe Precincts (DSPs) to reduce alcohol-related violence in the key entertainment precincts of Surfers Paradise, Townsville and Fortitude Valley.

The Drink Safe Precinct trial, operating from December 2010 to November 2012, forms part of the Queensland Government's response to the recommendations of the bipartisan Law, Justice and Safety Committee's inquiry into alcohol-related violence. Background information about the establishment of Drink Safe Precincts, including the full inquiry report and the government's response, is available online.<sup>1</sup>

## Important notes

The following information should be taken in to account when considering the information and figures reported in the following snapshot.

## Significant events

A number of significant events occurred during the first nine months of the trials which may have had an impact on activity in the Drink Safe Precincts, including:

- festive season (e.g. Christmas and New Year's celebrations)
- Queensland floods and Cyclone Yasi
- major events (e.g. Cowboys National Rugby League home games, V8 supercars)
- Operation Unite (i.e. two-day national high visibility police operation between 17-19 December 2010 and 13-15 May 2011)
- Australia Day
- Easter holiday period
- seasonal variations (i.e. winter months tend to be associated with fewer patrons frequenting entertainment precincts).

These events should be taken into account when considering the information provided in this snapshot.

## Comparisons between precincts and months

Comparisons between precincts and months may be misleading for a number of reasons, for example:

- there were four weekends in December, February, March, May, June and August and five weekends in January, April and July
- Drink Safe Precinct policing initiatives operate in Surfers Paradise and Townsville three nights a week, and in Fortitude Valley two nights a week
- in all three precincts support services are provided on Friday and Saturday nights, however, in the Surfers Paradise precinct the support service also operates on Thursday nights.

<sup>1</sup> Report: [www.parliament.qld.gov.au/view/committees/LCARC.asp?SubArea=reports](http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/view/committees/LCARC.asp?SubArea=reports) Government's response: [www.parliament.qld.gov.au/view/committees/LCARC.asp?SubArea=responses](http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/view/committees/LCARC.asp?SubArea=responses).

## Availability of data

Data from a broad range of sources is progressively becoming available from partner agencies which will form the basis of the DSP evaluation.

Additional data available for presentation in this round of snapshots includes:

- Queensland Ambulance Service - calls for service
- TransLink – Fortitude Valley and Surfers Paradise bus patronage (first 7-months)
- Department of Transport and Main Roads – Townsville bus patronage
- Brisbane City Council – CitySafe CCTV incident register (Fortitude Valley only).

Again, caution should be exercised in interpreting the various data represented. Directly comparing figures from direct data sources should be avoided as the parameters of each set of data may differ (e.g. in terms of collection methods or time periods). Following the conclusion of the two year trial, overall conclusions can be drawn on the basis of analysis of the wide range of data obtained. At this stage the data is presented only to provide an indication of activity in the precincts.

## About the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct

The Townsville Drink Safe Precinct covers a widespread area of the central business district and adjoining commercial, recreational and residential areas. The precinct has several distinct areas of activity, including:

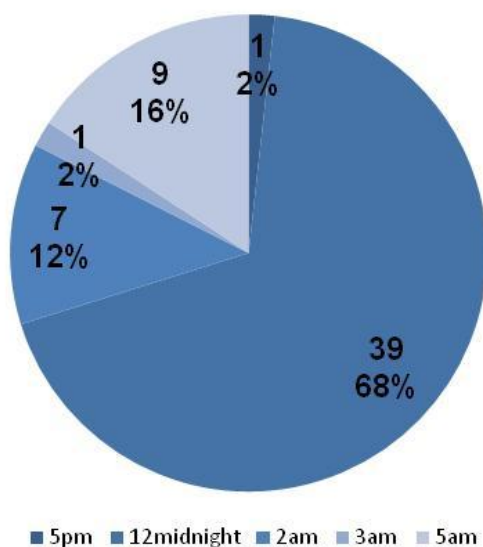
- **Flinders St East** – which is Townsville’s main entertainment and nightclub hub.
- **Flinders St West** – which has two hotels, a nightclub and a number of high rise residential units.
- **Palmer St** – which is principally a restaurant precinct interspersed with numerous high rise residential units.
- **The Strand**<sup>2</sup> – which borders the seaside foreshore in the suburb of North Ward. The Strand has a number of high rise residential and holiday units, restaurants, cafes and bars.

Townsville regularly hosts special events such as Townsville V8 Supercars, Townsville Cup races, National Rugby League team the Cowboys home games and National Basketball League team the Croc’s home games. The Townsville Drink Safe Precinct attracts large numbers of patrons every weekend and especially after events. Just fewer than 2000 people reside in the Townsville City suburb.<sup>3</sup>

There are 57 licensed venues in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct. As shown in Figure 1:

- more than half of these venues close at or before midnight (70%, n = 40)
- seven venues close at 2am; one venue trades until 3am and nine venues have licenses to trade past lockout (i.e. 3am) until 5am.

**Figure 1. Trading hours of venues located in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct**



Source: Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation (OLGR) 2011.

The Townsville Drink Safe Precinct has been in operation since December 2010. Some information about what happened during the first nine months of the trial is described below.

<sup>2</sup> The Townsville Drink Safe Precinct boundary includes The Strand up to the corner of Gregory St.

<sup>3</sup> The Townsville City Australian Bureau of Statistics State suburb area is slightly larger in geographical area than the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct and does not include Palmer Street.

## What strategies are in place in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct?

A number of initiatives are in place in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct, including:

- **Establishment of a Rest and Recovery area** which operates out of a van in the Flinders St East carpark. The rest and recovery van is a place where patrons can go to rest, get some minor first aid and take time out from a busy night.
- **Marshals and security guard at the secure taxi rank** to manage the rank and ensure that patrons are loaded into taxis in a safe and efficient way.
- **Presence of military police** within the precinct to deter offences and assist the Queensland Police Service (QPS) in implementing diversionary strategies. Provision of appropriate vehicles to assist in the transport of defence patrons to alleviate the public transport burden.
- **Security guard (funded by Late Night Traders)** liaising between venues on Flinders Street East, the rest and recovery area and the QPS. The security guard maintains radio communication with all licensed premises to ensure efficient police response to incidents at establishments.
- **Liquor enforcement and proactive strategy (LEAPS) officers** attend monthly meetings with the Late Night Traders accord to ensure staff are trained and licensed premises have individual strategies in place.
- **Work underway towards the establishment of the 'CBD Liquor Accord Townsville'** – a draft accord has been circulated for consultation; it aims to manage alcohol-related violence and improve the safety of people visiting licensed venues in the Townsville CBD.
- **CCTV network** with cameras located in Flinders St, Flinders St East, The Strand, Victoria Bridge, Palmer St, and at the Secure Taxi Rank. Cameras are passively monitored at Council's Garbutt Operations Centre and the Stanley St Police Operations Centre.
- **Security guard** on late night bus services to ensure the safety of drivers and passengers.
- **Flinders St East redevelopment** including upgraded lighting and street furniture.
- **Promotion of the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct (see Figure 2)** and safety measures through billboards and television screens inside licensed premises.

Figure 2. Promotional posters from the Drink Safe Precinct

(Source: CBD Liquor Accord Townsville 2011)

**TAKE THE LEAD**  
**BE THE**  
**DESIGNATED DRIVER**

Queensland Government  
LAT  
CBD Liquor Accord Townsville

Also everyday price of soft drink is \$2.50 a glass  
**Free Water**

This poster features a yellow triangle pointing down with the text 'TAKE THE LEAD' and 'BE THE DESIGNATED DRIVER' in white on a black background. Below the text is a silhouette of a car with four people inside. Logos for Queensland Government and LAT are present. Text on the right states 'Also everyday price of soft drink is \$2.50 a glass' and 'Free Water' in large yellow letters.

**LAT**  
CBD Liquor Accord Townsville

Queensland Government

**\*Free water available at bar**  
**'how much alcohol have you consumed?'**  
**'Take care ask for a water'**

**\*Bottles of water will not be given Glasses ONLY**

This poster shows a smiling man holding a water bottle in a bar setting. Logos for LAT, Queensland Government, and Queensland Police are visible. Text includes 'Free water available at bar', 'how much alcohol have you consumed?', 'Take care ask for a water', and 'Bottles of water will not be given Glasses ONLY'.

**"How are you getting home?"**

**Secure Taxi Rank**  
Friday Saturday

**Secure Bus Rank**  
Friday Saturday

**LAT**  
CBD Liquor Accord Townsville

**Ask for assistance if you are unsure about locations?**

Queensland Government

This poster has an orange background. It features icons for a taxi and a bus, with text for 'Secure Taxi Rank' and 'Secure Bus Rank' for 'Friday Saturday'. The LAT logo and 'CBD Liquor Accord Townsville' are in the center. At the bottom, it says 'Ask for assistance if you are unsure about locations?' and includes logos for Queensland Police and Queensland Government.

**ONE PUNCH CAN KILL**

**LAT**  
CBD Liquor Accord Townsville

Queensland Government

This poster is split into two scenes. The left side shows a group of people in a bar. The right side shows a person lying in a hospital bed being attended to by a nurse. The text 'ONE PUNCH CAN KILL' is written in large, bold letters across the bottom. Logos for LAT, Queensland Police, and Queensland Government are at the bottom.

## What's been happening in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct?

### Queensland Police Service activity<sup>4, 5</sup>

#### Activity

During the first nine months of the trial in Townsville:

- 395 people were arrested – mainly for good order and liquor offences
- 70 Notices to Appear were issued
- 779 Tickets were issued
- 712 street checks were conducted
- 118 Random Breath Tests (RBTs) were conducted
- 243 Traffic Infringement Notices (TINs) were issued.

During this period police also conducted 1822 walkthroughs of licensed premises,<sup>6</sup> detected 13 breaches against licensed premises<sup>7</sup> and exercised tip out powers ten times.

#### Diversionsary activity by QPS

As part of the trial, police in Townsville are recording more information about the use of diversionsary strategies and policing that resolves incidents informally, without recourse to the criminal justice system.

During the first nine months of the trial, police officers patrolling the precinct used diversionsary strategies nearly 900 times.<sup>8</sup> This included:

- taking 27 people to a place of safety or rest and recovery area
- using conflict intervention/tactical communication 14 times
- diffusing 105 potential incidents through using de-escalation techniques
- issuing 731 move-on directions
- 17 handovers of defence force personnel to military police
- 30 handovers to Queensland Ambulance Service paramedics
- ten detentions for breaches of the peace.

#### Assaults

During the first nine months of the trial, seven people were arrested for assault in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct. An additional nine people were arrested for assaulting a police officer during the first nine months of the trial.

---

<sup>4</sup> The data presented here has been obtained from QPS nightly Returns Sheets and not from QPRIME which is QPS' principal crime recording database. There may be some discrepancies between Returns Sheet data and data obtained from QPRIME and where this occurs QPRIME is to be regarded as authoritative. It should be noted that the Drink Safe Precinct evaluation which is being conducted over the course of the two year Townsville Drink Safe Precinct trial will principally be based on QPRIME data. The Returns Sheets, however, provide some data that is not otherwise recorded in QPRIME or elsewhere and these data will also be used to inform the evaluation. The figures presented in this snapshot are based on the total amount of activity recorded on returns sheets (i.e. returns sheets completed by overtime and rostered personnel have been aggregated to provide a better indication of the total amount of police activity occurring in the precinct).

<sup>5</sup> Additional offences may have been detected by police, however, as they require further investigation before finalisation they will not be shown in these statistics.

<sup>6</sup> A walkthrough is where police conduct a foot patrol of a licensed premise and includes: maintaining a police presence; rapport building between police and patrons/venue management; and police observation of a venue's operation, for example, patron intoxication levels and behaviour, serving of alcohol to patrons, and compliance with relevant legislation.

<sup>7</sup> QPS figures for breaches detected against licensed premises do not necessarily mean that enforcement action was taken. Most of these breaches are reported to OLGR to action.

<sup>8</sup> Some interventions may have involved more than one person. For example, the use of conflict intervention/tactical communication may have been used to deescalate a possible assault occurring between two or more persons.

## Good Order Offences

Police arrested 192 people and issued 19 Notices to Appear and 576 tickets for good order-related offences<sup>9</sup> during the first nine months of the trial in Townsville.

## Liquor Offences

During this period, 108 people (including one juvenile) were arrested for liquor-related offences.<sup>10</sup> Eighty-eight tickets and 19 Notices to Appear were issued by police during this period.

## Drug Offences

During the first nine months of the trial one juvenile was arrested for a drug-related offence.

## Drink or Drug Driving Offences

During this period, three people were arrested for a drink or drug driving offence in the precinct.

## Other Offences

In addition to the offence categories listed above, police arrested a further 75 people, issued 115 tickets and 32 Notices to Appear for 'other' types of offences in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct – including offences against property and weapons offences.

## Banning orders

During the first nine months of the trial, 15 people have been banned from entering the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct for between one and 24 months for a range of the following offences:<sup>11</sup>

- assault occasioning bodily harm
- assault police
- public nuisance
- common assault
- obstruct police
- refusing to leave a licensed premises.

During the first nine months of the trial, no one was found in breach of a banning order from the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct.

## Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation Activity

As part of the Drink Safe Precinct trials, OLGR plan, co-ordinate and participate in multi-disciplinary compliance operations of licensed premises within the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct targeting Liquor and Security Provider Act compliance. During the first nine of the trial, OLGR conducted nine joint operations targeting licensed venues located in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct.

As well as conducting special joint operations, OLGR monitors the compliance of licensed premises and routinely conducts compliance audits and investigations.

During the first nine months of the trial, 80 compliance operations were conducted on licensed venues in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct.<sup>12</sup> OLGR conducted an additional 51 investigations in response to complaints from members of public, police and other sources.

<sup>9</sup> Good Order offences recorded on the Drink Safe Precinct returns sheets include 'disobey move-on direction', 'resist, incite, hinder, and obstruct police', 'public nuisance' and 'public urination'.

<sup>10</sup> Liquor offences recorded on the Drink Safe Precinct returns sheets include 'consume liquor in a public place', 'non-exempt minor in licensed premises', 'adult supply to a minor in public place', 'public drunkenness', 'disorderly on licensed premises', 'drunk in licensed premises', 'fail to leave licensed premises' and 'other Liquor Act offences'.

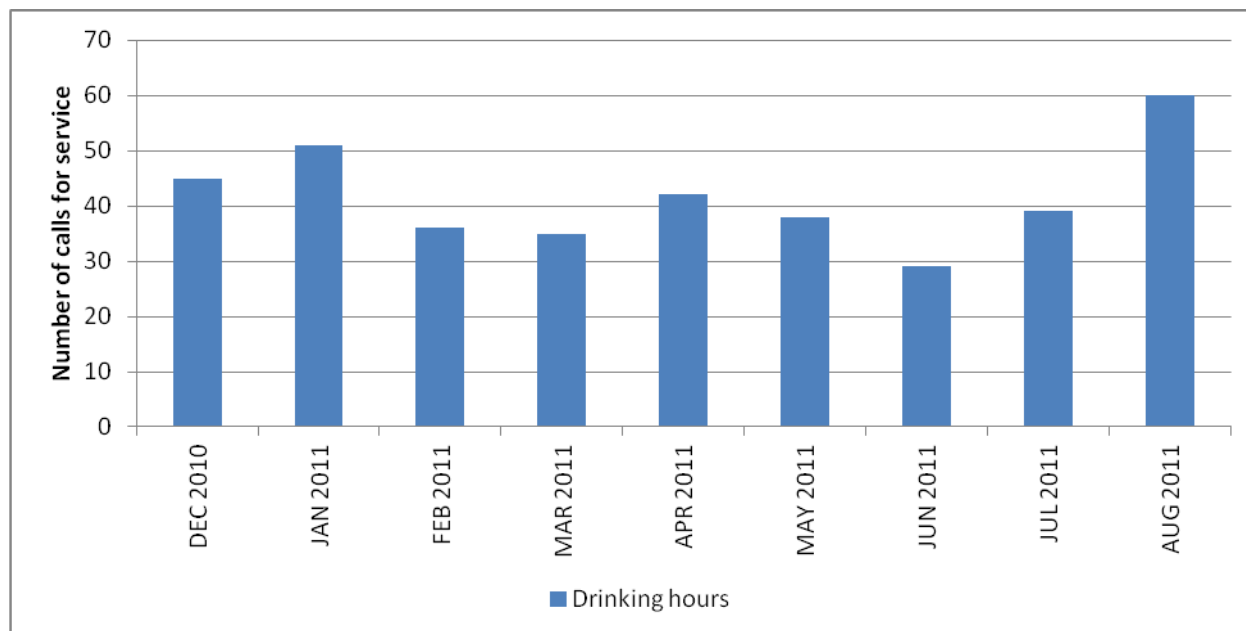
<sup>11</sup> Court-issued banning orders can be for up to 12 months duration, or longer if attached to a sentence for a criminal offence.

A total of 146 breaches against licensed premises were detected during this period.

### Queensland Ambulance Service calls for service

During the first nine months of the trials, Queensland Ambulance Service received a total of 1114 calls for service to the area covered by the Drink Safe Precinct. Of these, 375 (33.7%) calls for service may be considered, for these purposes, as being related to the Drink Safe Precinct.<sup>13</sup> The remaining calls for service (739, 66.3%) occurred outside of the Drink Safe Precinct related hours and days of the week.

**Figure 3. Queensland Ambulance Service - Calls for Service (Townsville DSP)**



Source: Queensland Ambulance Service 2011.

The Drink Safe Precinct related calls for service were most commonly for:<sup>14</sup>

- assault/sexual assault
- falls
- unconscious/fainting (near).

### Support services

As part of the Drink Safe Precinct initiative a static rest and recovery service (under the auspice of AngliCare North Queensland and in partnership with Townsville Street Chaplains Inc) has been established in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct.

The static rest and recovery service commenced in February 2011 and operates out of a van in the Flinders Street East car park on Friday and Saturday nights. In April 2011, the van was expanded to include an outside tented area with a table and 30 litre water container.

A volunteer mobile foot patrol (operated by Townsville Street Chaplains Inc) also operates in the precinct, providing support and assistance to intoxicated persons. The volunteer service has been operational in the precinct since December 2010 and will continue to operate for the two year duration of the trial.

<sup>12</sup> For the purposes of this snapshot, compliance operations include after hours inspections and day time inspections.

<sup>13</sup> As QAS do not record if a call for service is alcohol-related, this measure is based on calls for service to locations within the Drink Safe Precinct during 'high alcohol consumption times and days of the week' – Tuesday, Friday and Saturday nights 6pm – 6am. This is a preliminary measure developed for the purposes of data collection and will be revised following further analysis during the course of the evaluation.

<sup>14</sup> These categories are based on the code assigned by the QAS at the time an ambulance is dispatched using the Medical Priority Dispatch System. Calls are categorised on the basis of details provided by the caller.

During the first nine months of the trial, the support service operated on 74 nights and spent more than 800 hours offering support to patrons in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct.

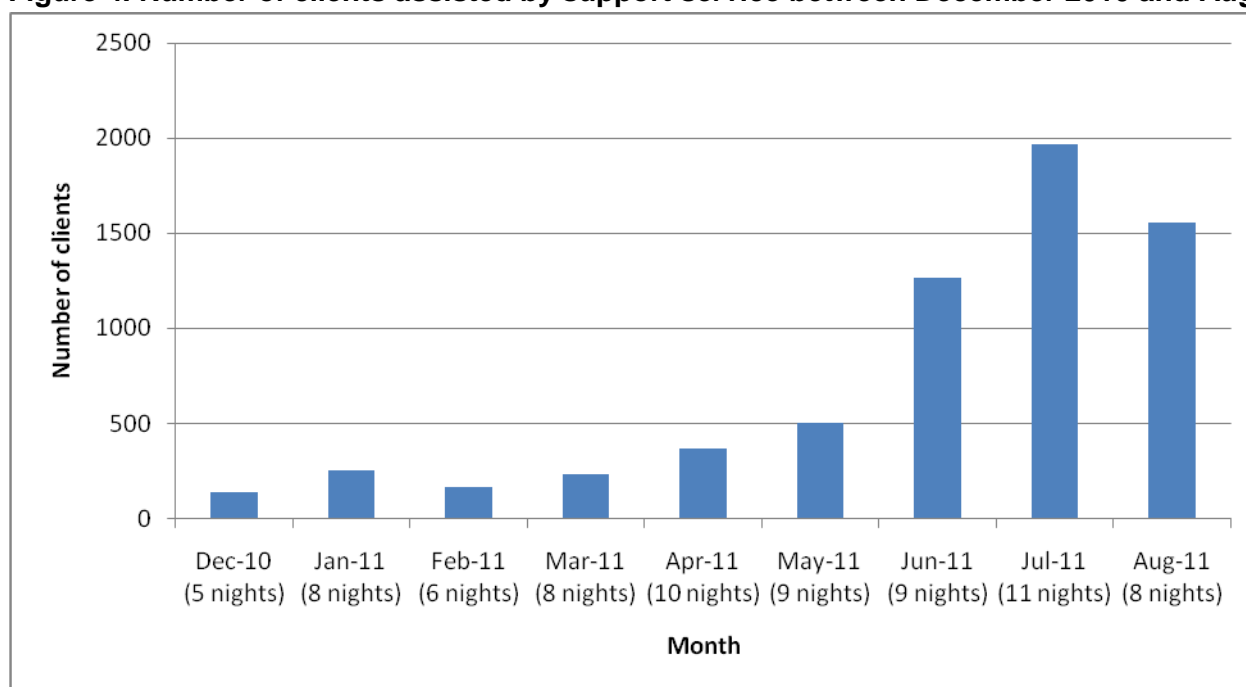
During this period, 6453 patrons in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct were assisted.<sup>15</sup> On average, 87 patrons were assisted per night that the service operated during the first nine months of the trial.

Figure 3 shows the number of clients that the support service assisted per month during the first nine months of the service.<sup>16</sup>

It is important to note that comparisons between months can be misleading due to variation in the number of nights that the service operated per month. The increase in the number of patrons assisted from April 2011 onwards can, in part, be explained by the addition of the tent, table and large water container; greater awareness about the service among patrons; and increasing referrals from police and security staff, aided by the provision of two-way radios to the support service.

Since the addition of the tent, the service has distributed 200 cups of water on an average night. People who receive water only from the support service are counted as a client. As such, these account for the majority of total client numbers.

**Figure 4. Number of clients assisted by support service between December 2010 and August 2011**



Source: Drink Safe Precinct Program (AngliCare North Queensland) 2011. Note: The figure in the brackets beneath the month shows the number of nights that the service operated that month.

## Transport

Patrons can get to and from the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct in a number of ways – including bus services, private transport and taxi services. Data is presented on taxi and bus patronage.

### Taxi Patronage

There is currently one secure taxi rank in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct. The secure rank is centrally located in Flinders Street East.

<sup>15</sup> This figure includes patrons assisted on Friday and Saturday nights as well as additional Drink Safe Precinct nights which may be allocated according to need on public holidays or for special events. This figure also includes patrons assisted by the Drink Safe Precinct funded rest and recovery service as well as patrons assisted by the volunteer foot patrol. The number of patrons assisted includes patrons who received first aid, rest and recovery services, as well as those who were given cups of water.

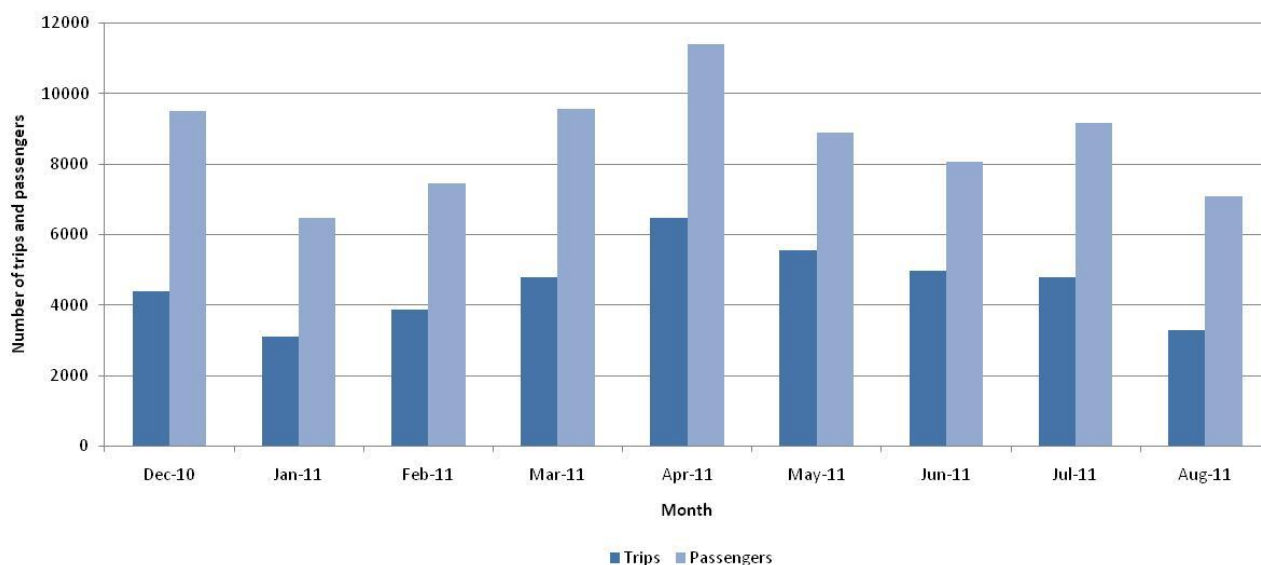
<sup>16</sup> Note, figures for April 2011 onwards include both patrons that required medical assistance as well as those who were provided with water only.

The secure taxi rank in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct typically operates on Friday and Saturday nights between midnight and 6.00am, and during special events (e.g. public holidays). The secure taxi rank is staffed by rank marshals and security guards to help nightclub patrons get home quickly and safely.

During the first nine months of the trial, the secure taxi rank in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct operated on 79 nights – including regular Friday and Saturday nights as well as five additional nights.<sup>17</sup>

Taxi services transported 77 652 people home from the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct during the first nine months of the trial.<sup>18</sup> More than 41 200 taxi trips departed the Drink Safe Precinct during this period.

**Figure 5. Number of trips and passengers collected from the Secure Taxi Rank inside the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct<sup>19</sup>**



Source: DTMR 2011.

### Bus Patronage

The Townsville Drink Safe Precinct bus services are coordinated and funded through the Department of Transport and Main Roads' qConnect initiative and the Townsville City Council. The Townsville Drink Safe Precinct is serviced by a limited number of regular bus services that operate until between 6pm and 8pm on weekdays and weekends. After these times, one bus route operates with a service departing every half-hour between midnight and 5am on Saturday and Sunday mornings from the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct.

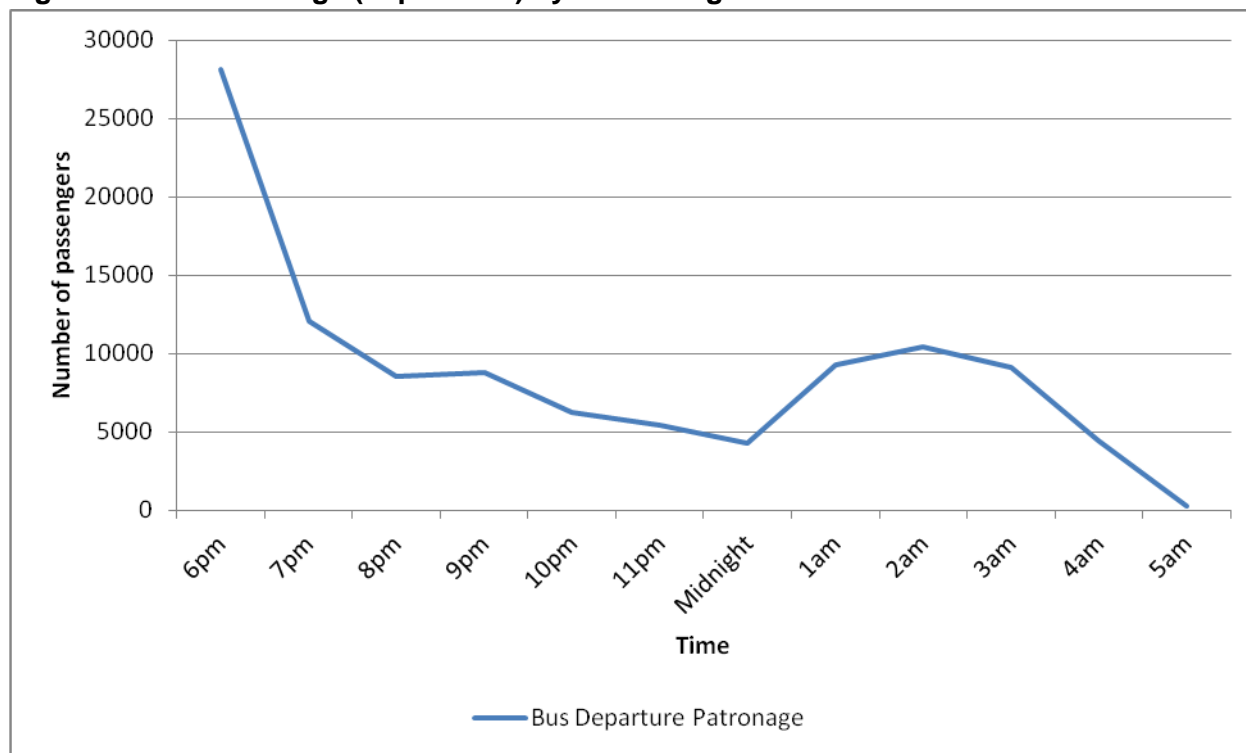
During the first nine months of the trial, 29 201 people travelled by bus from the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct between 6pm and 6am on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday nights. Figure 6 shows patronage patterns across all nights and demonstrates how the number of bus passengers falls after 6pm (which shows after business hours travel) until midnight when it then peaks again between 2am and 3am (which shows peak DSP travel).

<sup>17</sup> Monday 27 December 2010, Tuesday 25 January 2011, Monday 25 April 2011, Sunday 1 May 2011 and Sunday 12 June 2011.

<sup>18</sup> These figures only include passengers and trips that departed from the Secure Taxi Rank located on Flinders Street East and do not include trips or passengers collected in other parts of the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct or trips that were hailed by passengers.

<sup>19</sup> Please note that comparisons between months can be misleading for a number of reasons, including the impact of the festive season and Cyclone Yasi on operating hours of rank and patronage and the variation in the number of nights that the rank operated each month,

**Figure 6. Bus Patronage (departures) by time of night - December 2010 to June 2011**



Source: DTMR 2011. Note: Counts passengers boarding outbound buses from stops located within the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct.

## Where to from here?

The range of data available to the Drink Safe Precinct evaluation continues to grow as partner agencies strive to provide accurate data extracts from each of their systems. It is anticipated that a 12-month snapshot will be released in early 2012 which will continue to build on the data presented in this snapshot and any new data available to the evaluation.

## Have your say

A further round of surveys capturing the views, experiences and perceptions of patrons, licensees, business owners, support service workers and residents is planned for early 2012. The survey will be available on the Queensland Government's 'Get Involved' website ([www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au](http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au)) and promoted through a broad range of sources, including the 'Get Involved' social media sites.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> 'Follow' <http://twitter.com/consultqld> or 'Like' <https://www.facebook.com/ConsultQueensland> to be informed when the survey is released.