

Three month snapshot: Townsville Drink Safe Precinct trial

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:

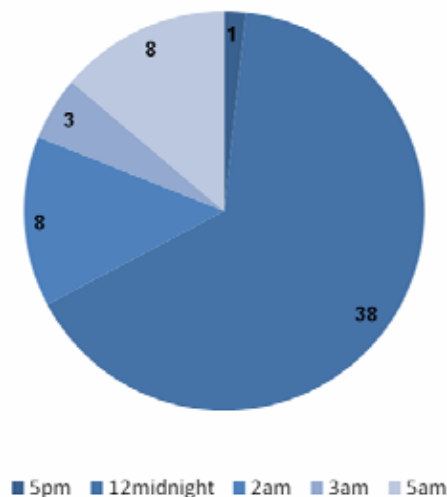
- **Flinders St East** - which is Townsville's main entertainment and nightclub hub.
- **Flinders St West** – which has two hotels, a nightclub and a number of high rise residential units.
- **Palmer St** - which is principally a restaurant precinct interspersed with numerous high rise residential units.
- **The Strand**¹ – 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 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.²

There are 58 licensed venues in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct. As shown in Figure 1:

- more than half of these venues close at or before midnight (67%; n = 39)
- eight venues close at 2am; three venues trade until 3am and eight venues have licenses to trade past lockout.

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



Source: OLGR 2011.

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

¹ The Townsville Drink Safe Precinct boundary includes The Strand up to the corner of Gregory St.

² The Townsville City ABS State Suburb area is slightly larger in geographical area than the DSP 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:

- **Presence of Military Police** to deter offences and assist in Queensland Police diversionary strategies. Provision of appropriate vehicles to assist in the removal of defence patrons to alleviate the public transport burden.
- **Security guard (funded by Late Night Traders)** liaising between venues on main strip and the QPS – maintains radio communication with all licensed premises to ensure efficient police response to incidents at establishments
- **Liquor enforcement and proactive strategy (LEAPS) officers** conduct monthly meetings with Late Night Traders accord to ensure staffs are trained and licensed premises have individual strategies in place.
- **CCTV network** with cameras located in Flinders St, Flinders St East, the Strand, Victoria Bridge, Palmer St, and at Secure Taxi Rank. Cameras are passively monitored at Council's Garbutt Operations Centre and Stanley St Police Operations Centre.
- **Security guard** on late night bus services to ensure the safety of the driver and passengers.
- **Flinders St East redevelopment** including upgraded lighting and street furniture.
- **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.
- **Marshalls and security guard at secure taxi rank** to govern the rank and ensure that patrons are loaded into taxis in a safe and efficient way.

Figure 2: Secure taxi rank in Flinders Street East



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

Queensland Police Service activity³

Activity

During the first three months of the trial in Townsville:

- 109 people were arrested – mainly for liquor offences
- 35 Notices to Appear were issued
- 127 street checks were conducted
- 57 Random Breath Tests (RBTs) were conducted
- 55 Traffic Infringement Notices (TINs) were issued.

During this period police conducted 508 walkthroughs of licensed premises,⁴ detected five breaches against licensed premises⁵ and exercised tip out powers 10 times.

Diversions activity by QPS

As part of the trial, police in Townsville have started to record more information about the use of diversionary strategies and policing that resolves incidents informally, without recourse to the criminal justice system.

During the first three months of the trial, police officers patrolling the precinct used diversionary strategies nearly 212 times.⁶ This included:

- taking two people to a place of safety or rest and recovery area
- using conflict intervention/tactical communication twice
- diffusing 31 potential incidents through using de-escalation techniques
- issuing 169 move-on directions
- three handovers of defence force personnel to military police.

Assaults

During the first three months of the trial, one person was arrested for an assault-related offence in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct.

Good Order Offences

During the first three months of the trial police arrested 37 people for good order-related offences. Police issued 16 Notices to Appear and 138 tickets for good order offences during this period.

Liquor Offences

During the first three months of the trial police arrested 45 people for liquor-related offences. Five tickets and 25 Notices to Appear were issued by police during this period.

³ The data presented here has been obtained from QPS nightly Returns Sheets and not from QPRIME which is QPS's 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 DSP evaluation which is being conducted over the course of the two year DSP 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

Drug Offences and Drink/Drug Driving

During the first three months of the trial, there were no arrests for drug related offences.

During this period, three Notices to Appear were issued for drink/drug driving offences in the precinct.

Banning orders

Since the commencement of the Drink Safe Precinct trial, one person has been banned from entering the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct for six months for a 'Public Nuisance – Language Towards Police Offence'.

This order was imposed by the courts without an application being made by the police to have such an order imposed. A further 10 matters are currently before the courts.

Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation Activity

As well as being able to issue Infringement Notices, OLGR inspectors also monitor the compliance of licensed premises and routinely conduct compliance audits and investigations.⁷ During the first three months of the trial, 31 compliance operations were conducted on 24 licensed venues in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct.⁸ A total of 12 breaches against licensed premises were detected during this period.

Support services⁹

As part of the Drink Safe Precinct initiative, a static rest and recovery service (under the auspice of AngliCare North Queensland) 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.

A volunteer mobile foot patrol (operated by the Combined Churches of Townsville) separate from the Drink Safe Precinct initiative 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.

During the first three months of the trial, 164 patrons were assisted in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct.¹⁰

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. One of the most common ways is by taxi.

During the first three months of the trial, taxis transported 23,469 people home from the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct.¹¹ More than 11, 300 taxi trips departed the Drink Safe Precinct during this period.

Figure 3: Number of trips and passengers collected from the Flinders Street East Secure Taxi Rank¹²

⁷ No infringement notices were issued by OLGR inspectors during the first three months of the trial.

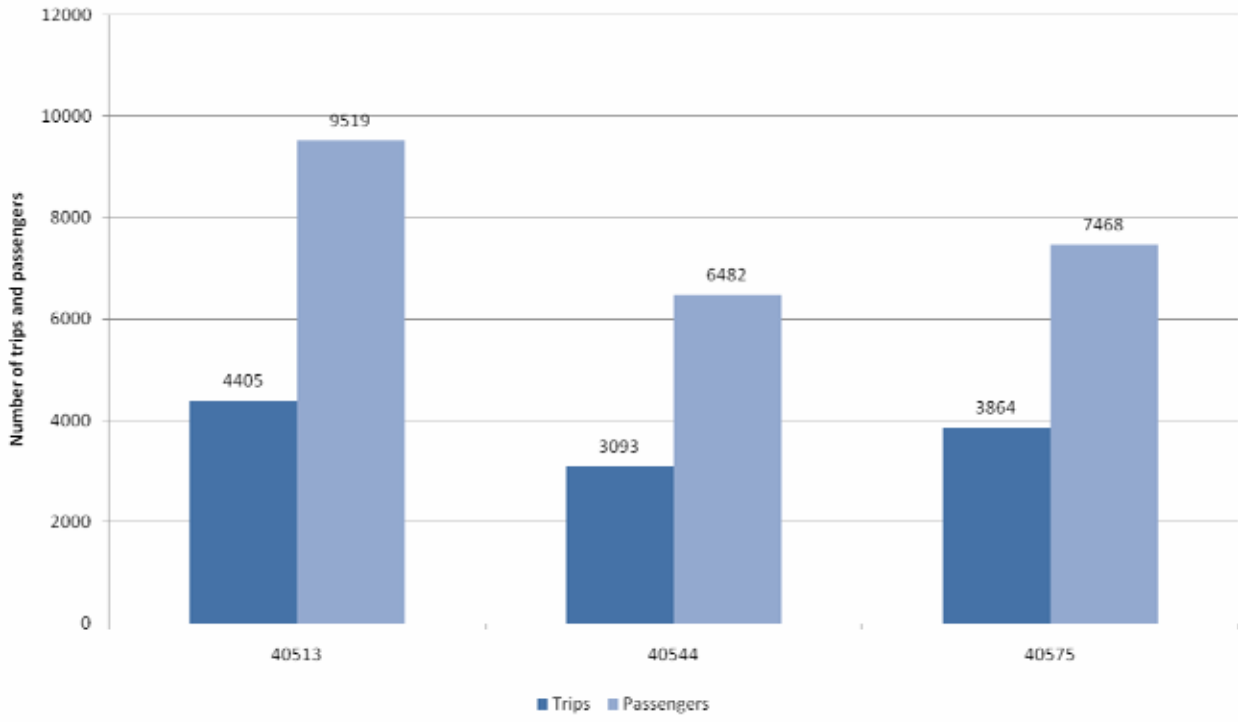
⁸ For the purposes of this snapshot, compliance operations include after hours inspections and day time inspections.

⁹ For the purposes of this snapshot, figures relating to support services include both Drink Safe Precinct funded services and services that are otherwise funded. These figures have been obtained from the weekly reports provided by support services to the Department of Communities. Some discrepancies may exist between the figures reported in this snapshot and those reported elsewhere by the Department of Communities.

¹⁰ 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, for example. 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² 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. Note there were five weekends in January and four weekends in February.



Source: DTMR 2011. Secure Ranks December 2010 – February 2011.