

Nine month snapshot: Drink Safe Precinct trials

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.¹

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

¹ Report: 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.

- 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.

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 snapshot 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.

The story so far

Increased police presence

As part of the trials, increased numbers of police officers patrol these areas on Drink Safe Precinct nights. These nights are:

- Friday and Saturday nights in Fortitude Valley
- Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights in Surfers Paradise
- Tuesday, Friday and Saturday nights in Townsville.

In December 2010 – August 2011 police spent an additional:²

- 11 106 hours in the precinct on Drink Safe Precinct nights in Fortitude Valley
- 9720 hours in the precinct on Drink Safe Precinct nights in Surfers Paradise
- 5492 hours in the precinct on Drink Safe Precinct nights in Townsville.

Police officers in Fortitude Valley and Surfers Paradise wear high visibility vests while patrolling these areas to highlight their presence to patrons frequenting these areas.

Figure 1. High visibility policing in Fortitude Valley



Source: Queensland Police Service 2011.

² Each precinct uses a slightly different rostering model to suit their operational needs. For this reason, the number of additional hours has been reported.

Police activity in the Drink Safe Precincts^{3, 4}

Since the commencement of the Drink Safe Precinct trials in Fortitude Valley, Surfers Paradise and Townsville:

- Police have arrested 3395 people, issued 2161 tickets and 317 Notices to Appear.
- Police officers have conducted 6069 walkthroughs of licensed premises,⁵ and detected 706 licensing breaches⁶ by premises in the Drink Safe Precinct areas.
- Tip-out powers have been exercised 2726 times.
- Police have utilised a broad range of diversionary activities across the three Drink Safe Precincts, including taking 1184 people to a place of safety or designated rest and recovery area, using conflict intervention/tactical communication on 2747 separate occasions, issuing 1998 move-on directions and using other forms of de-escalation 1397 times.⁷ In addition, 272 people were detained for a breach of the peace.
- Police also conducted 6540 street checks during the first nine months of the trials.
- 2203 Random Breath Tests (RBTs) have been conducted and 836 Traffic Infringement Notices (TINS) were issued.

During the first nine months of the trials, 57 people have been banned from Drink Safe Precincts for between one and twenty-four months⁸, including:

- 15 people from Townsville
- 28 people from Fortitude Valley
- 14 people from Surfers Paradise.

The offences which resulted in a banning order being issued included:

- affray
- armed so as to cause fear
- assault (serious, occasioning bodily harm, assault police and common)
- disorderly conduct in licensed premises
- obstruct police
- public nuisance
- refuse eviction or re-enter licensed premise after ejection.

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 Drink Safe Precinct evaluation which is being conducted over the course of the two year 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 precincts).

⁴ Additional offences may have been detected by police, however, as they require further investigation before finalisation they will not be shown in these statistics.

⁵ 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.

⁶ QPS figures for breaches detected against licensed premises do not necessarily mean that enforcement action was taken. Most of these breaches are reported to the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation to action.

⁷ Some of these 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.

⁸ Court-issued banning orders can be for up to 12 months duration, or longer if attached to a sentence for a criminal offence.

Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation Activity in the Drink Safe Precincts

As part of the Drink Safe Precinct trials, Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation (OLGR) plan, co-ordinate and participate in multi-disciplinary compliance operations (joint operations) that target licensed premises in the Drink Safe Precincts focusing on Liquor Act and Security Provider Act compliance.

During the first nine months of the trial, OLGR conducted 28 joint operations targeting licensed venues located in the Drink Safe Precincts.

As well as conducting these special joint operations, OLGR inspectors monitor the compliance of licensed premises and routinely conduct compliance audits and investigations.

During the first nine months of the trial:

- 416 compliance operations were conducted on licensed venues in the Fortitude Valley, Surfers Paradise and Townsville Drink Safe Precincts⁹
- OLGR conducted an additional 182 investigations in response to complaints from members of public, police and other sources.

A total of 503 breaches against licensed premises were detected during this period.

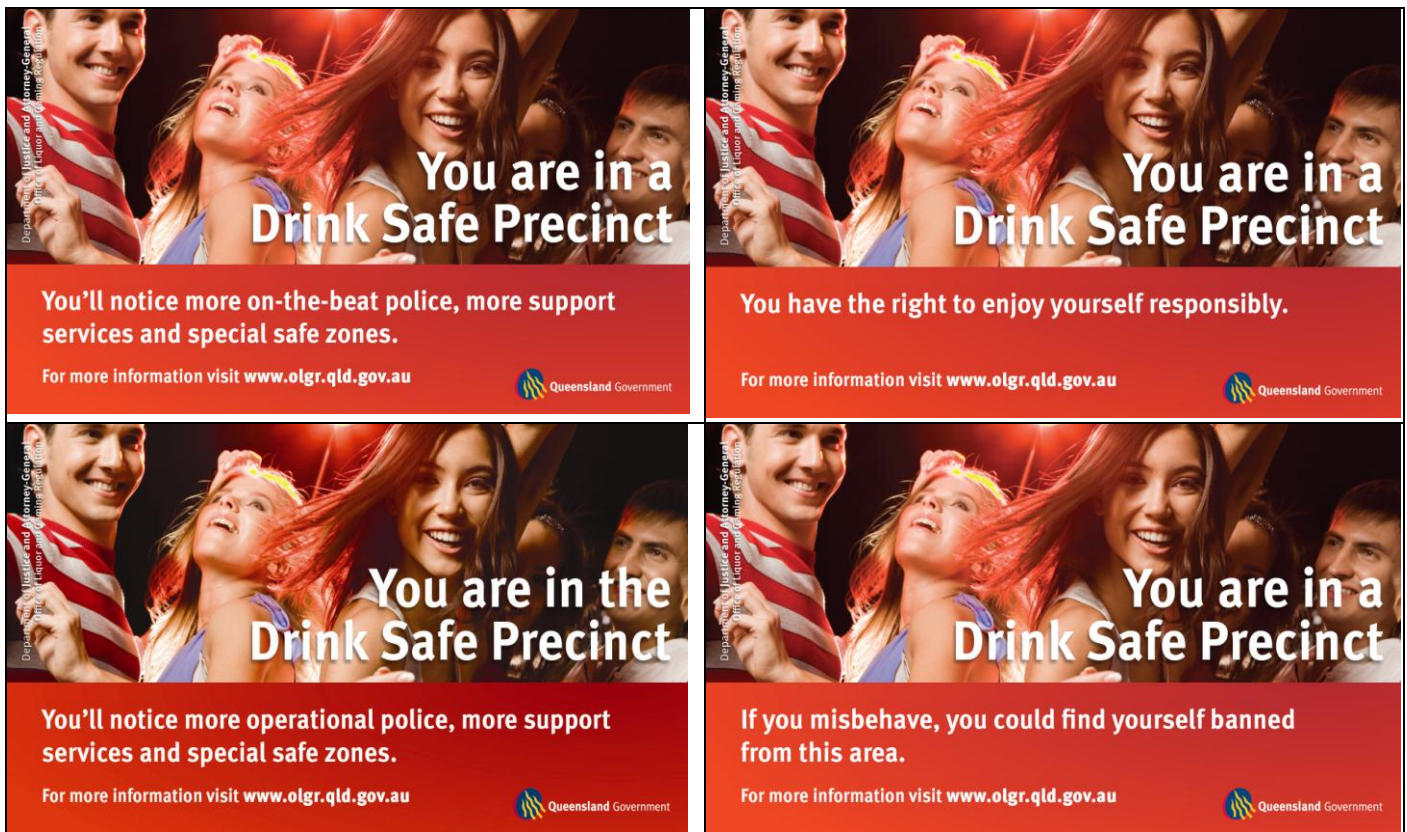
In conjunction with licensees, OLGR is also providing Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) forums to staff and management from licensed premises within the Drink Safe Precinct areas. The forums provide an opportunity for OLGR to discuss examples of RSA practices and provide contextual information complementing RSA course content. Forums to date have been well received with attendees indicating their appreciation for the opportunity to receive further education and to discuss RSA issues with OLGR representatives.

During the first nine months of the trial, OLGR participated in nine Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) forums.

OLGR have also released a series of posters and screen images for distribution in licensed premises informing patrons about the Drink Safe Precinct initiatives (Figure 2).

⁹ For the purposes of this snapshot, compliance operations include after hours inspections and day time inspections.

Figure 2. Drink Safe Precinct screen images



Source: OLGR 2011.

Queensland Ambulance Service calls for service

During the first nine months of the trials, Queensland Ambulance Service received 1347 calls for service related to the Drink Safe Precincts.¹⁰ The calls for service were most commonly for¹¹:

- assault/sexual assault
- unconscious/fainting (near)
- overdose/poisoning (ingestion)
- falls.

Patron support services in the Drink Safe Precincts¹²

Support services where patrons can go to recuperate, seek advice or to take some time out have received funding in each of the three precincts.

These services include:

- the establishment of designated rest and recovery areas in Townsville and Fortitude Valley
- the extension of the existing Chill Out Zone in Surfers Paradise
- the continuation of the NightWatch Chaplains foot patrol in Fortitude Valley.¹³

¹⁰ 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 Precincts during 'high alcohol consumption times and days of the week' – which varies for each DSP (Friday and Saturday night 6pm – 6am for all precincts; and Tuesday night 6pm – 6am for Townsville; and Thursday night 6pm – 6am for Surfers Paradise).

¹¹ 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.

¹² For the purposes of these snapshots figures relating to support services include both services funded with Drink Safe Precinct funding allocations and those that are funded otherwise.

During the first nine months of the trial, support services have assisted more than 10 700 patrons and gave out free plastic cups of water more than 73 000 times.

Transport in the Drink Safe Precincts

Taxi Services

A number of transport options exist for patrons to get to and from the Drink Safe Precincts. One of the most common forms of transport home from these areas is taxis.

During the first nine months of the trial, taxis transported 749 529 passengers home from these areas through more than 346 400 trips departing from the secure taxi ranks in the Drink Safe Precincts.¹⁴

Bus Services

Bus services in the Fortitude Valley and Surfers Paradise Drink Safe Precincts are coordinated and funded through the Translink Transit Authority. In addition to regular services, 'NightLink' bus services to and from the Drink Safe Precincts operate from 1am until 5am Saturday and Sunday mornings in Fortitude Valley and between 2.30am and 5.30am in Surfers Paradise.

During the first seven months of the trial¹⁵, 110 490 passengers travelled from the Fortitude Valley and Surfers Paradise Drink Safe Precincts on regular or NightLink bus services on Friday and Saturday nights between 6pm and 6am.

The Townsville Drink Safe Precinct bus services are coordinated and funded through the Department of Transport and Main Roads' qConnect initiative. 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.

¹³ As part of the Drink Safe Precinct initiative, NightWatch Chaplains received funding to provide a foot patrol service in the Fortitude Valley Drink Safe Precinct, they also continue to operate a mobile vehicle patrol in the area. Nightwatch Chaplains also continue to provide mobile vehicle patrol and services in the CBD/Caxton Street precincts that are not funded under the Drink Safe Precinct initiative.

¹⁴ Secure taxi ranks are particular taxi ranks that have been allocated funding by Department of Transport and Main Roads for the provision of a taxi marshal and security officer.

¹⁵ Translink Transit Authority patronage data is provided on a financial quarter basis, as such, the latest data available is up to June 2011.

Where to from here?

The range of data available to the Drink Safe Precinct evaluation continues to grow. 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) and promoted through a broad range of sources, including the 'Get Involved' social media sites.¹⁶

¹⁶ 'Follow' <http://twitter.com/consultqld> or 'Like' <https://www.facebook.com/ConsultQueensland> to be informed when the survey is released.