

## Six 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 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 at [www.parliament.qld.gov.au/view/committees/LCARC.asp?SubArea=reports](http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/view/committees/LCARC.asp?SubArea=reports) and [www.parliament.qld.gov.au/view/committees/LCARC.asp?SubArea=responses](http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/view/committees/LCARC.asp?SubArea=responses).

### What are Drink Safe Precincts?

Drink Safe Precincts use the combined resources of state and local Government agencies, industry and community organisations, to deliver practical local solutions to reduce alcohol-related violence.

The Queensland Government has approved \$4.267 million in funding per year for the two year trial.

These precincts include many of the late night trading licensed venues located in those areas. The trials involve a range of measures to reduce alcohol-related violence, including:

- increased and high visibility police presence during peak times of the week (e.g. Friday and Saturday nights)
- the establishment of 'safe zones' where patrons can access non-government support services
- improved transport information and wayfinding signage
- addressing issues such as crowding and footpath queuing
- better on-the-ground coordination between community groups, security, police and licensees.

In addition, new powers allowing courts to ban people from licensed premises and areas around these premises were introduced in December 2010.

As part of the Drink Safe Precinct trials, local committees make informed decisions about strategies tailored to the individual needs of their area to be implemented to respond to alcohol-related violence. These local committees involve representation from local council, licensees, government departments and community organisations.

The Queensland Government is undertaking an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Drink Safe Precinct trials to determine if they achieve the aim of reducing alcohol-related violence. The evaluation will inform the ongoing decision making of the local Drink Safe Precinct Committees, and will inform the public and the Queensland Government about the success or otherwise of this initiative.

For more information about the trials or to view a map of the Drink Safe Precincts go to: [www.olgr.qld.gov.au/stories/alcoholrelatedviolence2.shtml](http://www.olgr.qld.gov.au/stories/alcoholrelatedviolence2.shtml).

## Important notes

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

### First six months of the trial

A number of significant events occurred during the first six 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
- a number of music festivals (e.g. Big Day Out; SummaFieldDayze)
- Operation Unite (i.e. two-day national high visibility police operation between 17-19 December 2010 and 13-15 May 2011)
- Australia Day
- Cyclone Yasi
- Easter holiday period.

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 and May and five weekends in January and April
- Drink Safe Precinct initiatives operate in Surfers Paradise and Townsville three nights a week
- support services also operate on Thursday nights in the Surfers Paradise precinct.

### 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 – May 2011:<sup>1</sup>

- police spent an additional 7686 hours in the precinct on Drink Safe Precinct nights in Fortitude Valley<sup>2</sup>
- police spent an additional 6397 hours in the precinct on Drink Safe Precinct nights in Surfers Paradise<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Each precinct uses a slightly different rostering model. For this reason, only the number of additional hours have been reported.

<sup>2</sup> Officers in Fortitude Valley work either eight, nine or hour shifts depending on their duties (e.g. Beat staff = 8 hours, Watchhouse staff = 9 hours, Drink Safe Precinct Supervisor = 10 hours).

- police spent an additional 3616.25 hours in the precinct on Drink Safe Precinct nights in Townsville.<sup>4</sup>

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

**Figure 1: High visibility policing in Fortitude Valley**



Source: Queensland Police Service 2011.

## Police activity in the Drink Safe Precincts<sup>5</sup>

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

- Police have arrested 2284 people, issued 1451 tickets and 198 Notices to Appear.
- Police officers conducted 3812 walkthroughs of licensed premises,<sup>6</sup> and detected 379 licensing breaches<sup>7</sup> against premises in the Drink Safe Precinct areas.

<sup>3</sup> On a typical Thursday, Friday or Saturday night a team of eight officers work a 10 hour shift between 8pm-6am. An additional eight officers work a seven hour shift between 11pm-6am. This gives the precinct a good coverage of police during peak periods. A similar rostering model is used on Public Holiday nights.

<sup>4</sup> The majority of shifts in the Townsville Drink Safe Precinct are eight hours shifts. There may be instances, however, where shifts are split into 2 x 4 hour shifts (i.e. 11 pm – 3am and 3am – 7am).

<sup>5</sup> 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).

<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 the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation to action.

- Tip-out powers have been exercised 1949 times.
- Police had contact with more than 4900 people across the three Drink Safe Precincts, including taking 715 people to a place of safety, using conflict intervention/tactical communication on 1681 separate occasions, issuing 1300 move-on directions and using other forms of de-escalation 902 times.<sup>8</sup> In addition 173 people were detained for a breach of the peace.
- Police also conducted 4377 street checks during the first six months of the trials.
- 1387 Random Breath Tests (RBTs) have been conducted and 591 Traffic Infringement Notices (TINS) were issued.

During the first six months of the trials, 32 people have been banned from Drink Safe Precincts for between six–13 months, including:

- 12 people from Townsville
- 11 people from Fortitude Valley
- nine people from Surfers Paradise.

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

- serious assault
- assault police
- common assault
- armed so as to cause fear or alarm
- assault occasioning bodily harm
- obstruct police
- public nuisance.

### **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 of licensed premises in the Drink Safe Precincts targeting Liquor and Security Provider Act compliance.

During the first six months of the trial, OLGR conducted 19 joint operations targeting licensed venues located in the Fortitude Valley Drink Safe Precinct.

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

During the first six months of the trial:

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<sup>8</sup> 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.

- 291 compliance operations were conducted on licensed venues in the Fortitude Valley, Surfers Paradise and Townsville Drink Safe Precincts.<sup>9</sup>
- OLGR conducted an additional 99 investigations in response to complaints from members of public, police and other sources.

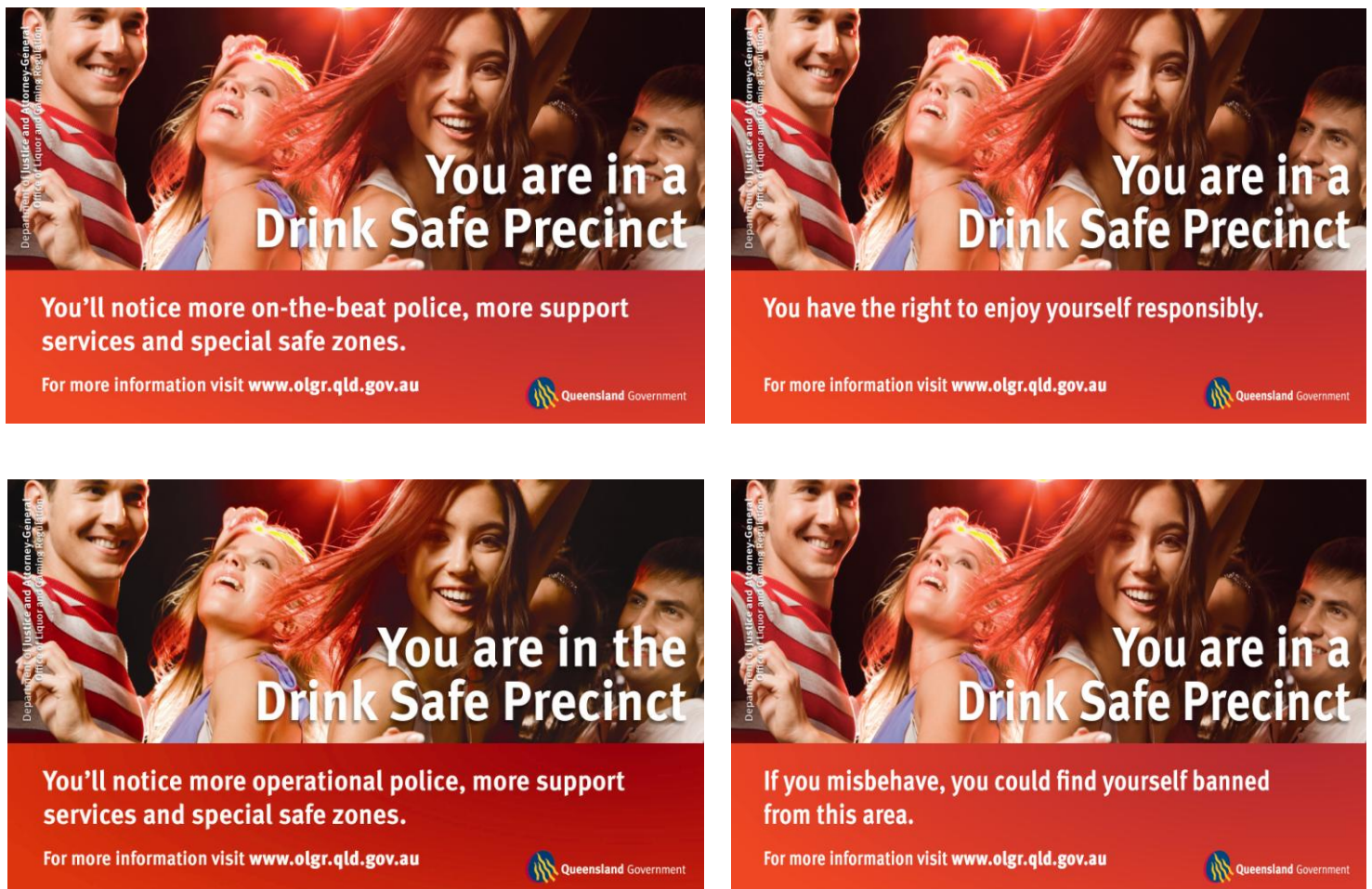
A total of 340 breaches against licensed premises were detected during this period.

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 impart examples of RSA practices and provide contextual material complimenting RSA course content. The forums are 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 six months of the trial, OLGR participated in seven 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: Drink Safe Precinct screen images**



Source: OLGR 2011.

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

## Patron support services in the Drink Safe Precincts<sup>10</sup>

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
- NightWatch Chaplains (who received funding as part of the Drink Safe Precinct initiative to operate the foot patrol) will continue to operate in Fortitude Valley offering mobile vehicle and foot patrol services to patrons in this area and the surrounding CBD/Caxton Street precincts.<sup>11</sup>

During the first six months of the trial, support services have assisted more than 3800 patrons and handed out more than 51,800 plastic cups of water.

## Transport in the Drink Safe Precinct

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 six months of the trial, taxis transported 494,582 passengers home from these areas and more than 233,800 taxi trips departed from the secure taxi ranks in the Drink Safe Precincts.

## Drink Safe Precinct Surveys

Some of the target outcomes that Local Drink Safe Precinct committees hope will be achieved through the Drink Safe Precinct trial (e.g. perceptions of safety, public amenity issues, awareness of initiatives, and perceptions of effectiveness of Drink Safe Precinct initiatives) cannot be easily or comprehensively measured through other administrative data sources (such as QPS or QAS data). Surveys will help to measure whether the Drink Safe Precinct is successful in achieving these aims.

Online surveys were developed in close consultation with each of the local Drink Safe Precinct committees as one way to let people who use these areas have their say about alcohol-related violence, the Drink Safe Precinct initiatives and what more they think should be done to improve community safety in these areas.

Surveys were developed targeting five key groups of stakeholders in the Drink Safe Precincts:

1. Patron Survey
2. Resident Survey
3. Business Survey
4. Licensee/Approved Manager Survey
5. Service Provider Survey (e.g. police officers, ambulance paramedics, transport drivers and bar staff).

Overall, we received more than 1600 responses to the online surveys.<sup>12</sup> Results from respondents across all five surveys identify a number of key themes and issues for the Drink Safe Precincts.

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<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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. The mobile vehicle patrol and services in the CBD/Caxton Street precincts are not funded under the Drink Safe Precinct initiative.

Some of the key themes and issues raised by respondents are summarised below. For a detailed breakdown of responses to the Patron Survey and Surveys of people who work and live in a Drink Safe Precinct, see <http://www.olgr.qld.gov.au/stories/alcoholrelatedviolence2.shtml>

## Key themes and learnings

- Respondents to all five surveys rated a number of issues in the Drink Safe Precinct that they spend time in as either 'serious' or 'very serious'. Overall, alcohol-related violence was identified as one of the most serious issues among all five groups of respondents – and especially among service providers and patrons.
- Perceptions of safety varied across respondents to the five surveys. Overall, the majority of respondents identified that they generally feel safe being in the precinct. Perceptions of safety tended to vary depending on the time of the day – most respondents reported feeling safer being the precinct during the day than at night-time.
- Overall, the majority of respondents reported that they are 'not very worried' or 'not worried at all' about being assaulted in the Drink Safe Precinct that they usually spend time in.
- Most respondents reported that they had witnessed someone being either verbally threatened or physically abused in the Drink Safe Precinct – and in particular, public transport drivers, police officers and licensed venue staff.
- A number of respondents to these surveys also reported that they have personally experienced either verbal threats or physical violence while in the Drink Safe Precinct. Overall, respondents who work in these areas during peak periods and people who live in these areas were more likely to report experiencing this behaviour than patrons and people who work in the precincts outside of licensed premises peak trading hours.
- Public amenity issues were highlighted among respondents to all five surveys. In particular, public urination and people vomiting in the public space were frequently identified as a major amenity issue among all respondents.
- Overall, there was a mixed level of awareness of the Drink Safe Precinct trials and the initiatives that have been introduced to reduce alcohol-related violence in these areas and improve community safety.
- A number of respondents agreed the initiatives listed in the survey that aim to reduce alcohol-related violence and improve community are effective. Generally, respondents to all five surveys agreed that the visible presence of police is an effective strategy to reduce alcohol-related violence. There was less agreement, however, among respondents about the effectiveness of the free supply of water inside licensed premises; patrons considered this strategy to be more effective than people who work or live in a Drink Safe Precinct.

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<sup>12</sup> This included 1398 responses to the Patron Survey, 170 responses to the Service Provider Survey, 29 responses to the Resident Survey, 17 responses to the Business Survey and nine responses to the Licensee/Approved Managers Survey. The Patron and Service Provider Surveys achieved a satisfactory response rate. However, there was a low response rate from local businesses, residents and licensees. Local Drink Safe Precinct committees have been consulted about these low response rates to determine whether there are more effective ways of targeting some of these audiences for feedback on alcohol-related violence and the Drink Safe Precinct initiatives. A number of reasons have been suggested for the low response rate, including high levels of tolerance among people who live and work in these areas to the issues included in the survey (i.e. people who live or work in a Drink Safe Precinct are aware that their business/property is located in an entertainment precinct and have come to accept a lot of the issues associated with living or working in these areas). It has also been suggested that some licensees, residents and people who work in a Drink Safe Precinct completed the Patron Survey in the brief period when this survey was available and prior to receiving information about the targeted surveys. Changes will be made to the administration of the surveys in the future to ensure that all stakeholder groups are able to have their say.

### *Where to from here?*

Results from the first round of the online surveys are currently being discussed with the local Drink Safe Precinct committees in each area to help inform local level decision making and action. The issues which have been highlighted for each of the three Drink Safe Precincts as requiring further attention include:

1. The need for information campaigns in Drink Safe Precincts focusing on the issue of alcohol-related violence and public drunkenness in order to communicate, inform and change behaviour.
2. The need for there to be further work done to respond to the amenity issues identified, in particular through the provision of toilet facilities to reduce public urination.

It is anticipated that the Drink Safe Precinct surveys will be conducted on a six-monthly basis for the two-year duration of the trial to measure any change over time (e.g. changes in awareness about Drink Safe Precinct initiatives). The next round of surveys will be conducted in November 2011 through the 'Get Involved' website.

Prior to the next round of surveys, focus groups will be conducted with key stakeholders, including service providers, licensees and approved managers, to provide a face-to-face opportunity for them to have their say about the Drink Safe Precinct trial. These focus groups will also be used to discuss future iterations of the online surveys – including the content of the survey and ways of administration. Changes will be made to the administration of the surveys to ensure that all target groups have an opportunity to have their say.