

Three 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 DSP 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 and 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 'kick start' funding for the first year of the trials.

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 DSP 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 DSP trials to determine if they achieve the aim of reducing alcohol-related violence. The evaluation will inform the ongoing decision making of the local DSP 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.

How can you have your say?

If you go to pubs and clubs in Surfers Paradise, Fortitude Valley or Townsville, the Queensland Government, along with the local Drink Safe Precinct committees want you to have your say about alcohol-related violence through an online survey. The survey will be available online until **midnight 29 April 2011** and will be conducted on a six-monthly basis for the two year duration of the trial.

The survey covers a range of topics — including your safety in the precinct, your experiences of violence in the precinct, your opinion of public amenity issues, how effective you think initiatives are at reducing alcohol-related violence and what you think should be done to improve the current situation.

To have your say go to www.gld.gov.au/drinksafe.

Important notes

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

First three months of the trial

A number of significant events occurred during the first three 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)
- Australia Day
- Cyclone Yasi.

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 five weekends in January and four weekends in February
- 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 – February 2011:¹

- police spent an additional 3749 hours in the precinct on DSP nights in Fortitude Valley²

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

- police spent an additional 2585 hours in the precinct on DSP nights in Surfers Paradise³
- police spent an additional 1626.75 hours in the precinct on DSP nights in Townsville.⁴

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.

Police activity in the Drink Safe Precincts⁵

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

- Police have arrested 1026 people and issued 105 Notices to Appear. Of those arrested, nine related to offences committed by juveniles.
- Police officers conducted 1639 walkthroughs of licensed premises,⁶ visited 1160 premises and detected 168 licensing breaches⁷ against premises in the DSP areas.
- Tip-out powers have been exercised 875 times.
- Police had contact with 2,231 people across the three DSPs including taking 296 people to a place of safety, using conflict intervention/tactical communication on 763 separate occasions, issuing 605 move-on directions and using other forms of de-escalation 477 times.⁸ In addition 90 people were detained for a breach of the peace.
- Police also conducted 1938 street checks during the first three months of the trials.
- 541 Random Breath Tests (RBTs) have been conducted and 230 Traffic Infringement Notices (TINS) were issued.

Seven people have been banned from Drink Safe Precincts for between six–13 months, including:

- five people from Surfers Paradise
- one person from Townsville
- one person from Fortitude Valley.

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

- common assault
- armed so as to cause fear or alarm
- disorderly in licensed premises

² 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, DSP Supervisor = 10 hours).

³ 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.

⁴ 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).

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

- assault occasioning bodily harm
- obstruct police
- public nuisance - disorderly
- public nuisance - language towards police.

Of those banning orders, two were issued without a full application by police. One application for a banning order was rejected by the courts.

One person was arrested for breaching a banning order in March and charged with the offence of Contravention of Banning Order under the *Penalties and Sentences Act* (section 42O). This person was convicted and fined \$750 for the breach, but a return-to-prison warrant was issued against him because this offence breached his parole conditions.

An additional 28 matters are currently before the courts awaiting finalisation.

Patron support services in the Drink Safe Precinct⁹

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 DSP 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.¹⁰

During the first three months of the trial support services have assisted more than 1,000 patrons and handed out more than 21,000 bottles 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 three months of the trial taxis transported more than 224,100 passengers home from these areas and more than 102,700 taxi trips departed the Drink Safe Precincts.

⁹ For the purposes of these snapshots figures relating to support services include both services funded with DSP funding allocations and those that are funded otherwise.

¹⁰ As part of the DSP 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 DSP initiative.