DAVID TOLLNER, Member for Fong Lim
Minister for Alcohol Policy

ASSAULTS DOWN ON DARWIN’S MITCHELL STREET

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Assaults on Mitchell Street have declined significantly while Darwin Safe has been in operation.

Darwin Safe is a collaborative approach in city safety by the Territory Government, the Australian Hotels Association (AHA) and the City of Darwin which aims to ensure the city remains an enjoyable place to have a night out by employing a range of measures aimed at ensuring anti-social behaviour is minimised without penalising responsible patrons.

From late last year till the end of May, assault offences recorded by Police in Mitchell Street are down by more than 20 per cent from the same period in 2012-13. More than 4000 people are currently on Alcohol Protection Orders in the Darwin metropolitan area, further deterring troublemakers by banning people from buying, possessing or consuming alcohol or attending licensed premises.

Key Darwin Safe measures include agreement by members of the AHA’s Darwin Liquor Accord to ban all shots and shooters after 1am, as well as introducing a four drink limit during happy hours and after midnight to prevent stockpiling of drinks.

To enhance collaboration between licensed premises and Police, a special radio system has been implemented to allow instant communication between venues and Police warning of problem patrons in the CBD.

Minister for Alcohol Policy, Dave Tollner, said Darwin Safe isn’t just about restricting access to alcohol.

“The Government is boosting CCTV coverage of Mitchell Street with two additional cameras to be installed by the end of this month near Monsoons Nightclub,” Mr Tollner said.

“The new cameras will cover the secluded lanes to the side and rear of Monsoons. Clearly this type urban design is a likely location of criminal and public order offences. CCTV is instrumental in reducing crime and identifying criminal and street offences. “

The new cameras will bring the total number around Greater Darwin to about 65. The CCTV system is monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week from a control room within the Joint Emergency Services Communications Centre in the Peter McAulay Centre.

However, a key aspect in combatting antisocial behaviour is to encourage patrons to respect everyone’s right to enjoy a night out free from trouble.

The Territory Government and the City of Darwin are jointly funding an awareness campaign promoting that everyone has a role to play in having a safe night out.

City of Darwin Acting Lord Mayor Robin Knox said that the City of Darwin is committed to participating in activities that contribute to a safer Darwin and ensure there are public spaces for the community to enjoy.
“We will continue to work with all parties to develop initiatives, to reinforce the Darwin Safe program,” Acting Lord Mayor Robin Knox said.

Australian Hotels Association NT President Justin Coleman said the early signs of the Darwin Safe initiatives indicate that it’s an effective tool in keeping Darwin’s CBD even safer.

"Licencees understand the role they play in ensuring Darwin City remains a safe place to visit and enjoy,” Mr Coleman said.

"We are committed to continuing to work with the key stakeholders to introduce measures that are tailor made to our location, while targeting the small minority of people who do the wrong thing.

"We continue to advocate the importance of self-responsibility and real consequences for those who choose to act like idiots,” Mr Coleman said.

Mr Tollner said he was confident that Darwin Safe was the right solution for local issues.

“It’s too easy to assume the response in Sydney or Newcastle is the best solution for the Territory. Arguably, evidence is starting to emerge that some interstate solutions might not be working as hoped,” he said.

Figures released this week show Sydney’s controversial lockout laws seem to be pushing alcohol-related violence onto the streets – the very environment where the two deaths from so-called coward’s punches took place.

The latest Bureau of Crime Statistics for the first quarter of this year show there were six alcohol-fuelled assaults in the Kings Cross police command in March. But there were 45 assaults — 20 alcohol-related — outside licensed premises in Kings Cross a month after the lockout laws came into effect. This is nearly double the number of assaults outside licensed premises in February (26).

Mr Tollner said the collaborative approach taken in the NT ensures that all key stakeholders can bring to the table initiatives that ultimately deliver a more seamless approach.

“I firmly believe that there is no silver bullet in managing issues in entertainment precincts. It’s not the sole responsibility of any one stakeholder and no single policy setting is likely to be effective,” he said.

“By getting two tiers of government and agencies such as police working together with licenced venues, we get a far more effective outcome rather than one that just shifts the location of the problem.”

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