

# Expanding Adult Time, Adult Crime and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026

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**Submission By:** Cairns Regional Council

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**Our Ref: # 7840456**

18 March 2026

Queensland Parliamentary Committee  
Parliament House  
Cnr George and Alice Streets  
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Committee

Cairns Regional Council (Council) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee on the **Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026**, introduced to Queensland Parliament on 3 March 2026.

Council acknowledges the broad objectives of the Bill, which seeks to strengthen Queensland's criminal justice framework through:

1. Amendments to the *Youth Justice Act 1992* to prescribe new Adult Crime, Adult Time offences;
2. Repeal of the Police Drug Diversion Program (PDDP) and establishment of a new Illicit Drug Enforcement and Diversion Framework (IDEDF); and
3. Introduction of new and expanded police powers within prescribed Designated Business and Community Precincts (DBCPs).

While Council recognises the significance of all three components, this submission is focused specifically on point 3 of the bill - Introduction of new and expanded police powers within prescribed Designated Business and Community Precincts (DBCPs). This focus reflects the ongoing challenges experienced within the Cairns central business district and the strong evidence base demonstrating the need for a targeted, place-based tool to support public safety, business confidence and community amenity.

Anti-social behaviour in the Cairns CBD continues to undermine public safety, disrupt business operations and diminish community confidence. The DBCP provisions within the Bill provide a targeted, preventive and proportionate mechanism to address these challenges in locations where the consequences of disorder are most acute. Council supports the intent of the Bill and recognises the importance of strengthened laws that allow police to proactively respond to disruptive public disorder offending, reduce impacts on public amenity and maintain the safety and functionality of shared public spaces.

Data collected from Council's Community Safety Unit demonstrate a sustained and concentrated pattern of public space anti-social behaviour within the Cairns CBD. Between 2023 and 2025, 33,300 incidents involving anti-social or disruptive behaviour were recorded. These include alcohol-related disorder, assaults, threats, harassment, theft, begging, public drunkenness and disruptive group behaviour.

The majority of these incidents occur within a compact CBD footprint, heavily pedestrianised by residents and tourists including our Esplanade lagoon, CBD transit mall, City Heart nightlife area and our Esplanade dining precinct. These areas are a drawcard for our city and should be welcoming and inviting, however they are unfortunately becoming known for consistent harmful or disruptive behaviours. This concentrated pattern highlights the need for a stronger regulatory mechanism capable of providing targeted, location-specific responses. A DBCP offers this capability with enhanced move on and location banning powers issued to Police, allowing earlier intervention and preventing escalation.

Community sentiment across the Cairns CBD is clear and consistent.

- **Residents** report feeling worn down by recurring behaviours in the same locations. Many avoid certain streets at night, particularly around the Transit Mall and City Heart due to concerns about verbal aggression, public drinking, groups blocking footpaths and unpredictable behaviour.
- **Local businesses** regularly encounter early-morning sleeping in doorways, intoxicated groups arguing or shouting, and customers feeling uncomfortable entering premises. Recently a number have closed their doors blaming the impacts of anti-social behaviour for loss of trade. Businesses overwhelmingly support, and in fact demand, stronger action.
- **Visitors and tourists** are particularly sensitive to visible disorder, especially along the Esplanade. Even minor disturbances like arguing or shouting, drinking in public, or someone lying across a footpath intoxicated can influence how they speak about Cairns afterwards.

Based on the evidence, a DBCP covering core Cairns CBD locations would allow for a proportionate response to recurring anti-social behaviour patterns while supporting community confidence, visitor experience and local business operations.

To ensure the DBCP operates as a balanced, accountable and community-aligned safety tool, Council recommends that any declaration in Cairns include:

1. Precise geographic boundaries reflecting demonstrated incident concentrations.
2. Regular review and flexibility to manoeuvre and disrupt as hot spot locations reduce or relocate.
3. Mandatory reporting, including data on directions issued, interactions, outcomes and any displacement effects.
4. Independent review assessing safety outcomes, public perceptions and economic impacts.
5. Integration with outreach and social services, recognising that enforcement alone cannot address underlying drivers of behaviour.

In addition to establishment of a DBCP in Cairns CBD, Council urges the State Government to invest in integrated, preventative approaches to address the contributing factors and causes of anti-social behaviour in public spaces, including:

1. **Review and implementation of robust reforms to the Local Fare Scheme**, including a reduction and tightening of eligibility and process requirements for subsidised travel and a single point of coordination for return arrangements.
2. **Coordinated and supported exit processes** for people transitioning from care (including health departments, corrections, and institutional living or out-of-home care).

3. **Specialist mobile mental health response unit** with capability to co-respond to anti-social behaviour that is correlated to complex mental health needs.
4. **Increase availability of community-based healthcare** and telehealth services.

Council firmly believes that these preventative measures would help increase community safety and amenity by reducing the volume of anti-social behaviour incidents and the strain on both Council and State resources in responding to anti-social behaviour in public spaces.

### **Conclusion**

Cairns Regional Council supports the establishment of a DBCP for the Cairns CBD based on strong, multi-year evidence of concentrated public space anti-social behaviour. The model provides a welcome step towards improved community safety and amenity within Cairns' most significant activity and visitor precincts.

Council emphasises however that a DBCP in the Cairns CBD will only succeed if supported by an uplift to and then **sustained Queensland Police Service presence**. Expanded powers alone will have little impact if not supported with increased resourcing. The pattern of incidents across multiple years shows that anti-social behaviour is not confined to set time periods. A **24/7 physical deterrent and response capability** within the precinct is essential for community confidence and operational success.

In making this submission I must stress the need to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to future submission requests to allow essentially stakeholders, such as councils, adequate time to participate. The fact that only 14 days was allowed for in this instance, when weighed against the potential impact of this proposed legislative change, undermines the genuine improvement this review seeks to make to the lives of Queenslanders.

Yours sincerely



Cr Amy Eden  
Mayor