

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

Submission No: 170

Submission By: Townsville City Council

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Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

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Dear Chair,

RE: Townsville City Council Submission - Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026

Townsville City Council (**Council**) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026 (the **Bill**).

The Bill is unique to Queensland and identifies that anti-social behaviour in regional central business districts poses an unacceptable risk, disrupts trade, and undermines public confidence. Particularly in Townsville, there is a high demand for stronger early-intervention tools for frontline police. The Designated Business and Community Precincts (**DBCP**) provisions of the Bill establish a targeted framework that aim to strengthen public order management in areas such as the Townsville CBD.

This submission addresses only the DBCP component of the Bill, specifically, the provisions enabling the declaration of DBCPs by regulation and the conferral of enhanced police powers, including strengthened move on powers and police banning notices within those precincts.

Council supports these amendments as they provide early, preventive intervention in locations where low-level disorder can rapidly escalate and negatively affect the amenity of those in the surrounding areas. Accordingly, this submission is expressly limited to the DBCP provisions, and Council does not offer comment on any other part of the Bill.

The Situation in Townsville

The Townsville CBD has, for decades, experienced recurring patterns of public intoxication and anti-social behaviour, with varying intensity over time. This issue has now reached a critical juncture, coinciding with renewed commercial interest in the CBD and Council's strong focus on precinct revitalisation. The commercial potential of the Townsville CBD is merging into fruition, however, the biggest barrier to future growth is the persistent disorderly behaviour throughout the area's public spaces.

This is despite the significant work of the Townsville Anti-Social Behaviour Response Governance Group (the **Group**), established by the LNP Crisafulli Government, comprising a coordinated multi-agency alliance including the Queensland Police Service (QPS), the Department of Housing, the Department of Communities, the Australian Red Cross, Council and other contracted outreach, health and support partners. The Group has undertaken structured cohort surveys, coordinated interventions, and individual case assessments, generating a comprehensive, evidence-based understanding of the cohort's behaviour and needs.

Data indicates that approximately 105 individuals are typically present around the CBD and Dean Park area at any one time, with numbers fluctuating due to high transience. The cohort includes individuals from locations such as Palm Island and North-West Queensland who are either visiting or cycling in and out of corrections or the Townsville University Hospital, often remaining in Townsville for several weeks or months before returning home.

The ability to declare a DBCP will permit a targeted, location-specific framework suited to the Townsville CBD. The accompanying enhanced move on powers will allow QPS to intervene at an earlier stage, thereby preventing escalation and restoring amenity. Further, police banning notices will provide an essential mechanism to exclude repeat offenders from the area. Collectively, these measures offer the statutory pathway needed to address the long-entrenched issues facing Townsville's CBD.

Council is of the view that the challenges outlined above not only require a strengthened legislative framework but also a renewed focus by NGOs and relevant State Government agencies on coordinated case management. Responsibility for addressing these issues cannot rest with QPS and Council alone. The recurring patterns of transient congregation, public intoxication, and disorder highlight the need for more effective public order tools and a more integrated, multi-agency response.

Common misconceptions

A frequently raised contention is that the individuals congregating in Townsville CBD and Dean Park area are homeless, with no place of legal abode. The operational data produced by the Group, has established that approximately 35% of this cohort have accommodation options in Townsville or other areas.

In short, the issue in these locations is not one of entrenched homelessness, but rather, is one of transient congregation and recurring disorder. In our submission, the DBCP framework and enhanced move-on powers are proportionate and appropriately aimed at preserving public order.

Decriminalisation of certain public offences

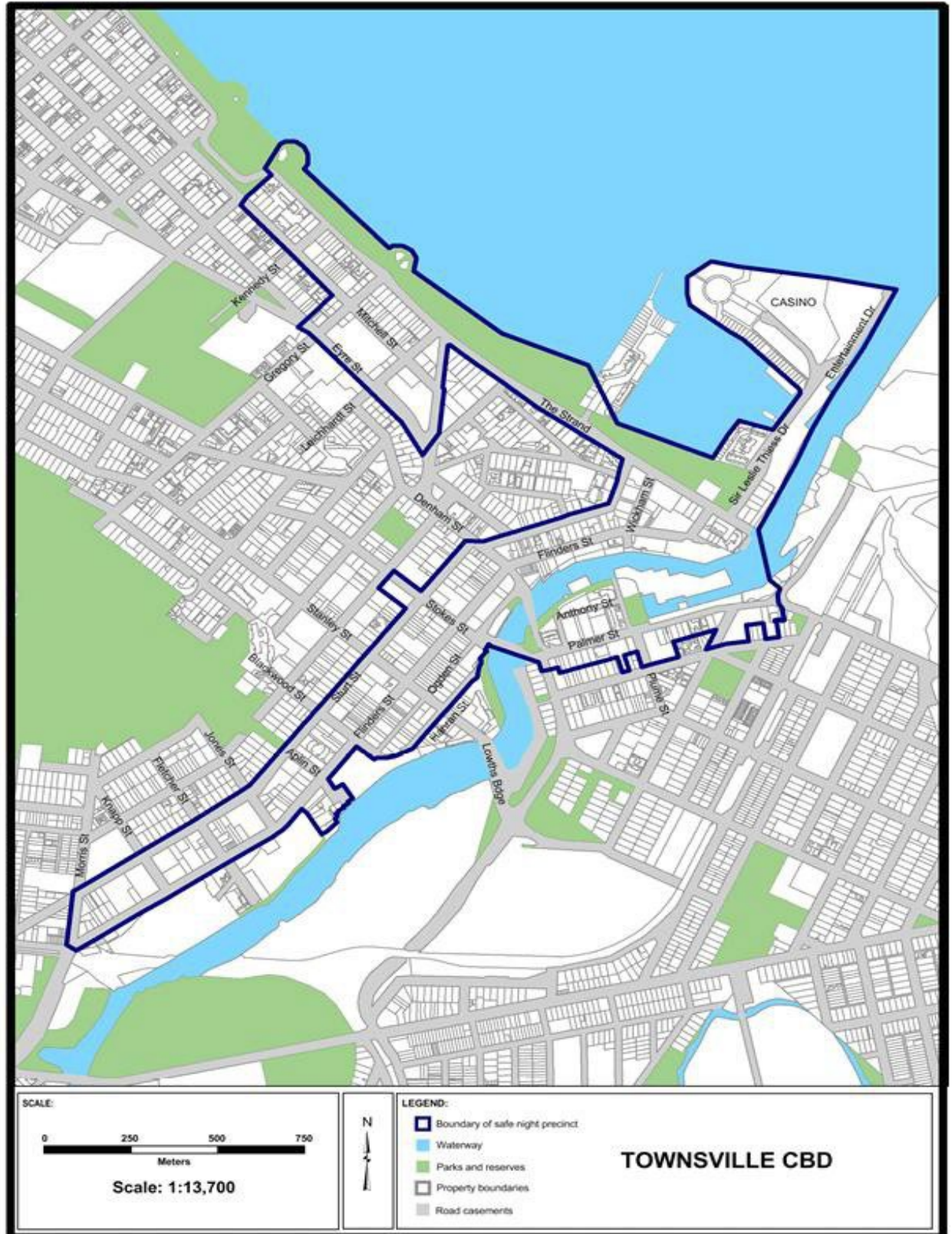
The removal of public intoxication, begging, and public urination, amongst other public order offences, has significantly impacted the safety and amenity in the Townsville CBD.

Since these offences were repealed, Council and QPS report a reduced capacity to intervene early, before anti-social behaviour escalates to the point of harassment, property damage and assaults. The establishment of the DBCP will allow a graduated response from Council and QPS and builds on the already underway Group efforts to better connect the cohort with the health, housing and social services that they require. Importantly, it also provides a lever for the QPS to deal with individuals that choose to not engage with the coordinated intervention and service provisions and be dealt with by an alternate law enforcement response.

Declaring a DBCP

Council is motivated to deliver a safe, activated and economically vibrant CBD.

Should the DBCP provisions come into effect, Council welcomes the opportunity to work closely with the State Government to declare the Townsville CBD as a DBCP in conjunction with the already existing Safe Night Precinct as shown below.



Existing Townsville Safe Night Precinct



Proposed DBCP

The expanded area in the proposed DBCP (whilst encompassing the existing Safe Night Precinct) includes:

- Queensland Country Bank Stadium

- V8 Supercar Track
- Dean Park
- Dean Street Carpark
- Jezzine Barracks
- The entire length of Strand

Council recognises that a singular DBCP declaration risks merely displacing behavioural issues into neighbouring suburbs. To ensure a genuine city-wide public-order response, Council will seek opportunities for future DBCP consideration in other high-risk precincts such as the Aitkenvale and Willows shopping districts, or other retail or transit hubs that experience recurrent anti-social behaviour and significant youth interaction.

Council will remain alert to new or emerging trouble areas, informed by CCTV, QPS data, Council community safety teams and community feedback. This will ensure that future precinct nominations are timely and proportionate.

Move on Directions

The Bill introduces a specific move on power that allows police to direct an individual to leave a DBCP and not return for up to 24 hours. This power will apply in circumstances where a person's presence or behaviour is reasonably suspected to be causing disruption, obstruction or contributing to public disorder.

This provides a clear, enforceable mechanism for police to intervene early and prevent immediate re-congregation. The 24-hour exclusion period creates the operational separation needed to reduce repeated incidents within the precinct.

If a person contravenes a move on order, the maximum penalty is 40 penalty units.

Further, if a person contravenes a move on direction or has already been given a move on direction within the previous seven days, the Bill allows police to exercise a stronger exclusion response by issuing a police banning notice.

Police banning notices

The Bill permits police to issue a banning notice to prohibit a person from entering or remaining in a DBCP for 30 days. Police banning notices may apply where the person has contravened a move on direction, or where the person has received one or more move on directions in the previous seven days for the same precinct and again behaves in a way that would justify a further direction.

This is necessary in locations such as the Townsville CBD where anti-social behaviour has become recurring and deeply ingrained. Police banning notices will be a necessary legislative tool to break the cycle of anti-social behaviour.

If a person contravenes a police banning notice, the maximum penalty is 60 penalty units.

Penalties

In Council's view, the penalties listed above - failure to comply with a move on direction (maximum of 40 penalty units) and contravening a police banning notice (maximum of 60 penalty units) - are insufficient for the Bill to achieve its policy objectives.

Fine-based penalties offer little deterrence for this cohort. These individuals are typically highly disadvantaged, unemployed, and have no realistic capacity or incentive to pay fines. In practice, infringement debts are simply sent to SPER and have no immediate consequence, meaning fines do not influence changed behaviour or prevent repeated offending.

It is Council's submission that amendments are needed to introduce a custodial option for repeat breaches of both move on directions and police banning notices within a defined period.

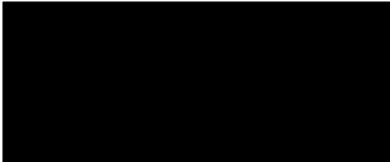
Conclusion

Council appreciates the Committee's consideration of this submission and reiterates its strong support for the DBCP framework and associated police powers as essential tools to restore public order and protect the viability of Townsville's CBD and other key precincts.

With appropriate refinements to the penalty regime, these reforms have the potential to deliver meaningful, lasting improvements to safety, amenity and economic activity within Townsville.

Council stands ready to work collaboratively with the Queensland Government and Queensland Police Service to ensure the effective implementation of these important measures.

Sincerely



Cr Nick Dametto
Mayor of Townsville