Queensland Audit Office

Drink Safe Precincts trial

Report to Parliament 13 : 2012–13

Queensland Audit Office

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Queensland Audit Office

May 2013

The Honourable F Simpson MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Madam Speaker

Report to Parliament

This report is prepared under Part 3 Division 3 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, and is titled Drink Safe Precincts trial.

In accordance with s.67 of the Act, would you please arrange for the report to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General

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Summary

The two-year Drink Safe Precincts (DSP) trial commenced in 2010 and was due to finish in November 2012. It has since been extended to September 2013. Its aim was to reduce alcohol-related violence and improve community safety in three of the largest entertainment precincts in Queensland—Fortitude Valley, Surfers Paradise and Townsville.

These three precincts contain a high density of licensed venues frequented by large numbers of people and have a history of alcohol-related violence and community safety issues. The three precincts differ in physical layout and size, patron demographics and availability of resources.

The DSP trial was intended to deliver a heightened enforcement presence and support services for patrons and to maintain existing levels of enforcement of licensing conditions and laws. The DSP trial initiatives in each precinct were tailored to meet specific local issues and community needs.

We examined the planning, implementation and evaluation of the DSP trial as a whole and the issues specific to each of the three precincts. We also examined whether the trial achieved its intended outcomes, including reducing alcohol-related violence and improving community safety within the precincts.

This report's conclusions and recommendation are directed to all Queensland Government agencies to help them improve their planning, implementation and evaluation of projects, programs and trials.

Conclusions

More than two years after the DSP trial commenced, after a total investment of more than $10 million and two evaluations, its proponents are no closer to establishing its efficacy. Nor are they better informed about the elements of the model and whether and how each could be deployed individually or collectively in the future to combat alcohol-related violence in entertainment precincts.

This disappointing result, both for the government and non-government organisations who have participated in the trial, is an object lesson for the design and implementation of future trials. The DSP trial was not well planned, implemented or evaluated. It was adversely impacted in its set up and design by the imposition of arbitrarily short and unrealistic time frames. This caused problems throughout, particularly in terms of certainty of funding and in data gathering and evaluation.

The final evaluation by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet due later this year is not likely to be any more reliable or conclusive than the previous two evaluations it conducted because of these design issues. Furthermore, all three evaluations of the two-year trial will have been finalised after it ended and the extension period will not be evaluated. For this reason, there is little value to be gained by continuing the trial in its current format.

The issues identified in this report demonstrate how critical effective planning, implementation and evaluation are for the greatest likelihood of success of government projects or programs. This becomes even more important in multi-agency projects and those involving partnerships with community and industry groups.

Key findings

Planning and implementation

The DSP trial was planned and implemented in around three months. As a result, the planning was rushed and did not identify options, risks and mitigation strategies, resourcing and funding requirements adequately.

Despite this, the lead agencies developed an intervention model that was consistent with contemporary better practice. They also drew together a broad range of key government, industry and community groups to form effective steering committees within each of the three precincts. The police DSP inspectors were integral to each committee's effectiveness.

There has been a lack of strategic leadership of the trial. The CEO oversight committee has not met since 31 January 2012, other than for a presentation on the 14-month evaluation results in October 2012. The Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation, as the lead agency, prepared submissions to government and chaired the DSP Working Group meetings. However, it did not effectively coordinate the sharing of information across the precincts or responses to issues common to the three DSPs.

The trial has cost more than the $9.097 million in government-approved funding, but complete costs are unknown because they were not collected. No cost-benefit assessment was planned or undertaken, so this key information is unavailable to inform decision makers about the trial’s value for money or financial sustainability.

Evaluation

The evaluation used to assess the DSP trial was an ambitious attempt to use a broad range of data, including police, ambulance and hospital data sets. However, each of the three main data sets had important limitations that adversely affected their relevance and the evaluation's usefulness.

No benchmarks or criteria were set to gauge the success of the trial or its components. Instead, success was measured after the event, based on an assessment of performance against subjective standards. As a result, the evaluation's conclusions of the trial's success are open to alternative interpretations.

The evaluation focused on the three precincts collectively. While the 14-month and 18-month evaluation reports did report on each precinct, there was no specific evaluation of place-based initiatives, local elements were not fully considered and the results were inconclusive. However, the level of analysis improved from the 14-month evaluation to the 18-month evaluation.

Because the evaluation was not designed to assess the effectiveness of the individual initiatives of the trial, it was difficult to identify those that were working and those that were not. Given the place-based model implemented, this is a weakness of the evaluation design.

The trial's three evaluations will all be completed after the two-year trial had finished, and will be too late to guide any refinements to the trial or to data collection. In addition, the extension period of the trial will not be evaluated, and valuable information for decision makers will not be captured.

Effectiveness and outcomes

There is a widely-held perception among participants and stakeholders involved in the DSP trial that it has been effective in reducing the occurrence and severity of alcohol-related violence and improving community safety. In and of itself, this is a positive outcome, as perceptions of these matters can be important in these contexts.

However, the results of the trial are mixed, inconclusive and the evidence does not lend support to this view. It is more likely that changes in the key measures of alcohol-related violence and community safety are the result of a range of uncontrolled factors external to the trial.

Previous trials in other jurisdictions have shown that high-visibility policing in combination with liquor licensing enforcement is important for sustained reductions in alcohol-related violence. The DSP trial provided additional high-visibility policing to the three precincts. The liquor licensing enforcement and compliance activities conducted by the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation were planned to be maintained at pre-trial levels, yet intended to produce a significant reduction in liquor licensing breaches. The evaluation was unable to demonstrate whether the liquor licensing enforcement and compliance activities achieved the intended reduction.

The provision of support services, such as rest and recovery areas, was widely viewed by stakeholders as valuable, but their contribution to the trial's intended outcomes was not measured or assessed consistently in the evaluation. The lack of assessment of the trial interventions inhibits the ability to tailor the optimal levels and mix of interventions for existing DSPs. It also makes it difficult to assess the suitability of other entertainment precincts for the DSP model.

Despite being an intended outcome of the trial, there has been no demonstrated improvement to public amenity in any of the three DSPs.

The DSP trial had the unintended consequence of restricting the ability of the police service to use its resources where and when needed under its 'place and case' model of intelligence-led policing. This has affected its service delivery outside the DSPs.

Recommendation

1. **It is recommended that, if the DSP model is to continue or extend to other precincts, the lead agencies undertake more detailed planning, implement better oversight and monitoring and redesign and strengthen the evaluation.**

Reference to agency comments (Appendix A)

In accordance with section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, a copy of this report was provided to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and the Queensland Police Service with a request for comments.

Their views have been considered in reaching our audit conclusions and are represented to the extent relevant and warranted in preparing this report.

The full comments received are included in Appendix A of this report.

1 Context

1.1 Background

Alcohol serves social and cultural roles. The service and consumption of alcohol contributes also to national, state and local economies by creating employment, retail activity, and tax revenue. However, with these benefits come costs, with poor service practices and excessive consumption of alcohol being linked to adverse health, social, cultural and economic impacts on families and communities.

In 2008, it was estimated that the direct cost to government to regulate, prevent and respond to alcohol-related abuse and misuse was $226 million.

Entertainment precincts with high concentrations of licensed premises such as pubs and clubs contribute to the economic, social and cultural roles of alcohol consumption. They can also show its negative impacts, particularly concerning alcohol-related violence and community safety. Australian Bureau of Statistics data show that 90 per cent of assaults in entertainment precincts in 2010–11 were alcohol-related.

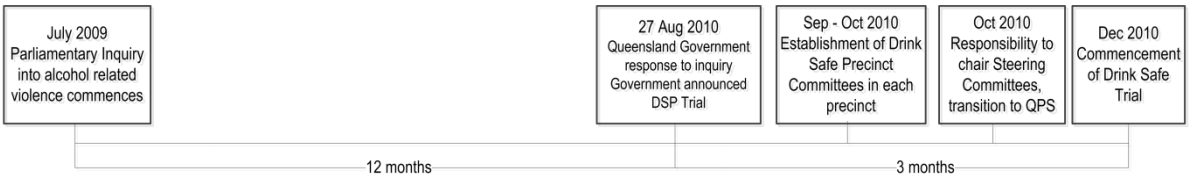
Addressing alcohol-related violence and community safety issues in entertainment precincts is a difficult and complex task due to the wide range of factors such as police presence, trading hours, binge-drinking, crowding, queuing, transport, venue design and management, as well as urban or precinct design and planning.

1.1.1 Decision to establish the trial

In March 2010, the Queensland Parliament's Law, Justice and Safety Committee delivered a report on its inquiry into alcohol-related violence. In response, the government committed to taking 'immediate action to provide a long term approach to reduce such anti-social behaviour', as well as developing a liquor regulatory harm minimisation strategy. The *'centrepiece'* of the approach was the establishment of Drink Safe Precincts (DSP) to combine local, state, industry, and community resources to reduce alcohol-related violence.

A two-year trial of DSPs started in December 2010 in Fortitude Valley, Surfers Paradise and Townsville. Responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating the trial was shared between the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Communities (now the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services). Figure 1A shows a timeline for establishing the DSP trial.

Figure 1A
Establishment timeline



Source: QAO

1.2 The Drink Safe Precincts trial

The trial was a place-based approach to promote whole-of-community ownership of the problem and its solutions. The trial drew on combined local, state, industry and community knowledge of the problem to:

- improve government, community and industry coordination
- identify the nature and extent of the problem locally
- tailor a response particular to local circumstances
- bring together a range of resources to deal with the issue.

The trial's focus was the reduction of alcohol-related violence. In accordance with the place-based model, the objectives varied across the three DSPs as shown in Figure 1B.

Figure 1B
Drink Safe Precincts objectives

Fortitude Valley	Surfers Paradise	Townsville
Improved community safety	Improved community safety	Improved community safety
Improved public amenity	Improved public amenity	Improved community amenity
Improved patron behaviour	Improved patron behaviour	Better patron behaviour
Improved/coordinated transport	Improved stakeholder safety	
Improved partnerships across governments, industry and community		

Source: Drink Safe Precinct Management Plans and Queensland Audit Office

The key components of the trial were:

- increased and high-visibility policing
- enforcement of liquor licensing laws
- provision of support, rest and recovery services
- coordination between venues, police, ambulance, community support services and transport providers.

Additional strategies that varied across the trial sites included:

- improvements to taxi zones and their supervision
- improved transport information
- improved lighting and other crime prevention initiatives, such as measures to reduce crowding and footpath queuing
- efforts to increase access to public toilets.

Amendments to the *Liquor Act 1992* made provisions for the establishment of Drink Safe Precincts.

1.3 Roles and responsibilities

The main public sector agencies responsible for the Drink Safe Precincts trial were:

- Department of Justice and Attorney-General
- Queensland Police Service
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General, through its Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation, was the overall lead agency for the trial. Its Office of Regulatory Policy was responsible for the planning and the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation was responsible for implementation of the trial, as well as for initiatives targeting compliance and enforcement of licensees.

The Queensland Police Service was responsible for providing police services and local leadership in the three precincts.

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet was the lead agency for the trial's evaluation.

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services was responsible for the selection and administration of support services for the trial. This included grant funding, acquittal and performance of non-government organisations contracted to provide rest and recovery services for the three precincts.

1.4 Funding

The trial was initially for two years from December 2010 to the end of November 2012. The government initially provided $8.534 million for the trial, comprising $6.282 million for police overtime and $2.252 million for the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to provide grants for support services.

Other costs were to be met by participating agencies through their existing budget allocation. These other costs are further discussed in section 2.5.

On 24 July 2012, the Attorney-General announced an extension of the trial to 28 February 2013. The government provided an additional $63 000 to fund support services for this extension period. On 18 December 2012, the Attorney-General announced a further extension of the trial to September 2013 and another $500 000 for the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to further fund support services.

1.5 Audit objectives, method and cost

The audit's objective was to assess whether the Drink Safe Precincts trial is effective and is achieving intended impacts and outcomes.

The audit addressed the objective through the sub-objectives and lines of inquiry set out in Figure 1C.

Figure 1C
Audit sub-objectives and lines of inquiry

Sub-objectives		Lines of Inquiry	
1	The trial is appropriately planned and implemented.	1.1	The trial is well planned.
		1.2	The trial is implemented as intended.
2	The trial is appropriately evaluated.	2.1	The evaluation framework is appropriate.
		2.2	The evaluation framework is being implemented as intended.
3	Intended impacts and outcomes are being achieved and are cost effective.	3.1	The intended impacts and outcomes are being achieved.
		3.2	The trial is cost effective.

Source: QAO

The audit was undertaken in accordance with the *Auditor-General of Queensland Auditing Standards*, which incorporate Australian auditing and assurance standards.

The cost of the audit was $330 000.

1.6 Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 examines the planning and implementation of the Drink Safe Precincts trial
- Chapter 3 examines the evaluation of the Drink Safe Precincts trial
- Chapter 4 examines the effectiveness and outcomes of the Drink Safe Precincts trial.

2 Planning and implementation

In brief

Background

Ineffective planning and implementation is one of the most common sources of program or project failure. We expected to find that the planning and implementation of the Drink Safe Precincts (DSP) trial included consideration of the objectives and outcomes desired by government, options for meeting these, risks and mitigation strategies, costs and benefits, and resourcing and governance.

Conclusions

The DSP trial planning was rushed, which hindered effective implementation and evaluation. Failure to identify full funding and resource requirements led to agency inefficiencies, delays in the release of funding and disruption to the provision of some aspects of the trial.

Despite this, the responsible agencies managed to bring together a broad range of stakeholders and develop an intervention model consistent with better practice.

Key findings

- The trial was planned and implemented in about three months. The risks and consequences of this short time frame were not identified and reported to government.
- The trial has adopted a place-based model, which is current better practice.
- The planning did not adequately identify alternatives, risks and mitigation strategies, or resourcing and funding requirements. This led to disruption, delays and unforeseen costs.
- A broad range of initiatives was included in the model, and government, industry and community stakeholders were included in the steering committees.
- Information sharing and coordination was effective within the precincts, but was limited across the trial and between precincts.
- The total funding provided by government specifically for the trial was $9.097 million for the provision of police overtime and support services. Other costs were to be funded from agency budget allocations, but the extent is unknown because cost information has not been collected.

2.1 Background

Sound planning and implementation of projects provides confidence and assurance that resources are being applied in the right areas, with reasonable prospects of success, and at a reasonable cost. The importance of sound planning and implementation is well documented in several frameworks, guidelines and better practice publications, in Queensland and other jurisdictions. In Queensland, these include the *Project Management Methodology* and the *Project Assurance Framework*.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General, through its Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation, was the lead agency for the Drink Safe Precincts (DSP) trial.

Planning for the trial was undertaken by the Office of Regulatory Policy in the former Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation. The Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General was responsible for the implementation and ongoing overall leadership of the trial. It was also responsible for initiatives targeting compliance and enforcement of licensees.

We examined whether the trial was well planned and implemented as intended. We expected to find in a better practice planning and implementation process:

- identification of clear project objectives and outcomes
- defined roles and responsibilities
- effective scoping and resourcing, including consideration of alternative options
- detailed identification and assessment of the likely costs and benefits
- detailed and ongoing assessment of risk and identification of mitigation strategies
- timeline with key milestones
- effective governance.

2.2 Conclusions

Planning for the DSP trial was undertaken in just three months. This compromised the ability to plan the trial's implementation and subsequent evaluation thoroughly.

Despite this, the lead agencies managed to develop an intervention model that was consistent with better practice approaches and brought together a wide range of government, non-government, industry and community stakeholders.

The failure to identify and consider adequately the impact of the short time frames, alternative options, risks and mitigation strategies and resourcing and funding requirements reduced the trial's effectiveness, economy and efficiency. This led to additional agency inefficiencies, delays in the release of funding and disruption to the provision of some services for the trial.

2.3 Planning

The DSP trial was planned and implemented between the end of August and beginning of December 2010. This three-month time frame was set by government.

A place-based approach was the selected model of intervention adopted for the DSP trial. The place-based approach to complex social issues, such as alcohol-related violence, is recognised nationally and internationally as better practice. It promotes community ownership of the problem and advocates a whole-of-community response that is tailored locally.

The short-time frame, however, caused planning to be rushed, so no preliminary evaluation was undertaken to identify and assess options, costs and value for money. A draft project plan was started but not finished, so planning did not address important factors, such as:

- prerequisites for the trial
- budget
- assumptions
- constraints
- contingencies.

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services recognised and reported to the Minister some impacts of the short time frame, specific to the provision of support services. However, no detailed or coordinated assessment of the impact, risks and potential consequences of planning and implementing the trial in such a short period was conducted, or included in trial submissions to government. Similarly, no assessment of the likely impact of funding gaps or funding delays was made or reported to government, so:

- agencies were not fully aware of the impact of the trial on budget and resources
- government decision makers were not fully informed of what the DSP trial would be likely to achieve in the short time frame allocated
- there were delays in the implementation and ongoing provision of some aspects of the trial, such as community support services.

2.4 Implementation

Despite the short time frame and planning limitations, the lead agencies were able to bring together a broad range of stakeholders and existing initiatives to start the trial.

An implementation plan was developed and largely followed. The implementation plan was adequate, but would have benefited from a greater level of detail in areas such as risk assessment and options for the finalisation and sustainability of the trial.

The short time frame and mandatory start date compromised the coordination of activities. For example, grant funding for support services was largely determined before the local steering committees were established. The steering committees were, therefore, unable to contribute to the selection of support services based on local needs.

There was uncertainty around the strategic leadership of the DSP trial. The planning and implementation of the trial did not include systems to enable significant issues to be escalated and, where appropriate, information to be shared across DSPs. As a result, issues common to the three precincts, such as the provision of public toilets, were not resolved.

The Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation stated its role as lead agency was not clearly defined. It did not consider that its *'… lead agency role in this place-based approach extended to resolving common issues across the three precincts'.*

In its October 2006 better practice guide *Implementation of Programme and Policy Initiatives – Making implementation matter*, the Australian National Audit Office states:

> *'The lead agency should have a role of ensuring that: programme implementation is meeting the Government's objective; a process has been established where information is shared and flows between the agencies involved; performance is monitored; and the commitment by other agencies (as well as their own) is being met.'*

In its 2011 publication *Governance Models for Location Based Initiatives*, the Australian Government's Social Inclusion Board states that location-based initiatives, including place-based approaches, require active involvement of all levels of government. While these approaches involve the devolution of responsibilities to local communities, it is not the intent that government agencies devolve responsibility without aiding in problem-solving.

The CEO oversight committee was established to monitor implementation, to consider and resolve policy issues as they arose and to examine the trial at a strategic level. It has not met since 31 January 2012, other than to receive a presentation in October 2012 on the findings of the draft 14-month evaluation.

2.5 Funding

In its better practice guide *Implementation of Programme and Policy Initiatives – Making implementation matter*, the Australian National Audit Office cautions that:

> *'Overly ambitious time frames are among the most common difficulties in implementation. Time pressures can leave too little time to address factors for success, such as different options for programme delivery, consultation with implementers and stakeholders, or resource requirements and constraints. This can result in substantial variances between funding estimates for an initiative and the resources that actually have to be employed to deliver the initiative successfully.'*

The government provided $8.534 million funding for the first two years of the trial:

- $6.282 million for police overtime
- $2.252 million for the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to provide funding grants for support services.

All other costs were to be met by existing agency budget allocations.

The two extensions of the trial resulted in the government providing a further $563 000 for the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to provide grants for support services. The total approved funding for the trial was $9.097 million.

Because no further funding was provided for overtime during the extension periods, the Queensland Police Service had to change from resourcing the precincts with officers on overtime to drawing officers from other areas. This was considered by senior police to be less effective because it affected service delivery in those areas.

Delays in announcing funding for the extension affected the ability of the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to ensure the uninterrupted provision of support services by non-government organisations. At times, this resulted in reduced rest and recovery services being provided in the Fortitude Valley and Surfers Paradise DSPs.

While the funding provided by government for the trial was clearly identified, other costs met by agencies are unknown because they were never assessed during planning or captured in the implementation or evaluation. Funds from the budgets of these agencies had to be diverted from other activities. As a result the actual cost of the DSP trial is unknown. Figure 2A lists the unfunded costs we identified. It is not a complete list of costs incurred and does not include in-kind contributions from non-public sector agencies.

Figure 2A
Costs of participating organisations

Organisation	Purpose	Cost ($)
DPC, QPS, OLGR	Evaluation of the trial	98 600*
Department of Transport and Main Roads	Provision of taxi marshals, signage projectors, additional Nightlink bus services	415 402
Queensland Police Service	Estimated cost for provision of rostered staff to the DSP trial—does not include administration or the cost of DSP inspectors	5 841 200
Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services	Additional funding of non-government organisation support services	599 672
	Estimated administration costs	406 338
Gold Coast City Council	Provision of signage projectors, safety campaigns and portable toilets	60 000
Brisbane City Council	Provision of public amenity activities, enforcement activities and administration	229 170

* Cost split equally between the three agencies

Note: Townsville City Council identified costs which are not included above as they were not solely attributable to the DSP trial.

Source: Queensland Audit Office, based on actual and estimated costs provided by participating organisations

No cost-benefit assessment was included in any stage of the trial and no attempt was made to identify or understand all agency and stakeholder costs. The full impact on agencies' budgets and resourcing was not identified or reported to government.

As a result, vital information about value for money is not available to inform decisions about whether the planned scale of the trial was cost effective, and subsequently, what the likely full cost implications would be, should the DSPs continue.

Based on the additional costs we identified in Figure 2A, it is unlikely that the DSPs are sustainable in the long term with current funding arrangements, especially if they are to be extended to other entertainment precincts.

3 Evaluation

In brief

Background

Well-designed evaluations are essential for public sector agencies to strengthen efficiency and accountability and to demonstrate effectiveness of projects. A better practice evaluation uses a systematic and evidence-based approach to assess performance. It needs to be timely, reliable, relevant and useful to decision makers and have clear criteria for determining success.

Conclusions

The evaluation was innovative in using a broad range of data to assess outcomes of the Drink Safe Precincts (DSP) trial. It was ambitious, given limitations of the data sets and the short planning time frames of the DSP trial.

However, the evaluation was not timely and did not have clear criteria for determining success. It has not provided a strong evidentiary basis for reliable conclusions and its use will be limited for informing decisions on future similar trials.

A focused evaluation of each precinct would have provided more detailed information about the performance of each site and a stronger basis for decisions about the future of the three precincts and possible trial extension to other precincts.

Key findings

- This was the first time in Queensland that police, ambulance and hospital data were used together for an alcohol-related violence intervention. Each of these data sets has limitations which were not addressed effectively.
- The 14-month and 18-month evaluation reports were of limited use because they were completed after the two-year trial ended, did not include the extension period and were unable to guide any refinement of the trial or data collection.
- The evaluation was focused across the three precincts and did not adequately reflect the trial's place-based approach.
- The evaluation was not designed to assess the effectiveness of the trial's individual initiatives and did not identify which initiatives were working and which were not. This is a fundamental weakness for a trial of a place-based model intended to tailor the suite of interventions to local circumstances.

3.1 Background

Well-designed evaluations can strengthen public sector efficiency, effectiveness and accountability by:

- enhancing the ability to achieve government priorities and policy outcomes
- strengthening resource allocation, planning and decision making
- assessing and improving the performance and impact of service delivery
- demonstrating results as part of accountability to key stakeholders.

A culture of evaluation and continuous improvement can also assist future program design and management by encouraging the ongoing capture and transfer of learnings from individual programs.

We expected a better practice Drink Safe Precincts (DSP) trial evaluation process to:

- focus on key issues that inform decision making
- use a systematic and evidence-based approach to assess performance
- be reliable, useful and relevant to decision makers and stakeholders
- be timely
- detail criteria for determining the success of the trial and the evaluation itself.

3.2 Conclusions

The evaluation was not well planned or implemented and does not provide reliable conclusions on the effectiveness of the DSP trial. As a result, decisions about the trial's future will not be as fully informed as they could have been.

The evaluation plan was ambitious, given the short planning time frame, data limitations and the broad range of data used. Using a limited range of data sets and placing greater emphasis on addressing shortcomings may have achieved more reliable results. For example, hospital data could have been enhanced by gathering additional patient information to supplement that collected by hospital staff, such as when and where the injury occurred.

The conclusions of the 14-month and 18-month evaluation reports are open to alternative interpretations because no benchmarks or criteria were set to determine success of the trial or individual interventions. Determinations of success were arbitrary and not benchmarked against previous alcohol-related violence initiatives. In addition, identified variances in key measures are equally likely to be due to several uncontrolled factors external to the trial, such as changes in patron numbers, than to the impact of the trial’s interventions.

The 14-month and 18-month evaluation reports were of limited use, since they were completed after the two-year trial period had ended. Therefore, they were unable to guide any refinement of the trial or data collection. In effect, once the Department of the Premier and Cabinet has completed the final evaluation, it will have conducted three evaluations after the two-year trial period has ended, none of which will have assessed the extension periods.

Given the local nature of the DSP model, it would be more appropriate to have conducted an evaluation for each precinct, so that detailed information about the context, problems and interventions could be assessed and documented for each location. This is a fundamental weakness for a trial of a place-based model which is intended to tailor a suite of interventions to local circumstances.

3.3 Evaluation planning and design

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet was responsible for the evaluation of the DSP trial. It contracted the main data analysis to an external body, but the Department of the Premier and Cabinet interpreted the analysis, formed conclusions and reported the trial's results.

In planning for the trial's evaluation, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet developed an evaluation project plan, a data code book and a document identifying data sources.

The evaluation plan was ambitious in the range of data it gathered for analysis. It included three main administrative data sets:

- Queensland Ambulance Service call data
- Queensland Health emergency department presentation data for the Royal Brisbane and Women's, Gold Coast, and Townsville hospitals
- Queensland Police Service crime data.

This was the first time these three data sets had been used together in an evaluation of alcohol-related violence.

In addition, data was collected to assess the effectiveness of specific interventions within the trial such as liquor licensing compliance inspections, Brisbane City Council CCTV incident logs and rest and recovery services. While some of this data was reported in the evaluations, the evaluations were unable to demonstrate outcomes to show the effectiveness of these interventions.

Baseline data was collected for the major data sets for the three DSPs and for eight control sites:

- Brisbane CBD and Caxton Street
- Broadbeach CBD
- Bundaberg CBD
- Cairns CBD
- Ipswich CBD
- Mackay CBD
- Rockhampton CBD
- Toowoomba CBD.

3.3.1 Data issues and external factors

The broad range of collected data, the use of baseline data and the establishment of control sites were intended to provide a far richer picture of changes in alcohol-related violence and community safety than evaluations of previous interventions.

The chosen data all have significant limitations that affect their ability to reflect changes in alcohol-related violence.

The police data can accurately provide location and time information, allowing for reliable identification of incidents within the DSP precincts. However, it is limited because it is an indicator of police activity. As a large component of the trial involved increasing the number of police in entertainment precincts, it was almost inevitable that police activity would increase.

The police data outcome measures assessed were assault offences, good order offences (disorderly or indecent behaviour, obscene, insulting or offensive language and resist or hinder offences), offences against police officers and total offences. However, none of these offences is specifically alcohol-related, so a change in the level of any of these offences does not necessarily mean a change in the effect of alcohol-related behaviour.

Ambulance data also provide accurate time and location information, but do not include information about the presence or involvement of alcohol. The evaluation identified a 'most relevant' sub-group of calls as indicators for alcohol-related violence and community safety—assault/sexual assault, overdosing/poisoning and unconscious/fainting (or near-fainting).

The major drawback of the hospital data is its inability to provide location and time information—analysis cannot identify whether the alcohol-related injury to patients occurred in the DSP or elsewhere. The evaluation concluded that no reliable conclusions could be drawn about the Fortitude Valley or Surfers Paradise DSPs on the basis of the hospital data, though Townsville Hospital data did not have the same limitations. However, Townsville Hospital data was also unable to provide the location and time data necessary to distinguish injuries incurred within the DSP, as opposed to other areas of Townsville.

The evaluation could have assessed the range of competing explanations for changes in performance measures. Analysis could have tried to quantify the impact of these factors, so that competing explanations for the results could be credibly refuted.

A major weakness was the failure to assess patronage levels in each precinct. Changes in alcohol-related violence and other community safety factors could be due to changes in the number of people attending the precincts. There are several ways in which patronage levels can be estimated, such as mobile phone counting technology or using CCTV to count people in key locations to extrapolate across the precinct. This information is important to help assess whether changes in alcohol-related violence and community safety were the result of fewer people attending the precinct.

For example, a lengthy council redevelopment in the Surfers Paradise DSP may have affected patronage during the trial period, with a corresponding increase in the Broadbeach entertainment precinct, which is its control site. This is discussed further in Chapter 4.

3.3.2 Implementing the evaluation plan

The evaluation was designed to assess the effects of the total package of initiatives by comparing levels of alcohol-related violence and community safety to a baseline period and to the control zones. It was intended to answer the question: 'Has there been a change in the level of alcohol-related violence and community safety?'

The evaluation did not attempt to assess the impact of individual initiatives in each precinct. Without an assessment of the effectiveness of individual initiatives, the impact of scaling back or increasing the level of any individual intervention cannot be assessed. This makes it difficult to assess the likely success of applying the DSP model to other entertainment precincts around the state where the local context and mix of possible interventions varies.

Separate evaluations in each of the precincts would provide a greater chance of answering a more useful question: 'What works under what circumstances?' and has a better likelihood of explaining the differing results observed in the three precincts.

The original two-year trial finished at the end of November 2012, but has now been extended to September 2013. There are no plans to evaluate the trial's extension. Although key aspects of the trial, such as police resourcing, changed during the extension, an evaluation of this period may have indicated the impact of changes to elements of the trial and led to a more robust evaluation.

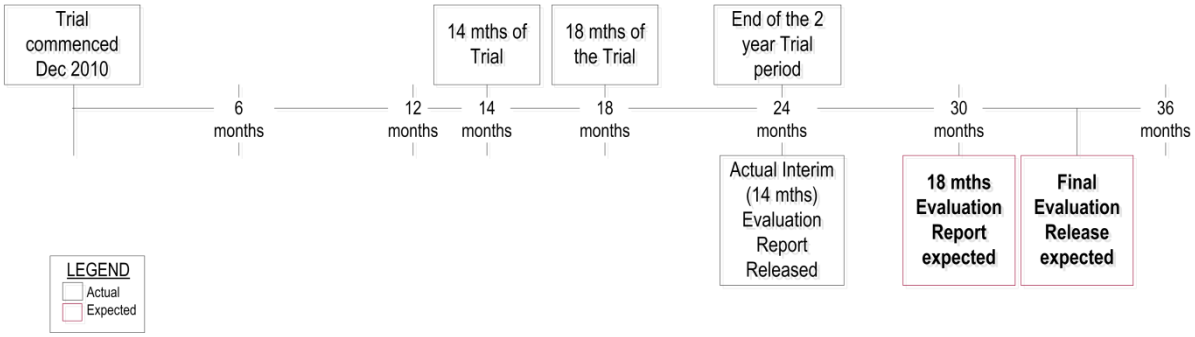
The evaluation assessed changes in alcohol-related violence and community safety on weekend drinking nights—Fridays and Saturdays, 6pm to 6am. But police have allocated part of their overtime funding for the DSP to nights other than the evaluated weekend drinking nights—for example, a Sunday night before a Monday public holiday.

While this is an appropriate use of police resources under the intelligence-led place and case-based policing model, this nevertheless means that significant aspects of the DSP trial have not been evaluated. It also compromises the evaluation of the weekend drinking nights as certain key measures, such as ambulance service calls and crime data, were calculated as a proportion of the rest of the week.

3.3.3 Timeliness of evaluation

The trial evaluation was not timely and, therefore, was unable to guide decisions to modify and improve the trial as it progressed. Figure 3A shows a timeline of the trial evaluation.

Figure 3A
Evaluation timeline



Source: QAO

The timing, purpose and intended value of each of the evaluation reports was not well planned and the time needed to collect, validate and analyse the data affected their timeliness. Data limitations were known prior to planning the evaluation, having been raised in the report by Parliament's Law, Justice and Safety Committee on its inquiry into alcohol-related violence. While the evaluation planning did identify some of these limitations, it did not detail the consequences or identify options, risks, mitigation strategies or contingencies to deal with these risks.

As a result, the 14-month and 18-month evaluation reports were not completed until 24 and 28 months (respectively) after the trial started. By this time, the two-year trial was complete. The timing of the evaluations meant that any opportunity to modify implementation, improve data collection and analysis and modify performance measures was lost.

4 Effectiveness and outcomes

In brief

Background

To be successful, a program must achieve its intended outcomes in line with its objectives. For the Drink Safe Precincts (DSP) trial, this meant that alcohol-related violence was to be reduced and community safety, public amenity and patron behaviour improved.

Conclusions

There is no reliable or conclusive evidence to demonstrate that the DSP trial has been effective and achieved its outcomes. Identified changes in key measures of alcohol-related violence and community safety have been mixed and limited and cannot be linked to the trial's interventions.

At the local level, the steering committees and police DSP inspectors have been effective at improving government and stakeholder communication and coordination. Overall strategic leadership across the trial has been lacking.

Key findings

- The three DSP steering committees meet regularly and bring together key government, industry and stakeholder representatives.
- The 14-month and 18-month evaluation reports concluded that there were some positive signs the trial has been successful at improving community safety and reducing alcohol-related violence, but this is not supported by the data.
- The community surveys were ineffective in measuring changes in perception of community safety.
- Enforcement directed to patrons has increased, but the management plans for each of the precincts reflect the intention that the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation's enforcement of liquor licensing laws would be maintained at existing levels.
- Due to the design of the trial and evaluation, it is not possible to attribute detected changes in levels of alcohol-related violence and community safety to the effect of the interventions rather than to influences external to the DSP.

4.1 Background

The Drink Safe Precincts (DSP) trial stemmed from the government's response to the Queensland Parliament's Law, Justice and Safety Committee report on its inquiry into alcohol-related violence. The aim of the DSP trial was to reduce alcohol-related violence and improve community safety. If successful, this would lead to social and economic benefits for the state by reducing the burden and costs to emergency services and hospitals and allowing for safer use of the precincts by the public.

The 14-month evaluation report drew the following key conclusions on the DSP trial:

- The place-based approach has improved the response to high levels of violence and disorder.
- The DSP model has ensured greater coordination of local level strategies, is well regarded by stakeholders and has improved perceptions of safety.
- The increased police presence and high-visibility strategies are widely believed to be effective, and have resulted in increased confidence in the safety of each area across all stakeholders.
- The support services provided by non-government organisations, such as Chaplain Watch, have been highly praised as an effective part of the trial.
- The introduction of the DSP trial is associated with positive signs suggesting a reduction in alcohol-related violence in the Fortitude Valley DSP, and especially the Surfers Paradise DSP. However, in Townsville, the introduction of the DSP trial is not associated with a clear reduction in alcohol-related violence and disorder.

These conclusions were supported in the 18-month evaluation report.

We examined whether intended impacts and outcomes were achieved and were cost effective. We expected to find in an effective trial that:

- outcome targets had been set and met
- results were reliable and defensible
- value for money could be demonstrated.

4.2 Conclusions

There is no reliable or conclusive evidence that the DSP trial has achieved its intended outcomes of reducing alcohol-related violence and improving community safety.

The changes in alcohol-related violence and community safety measures identified in the 14-month and 18-month evaluations were limited and mixed. These evaluations do not allow for any reliable conclusions on whether changes in police crime data, ambulance calls or hospital admissions are attributable to the DSP interventions, or to other factors that were not controlled in the trial. In this respect, correlation does not equal causation.

Also, the evaluation is unable to identify or discern the impact of each of the different elements of the trial, so its ability to provide models for other precincts is limited.

As a result, there is no reliable information for decision makers to determine whether:

- the trial should continue
- further funding should be made available and, if so, the amount of funding required
- the DSP model could be applied to other entertainment precincts, in what circumstances and with what expectation of success.

At a local level, the trial has been successful in bringing together key government, industry and community stakeholders through the steering committees. This has delivered greater communication and coordination to better address local issues. The appointment of police DSP inspectors has been crucial to this improvement.

The success of the local steering committees has not been fully exploited and issues common to all three precincts have not been addressed in a coordinated way.

4.3 Assessing intended outcomes

The reliability of conclusions from the evaluations is questionable, as the data analysis supports alternate interpretations of the results.

The 14-month and 18-month evaluation reports concluded that the trial was associated with positive signs suggesting a reduction in alcohol-related violence in Fortitude Valley and Surfers Paradise DSPs, but not in Townsville. The results of the evaluation for the three precincts are summarised in Figure 4A.

Figure 4A
Evaluation results

	Ambulance	Hospital	Police
	Rate of calls for service on weekend drinking nights (% change)	Rate of alcohol-related presentations on weekend drinking nights (% change)	Rate of total offences on weekend drinking nights (% change)
Townsville	25.4 ↑	11.1 ↑	4.4 ↑
Fortitude Valley	5.8 ↓	2.2 ↓	9.9 ↓
Surfers Paradise	9.7 ↓	no change	24.2 ↓

Source: Drink Safe Precincts: Evaluation update—18 months of the trial and Queensland Audit Office

While the above results prima facie tend to support the evaluation's conclusion of improvement in Fortitude Valley and Surfers Paradise and deterioration in Townsville, further assessment of the data in the following sections suggests an alternative conclusion.

4.3.1 Levels of patronage and displacement

There was no effort to assess whether patronage in the precincts had risen, declined or remained steady during the trial period and how it compared with the baseline period and the control zones.

Several stakeholders and the Surfers Paradise DSP steering committee reported that there had been a noticeable drop in patronage in the Surfers Paradise DSP due to a lengthy council redevelopment within the precinct and, more recently, the closure following fire of three venues in the precinct.

A comparison of data for the Surfers Paradise DSP and the Broadbeach control zone is detailed in Figure 4B.

Figure 4B
Surfers Paradise DSP and Broadbeach control zone comparison

	Total offences	Good order offences	Offences against police	Assault offences	Ambulance calls for service
	(% change)	(% change)	(% change)	(% change)	(% change)
Surfers Paradise DSP	24.2 ↓	27.9 ↓	39.6 ↓	23.3 ↓	9.7 ↓
Broadbeach	67.5 ↑	144.5 ↑	54.5 ↑	8.2 ↑	12.5 ↑

Source: Drink Safe Precincts: Evaluation update—18 months of the trial and Queensland Audit Office

The improvement in the indicators for Surfers Paradise has been counterbalanced by deterioration in Broadbeach. Without patron numbers and specific analysis of the timing of the changes in these measures, it is not possible to determine whether the reductions in the Surfers Paradise DSP and increases in the Broadbeach control zone are a result of displacement.

4.3.2 Effect of different policing models

The evaluation did not consider the trial's placed-based nature and the precincts' local context. Specifically, the policing model applied in the Townsville DSP differed from that of DSPs at Surfers Paradise and Fortitude Valley. A de-escalation model of policing was applied in the latter two DSPs. The different circumstances, facilities and support services in the Townsville DSP required a low-tolerance model there, consistent with the place-based design of the trial and the Queensland Police Service intelligence-based 'case and place' approach to policing.

Under a low-tolerance model, less serious offences and offences against police could be expected to increase, but more serious offences such as assault would be expected to decrease. In contrast, a focus on de-escalation, as practised in the Surfers Paradise and Fortitude Valley DSPs, should see a decrease in less serious good order offences as, rather than being processed by police, offenders are warned, moved on or diverted to support services.

The police crime data is detailed in Figure 4C.

Figure 4C
Police crime data comparison

	Assault	Good order offences	Offences against police
	(% change)	(% change)	(% change)
Townsville	28.9 ↓	22.3 ↑	8.8 ↑
Fortitude Valley	6.7 ↑	19.8 ↓	31.6 ↓
Surfers Paradise	23.3 ↓	27.9 ↓	39.6 ↓

Source: Drink Safe Precincts: Evaluation update—18 months of the trial and Queensland Audit Office

The data for the Townsville DSP are consistent with expectations for a low-tolerance policing approach. The differing results for good order offences between Townsville and the two precincts using a de-escalation strategy are likely to be attributable to police in DSPs at Fortitude Valley and Surfers Paradise taking alternative actions for good order offences, rather than the offences actually decreasing.

The evaluation reports' conclusions fail to consider the different model of policing in the Townsville DSP compared with DSPs at Fortitude Valley and Surfers Paradise.

In addition, Townsville and Surfers Paradise applied the DSP interventions on Tuesday and Thursday nights respectively. These were not included in the evaluation of the DSP trial and the effectiveness of these interventions was not assessed.

4.3.3 Analysis of ambulance data

The evaluation forms its conclusions on overall ambulance calls for service. But, as noted previously, it identified a 'most relevant' group of calls as indicators for alcohol-related violence and community safety—assault/sexual assault, overdosing/poisoning and unconscious/fainting (or near-fainting).

The trends in ambulance calls for its 'assault/sexual offences' code shows a markedly different picture than that based on all ambulance calls. Figure 4D shows ambulance assault/sexual offence data and police assault data.

Figure 4D
Assault data

	Police data	Ambulance data
	(rate of assault offences—% change)	(calls for service—assault/sexual assault—% change)
Townsville	28.9 ↓	5.0 ↓
Fortitude Valley	6.7 ↑	0.5 ↑
Surfers Paradise	23.3 ↓	7.4 ↓

Source: Drink Safe Precincts: Evaluation update—18 months of the trial and Queensland Audit Office

The results shown here do not support the DSP evaluation report conclusion that there are positive signs of reductions in alcohol-related violence for Fortitude Valley DSP, but not for Townsville. Furthermore, the Fortitude Valley DSP performance largely mirrored that of its Brisbane CBD and Caxton Street control zone and was worse in some key areas, such as assault offences. A stronger evaluation design would have identified whether the interventions in Fortitude Valley DSP affected the Brisbane CBD and Caxton Street control zone. Figure 4E compares the Fortitude Valley DSP and Brisbane CBD and Caxton Street control zone data.

Figure 4E
Fortitude Valley DSP and Brisbane CBD and Caxton Street control zone comparison

	Total offences	Good order offences	Offences against police	Assault offences	Ambulance calls for service
	(% change)	(% change)	(% change)	(% change)	(% change)
Fortitude Valley DSP	9.9 ↓	19.8 ↓	31.6 ↓	6.7 ↑	5.8 ↓
Brisbane CBD & Caxton Street control zone	4.1 ↓	19.5 ↓	40.7 ↓	9.0 ↓	3.3 ↑

Source: Drink Safe Precincts: Evaluation update—18 months of the trial and Queensland Audit Office

4.3.4 Perceptions and surveys

The evaluation included two surveys of patrons, licensees/managers, business owners, workers and residents of the three DSPs. The purpose of the surveys was to assess whether there had been improvements in the perception of community safety as a result of the trial. However, the choice of survey methodology and the small response numbers did not allow for an assessment of changes in perceptions of safety. A stronger design, such as a panel survey methodology where respondents are surveyed several times, would be better at controlling for differences in survey participants and therefore identifying changes over time. This would also help control the response rate.

The three local DSP steering committees brought together representatives of key local, state, industry, and non-government organisations to promote whole-of-community ownership of problems and work toward solutions. The committees provided a good vehicle for coordinating combined local, state, industry, and community knowledge and resources to address local issues quickly and effectively.

4.3.5 Liquor licensing enforcement and public amenity

Research in several jurisdictions indicates that high-visibility policing, in combination with targeted liquor licensing enforcement, is necessary to achieve sustainable reductions in alcohol-related violence. Consistent with this, the trial intended to include increased and high-visibility policing and to produce significant reductions in liquor licensing breaches.

Greater numbers of police with higher visibility provided increased enforcement of patron behaviour in DSPs. The Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation could not demonstrate the effectiveness of its enforcement activities in the three DSPs because its baseline data was not sufficient nor specific enough for this purpose and was not used in the evaluation.

The Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation advised that it targeted the trial areas as part of its existing risk based compliance plan. It therefore did not plan to improve, enhance or increase its licensing enforcement activities from pre-trial levels. This represents a missed opportunity to maximise reductions in alcohol-related violence.

The DSP trial included an objective to improve the public amenity of the precincts. There were two performance measures for this objective—the number of public urination offences and improvements in the perception of public amenity.

There has been no demonstrated improvement in the public amenity of any of the three DSPs. The lack of public toilet facilities was identified as an issue pre-trial, and repeatedly raised as a problem for more than two years of the trial. The Surfers Paradise DSP had portable toilets installed for a 12-week period, but this was discontinued and no additional toilets were provided in the other two DSP precincts. There was no assessment of any change in public urination offences during this period.

Improvements in the perception of public amenity were to be measured through the two surveys of patrons, licensees/managers, business owners, workers and residents of the three DSPs. There was no assessment made of changes in the perception of public amenity from the information reported in these surveys.

4.4 Evaluation learnings

There have been earlier major campaigns to tackle alcohol-related violence. For example, Operation Merit, with funding of $1.57 million, enabled the Queensland Police Service to increase its policing presence in entertainment hotspots across the state between November 2009 and the end of January 2010. Its four strategies comprised high-visibility policing, covert enforcement of liquor licensing offences, targeting of known crime hotspots and enforcement of alcohol management plans.

An additional 16 000 hours of police enforcement focused on targeting alcohol-fuelled violence and anti-social behaviour in high-volume entertainment areas during the festive season. Operation Merit reduced assaults by 23.6 per cent, compared with the previous year.

Although not directly comparable with the DSP in duration or scale of the range of interventions, there were potentially valuable lessons to be learnt from Operation Merit. For example, the evaluation of Operation Merit suffered from not having identified patronage levels and their potential contribution to results. This lesson was not applied to the DSP evaluation which, as previously discussed, suffers the same problem.

The evaluation of the DSP trial offered an opportunity to quantify the contribution of factors other than high-visibility policing, such as the provision of support, rest and recovery services and coordination between venues, police, ambulance, community support services and transport providers.

However, the DSP evaluation was unable to show which of these components contributed most, or least, to the result. Therefore, it cannot provide a model to help other precincts with alcohol-related problems choose the most cost effective mix of factors for their local circumstances.

The evaluation's failure to address different policing approaches in DSPs at Fortitude Valley, Surfers Paradise and Townsville further reduces its usefulness in providing a model for other precincts.

The de-escalation strategy used in DSPs at Fortitude Valley and Surfers Paradise was possible because of the existing network of stakeholders offering support services. Other urban centres planning to adopt elements of the DSP are unlikely to be large enough to have such comprehensive networks, and will have policing challenges similar to the Townsville DSP, rather than DSPs at Fortitude Valley and Surfers Paradise.

4.5 Unintended impacts

The trial has had an unintended impact on police flexibility to allocate resources where and when needed under its place and case-based model of intelligence-led policing.

The trial places a requirement and expectation on the Queensland Police Service to resource each DSP with a certain number of police to achieve high-visibility and rapid response, regardless of whether a quiet or busy night is anticipated. Police have been restricted in their flexibility to redeploy officers from the DSP precincts when they can be better used elsewhere.

The additional police officers required during the DSP trial were originally provided on overtime. By staffing DSPs on overtime, police were not taken from other police areas or duties to provide the greater presence for the DSP trial.

While the overtime model has been effective in limiting the staffing impact of the trial, it is expensive. The $6.282 million funding for the police was for overtime payments and, increasingly, officers on overtime have been supplemented by rostered staff taken from other policing areas and duties. This practice increased significantly after the July 2012 announcement of the first extension of the trial. The police staffing levels needed by the DSP have required additional expenditure on overtime beyond the $6.282 million, as well as the cost of providing additional rostered police.

Appendices

Appendix A—Comments

Auditor-General Act 2009 (Section 64)—Comments received

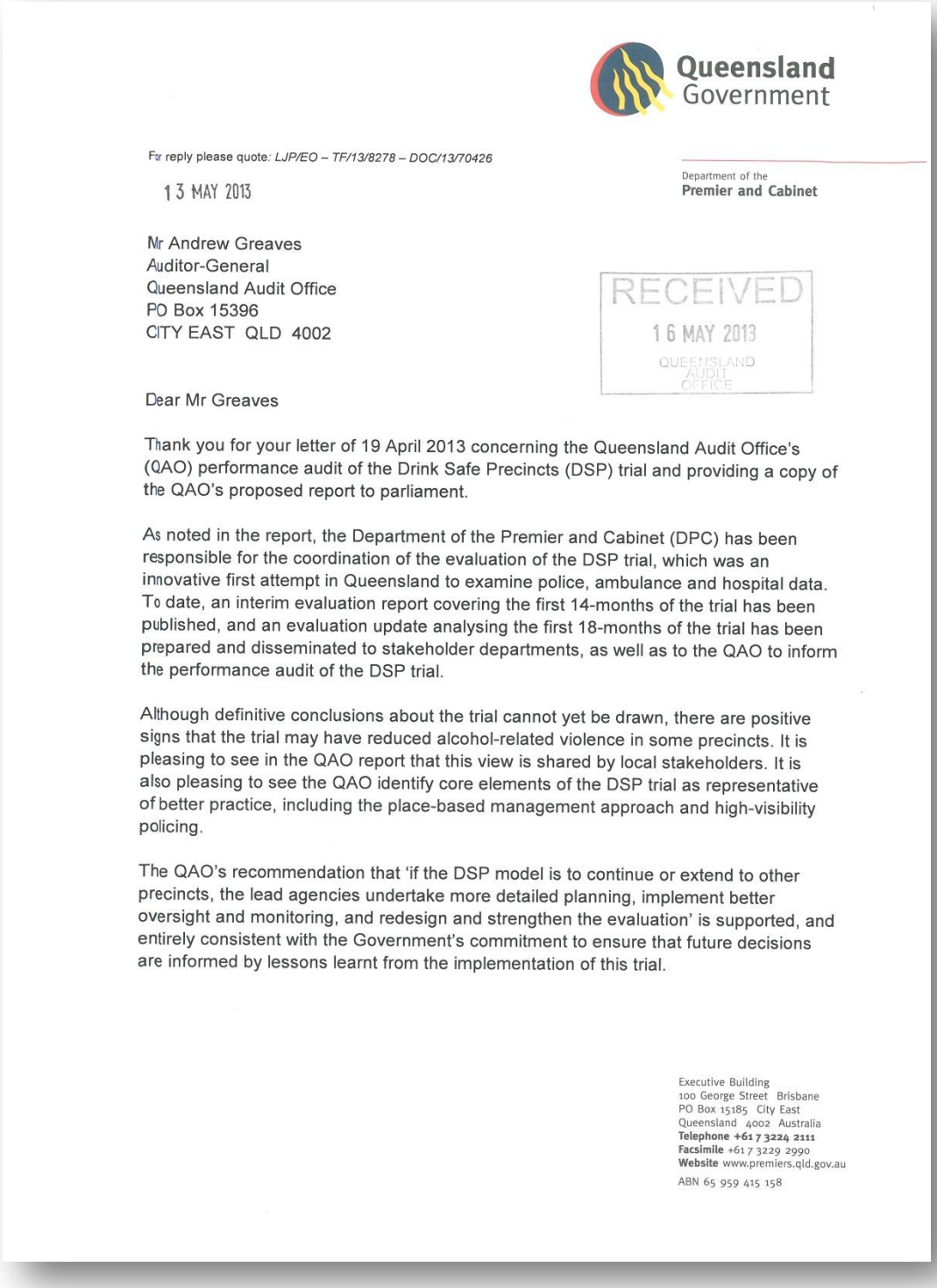
Introduction

In accordance with section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009* a copy of this report was provided to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and the Queensland Police Service with a request for comment.

Responsibility for the accuracy, fairness and balance of the comments rests with the heads of these agencies.

Comments received

Response provided by the Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet on 13 May 2013.



Queensland Government

For reply please quote: *LJP/EO – TF/13/8278 – DOC/13/70426*

13 MAY 2013

Department of the
Premier and Cabinet

Mr Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
PO Box 15396
CITY EAST QLD 4002

RECEIVED
16 MAY 2013
QUEENSLAND AUDIT OFFICE

Dear Mr Greaves

Thank you for your letter of 19 April 2013 concerning the Queensland Audit Office's (QAO) performance audit of the Drink Safe Precincts (DSP) trial and providing a copy of the QAO's proposed report to parliament.

As noted in the report, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) has been responsible for the coordination of the evaluation of the DSP trial, which was an innovative first attempt in Queensland to examine police, ambulance and hospital data. To date, an interim evaluation report covering the first 14-months of the trial has been published, and an evaluation update analysing the first 18-months of the trial has been prepared and disseminated to stakeholder departments, as well as to the QAO to inform the performance audit of the DSP trial.

Although definitive conclusions about the trial cannot yet be drawn, there are positive signs that the trial may have reduced alcohol-related violence in some precincts. It is pleasing to see in the QAO report that this view is shared by local stakeholders. It is also pleasing to see the QAO identify core elements of the DSP trial as representative of better practice, including the place-based management approach and high-visibility policing.

The QAO's recommendation that 'if the DSP model is to continue or extend to other precincts, the lead agencies undertake more detailed planning, implement better oversight and monitoring, and redesign and strengthen the evaluation' is supported, and entirely consistent with the Government's commitment to ensure that future decisions are informed by lessons learnt from the implementation of this trial.

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Comments received

Response provided by the Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet on 13 May 2013.

The challenges encountered by the evaluation and identified by the QAO are issues not only for the DSP trial, but for the evaluation of all criminal justice trials in Queensland. overcoming challenges such as these are all part of building an open, accountable and transparent government.

The Open Data initiative, led by DPC, has been pushing a cultural change across the Queensland Government, to make government administrative data readily accessible. It is clear, however, that more still needs to be done to ensure that robust agency data is made available to inform policy and practice, and we will continue to progress reforms in this area.

One important issue raised in the QAO's proposed report relates to the extent to which the evaluation assessed the effectiveness of individual, place-based initiatives. These findings highlight the importance of planning and resourcing of evaluation projects within government. The benefits to government of having highly reliable and detailed results are clear, however, place-based evaluations and analysis of individual strategies require the dedication of substantial resources and the right balance must be found between these two competing demands. DPC will continue to encourage agencies to undertake detailed planning for evaluations to ensure that robust assessments are conducted of government policies and programs.

Please be assured that I am committed to ensuring that quality evaluations are undertaken of key government initiatives and we will take into account the issues that the QAO has raised about better supporting and targeting our evaluations, in order to inform future policy development and decision making.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comment on the QAO's proposed report to parliament.

Yours sincerely

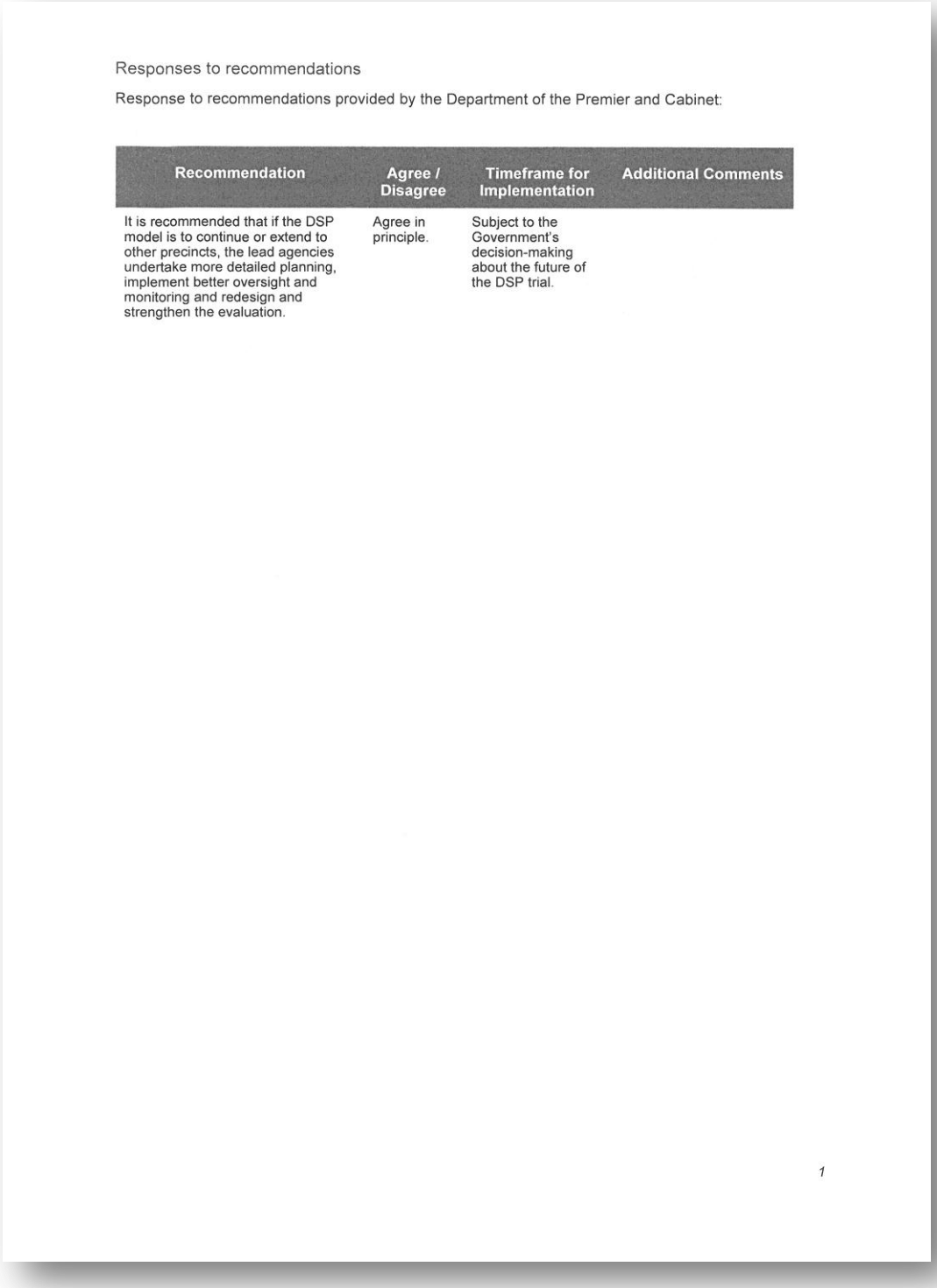
Jon Grayson
Director-General

***Encl**

Page 2 of 2

Responses to recommendations

Response to recommendations provided by the Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet on 13 May 2013.



Responses to recommendations

Response to recommendations provided by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet:

Recommendation	Agree / Disagree	Timeframe for Implementation	Additional Comments
It is recommended that if the DSP model is to continue or extend to other precincts, the lead agencies undertake more detailed planning, implement better oversight and monitoring and redesign and strengthen the evaluation.	Agree in principle.	Subject to the Government's decision-making about the future of the DSP trial.	

1

Comments received

Response provided by the Director-General, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services on 13 May 2013.

RECEIVED
14 MAY 2013
QUEENSLAND AUDIT OFFICE

Queensland Government

Office of the
Director-General

Department of
Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Your reference: 2013-9104P
Our reference: COM 03893-2013

13 MAY 2013

Mr Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
PO Box 15396
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Mr Greaves

Thank you for your recent correspondence providing an opportunity to comment on the final report to Parliament regarding the performance audit on Drink Safe Precincts trials.

I note the finding that the provision of support services, such as rest and recovery areas, was widely viewed by stakeholders as valuable. The report also identifies the importance of effective planning, design and implementation to ensure the success of programs.

I support the recommendation for lead agencies to undertake more detailed planning and implement better oversight and monitoring should Drink Safe Precincts support services continue or extend to other precincts.

At the advent of any new program, the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services utilises needs-based planning to identify and plan for future funding. The department's funding policies ensure accountability, transparency and probity, providing for adequate time to include community and industry consultation and risk management.

The report refers to place-based service delivery models when components of the same model were used in each location. In the event of the continuation of Drink Safe Precincts and establishment of new precincts, the department would seek to consult with local stakeholders and community groups to encourage local ownership and coordination, resulting in the development of truly place-based service models.

I have enclosed the department's response to the report, indicating that we agree with the recommendation.

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Comments received

Response provided by the Director-General, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services on 13 May 2013.

If you require any further information or assistance in relation to this matter, please contact Ms Barbara Shaw, Director, Family and Individual Support, Social Inclusion, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services on 3006 8856.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Allison
Director-General

Enc (1)

Responses to recommendations

Response to recommendations provided by the Director-General, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services on 13 May 2013.

Drink Safe Precinct (DSP) Trial

Responses to recommendations

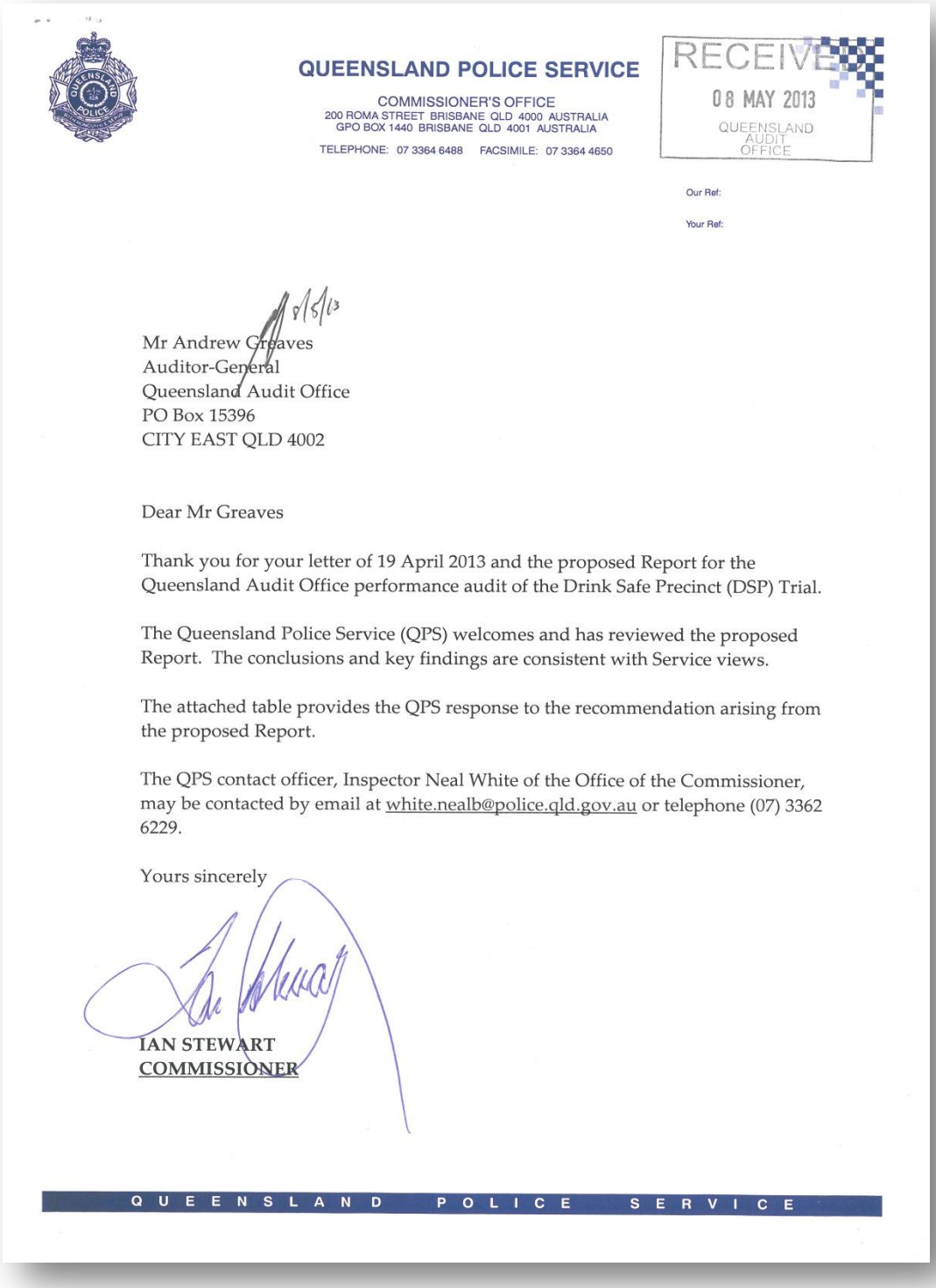
Response to recommendations provided by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services:

Recommendation	Agree / Disagree	Timeframe for Implementation	Additional Comments
It is recommended that if the DSP model is to continue or extend to other precincts, the lead agencies undertake more detailed planning, implement better oversight and monitoring and redesign and strengthen the evaluation.	Agree	**6 months** after any decision to continue in current locations **9 months** after any decision to extend to additional locations	Continue with current model in current locations – 6 months This timeframe allows for: - consultation and planning for true place-based service model in each location; - transparent open tender funding process with due probity and assessment; and - commencement of new service agreements on 1 April 2014. Extend to other locations – 9 months This timeframe allows for: - identification of need in other entertainment precincts; - combined planning process for localised response in partnership and integration with existing services and community groups; - transparent open tender funding process with due probity and assessment; and - commencement of new service agreements on 1 July 2014.

1

Comments received

Response provided by the Commissioner, Queensland Police Service on 8 May 2013.



QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

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RECEIVED
08 MAY 2013
QUEENSLAND AUDIT OFFICE

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

8/5/13

Mr Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
PO Box 15396
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Mr Greaves

Thank you for your letter of 19 April 2013 and the proposed Report for the Queensland Audit Office performance audit of the Drink Safe Precinct (DSP) Trial.

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) welcomes and has reviewed the proposed Report. The conclusions and key findings are consistent with Service views.

The attached table provides the QPS response to the recommendation arising from the proposed Report.

The QPS contact officer, Inspector Neal White of the Office of the Commissioner, may be contacted by email at white.nealb@police.qld.gov.au or telephone (07) 3362 6229.

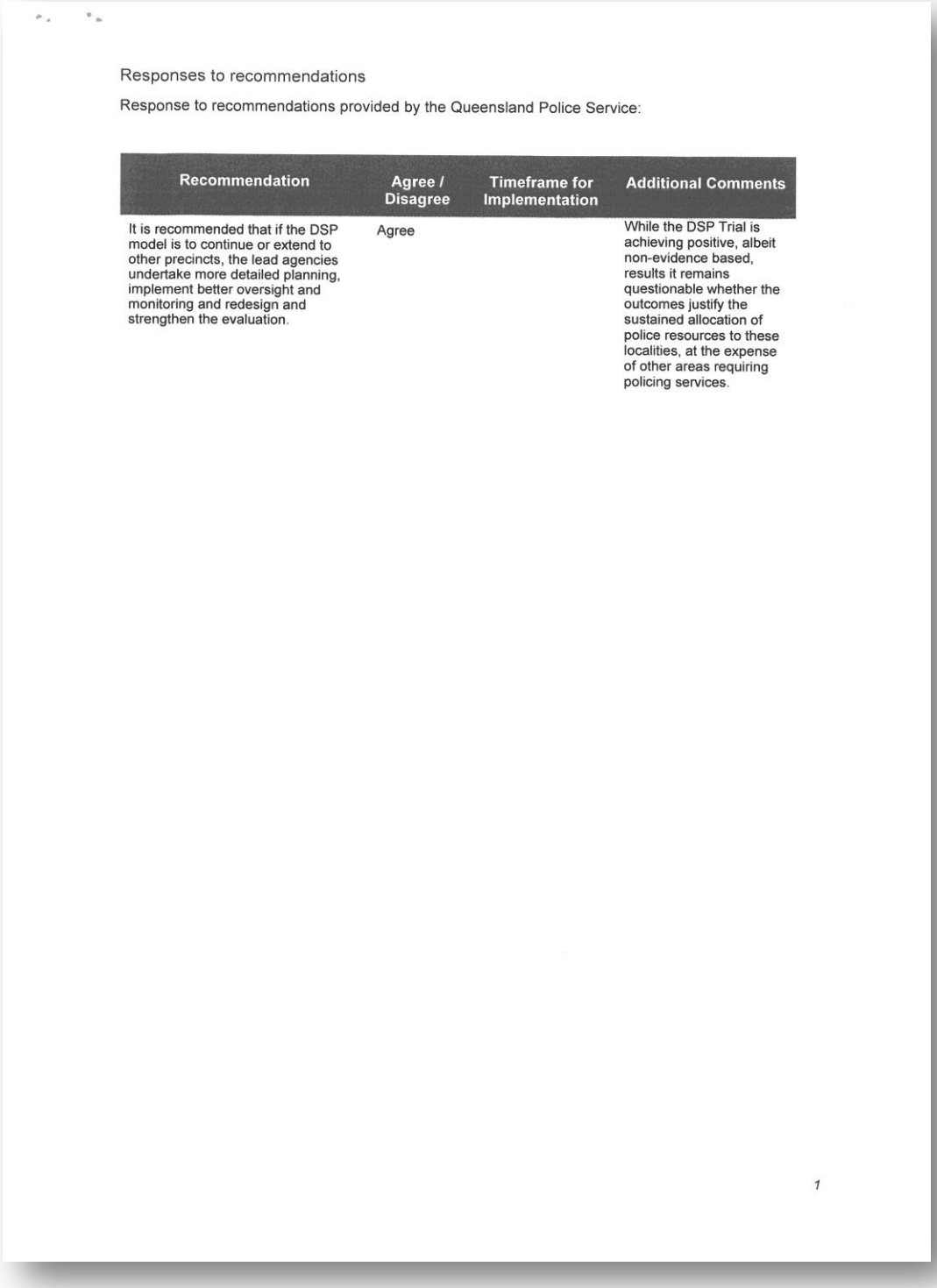
Yours sincerely

IAN STEWART
COMMISSIONER

QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

Responses to recommendations

Response to recommendations provided by the Commissioner, Queensland Police Service on 8 May 2013.



Responses to recommendations

Response to recommendations provided by the Queensland Police Service:

Recommendation	Agree / Disagree	Timeframe for Implementation	Additional Comments
It is recommended that if the DSP model is to continue or extend to other precincts, the lead agencies undertake more detailed planning, implement better oversight and monitoring and redesign and strengthen the evaluation.	Agree		While the DSP Trial is achieving positive, albeit non-evidence based, results it remains questionable whether the outcomes justify the sustained allocation of police resources to these localities, at the expense of other areas requiring policing services.

1

Comments received

Response provided by the Director-General, Department of Justice and Attorney-General on 10 May 2013.

Queensland Government

Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Office of the Director-General

Our reference: OGR-05370, 2179089
Your reference: 2013-9104P

10 MAY 2013

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50 Ann Street Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
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Mr Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
PO Box 15396
CITY EAST QLD 4002

RECEIVED
16 MAY 2013
QUEENSLAND AUDIT OFFICE

Dear Mr Greaves

Thank you for your letter dated 19 April 2013 enclosing the proposed report on the performance audit of the Drink Safe Precinct (DSP) trial conducted by the Queensland Audit Office (QAO).

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed audit report and the associated recommendation. While DJAG agrees in principle with the recommendation that, "the lead agencies undertake more detailed planning, implement better oversight and monitoring", this seems to imply that if the DSP model is to continue beyond the trial period, it will continue in its current trial format and certain conditions will remain the same in the future.

The DSP trial arrangements, including the planning, monitoring and evaluation, were designed to test a new concept. Following the results of the full trial evaluation, the Government will make decisions about the future of the DSP approach which may result in the current model being re-designed, implemented in full or part or not continued.

The extensive level of oversight, monitoring and evaluation that have been integral to the DSP trial as a Government funded initiative are not considered sustainable on a long term basis. In this regard, it is possible that a continuation of DSPs, or extension to other locations, could see Government and other stakeholders assume different roles. If DSPs do continue under the same or different conditions, they will move to a 'business as usual' status with appropriate sustainable planning, monitoring and evaluation strategies adopted.

DJAG's response to the recommendation has been completed and is enclosed for your consideration. Also enclosed are the Department's comments on the proposed report to Parliament.

Comments received

Response provided by the Director-General, Department of Justice and Attorney-General on 10 May 2013.

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Mr Michael Sarquis, Executive Director, Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation, DJAG, on 3247 5963 or by email to michael.sarquis@olgr.qld.gov.au.

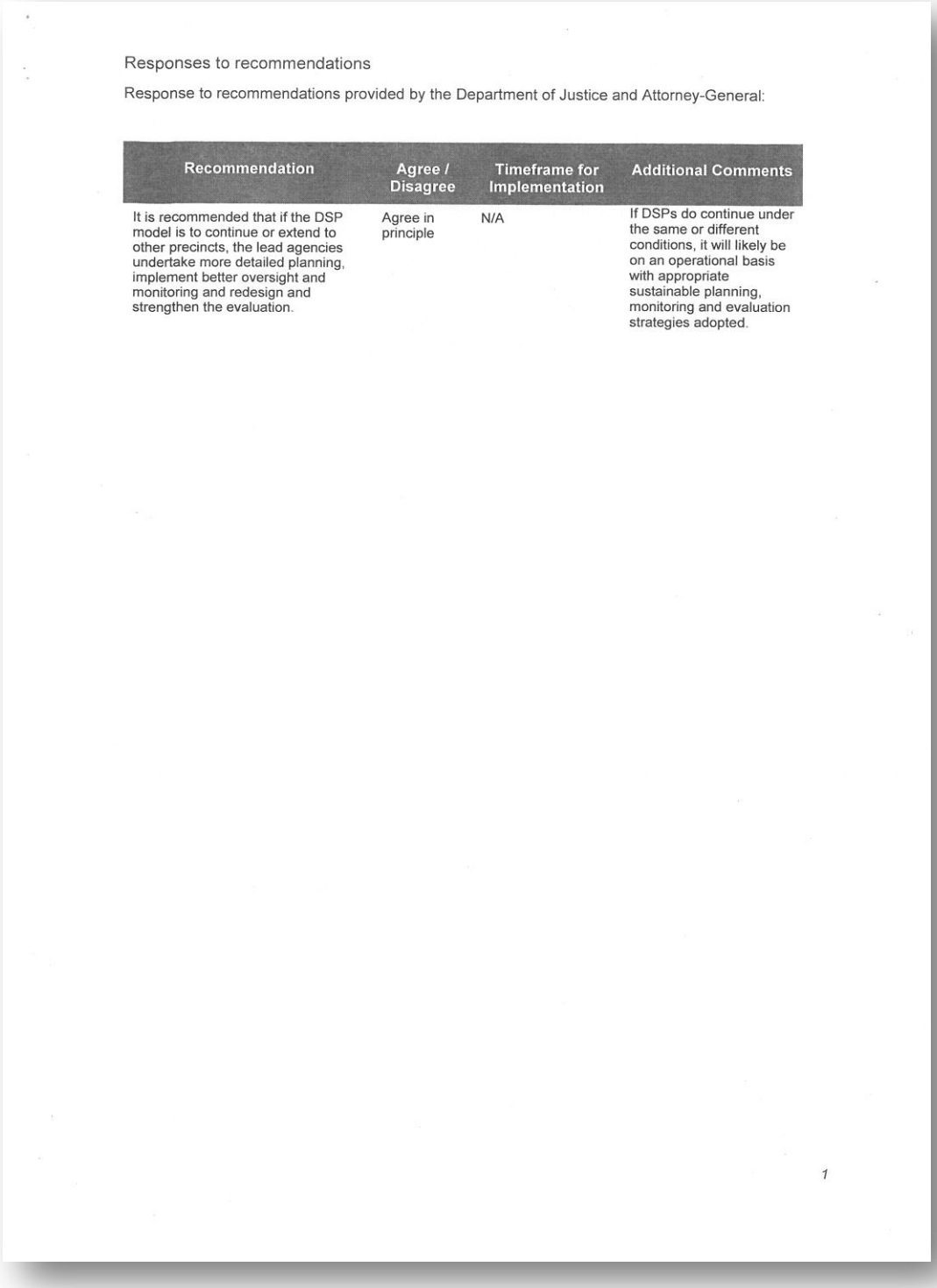
Yours sincerely

John Sosso
Director-General

Enc.

Responses to recommendations

Response to recommendations provided by the Director-General, Department of Justice and Attorney-General on 10 May 2013.



Responses to recommendations

Response to recommendations provided by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General:

Recommendation	Agree / Disagree	Timeframe for Implementation	Additional Comments
It is recommended that if the DSP model is to continue or extend to other precincts, the lead agencies undertake more detailed planning, implement better oversight and monitoring and redesign and strengthen the evaluation.	Agree in principle	N/A	If DSPs do continue under the same or different conditions, it will likely be on an operational basis with appropriate sustainable planning, monitoring and evaluation strategies adopted.

1

Responses to recommendations

Response to recommendations provided by the Director-General, Department of Justice and Attorney-General on 10 May 2013.

Response to the proposed report – Performance Audit of the Drink Safe Precinct (DSP) Trial provided by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General :

1. Section 1.5 - The audit's objective was *'to assess whether the DSP **trial** is effective and is achieving intended impacts and outcomes*'. The 2 year DSP trial commenced in December 2010 and concluded in November 2012. The Government agreed to continue operations until September 2013 to allow time for decisions to be made about the future of DSPs. However the trial period, including the evaluation, concluded in November 2012 as planned. The audit report considers and makes a number of comments on DSP funding and service delivery arrangements for police and support services in the post-trial extension period. DJAG is of the opinion that this was not within the scope of the audit to review, as it falls outside of the period that the DSP model was being trialled and evaluated. In this regard, a number of statements made throughout the report are misleading and have an impact on the information presented by the QAO on the actual DSP trial. For example –

   - '*The 2 year DSP trial commenced in 2010 and was due to finish in November 2012*' (Summary, page 1). The trial did conclude in November 2012.

   - '*More than 2 years after the DSP trial commenced, after a total investment over $10 million, and two evaluations'* (Conclusions, page 1) and *'The total approved funding for the trial was hence $9.097 million*' (Section 2.5). Both these amounts for the trial period are incorrect. The Government provided $8.534 million for the trial. The QAO has included additional funding that was provided to continue operations in the trial areas while decisions are being made about its future.

2. Section 4.0, '*OLGR had no plans to increase compliance activities directed at licensees'*.. This is incorrect. The management plans reflect OLGR's intention to deliver targeted Responsible Service of Alcohol sessions and to participate in joint operations with other agencies, including the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and the Office of Fair Trading (OFT).

3. Section 4.3.5, '*OLGR could not demonstrate the effectiveness of its enforcement activities in the three DSP precincts because it was unable to provide baseline data'*. This statement is incorrect. In December 2010, OLGR provided baseline data to the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) on compliance activity in the DSP and moratorium areas of the State for the 17 months proceeding the trial period. OLGR understands that this data was used in the evaluation as an activity measure.

4. Section 4.3.5 – '*(OLGR) did not plan to improve, enhance or increase its licensing enforcement activities from pre-trial levels'*. The QAO agreed that the planning documents do not identify increased or enhanced enforcement of licensing conditions or laws. Each of the management plans reflect the OLGR's enforcement of liquor licensing laws would be maintained at existing levels. The report fails to recognise that OLGR already has a greater compliance focus on key entertainment precincts, including the DSP trial locations, compared to other areas of the State. As OLGR already targets the trial areas as part of their existing risk based compliance plan, the OLGR continued a higher level of enforcement activities in the DSPs compared to other locations, throughout the trial period. Further it is important to note that the audit does not give attention to the fact that the QPS also has powers for liquor enforcement and that the enforcement of liquor licensing laws has been delivered more broadly through the

Responses to recommendations

Response to recommendations provided by the Director-General, Department of Justice and Attorney-General on 10 May 2013.

high visibility policing, including a large number of walk throughs of licensed premises that have been conducted by both QPS and OLGR.

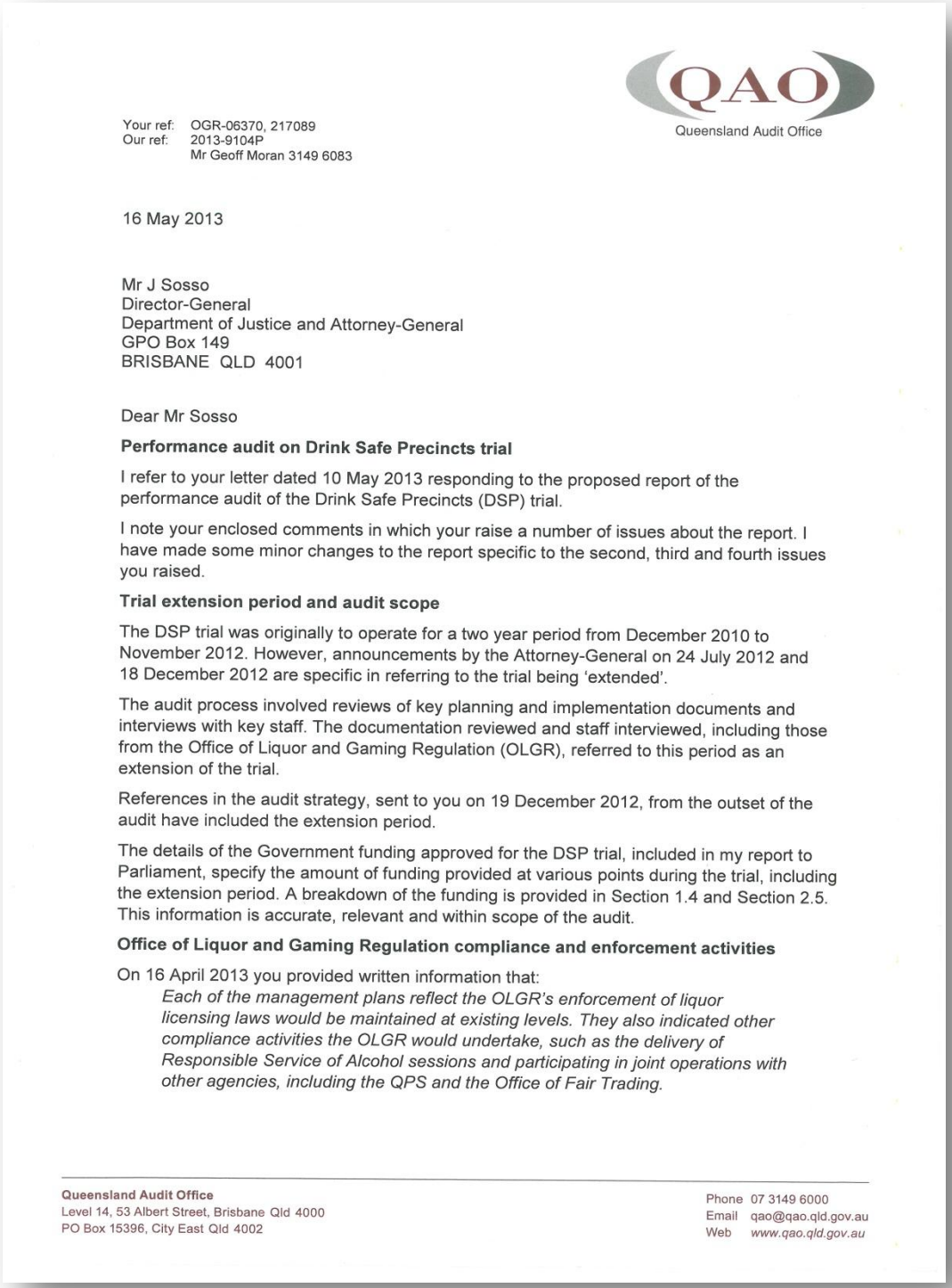
5. Section 3.0 - *'The 14 and 18 month evaluations were of limited use because they were completed after the two year trial ended, and did not include the extension period and were unable to guide any refinement of the trial or data collection'*. Although the 14 month evaluation was not published until December 2012, the results were pivotal in serving to inform Cabinet Budget Review Committee in November 2012 of their decision to continue post-trial operations in the DSPs while awaiting the results from the final evaluation. The evaluation did not include the extension period as it was not considered part of the trial.

6. Section 2.4 refers to the Australian National Audit Office publication *'Implementation of Programme and Policy Initiatives - Making Implementation matter'* where it states that "the lead agency should have a role of ensuring that: programme implementation is meeting the Government's objective; a process has been established where information is shared and flows between the agencies involved, performance is monitored and the commitment by other agencies (as well as their own) is being met". As a premise to this statement, this same publication also makes it clear that 'a lead agency must be identified and its role articulated and accepted by other relevant agencies'. As stated in this same section of the report, OLGR claims that the lead agency role was neither articulated nor defined to enable fulfilling these expectations.

7. QAO also referred to the publication *Governance models for Location Based Initiatives*' to demonstrate that OLGR had a clear lead agency role in resolving common issues across the three precincts. While OLGR does not dispute this may be better practice, it is unreasonable to refer to a publication that was published in 2011, after the trial commenced, as an expectation for the level of involvement or the role of the lead agency, given it was never defined in the context of the trial itself.

Auditor-General response

Response provided by the Auditor-General to the previous letter from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.



Queensland Audit Office

Your ref: OGR-06370, 217089
Our ref: 2013-9104P
Mr Geoff Moran 3149 6083

16 May 2013

Mr J Sosso
Director-General
Department of Justice and Attorney-General
GPO Box 149
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Mr Sosso

Performance audit on Drink Safe Precincts trial

I refer to your letter dated 10 May 2013 responding to the proposed report of the performance audit of the Drink Safe Precincts (DSP) trial.

I note your enclosed comments in which your raise a number of issues about the report. I have made some minor changes to the report specific to the second, third and fourth issues you raised.

Trial extension period and audit scope

The DSP trial was originally to operate for a two year period from December 2010 to November 2012. However, announcements by the Attorney-General on 24 July 2012 and 18 December 2012 are specific in referring to the trial being 'extended'.

The audit process involved reviews of key planning and implementation documents and interviews with key staff. The documentation reviewed and staff interviewed, including those from the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation (OLGR), referred to this period as an extension of the trial.

References in the audit strategy, sent to you on 19 December 2012, from the outset of the audit have included the extension period.

The details of the Government funding approved for the DSP trial, included in my report to Parliament, specify the amount of funding provided at various points during the trial, including the extension period. A breakdown of the funding is provided in Section 1.4 and Section 2.5. This information is accurate, relevant and within scope of the audit.

Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation compliance and enforcement activities

On 16 April 2013 you provided written information that:

> *Each of the management plans reflect the OLGR's enforcement of liquor licensing laws would be maintained at existing levels. They also indicated other compliance activities the OLGR would undertake, such as the delivery of Responsible Service of Alcohol sessions and participating in joint operations with other agencies, including the QPS and the Office of Fair Trading.*

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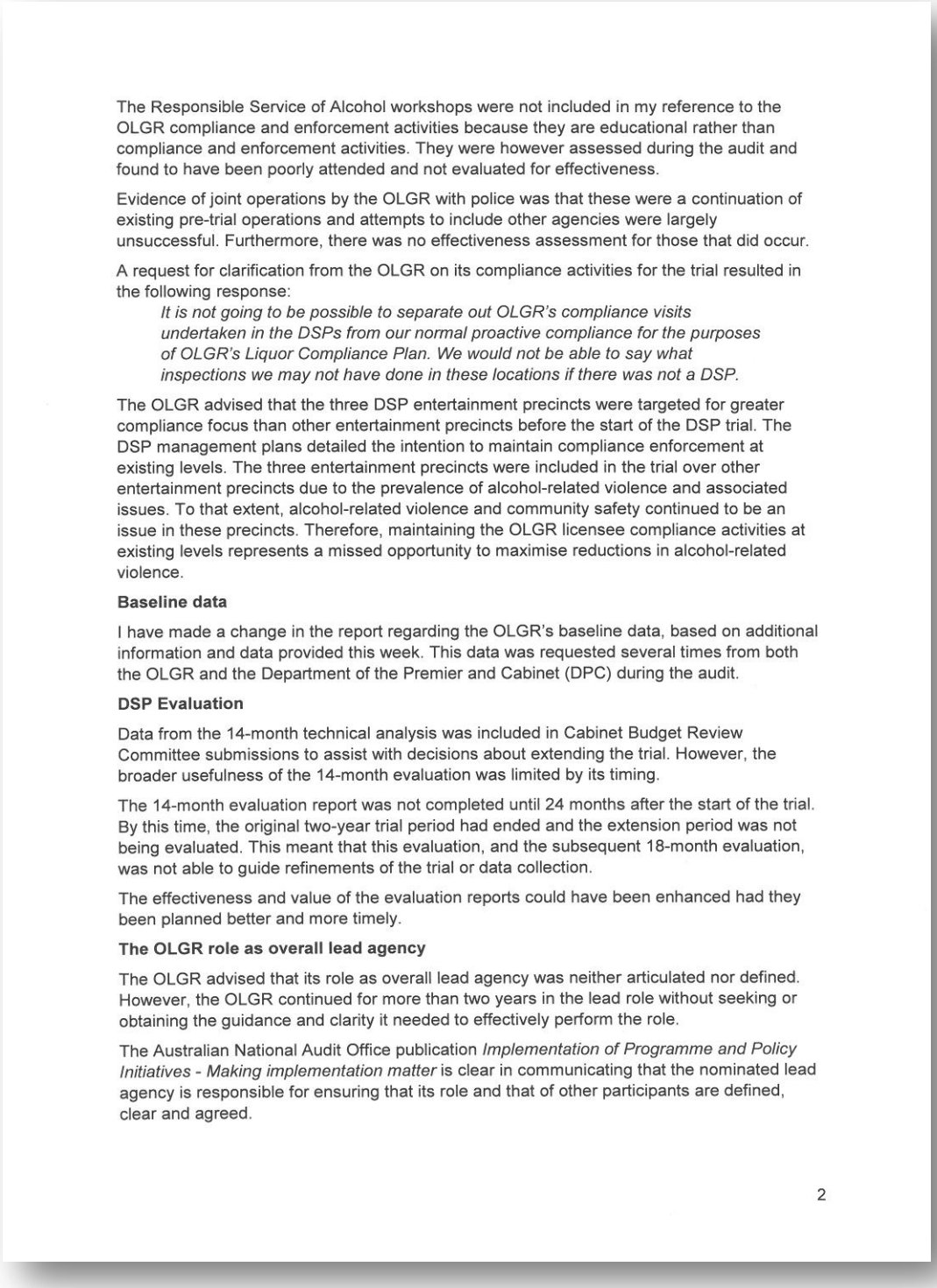
Auditor-General response

Response provided by the Auditor-General to the previous letter from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.



The Responsible Service of Alcohol workshops were not included in my reference to the OLGR compliance and enforcement activities because they are educational rather than compliance and enforcement activities. They were however assessed during the audit and found to have been poorly attended and not evaluated for effectiveness.

Evidence of joint operations by the OLGR with police was that these were a continuation of existing pre-trial operations and attempts to include other agencies were largely unsuccessful. Furthermore, there was no effectiveness assessment for those that did occur.

A request for clarification from the OLGR on its compliance activities for the trial resulted in the following response:

> *It is not going to be possible to separate out OLGR's compliance visits undertaken in the DSPs from our normal proactive compliance for the purposes of OLGR's Liquor Compliance Plan. We would not be able to say what inspections we may not have done in these locations if there was not a DSP.*

The OLGR advised that the three DSP entertainment precincts were targeted for greater compliance focus than other entertainment precincts before the start of the DSP trial. The DSP management plans detailed the intention to maintain compliance enforcement at existing levels. The three entertainment precincts were included in the trial over other entertainment precincts due to the prevalence of alcohol-related violence and associated issues. To that extent, alcohol-related violence and community safety continued to be an issue in these precincts. Therefore, maintaining the OLGR licensee compliance activities at existing levels represents a missed opportunity to maximise reductions in alcohol-related violence.

Baseline data

I have made a change in the report regarding the OLGR's baseline data, based on additional information and data provided this week. This data was requested several times from both the OLGR and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) during the audit.

DSP Evaluation

Data from the 14-month technical analysis was included in Cabinet Budget Review Committee submissions to assist with decisions about extending the trial. However, the broader usefulness of the 14-month evaluation was limited by its timing.

The 14-month evaluation report was not completed until 24 months after the start of the trial. By this time, the original two-year trial period had ended and the extension period was not being evaluated. This meant that this evaluation, and the subsequent 18-month evaluation, was not able to guide refinements of the trial or data collection.

The effectiveness and value of the evaluation reports could have been enhanced had they been planned better and more timely.

The OLGR role as overall lead agency

The OLGR advised that its role as overall lead agency was neither articulated nor defined. However, the OLGR continued for more than two years in the lead role without seeking or obtaining the guidance and clarity it needed to effectively perform the role.

The Australian National Audit Office publication *Implementation of Programme and Policy Initiatives - Making implementation matter* is clear in communicating that the nominated lead agency is responsible for ensuring that its role and that of other participants are defined, clear and agreed.

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Auditor-General response

Response provided by the Auditor-General to the previous letter from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

It is incumbent on a lead agency to be proactive in ensuring its role is well defined, articulated and accepted by participating agencies. This is to ensure that Government programs are well governed, focused, planned and managed. Some of the planning, implementation and evaluation gaps of the DSP trial detailed in my report to Parliament may have been avoided had better leadership been provided.

In my report to Parliament I refer to the 2011 Australian Government publication, *Governance Models for Location Based Initiatives*. Reference to this document was provided as general guidance on better practice principles for place-based initiatives. While it was published after the DSP trial commenced its principles were not new and remain relevant to public sector entities engaged in such programs.

For completeness, a copy of this letter will be included in the Appendix to my report to Parliament after your response.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General

Enc.

3

Appendix B—Audit details

Audit objective

The objective of this audit was to determine whether the Drink Safe Precincts trial is effective and is achieving intended impacts and outcomes. The audit assessed whether:

- the trial is well planned and implemented
- the trial is appropriately evaluated
- intended impacts and outcomes are being achieved and are cost effective.

Reason for the audit

The Drink Safe Precincts trial represents the centrepiece of the government response to the Queensland Parliament's Law, Justice and Safety Committee inquiry into alcohol-related violence. It represents a significant commitment from government and non-government stakeholders to coordinate their resources and efforts to address violence and safety issues in entertainment precincts. This includes a funding commitment of $9.097 million from the state government, with additional costs met from the budget allocations of contributing agencies.

If successful, the Drink Safe Precincts model has the potential to lead to considerable social and economic benefits for the state by reducing the burden and costs to emergency services and hospitals and to allow for safer use of the precincts by the public.

Performance audit approach

The audit was conducted between December 2012 and March 2013. It included the four state government agencies with lead responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating the Drink Safe Precincts trial.

The audit consisted of:

- interviews with key staff from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and the Queensland Police Service
- analysis of key documents, including plans, records, and performance reports
- analysis of performance data
- engagement with stakeholders.

The audit was undertaken in accordance with the *Auditor-General of Queensland Auditing Standards*, which incorporate Australian auditing and assurance standards.

Auditor-General Reports to Parliament

Tabled in 2012–13

Report number	Title of report	Date tabled in Legislative Assembly
1	Racing Queensland Limited: Audit by arrangement	July 2012
2	Follow- up of 2010 audit recommendations	October 2012
3	Tourism industry growth and development	November 2012
4	Queensland Health - eHealth	November 2012
5	Results of audits: State entities 2011–12	November 2012
6	Implementing the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness in Queensland	February 2013
7	Results of audit: Queensland state government financial statements 2011-12	March 2013
8	Online service delivery	March 2013
9	Fraud risk management	March 2013
10	Results of audits: Local government entities 2011–12	April 2013
11	Results of audits: Education sector entities 2012	April 2013
12	Community Benefit Funds: Grant management	May 2013
13	Drink Safe Precinct trial	May 2013

Reports to Parliament are available at www.qao.qld.gov.au