

ITEM 9 PUBLIC EXHIBITION - REVIEW OF ALCOHOL FREE ZONES

Alcohol Free Zones (AFZs) are established under the Local Government Act to improve public safety and prevent disorderly behaviour caused by the consumption of alcohol in public areas. AFZs have a four-year term and apply to road-related public areas including footpaths, roads and car parks. All of Council's seven AFZs are due to expire on 30 September 2022.

This report seeks support to undertake the review process for re-establishment outlined in the Ministerial Guidelines on Alcohol Free Zones 2009.

RECOMMENDATION

Council endorse the review of Alcohol Free Zones for public exhibition from 29 June to 31 July 2022.

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Sue Savage, Manager Community Cultural + Economic Development
Authorised by: Kerry Hunt, Director Community Services - Creative and Innovative City

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 Existing Alcohol Free Zones 2018-2022
- 2 Major Event Location Areas Seeking Alcohol Free Zone Suspension

BACKGROUND

The main objective of an AFZ is to act as an early intervention measure to prevent the escalation of irresponsible drinking on streets and footpaths, to incidents involving serious crime. They provide a means for assisting NSW Police to regulate the public consumption of alcohol within the Wollongong Local Government Area.

Council's AFZs are located in Helensburgh, Thirroul, Corrimal, Wollongong, Dapto, Warrawong and Berkeley and all expire on 30 September 2022.

The Local Government Act 1993 (the Act) sections 642-648 is the legislation underpinning an AFZ. The Ministerial Guidelines on Alcohol Free Zones 2009 outlines the procedures for establishment and reestablishment of an AFZ.

AFZs Enforcement

The partnership between Wollongong City Council and NSW Police is a key component to the ongoing success of AFZs. Council facilitates the community engagement process, review and installation of AFZs signs, while NSW Police officers enforce the zone.

NSW Police powers enable officers to tip out or otherwise dispose of alcohol being consumed. The main focus is to deter irresponsible drinking without imposing fines on potentially disadvantaged people. NSW Police can also use 'move on' powers in any public place where they believe, on reasonable grounds, that the person's behaviour is in accordance with the rules associated with the 'move on direction'.

AFZ Exemptions

In 2014, and again in 2018, Council resolved to support suspension of some AFZ areas to allow for some events to include alcohol.

These exemptions streamline the event application process and support positive activation with additional economic benefits. The areas where exemptions are applied include a maximum of 10 events per annum in each of the following areas and all areas have a Council approved generic Event Development Application.

- Upper Crown Street Mall (including Crown Lane)
- Lower Crown Street Mall

- Globe Lane
- The Arts Precinct
- Wollongong Foreshore area (refer Attachment 2).

In 2018 authority was also given to the General Manager to suspend AFZs in other areas to a maximum of two events per year to enable further activation and event diversification in suburbs with AFZs.

Each event where alcohol is permitted requires the event organiser to undertake a formal event approval process, including development consent, liaising with NSW Police, obtaining a liquor licence from NSW Liquor and Gaming, and that all conditions for the safe delivery of an event be the responsibility of the event organiser.

The AFZ exemptions have enabled events such as the 2018 Nights on Crown to include a pop-up bar. This was a successful event where there were no alcohol related concerns. The exemptions support event diversity for upcoming events such as Laneways Live.

Re-establishment

Every four years Council revisits each AFZ with the relevant NSW Police District. Council simultaneously undertakes an engagement strategy to inform the community and invite public comment on the review.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed the re-establishment of Council's AFZs process is undertaken including community engagement inviting public comment.

Steps undertaken in the re-establishment review process will include:

- AFZ Sign Audit
- NSW Police District comment sought regarding relevance of each AFZ
- Online AFZ survey – 'Join the conversation' (hardcopy available)
- Public Notice in the Newspaper – request for feedback - 30 days
- Information at Council libraries
- Consultation with Neighbourhood Forums and Community Safety Reference Group
- Letters to all licenced premises within each area
- Letters to the Antidiscrimination Board and organisations representing our Aboriginal community – this is a requirement due to population size of our Aboriginal community
- Council report presenting recommendations

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The community engagement AFZ review (outlined above), will commence in July upon Council endorsement for this process.

Conversations have commenced with both the Lake Illawarra and Wollongong Police District Community Safety Officers regarding the upcoming AFZ expirations.

Council's internal City Centre team and Events team have been consulted regarding their needs moving forward in relation to event diversity and activation.

PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

This report contributes to the delivery of Our Wollongong 2028 goal 5 “We have a healthy community in a liveable city”. It specifically delivers on the following:

| Community Strategic Plan | Delivery Program 2018-2022 | Operational Plan 2020-21 |
|---|---|---|
| Strategy | 4 Year Action | Operational Plan Actions |
| 5.4.2 Local crime continues to be prevented and levels of crime reduced | 5.4.2.1 Deliver projects and programs to reduce crime in the Wollongong Local Government Area | Monitor and maintain Alcohol Free Zones including new assessments as required |

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with undertaking the review process for the AFZs.

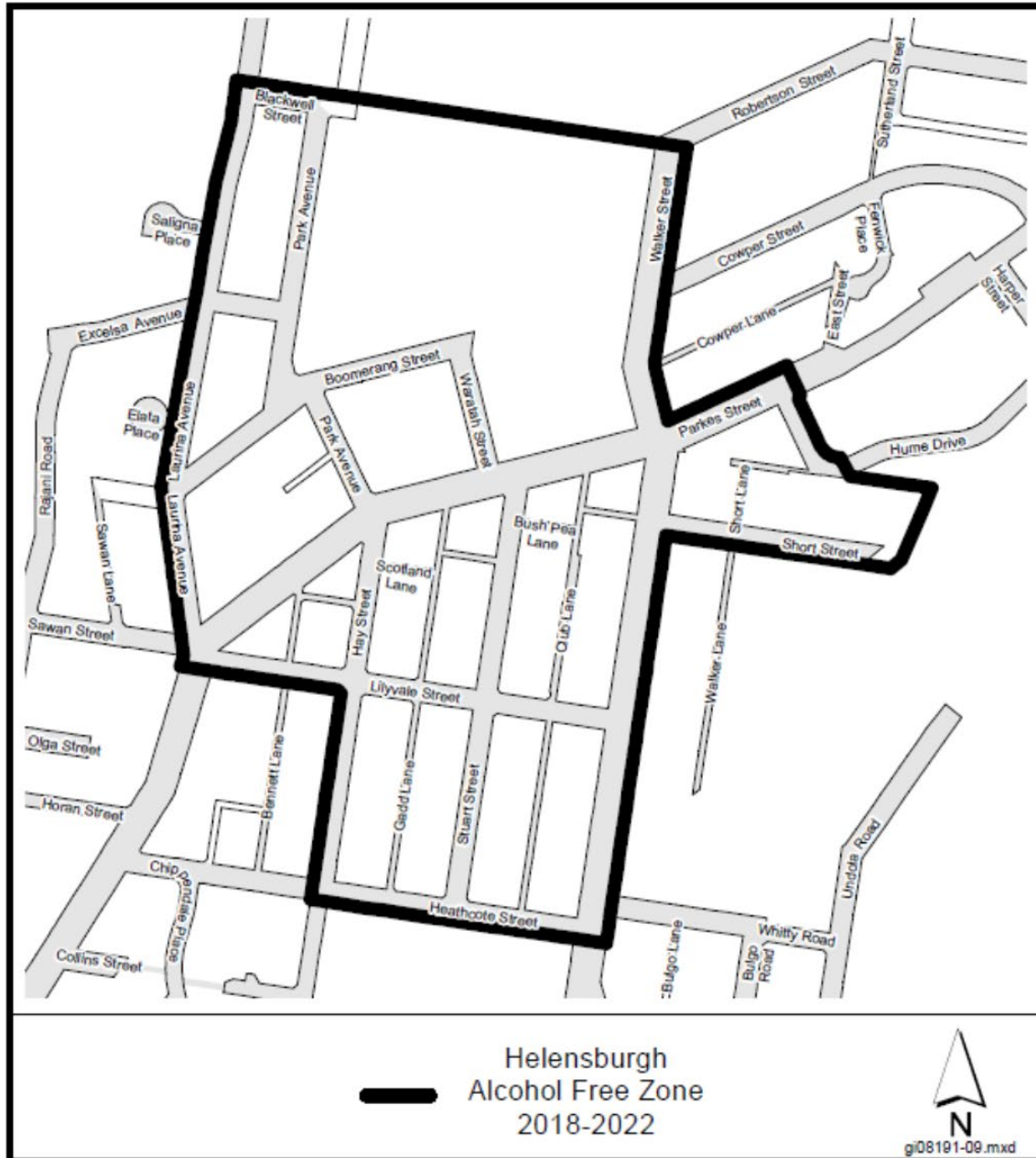
The duration of an AFZ is four years and if proposed for re-establishment there will be costs associated with updating the signs in seven AFZs with the new expiration date. These costs will be proposed as part of the capital projects budget in 2022/2023.

CONCLUSION

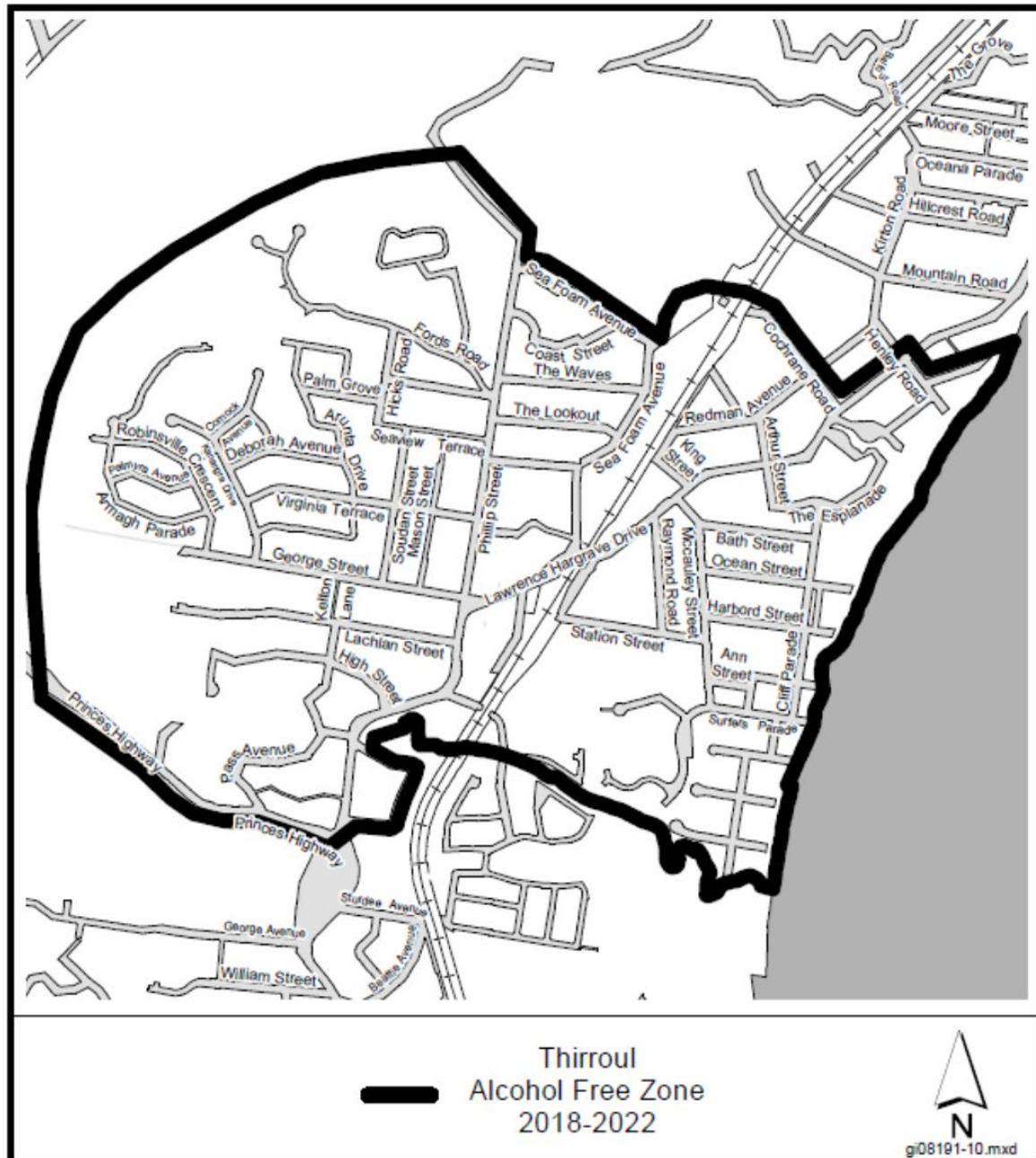
AFZs assist Council and NSW Police to improve and maintain community safety. They are one strategy, among many and act as an early intervention measure to prevent the escalation of irresponsible street drinking to incidents involving serious crime.

A review procedure, followed by a Council resolution, must occur to enable re-establishment of Council's AFZs.

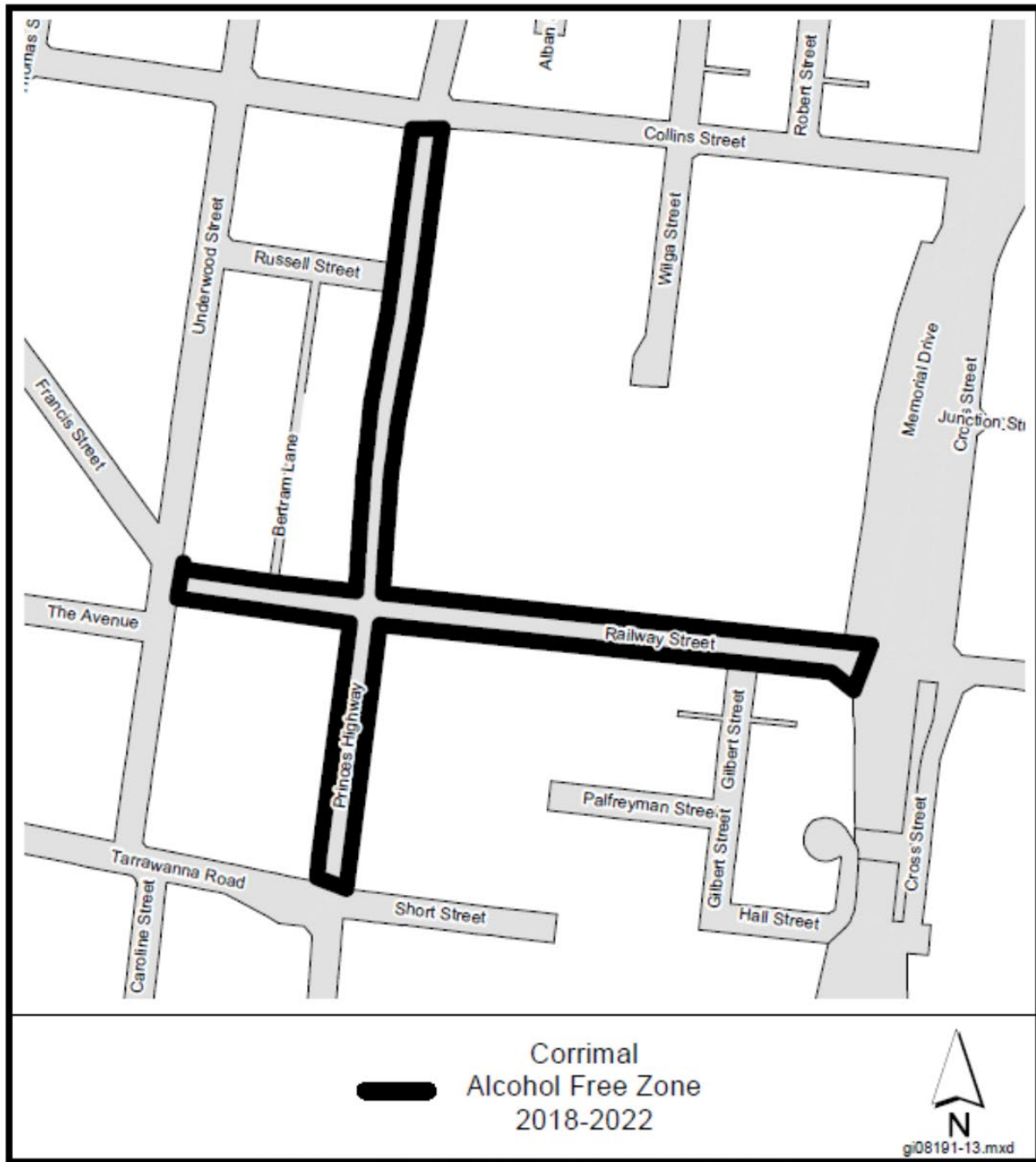
ATTACHMENT 1: EXISTING ALCOHOL FREE ZONES 2018-2022



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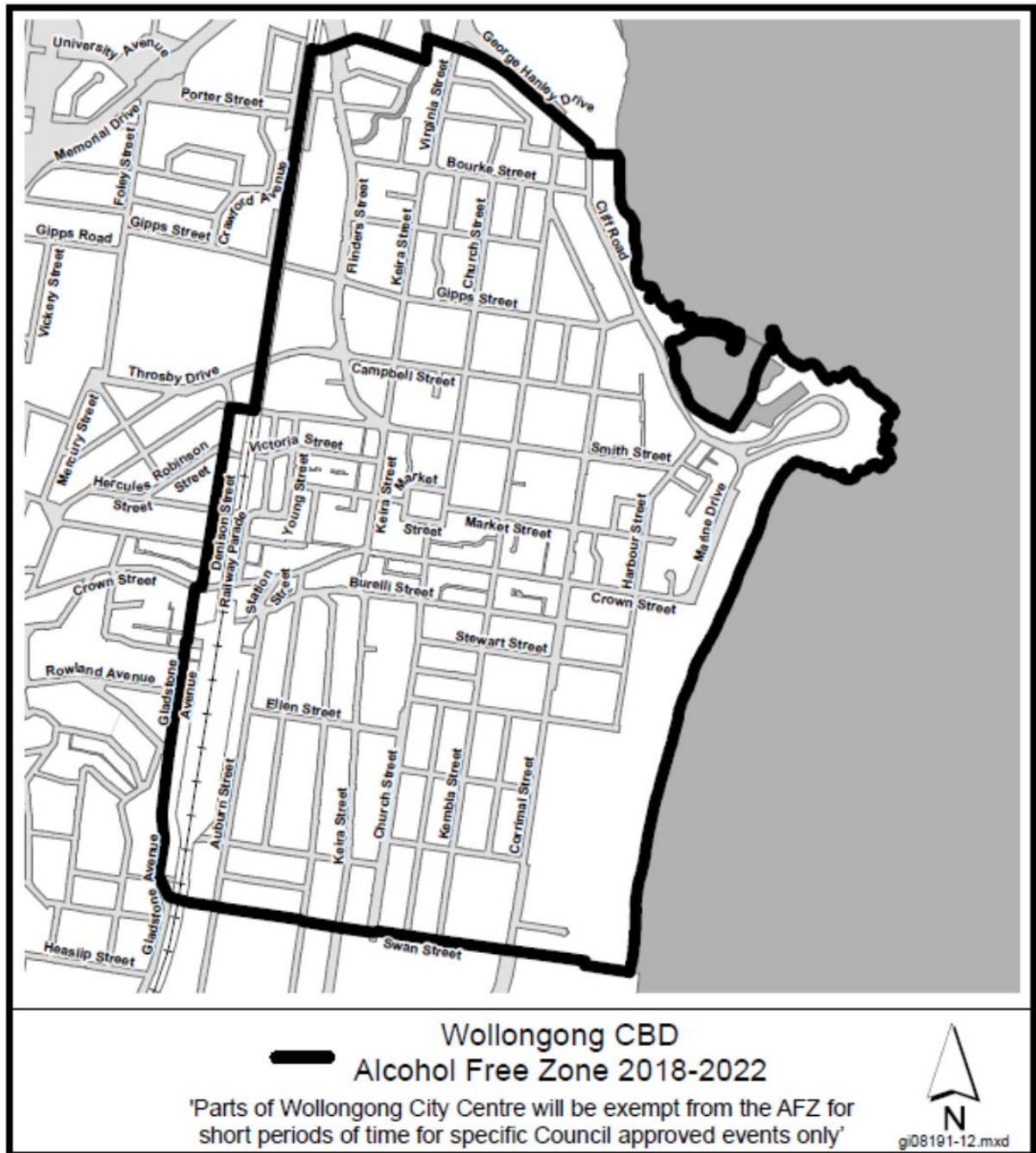


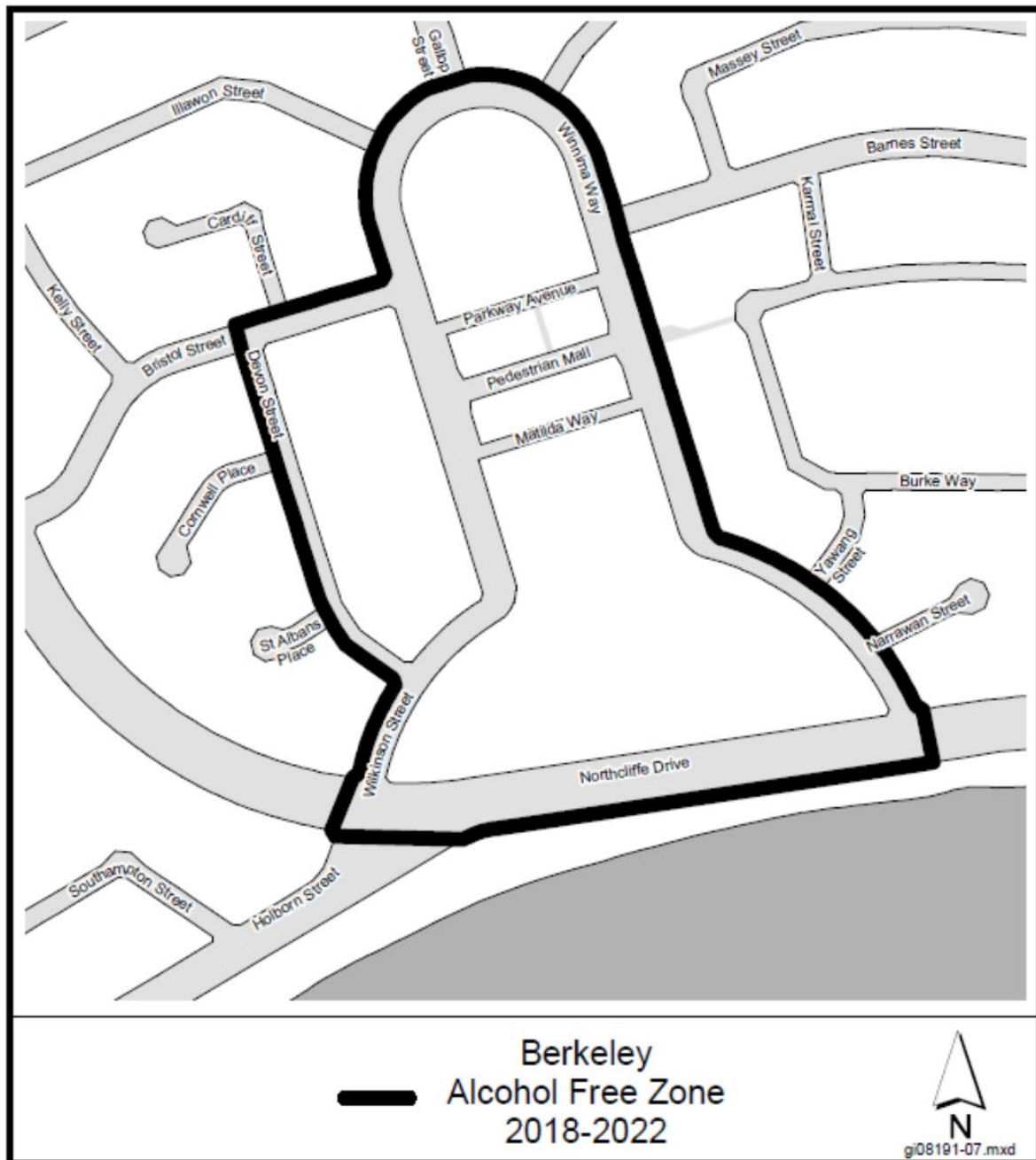
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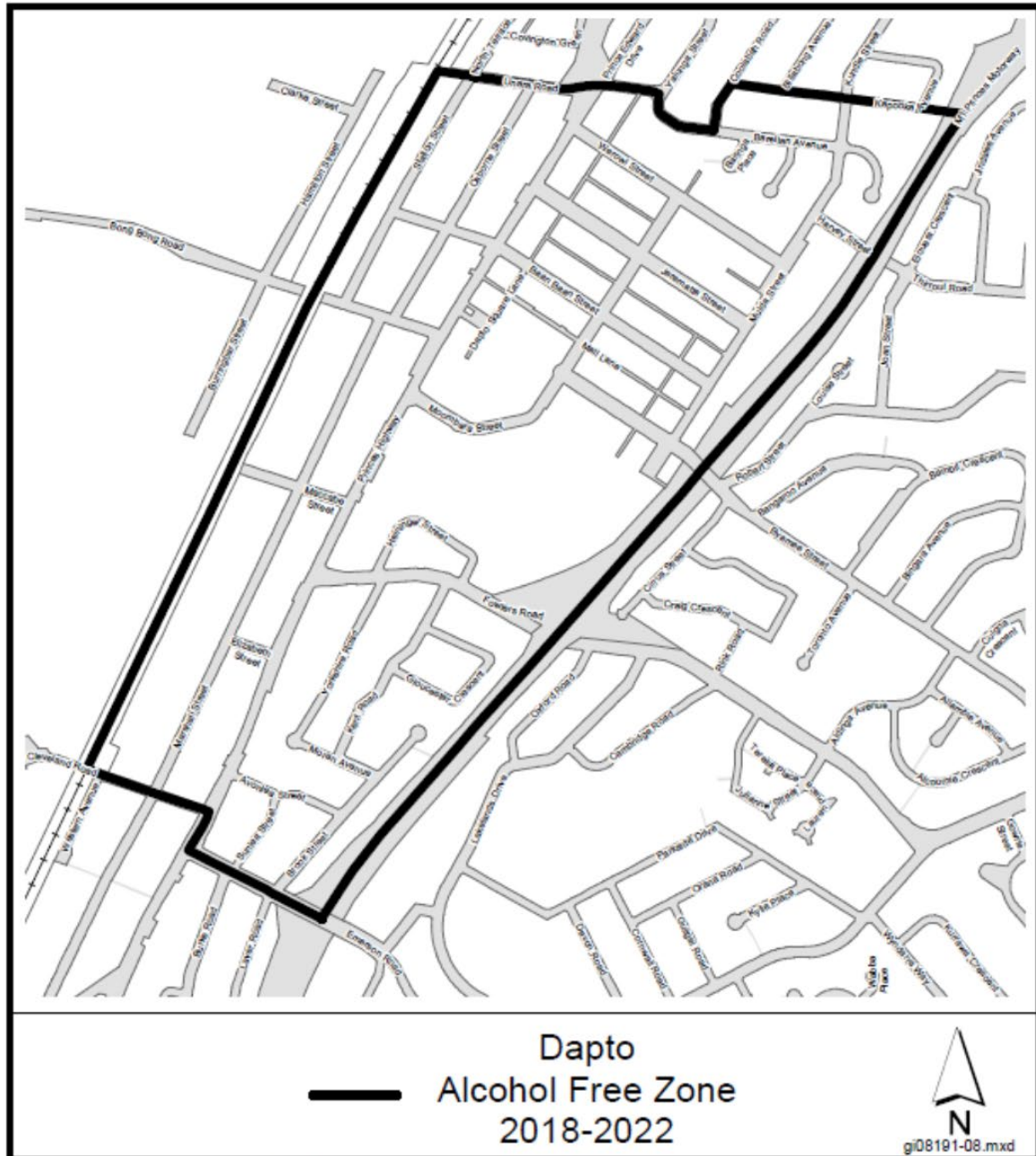
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ATTACHMENT 2: MAJOR EVENT LOCATION AREAS SEEKING ALCOHOL FREE ZONE SUSPENSION 2022-2026

Upper Crown Street Mall Activation Area



Crown Lane, see below, has been added to the Event DA for Upper Crown Street.



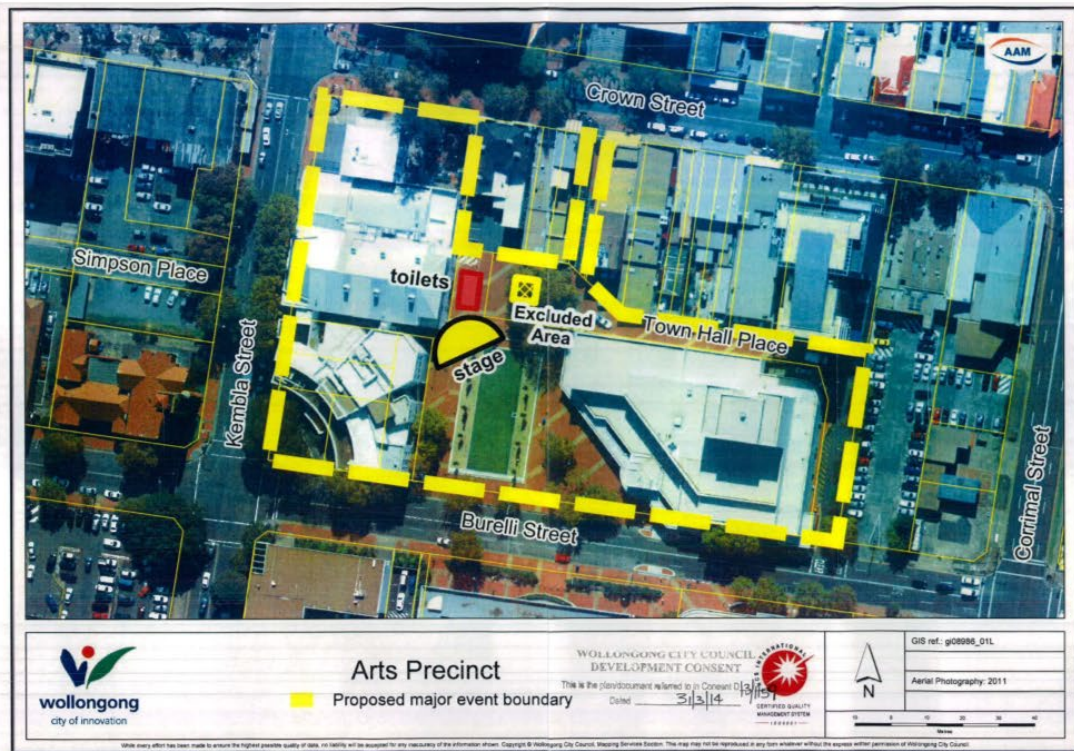
Lower Crown Street Mall Activation Area



Globe Lane Street Activation Area



Arts Precinct Major Events Area



Wollongong Foreshore Area – Major event area (yellow solid areas)



Detail Plan Flagstaff Hill – major event boundary

