



Hello,

My name is Lanie Loughlin, I am the Event Coordinator for 'Soul Street' NYE , which is a family friendly, alcohol free celebration held in Johnson St Byron Bay on New Year's Eve from 4pm to midnight. The event is the focus of reclaiming the Byron Bay town centre for locals. Featuring activities produced by locals for locals.

Last year the event saw up to 10 thousand people safely and happily enjoy a night out with their families in the heart of Byron Bay without incident.

Soul Street commenced in 2013 under the umbrella of 'Safe Summer in the Bay' and currently has approval to operate until 2018. The primary project objective of Safe Summer in The Bay is to establish a vibrant, inclusive and family orientated Byron Bay New Year's Eve event for both residents and visitors.

Byron Bay attracts large numbers of visitors, traditionally peaking in the summer school holidays. New Year's Eve in Byron Bay has a history of attracting large crowds of revellers.

Historically there has been a trend towards alcohol-related violence and anti-social behaviour, which has contributed to increasing negative impacts on more respectful visitors, the residential community and the local environment.

Various strategies have been implemented over the years to minimise the negative impacts of these large crowds.

The 90's saw fights and riots lead to the establishment of street closures and a Bay FM driven campaign to manage the night.

Later a safety committee was established and a strategy to contain the crowd on the foreshore was put in place. A procession down Johnson Street was organised, culminating in a gathering at the foreshore where a market was designed to occupy the crowds.

This format continued and around 2010 or 2011 when a stage was added to provide entertainment. In 2012 two fireworks displays, one at 9pm another at midnight were arranged.

The event deteriorated quickly and by 9pm there was almost a total collapse. The town was inundated with alcohol, visitors with eskies held parties in the streets and the town was heavily impacted, many in the community were negatively affected.

This prompted community debate about the problem of New Year's Eve and how to attract the 'right' visitors to Byron.

Community forums sprung up and collaboration between Councillors and community groups during 2013, saw Council established the Community Summer Safety and Cultural Activities Committee to work with the community on a different approach for 2013/14.

This committee identified 10 key strategies to keep Byron Safe, 3 of those identified were:

1. A family friendly alcohol free event reclaiming the heart of Byron Bay – **Now 'Soul Street'**
2. An event for 18 – 40+ held over NYE at a location outside of Byron Town Centre to draw crowds away from town – **now 'Falls Festival'**
3. A new year's morning event - **Now First Sun, NYD** at Cape Byron Lighthouse is a very 'Byron' event showcasing what Byron's famous for – the health and wellbeing arts.

These 3 strategies were implemented with great success in 2013/14.

The strategies were 'tweaked' further for New Year's Eve 2014/15 with their resounding success measured by no arrests and 'a very quiet night' for emergency services and Council Rangers.

By partnering with Soul Street and First Sun, Falls Festival plays a vital role in the Safe Summer in the Bay plan.

- Falls Music and Arts Festival provides a party alternative to Byron Town Centre because it is held at North Byron Parklands.
- Falls Festival has a natural fit with Soul Street and First Sun, by providing an exciting program of acts from across Australia and the world.
- Falls has the capacity to contribute financially to the Shire
- It is an event that enhances Byron's identity as a vibrant and diverse community, while occupying revellers and drinkers in a contained and manageable environment.
- Falls Festival requires zero investment from Council or Community, the event is organised by a private company on private land- Nth Byron Parklands
- Falls Festival organisers are extremely supportive of Council's Safe Summer in The Bay initiatives for New Year's Eve.

Evaluation by key stakeholders of Safe Summer in the Bay (and a variety of other safety strategies being implemented in Byron Bay) detail how Byron Bay local's experiences and attitudes are changing for the better. A 2016 Evaluation Report notes that...

- There are less complaints from businesses, people are more positive about the town.
- Not seeing the big groups from South East Queensland anymore.
- The demographic of holiday makers is changing, particularly around New Year's Eve. There are not as many people wandering the streets, not the big groups of men.
- In 2012 when there was trouble over New Year's Eve, the place was 'bunches of marauding drunks' and 'gangs'. That is no longer the case.
- Work done in the past few years has shown that the town is collaborating on a uniform approach and this is working.
- The messaging for New Year's Eve over the past few years has been great and seems to have been very effective.
- Soul St NYE has enabled locals to reclaim their town
- Street camping appears to have dropped also.

- New Year's Eve strategies, particularly Falls Festival over the New Year's Eve period are working
- All agreed there is a huge improvement

I, along with many local people would be very concerned about the impact to Byron Bay town centre, environment and local people if Falls festival were not to operate. I do not wish to see a return to the bad old days of NYE. I believe the partnership with Falls Festival is a positive and important one to retain.