

September 2020

Te Aro Park Assessing Harm



Executive Summary

This report outlines safety concerns within Te Aro Park, actions taken to date and potential solutions.

The numbers of events associated with social harm, occurring within the park are consistently higher in Te Aro Park than other central city parks.

In order to improve safety within Te Aro Park the report outlines a number of options to address these issues, which have been categorised into projects for possible implementation over short, medium and long term and are outlined below.

Short Term - as at January 2020

- Increased maintenance of the park – inclusion of Te Aro Park in the Central City Cleaning contract.
- Removal of the canopy between the two toilet blocks and addition of directional lighting.
- Lighting changes
 - If the canopy between the two toilets is not removed, additional lighting should be installed.
 - Vertical lighting should be installed on the Opera House side to improve night-time flow and a more defined route.
 - Lighting should also be added to the murals on the toilet building to increase attention to the artwork.
 - Lights should be added to the canopy of the Oaks building
 - Canopy lighting should be added to the tree.
- Remove Spark phone booth as it creates blind spots and concealments.
- Installing pedestrian crossings into both Manners and Dixon street to improve safe access to the park
- Increase patrols to the Te Aro Park area during the hours of high activity and high social harm - this includes Police, Local Hosts and Maori Wardens
- Improve guardianship of the park by involving businesses and other stakeholders in activity that occurs within the park, with central coordination from Council and intentional place-making

Medium Term

- Recognise and acknowledge the cultural significance of the park with interpretive signage and revitalise the park into more of a destination.
- Remove the bus shelter on Manners street which creates an entrapment spot between it and the building. The glaring signage on the end of the bus stop adds to the feeling of insecurity felt when approaching this space.
- Encourage more stores to sign up for Eyes On to encourage more business ownership of the space.
- Activate the park by identifying meaningful activities and possible community development approaches that could be implemented to address some of the anti-social behaviour that exists within the park.
- Encourage community led neighbourhood activities that would encourage the use of the park as a community gathering space.
- Explore activation by nearby businesses

Long Term

- Redesign or remove the toilet.
- Removing the parking from Dixon Street on the park side of the street will open the view to be seen from surrounding buildings.

Purpose of the paper

The focus of this report is specifically around the issues of safety within Te Aro Park identified by a joint working group established in August 2019 between Wellington City Council and the New Zealand Police.

The report provides:

- A summary of the key findings and factors requiring consideration in the management of Te Aro Park with a special focus on the side of the park where the toilet building is located and improving safety in this location.
- A series of options and initiatives which are being undertaken and recommended to address the challenges faced by the community, Council and the New Zealand Police in maintaining the safety, recreational amenity and cultural significance of the space.
- Recommendations for upgrades and adaptations that will improve perceptions of, and actual safety within, Te Aro Park.

Key options and outcomes

Revisit the structural layout of the park - to enhance its ability to provide a safe usable space, on a site of significant cultural heritage.

Upgrade on the toilet end of the park as soon as possible, followed by a refreshing of the park in its entirety.

Reduce harm, improve perceptions of safety within Te Aro Park, and create a more inviting space for general users of the park.

Work alongside Mana Whenua to recognise and raise community awareness about the history and cultural significance of the site.

Improve and increase guardianship of the park by involving businesses and regular users in creating a more welcoming space that is accessible to all, including surrounding businesses, residents and the public.

Address the current level of crime that occurs within the park, the toilets and surrounding laneways.

Activate the park by identifying possible community development solutions.

Background

Te Aro Park is a triangular shaped inner-city park that sits between Manners and Dixon streets. The park features a public artwork in the overall shape of a waka - integrating a tall prow structure at the eastern end, green space, two water features and bench seating. On the western side, there is a toilet block covered by a roof structure and a large pōhutakawa tree.

Aerial view



Te Aro Park lies directly to the west of Courtenay Place in the East Te Aro precinct and sits within a highly pedestrianised corridor running between Courtenay Place and Cuba Street.

There are a number of licenced premises; including two adult premises within 50m of the park (see Figure A). The park sits adjacent to the Oaks building. The businesses in the oaks building and surrounding the park along Manners and Dixon streets include a mix of retail, food, hospitality businesses. Downtown City Mission (DCM) is located close by in Luke's Lane.

The park is a Wellington City Council asset and is maintained by Council's Parks, Sport and Recreation business unit. The toilets have a custodian on site during a portion of their opening hours and some 24-hour cubicles. There are three City Safety CCTV cameras that monitor the park.

View looking east towards the prow & intersection of Dixon and Manners

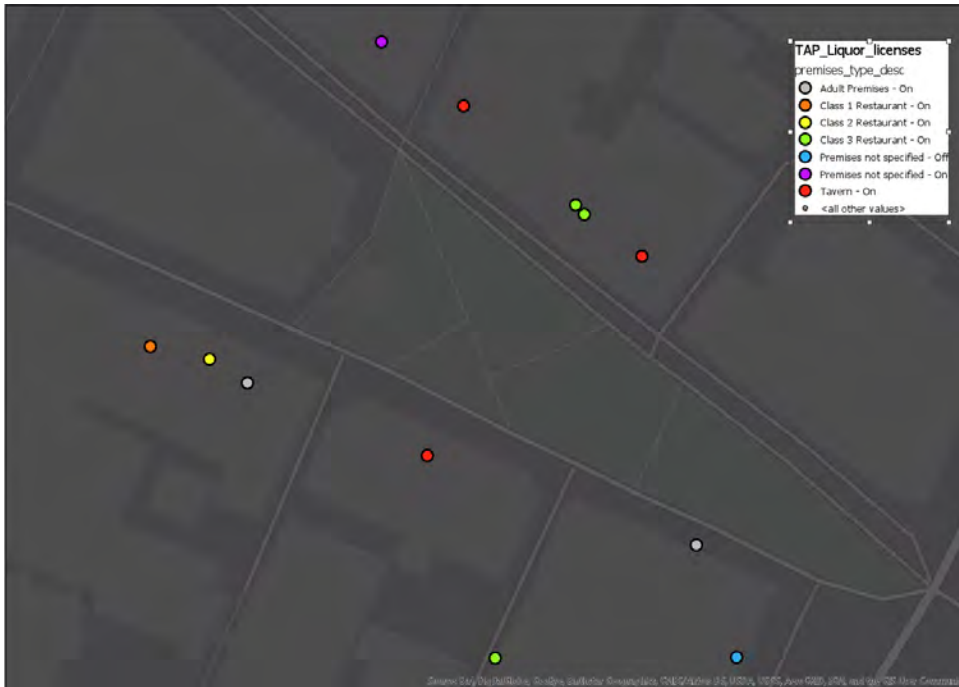


<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/>

Eastern toilet block, roof structure and pōhutakawa tree



Figure A: Licenced premises in the vicinity of Te Aro Park - as of April 2019



*Fig A.
The graph illustrates the number of licenced premises in the streets surrounding Te Aro Park. There are two Adult premises, two restaurants, three taverns and a mix of other licences. In total there are 12 licences in the area.*

Cultural and historical significance

The Te Aro Park site has a strong cultural significance to Mana Whenua and Wellington. Te Aro Pā – was established in the 1820s with the original Pā site covering two hectares, with residents from the iwi of Ngāti Ruanui and Taranaki. ¹ As the European settlement of Wellington grew, there were calls for the sale of the land, and resistance by Pā residents. The land was subdivided and sold by 1870. ²

The site is also associated with the establishment of the Wesleyan Methodist church in Wellington and fire and police stations occupied the site until 1910. ³ At that point it became a public park also serving as a gathering point for political protest. ⁴

It was known as Pigeon Park until 1991 when the site was redeveloped shaped by the work of ceramics artist Shona Rapira Davies (Ngāti Wai ki Aotea). This public art project involved the laying of 30 000 handmade tiles, including names and stories about tīpuna (ancestors).

The police noted that iwi have expressed to them a desire for the significance of this site to be more easily recognised and understood by the wider community.

Usage of Park

As noted, Te Aro Park sits in a heavily pedestrianised part of the city, which is particularly busy on weekend nights. The toilets are very heavily used and other users include pedestrians passing through, workers eating lunch, and members of the street community - who use the park as a place to sit and socialise.

Snapshot of usage - September 2019:

The middle of the day is the busiest (see below Figure B), consistent with its green space function. The use of the park is fairly even across the week, with higher use as a thoroughfare on weekends (see Figure C). The absence of a spike in use on weekends indicates that many people do not use this as a destination park but will use the space if they are in the vicinity.

¹ <https://teara.govt.nz/en/artwork/13194/te-aro-pa>

² <https://teara.govt.nz/en/artwork/13194/te-aro-pa>

³ <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1r1/rangihatua-ke-minarapa>

⁴ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/capital-life/67473627/protests-pigeons-pa-and-public-art>

There is a consistent level of anti-social behaviour across each day of the week and hour of each day which is likely to have a significant impact on the safety and usability of the park for all users (see the light blue bands in Figures B & C). The extent and impact of this anti-social behaviour will be explored further in the safety assessment that follows.

Figure B: CCTV average number of users by type by hour

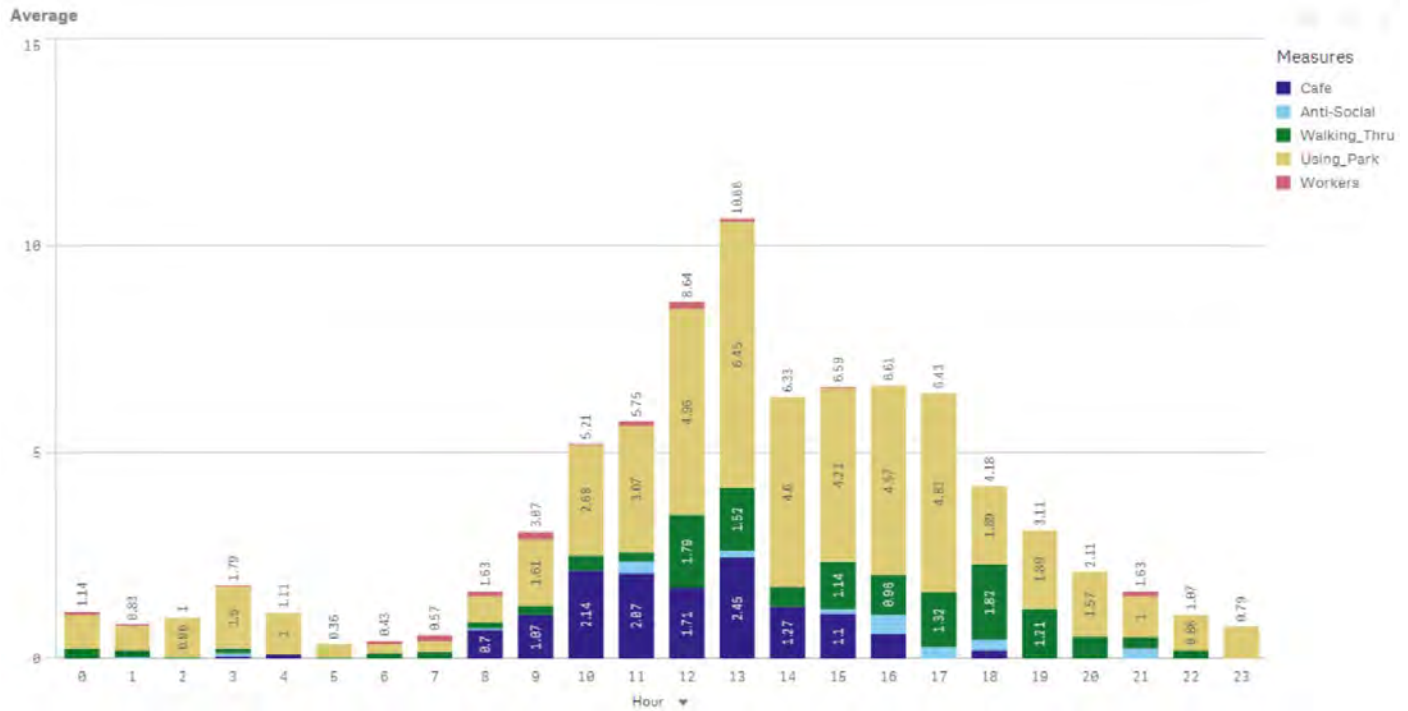
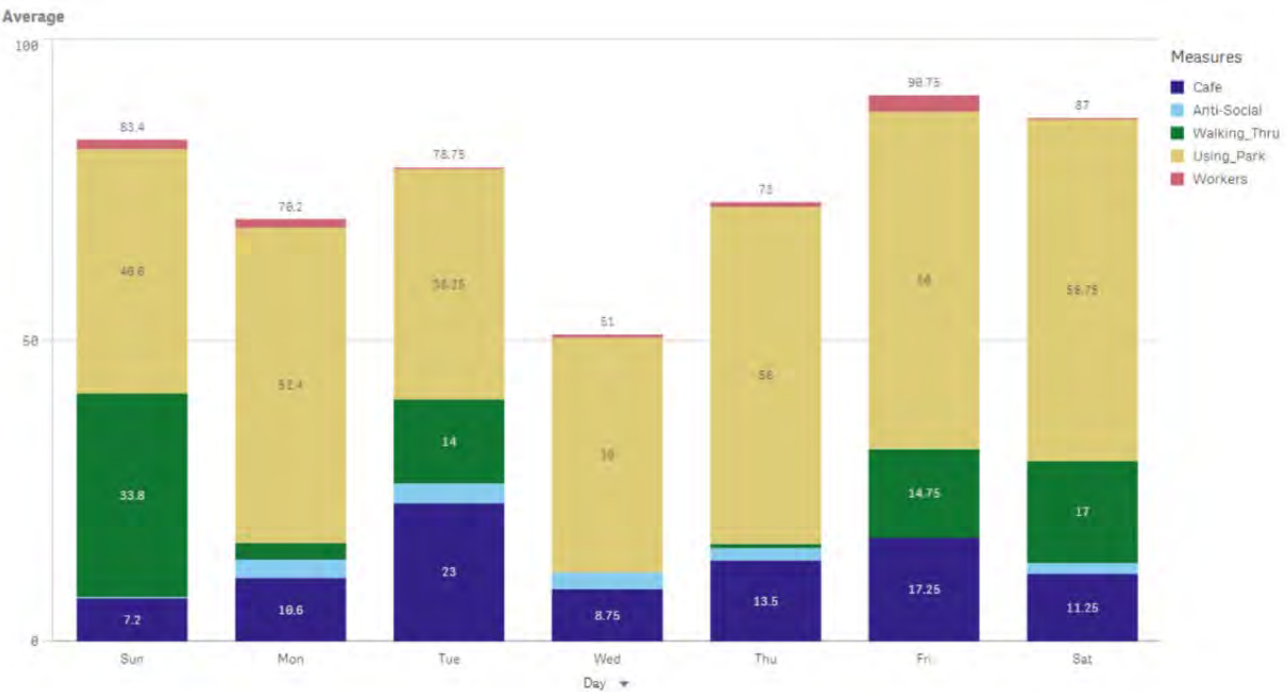


Figure C: CCTV average number of users by type and day



Safety

Fig B & C illustrates the average number of users of park by hour and day as captured on CCTV cameras located in the park. 11am to 2pm is the busiest time of day with people using the park in a variety of ways such as sitting in the park, spending time at the café and walking through the park. Anti-social behaviour in the park is more prominent later in the day with an increase from 4pm.

Assessment of Te Aro Park

The community affected by anti-social behaviour associated with the use of Te Aro Park includes local business owners and their employees, residents and the general public. Harm experienced as a result of activity within this park includes financial and psychological harm as result of intimidation, violence, defecation in the area, graffiti, fear of harassment or physical harm, exposure to aggressive behaviour, loud music, drug dealing, sexual violence and other forms of anti-social and dangerous behaviour.

The location and layout of the park makes it easy for people to gather and socialise, however several factors contribute to anti-social behaviour when such congregation occurs. For example, the presence of toilets is a higher risk factor for vandalism and graffiti and proximity to licensed premises means that alcohol is easily available. Lighting in the park is ineffective and is worsened by the location of the large low hanging tree. The tree conceals both sightlines and camera lines and provides a sheltered location for those gathering for social purposes. This coupled with infrequent enforcement of the Alcohol Ban bylaw, makes the park a highly attractive drinking location.

Consultation with Stakeholders

Engagement with stakeholders included a survey of businesses by the Police, a visit to the park by Police alongside iwi representatives, consultation with Eyes On (who gathered feedback from members) and feedback from the street community via DCM (partner agency which provides homelessness services).

Consultation to date, however, has been limited and it is recommended that consultation take place to gather views about the park and inform improvement of the site.

Evidence of social harm or disorder associated with Te Aro Park

The concerns raised by stakeholders about anti-social behaviour in the park are reflected in the data from numerous sources including Council and partner agencies. This data shows a high concentration and increase of incidents associated with social harm in the Te Aro Park area and surrounding laneways and insights are set out below.

Council data

This shows a concentration of anti-social behaviour in the park, with breach of liquor ban being historically the highest reported incident by Council's Local Hosts in the immediate vicinity of the park, followed by anti-social behaviour. There is also a concentration of rough sleeping in the surrounding area (see Figure D). CCTV observed incidents show a concentration of breach of alcohol ban and anti-social behaviour incidents in the park (see Figure E).

There is also a high level of graffiti in the vicinity of the park (see Figure F).

A comparison of complaints to Council relating to Te Aro, Glover and Waitangi Parks over the past five years indicates that Te Aro Park generated a high proportion of incidents associated with anti-social behaviour (33.4%) out of the three parks, despite being a relatively small area compared to Waitangi Park in particular (see Figures G & H).

The number of complaints of anti-social behaviour generated by Te Aro Park is increasing, with 28% of the total complaints since 2013 generated from January - September 2019 (see Figure I).

The proportion of complaints about graffiti, out of overall complaints generated by Te Aro Park is increasing. Te Aro and Waitangi Park also have a higher number of anti-social and bodily egestion complaints than Glover Park (see Figure J).

Fire and Emergency NZ

A review of Fire and Emergency NZ data suggests Te Aro Park is located in an "arc" where there is a higher frequency of social disorder incidents – running from Wellington Railway Station to Courtenay Place. There is a higher density of incidents within the arc in the vicinity of the park itself.

New Zealand Police

Police data identifies an over-representation of social harm associated with the Te Aro Park precinct compared to the rest of the Te Aro.

Figure D: Local hosts incidents 1 Jan 2017–30 Sept 2019 (Te Aro Park incidents highlighted in pink)



Fig D.

The dashboard illustrates the various incidences reported by Local Hosts during their walks around the city between Jan 1st, 2017 and September 30, 2019. There is a high density of breach of liquor ban logged within the park follow by number of anti-social behaviour incidences logged.

FIGURE E: CCTV observed incidents 1 January 2017–30 September 2019

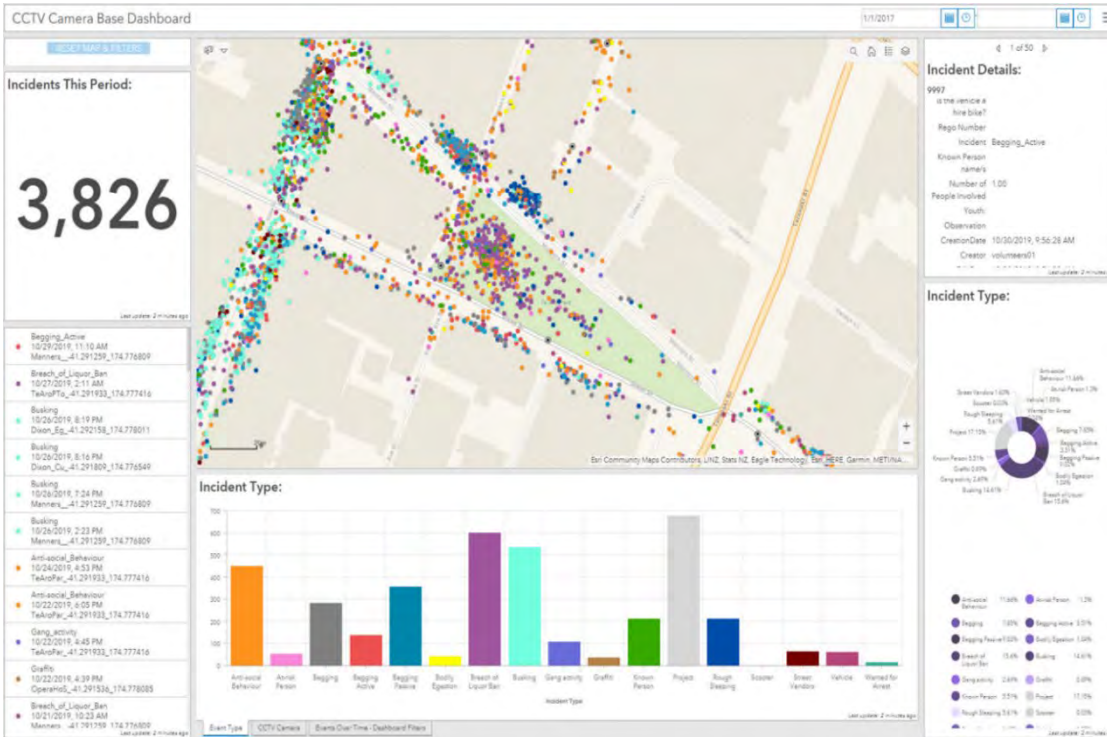


Fig E.
 The dashboard illustrates the CCTV incidences observed between 1st January 2017 and September 30th, 2019. The incidences logged show that there is overrepresentation of harm associated with Te Aro Park compared to the surrounded areas. The levels of anti-social behaviour and breach of liquor ban are much higher in the park than nearby streets. Most of these reports are in the area around the toilet block.

FIGURE F: Graffiti removals 2017–2018 financial year

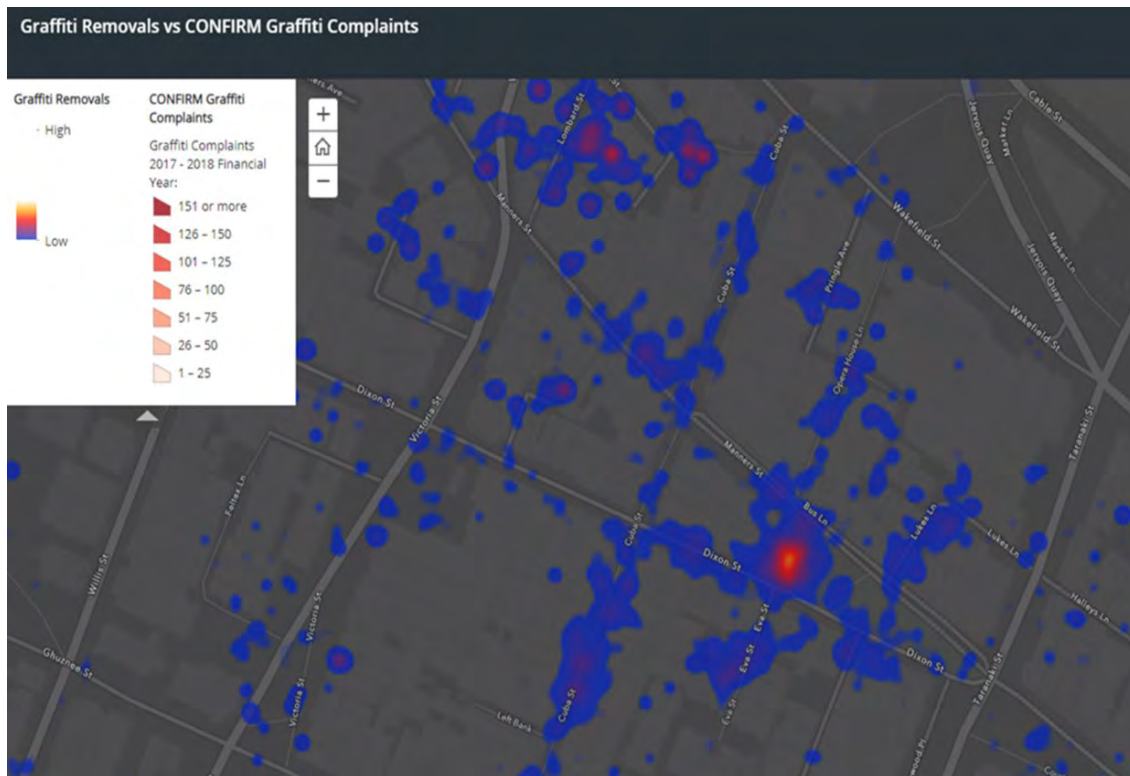


Fig E.
 The map depicts the graffiti removals during the 2017 and 2018 financial year in the Te Aro Park vicinity. The heat map shows that the highest number of logged removals are around the toilet in the park.

Figure G: Percentage of complaints generated by each park

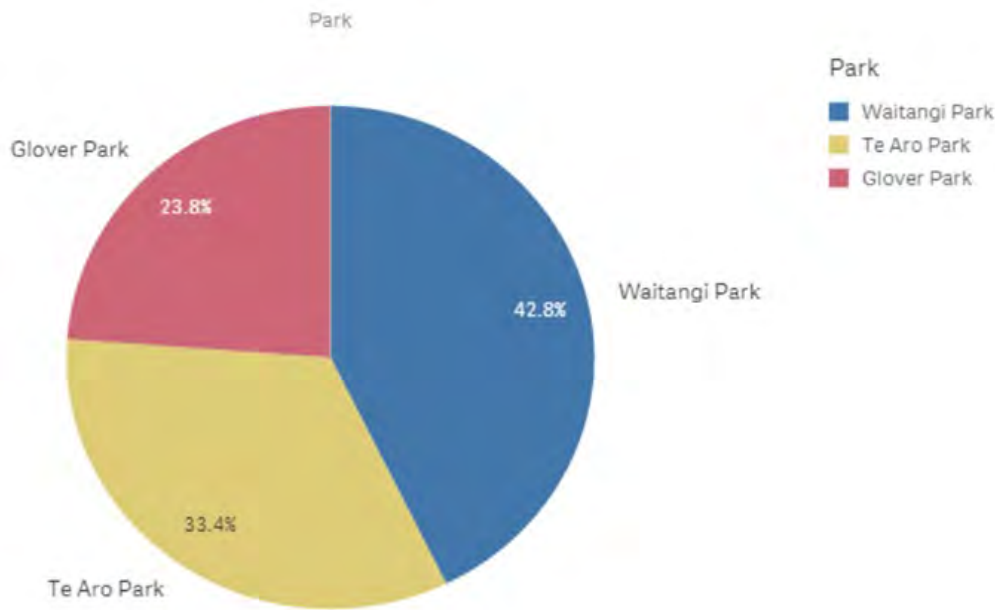


Fig G. This pie chart shows the percentage of complaints generated by three parks across Wellington. Waitangi Park receives most of the complaints at 42.8%, followed closely by Te Aro Park at 33.4% and Glover Park at 23.8%. Te Aro Park is substantially smaller than Waitangi park as depicted in Fig H.

Figure H: Total number of anti-social incidents reported in each park January 2013–30 September 2019 and land area



Figure I: Anti-social incidents reported to Council between 1 January 2013 to 30 September 2019 for Te Aro, Glover and Waitangi Parks.

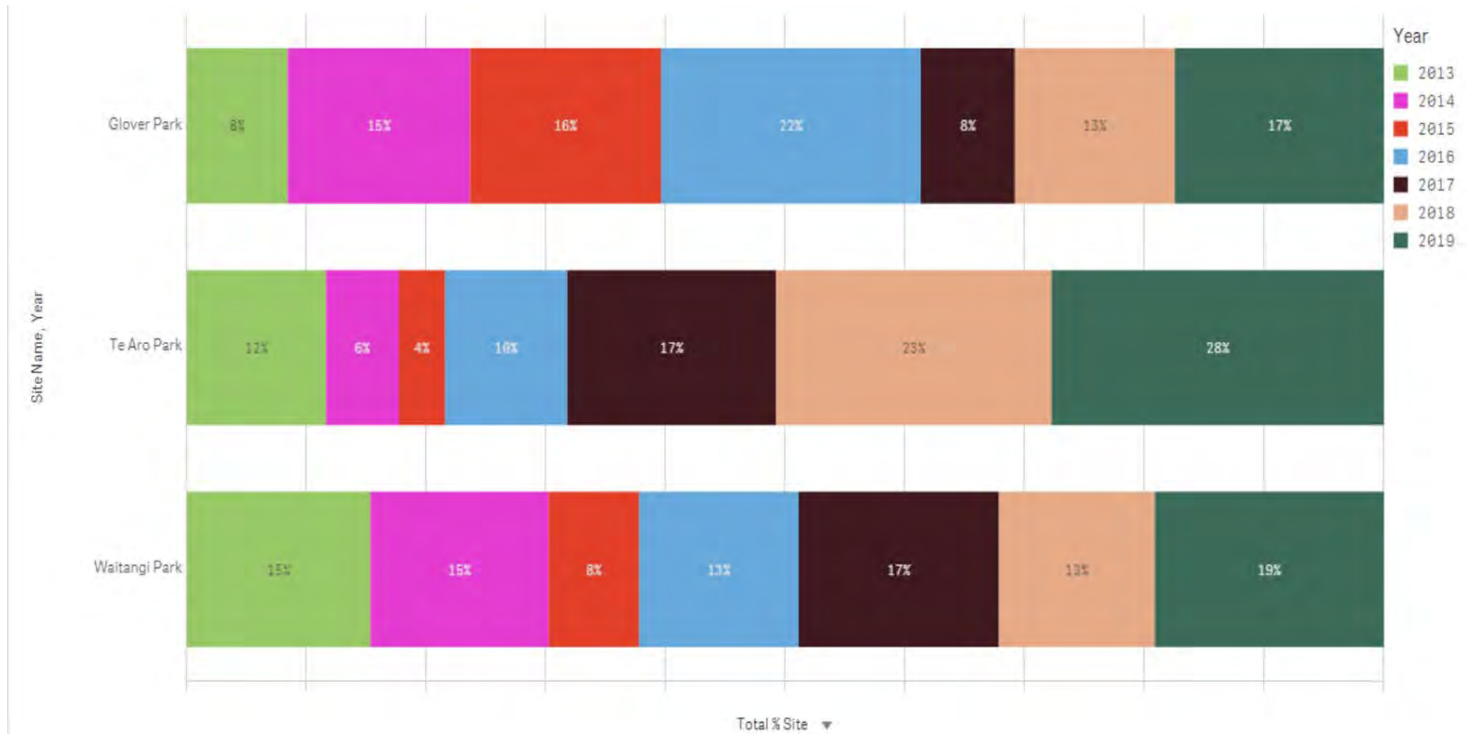


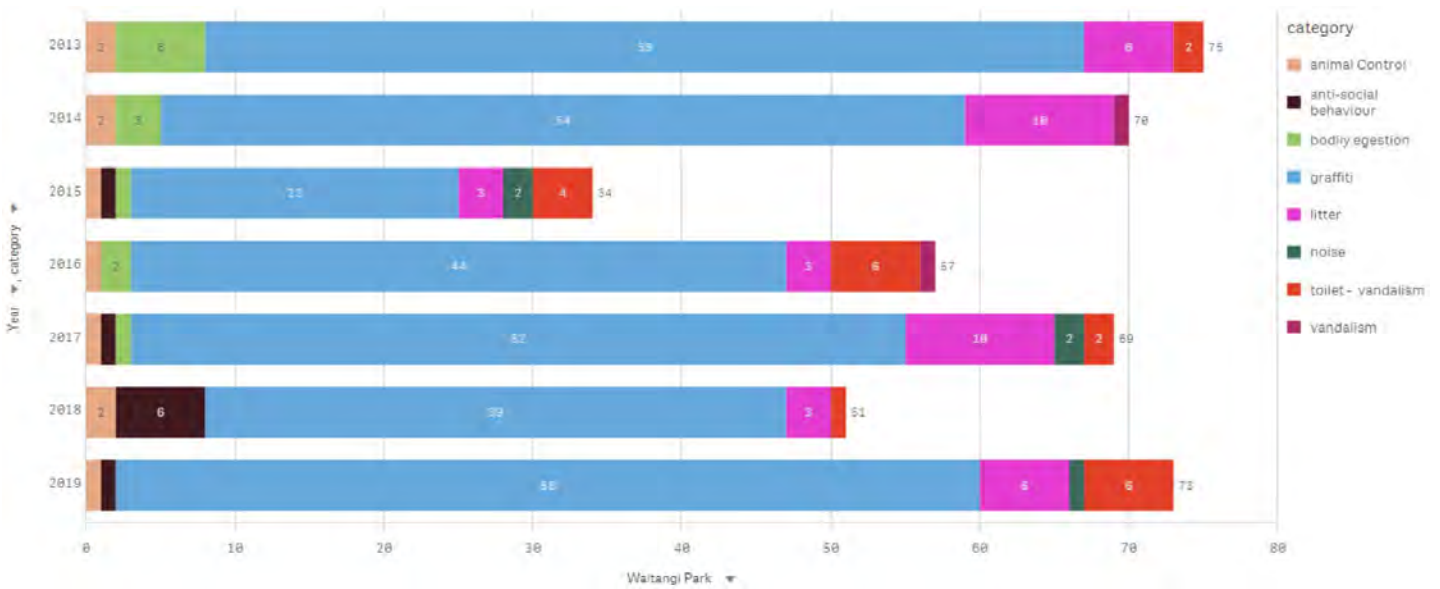
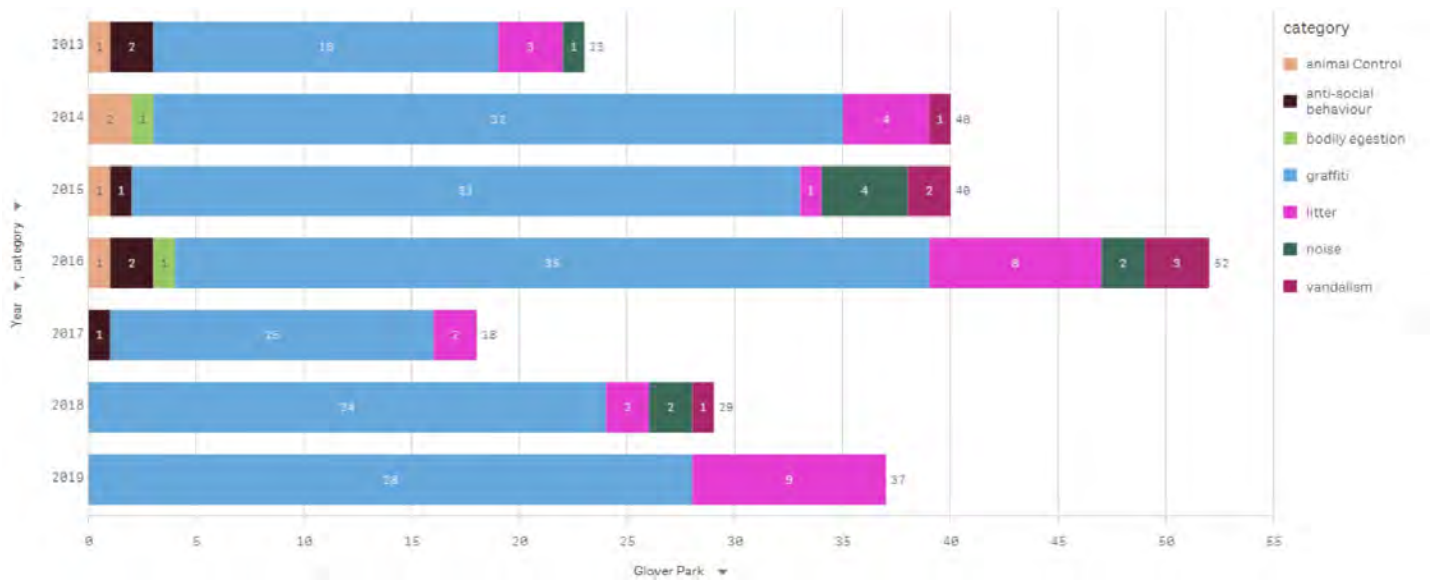
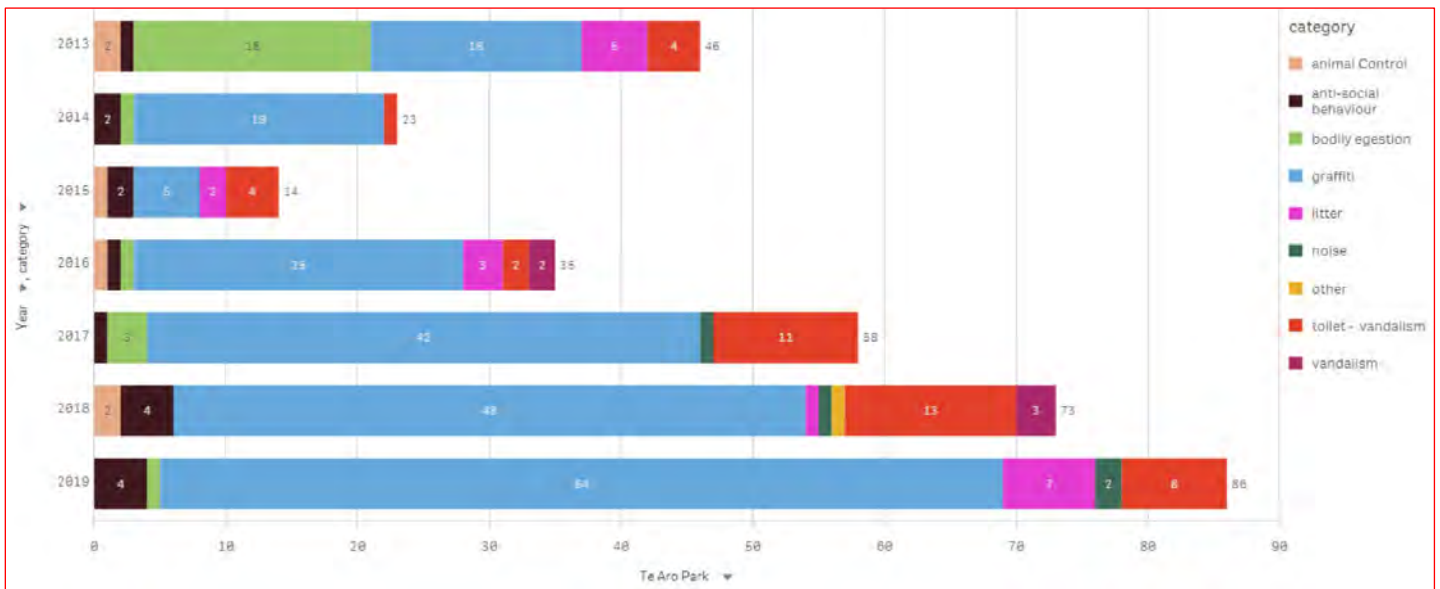
Fig I.
 This chart depicts the number of anti-social incidents reported to Council between 2013 and 2019 for Te Aro, Glover and Waitangi Parks. Te Aro Park reports continue to increase each year.

Notes:

- Incidents included in the above graphs are those where anti-social behaviour appeared to be involved e.g. broken toilet seat due to vandalism, broken glass, vomit, graffiti and littering).
- Glover and Waitangi Park are used for concerts such as Homegrown; however Te Aro Park is not.
- Glover Park has no toilet block and a programme of works to upgrade and open up the space was commenced in 2005.

Fig J.
 The three graphs in Fig J depict the number and type of incidents between January 2013 and September 2019 in Te Aro, Glover and Waitangi Parks. Graffiti is the most prominent incident across all three parks but what's noticeable is the high level of incidents reported for Te Aro park across all categories. In 2019 there were 86 incidents logged to Council for Te Aro Park, 37 for Glover Park and 73 for Waitangi Park, the largest of the three parks.

Figure J: Number and type of incidents Jan 2013 – Sept 2019



Options to improve perceptions of and actual safety in the park.

Potential actions fall into two broad categories:

- Physical changes that can be made to the park, including the toilet and buildings located in the area.
- Addressing the social problems that exist within the park and contribute to the anti-social behaviour and cause the park to feel unsafe.

Actions taken recently or as a result of this work - as at January 2020

- Tree trimmed to improve sightlines for CCTV
- Lighting levels increased
- New caretaker appointed
- Lighting assessment conducted
- Parks Sport and Recreation team looking into installing additional lighting in the space
- Artists engaged on possible new mural upgrade to toilet building
- Businesses engaged with about their perceptions of safety in the park
- Police survey conducted with surrounding businesses
- Maintenance of the bike racks located in the park
- Liquor ban signage has been installed.

Further options

Physical Changes

- Redesign or remove the toilet. The toilet is used regularly by people in the park, passing through the area and those visiting the surrounding amenities. The toilet block is located on either side of the natural connection between Dixon and Manners St. Removing the toilet is not the first solution but in its current state, it is not fit for purpose. Due to the physical layout, sightlines into the toilet area are concealed. Changing the layout and creating a more open space would be more suitable for this location.
 - The canopy connecting the two toilet blocks should be removed to improve sightlines for cameras and to create a more open space for pedestrians moving between Dixon and Manners.
 - If the canopy between the two toilets is not removed, further lighting should be installed as per recommendations made in the lighting report.
 - If the canopy is removed, it should be replaced with gentle directional lighting that encourages movement through the space rather than create the feeling of that section of the park being a destination.
- Remove Spark phone booth as it creates blind spots and concealments in front of the bicycle racks. Removing the phone booth would create less risk in this location.
- The park should be included in a regular cleaning plan to prevent the area feeling dirty and unwelcoming. Regular water blasting of hard surfaces within the park would be hugely beneficial.
- Recognise the cultural significance of the park with interpretive signage and transform the park into a destination.

- Supporting businesses to activate the park will encourage more legitimate uses of the space.
- Removing the parking from Dixon Street on the park side of the street will open the view to be seen from surrounding buildings.
- Installing pedestrian crossings into both Manners and Dixon street to improve safe access to the park
- Lighting
 - Currently there are numerous lights that are not functional. Regular upkeep of the lights would ensure that dark corners are lit up and artwork is highlighted.
 - Vertical lighting should be installed on the Opera House side to improve night time flow and a more defined route.
 - Lighting should also be added to the murals on the toilet building to increase attention to the artwork.
 - Lights should be added to the canopy of the Oaks building
 - The area under the tree is poorly lit and is a dark zone within the park. Walking through the toilet walkway and arriving in the unexpected dark zone can be quite jolting and creates the impression of being unsafe. Lower lights should be added into this area to increase continuity of lighting. Canopy lighting should be added to the tree.
- The bus shelter on Manners street creates an entrapment spot between it and the building. The glaring signage on the end of the bus stop adds to the feeling of insecurity felt when approaching this space. The sheltered bus stop is not necessary in this location as there is already a canopy on the building. The bus stop shelter should be removed.
- Increased maintenance of the park - repairs should be done in a timely way. For example, the glass panes of the canopy between the two toilet buildings slip out of their placement and repairs on these is not regular.

Behavioural Changes

- Improve guardianship of the park by involving businesses and other stakeholders in activity that occurs within the park, with central coordination from Council and intentional place-making.
- Where resources allow, increase patrols to the Te Aro park area during the hours of high activity and high social harm - this includes both Police as well as Local Hosts.
- Install Liquor ban signs within the Te Aro Park and surrounds liquor ban area.
- Encourage more stores to sign up for Eyes On
- Activate the park by identifying meaningful activities and possible community development approaches that could be implemented to address some of the anti-social behaviour that exists within the park.
- Initiate community led neighbourhood activities such as a community garden or gathering space
- Increase food carts or coffee carts into the area to bring more pedestrians and legitimate users of the space into the park.

Conclusion

This report outlines safety concerns within Te Aro Park, actions taken and potential solutions. Data collected between Council and Police channels outlines that the number of events associated with social harm, occurring within the park are comparatively high when compared to other central city parks. Options that have been identified for both physical and structural changes have been made that are aimed at reducing the harm that is currently occurring in the park. This list is not conclusive but an indication of steps that be taken to reduce harm, improve the perception of safety and ensure people feel safe to enjoy the park.