



Australian Government
Department of Social Services



Cashless Debit Card Trial Progress Report

28 October 2016

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Executive summary

The objective of the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) is to reduce the social harm caused by welfare-fuelled alcohol and drug abuse, and gambling, by reducing the cash available in a community to pay for these products. Participants receive 80 per cent of their welfare payments into a mainstream debit card account that cannot be used to purchase alcohol and gambling products, or withdrawn as cash.

The trial commenced in Ceduna, South Australia on 15 March 2016 and the East Kimberley (Kununurra and Wyndham), Western Australia on 26 April 2016.

In 2013-14, presentations to the hospital emergency department due to alcohol and drug use in Ceduna exceeded 500 (in a population of 4,227), amounting to more than one presentation per day. The Ceduna sobering up facility had 4,667 admissions. Hospitalisations due to assault were 68 times the national average.

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Community leaders in both regions supported the introduction of the CDC trial in their community to address some of the devastating harm caused by alcohol and drug abuse. Every element of the trial has been designed in conjunction with the community leaders in Ceduna and the East Kimberley, including a tailored package of support services. This constituted an investment by the Australian Government of over \$1 million in each region to fund drug and alcohol services, 24/7 mobile outreach, mental health services, family support services and financial counselling.

All levels of government recognise it is going to take a targeted, sustained and collaborative effort, in partnership with Indigenous people, to change these statistics.

Executive Summary cont.

The trial is being implemented as part of a broader suite of initiatives across both South Australia and Western Australia.

In South Australia, the Ceduna Service Reform Initiative has been operational for close to 18 months. The Ceduna Service Reform brings together service providers in the region to share knowledge and make the most of existing skills and resources, with the aim to achieve a service system that is coordinated, responsive, active and culturally competent.

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The CDC trial runs for 12 months and is subject to a full, independent evaluation conducted by ORIMA Research. The evaluation will measure the impact of the trial on social harm directly associated with alcohol and drug use, and gambling. The evaluation will also measure factors such as school attendance rates, child protection substantiations and incidents of disruptive behaviour.

The evaluation is due to be completed in June 2017.

The full evaluation will be supplemented by ongoing data collection from state and Commonwealth government agencies and community organisations throughout the trial period. This interim report collates early data from these sources, as well as anecdotal evidence.

Key Points[#]

Ceduna

- Poker machine revenue in the Ceduna area between April 2016 and August 2016 was 15.1 per cent lower than for the equivalent period in 2015.
- Monthly apprehensions under the *Public Intoxication Act 1984 (SA)* were 54 per cent lower between March 2016 and June 2016 compared to the same period in 2015.
- Compared to February 2016, the proportion of people discharged from the Ceduna Sobering-Up Unit while still at risk fell from 14 per cent at trial commencement to 2 per cent in June 2016 (most recent data available).
- There has been a strong uptake of financial counselling and capability services in the Ceduna region. The A Better Life (ABLE) drug and alcohol support workers programs in Ceduna is on track to meet its projected usage, with 50 referrals to the service as at the end of September 2016.
- Feedback from various service providers in Ceduna is that people are becoming more familiar with using the card, they know where to go to get help and appreciate the flexibility in being able to get a replacement card quickly (Source: Local service providers).
- Representatives from the Koonibba Community Aboriginal Corporation have observed noticeable improvements in the community, including more children walking around with cleaner, newer clothes and a significant decline in individuals requesting basic supplies (like milk and sugar) from the Koonibba Community Shopfront.

[#] *Caveat: All figures quoted are drawn from the most recent available data*

Key Points[#]

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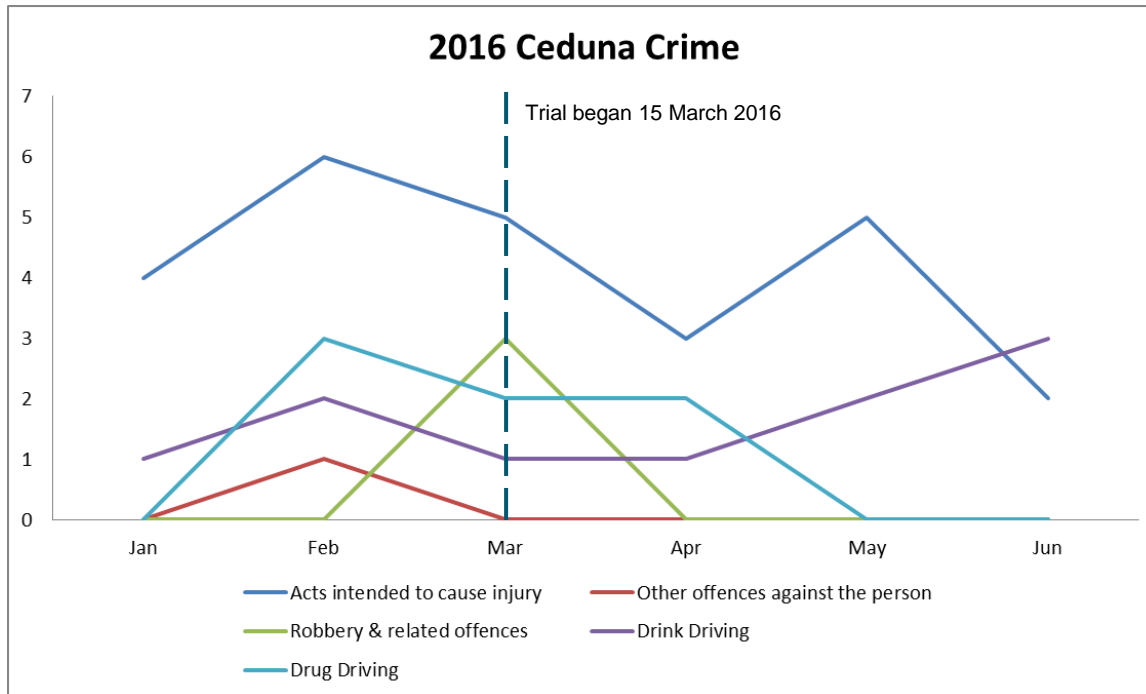
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CEDUNA

Crime – Ceduna[#]

Key takeaways



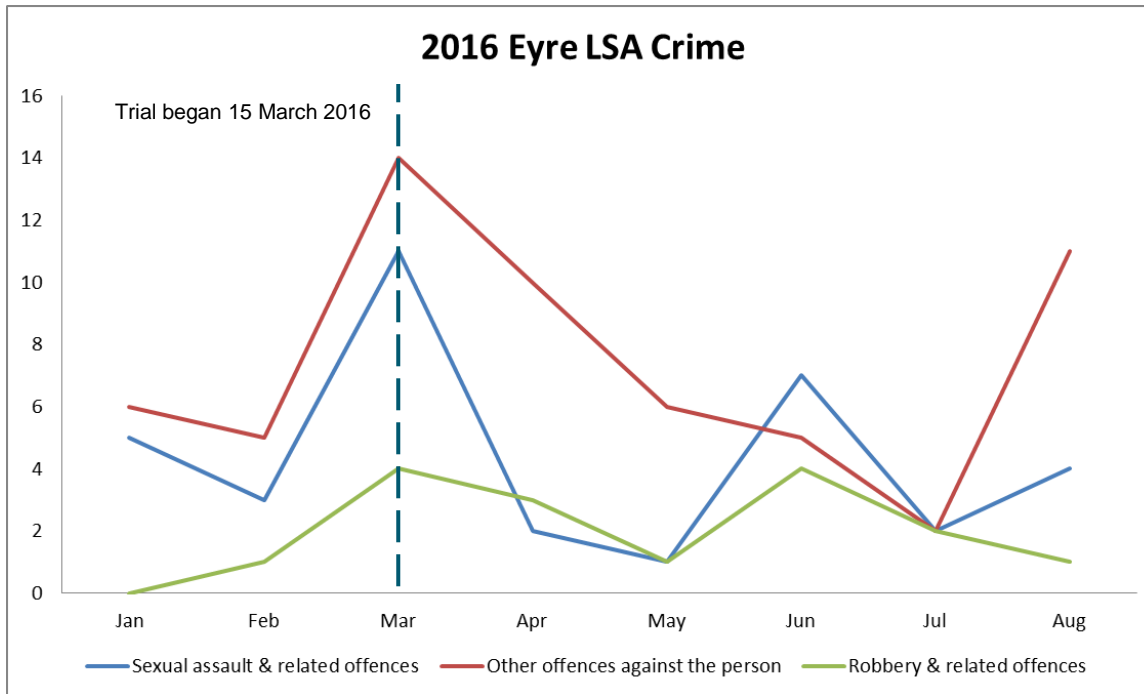
- There are mixed trends in crime statistics for Ceduna since the trial began.
- Since trial commencement in March 2016, Ceduna has seen a decrease in robberies and driving under the influence of drugs, to the point that there have been no reported robberies since April 2016 and no reports of drug driving since May 2016.
- Drink driving on the other hand appears to have increased slightly since the trial began.

Caveat: Due to privacy concerns, domestic violence, sexual assault and homicide data is not available for Ceduna.

Source: SA Attorney-General's Department

Crime – Eyre Local Service Area (LSA)[#]

Key takeaways



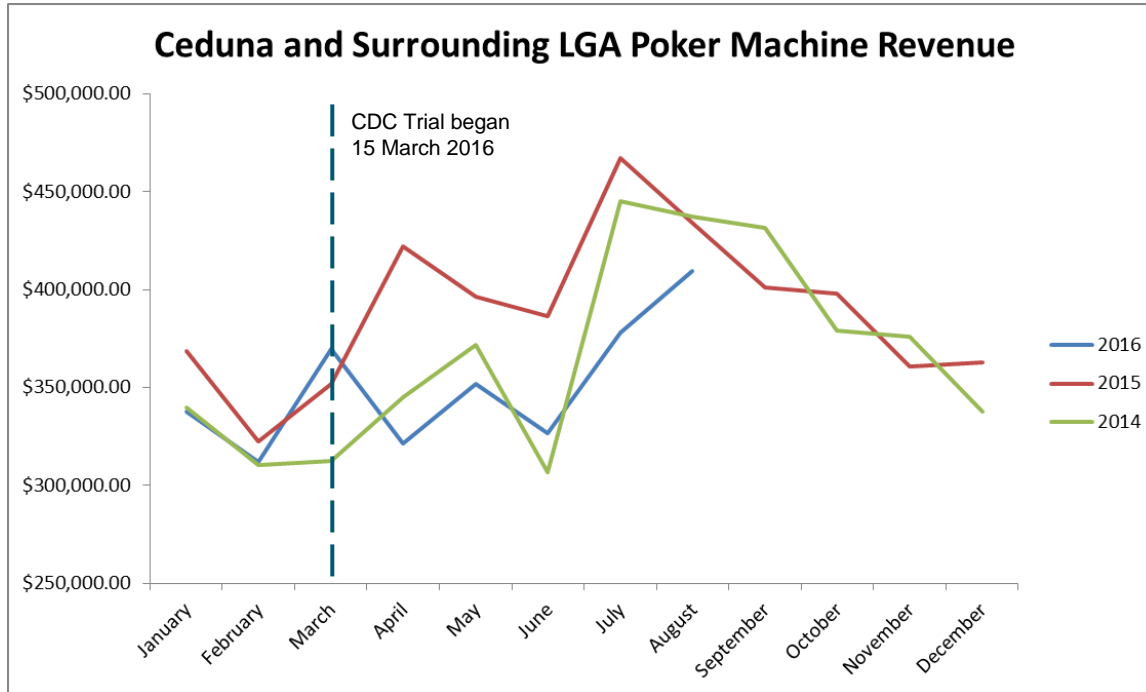
- Sexual assault, robbery and other offences against the person have been generally decreasing since trial implementation in March 2016, although 'other offences against the person' rose sharply in August 2016.
- Other offences against the person includes acts such as harassment, threatening behaviour or dangerous or negligent acts.
- Despite an initial sharp decrease in April 2016, following trial implementation, sexual assault in the Eyre LSA has returned to levels seen earlier in the year.
- A statistical increase in sexual assault could be a reflection of victims being more willing to report cases.

Caveat: This crime data is for the Eyre Local Service Area, which is an area larger than Ceduna. Due to privacy concerns, domestic violence and homicide data is not available for Ceduna.

Source: SA Police

Poker Machine Revenue – Ceduna[#]

Key takeaways

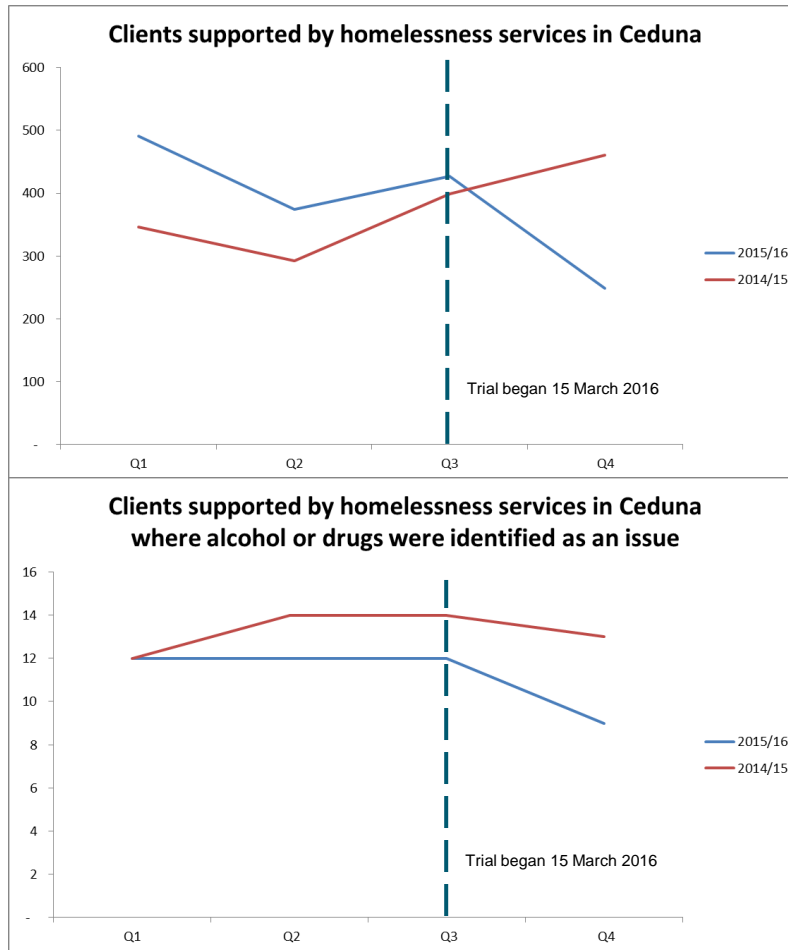


- Revenue for August 2016 is six per cent lower compared to the August average from the previous two years, falling to \$409,350 in 2016 from \$434,302 in 2015 and \$437,646 in 2014.
- Although there are often large fluctuations in spending from month to month, revenue traditionally reaches its peak in July/August and then gradually decreases until January/February.
- Poker machine revenue in the Ceduna area between April 2016 and August 2016 was 15.1 per cent lower than for the equivalent period in 2015.

[#] This data is for the grouped Local Government Areas of Ceduna, Streaky Bay, Le Hunte, Elliston and the Lower Eyre Peninsula. Trial participants make up approx. 30% of the population of this area and approx. 30% of the area's poker machines are located in Ceduna.

Source: SA Attorney-General's Department

Clients supported by Specialist Homelessness Services

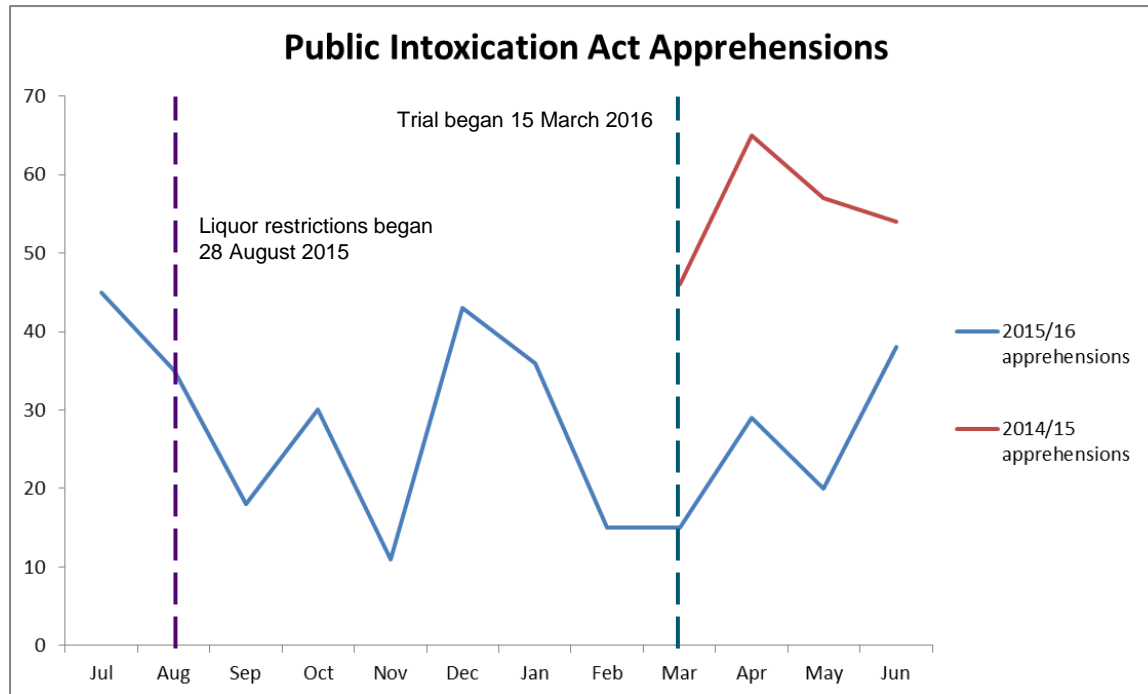


Key takeaways

- The number of clients supported by specialist homelessness services in Ceduna has decreased by 42 per cent in the quarter since trial implementation in March 2016.
- In the third quarter of 2015/16, 427 people were supported by homelessness services. This fell to 249 in the fourth quarter.
- This is 46 per cent lower than Q4 of 2014/15, when 461 clients were supported.
- This decrease is also reflected in the number of cases where drug and/or alcohol issues were identified.
- The number of clients with drug/alcohol issues fell by 25 per cent from 12 in Q3 to 9 in Q4.
- This is 31 per cent lower than Q4 of 2014/15, when 13 client with drug/alcohol issues were supported.

Source: SA Department for Communities and Social Inclusion

Public Intoxication Act Apprehensions – Ceduna



Note: Liquor restrictions introduced in Ceduna limit the amount of takeaway alcohol an individual can purchase and records the details of anyone purchasing two or more bottles of spirits. Additionally, takeaway alcohol cannot be sold to anyone living in Oak Valley, Maralinga Tjarutja Lands, Yalata Reserve, Tjuntjunjara, Umoona Community, APY Lands, Ngaanyatjarra Lands and Tjuntjuntjura Lands.

Source: SA Department for Communities and Social Inclusion

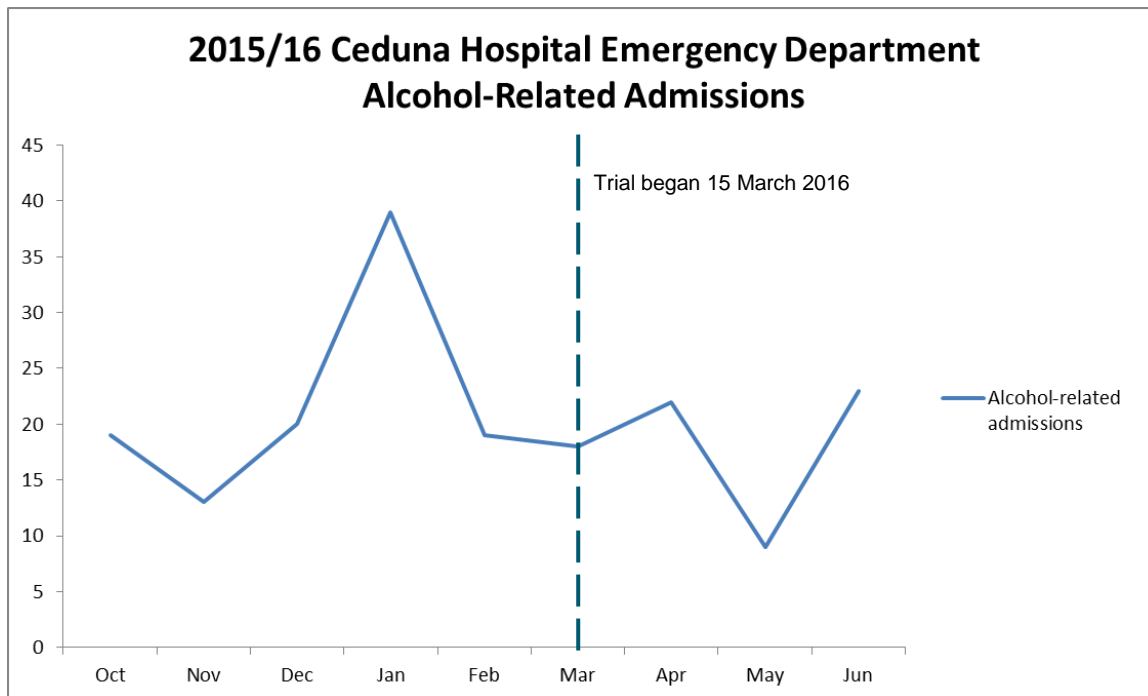
Key takeaways

- Other than a decline in May 2016, the number of apprehensions under the *Public Intoxication Act 1984 (SA)* has been steadily increasing.
- In February 2016, 15 people were apprehended under the Act. In June 2016, this increased to 38 apprehensions.
- Despite this, the number of apprehensions since the trial commenced is significantly lower compared to the same period in 2015*.
- The period from March 2016 to June 2016 saw an average 54 per cent fewer apprehensions per month compared to the same period in 2015.

* 2014/15 data is only available for March 2015 to June 2015 to provide a baseline for the trial period.

Emergency Department Admissions – Ceduna

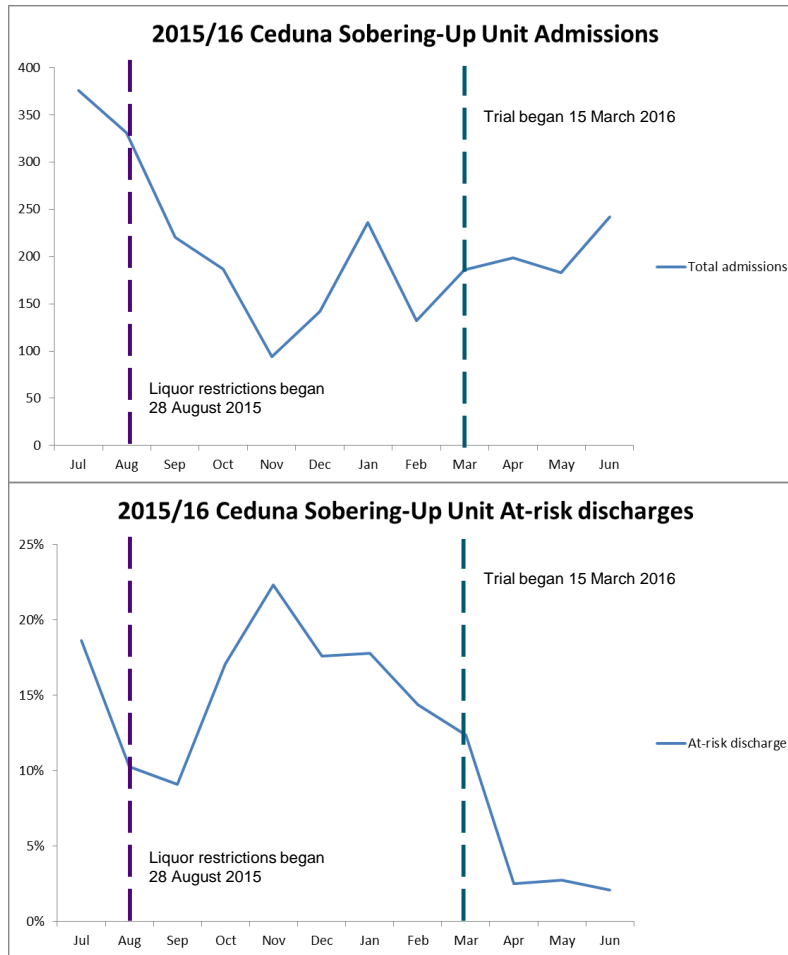
Key takeaways



- Other than a large drop in May 2016, the number of people admitted to the Emergency Department at Ceduna Hospital for reasons relating to alcohol has remained stable since the trial began in March 2016.

Source: SA Department for Communities and Social Inclusion

Sobering-Up Unit Admissions – Ceduna



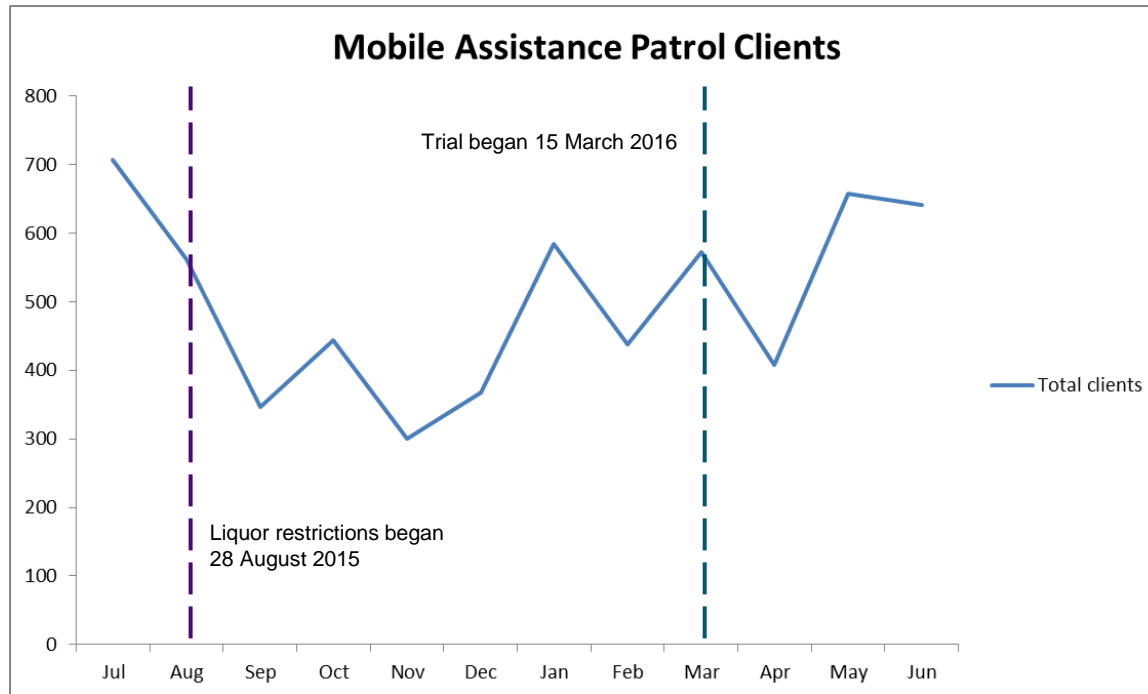
Key takeaways

- The number of people admitted to the Sobering-Up Unit (SUU) in Ceduna has generally been increasing since the trial began in March 2016.
- While the number of admissions remains high, the rate at which people are being discharged while still at-risk* has decreased significantly. This could indicate a lower level of intoxication.
- In February 2016, 14 per cent of people admitted were discharged while still at risk. As at June 2016, this figure is 2 per cent.

Source: Ceduna/Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service

- *Where a person is discharged before they are sufficiently sober as to no longer present a risk of harm to themselves or others.

Mobile Assistance Patrol



Key takeaways

- The Mobile Assistance Patrol provides transport for individuals affected by alcohol or other drugs who are at risk of harm to themselves or others.
- In the four months since trial implementation (from March 2016 to June 2016), the Mobile Assistance Patrol has picked up an average 570 clients per month.
- This is a 35 per cent increase from the four months immediately preceding trial implementation (from November 2015 to February 2016), when an average 422 clients were picked up per month.

Source: SA Department for Communities and Social Inclusion

Anecdotal Feedback – Ceduna[#]

- Feedback from various service providers in Ceduna is that people are becoming more familiar with using the card, they know where to go to get help, appreciate the flexibility of being able to get a replacement card quickly, and children are better dressed and eating more (Source: Local service providers).
- Ceduna merchants claim there has been a reduction in intoxicated persons coming into their shops.
- Local police based in Yalata have noticed a reduction in cash and alcohol coming into community, and a perceived reduction in violence as a result (6 May).
- Representatives from the Koonibba Community Aboriginal Corporation have observed noticeable improvements in the community, (27 May) including:
 - shorter parties with less alcohol consumption (parties are finishing at around 10pm instead of late at night, presumably because there is less alcohol);
 - more children are walking around with cleaner, newer clothes (jumpers, pants/shoes for winter and school uniforms); and
 - a significant decline in individuals requesting basic supplies (like milk and sugar) from the Koonibba Community shopfront.
- Representatives from the Tullawon Health Service in Yalata have advised since the implementation of the trial, weekends have been the quietest in recent memory (11 July).

[#] Caveat: All anecdotal statements are individual opinions or unverified data sets. The underlying cause of each claim has not been independently verified, tested for statistical significance, or placed within its wider context.

Support Services – Ceduna

Ceduna's Cashless Debit Card Trial support services include:

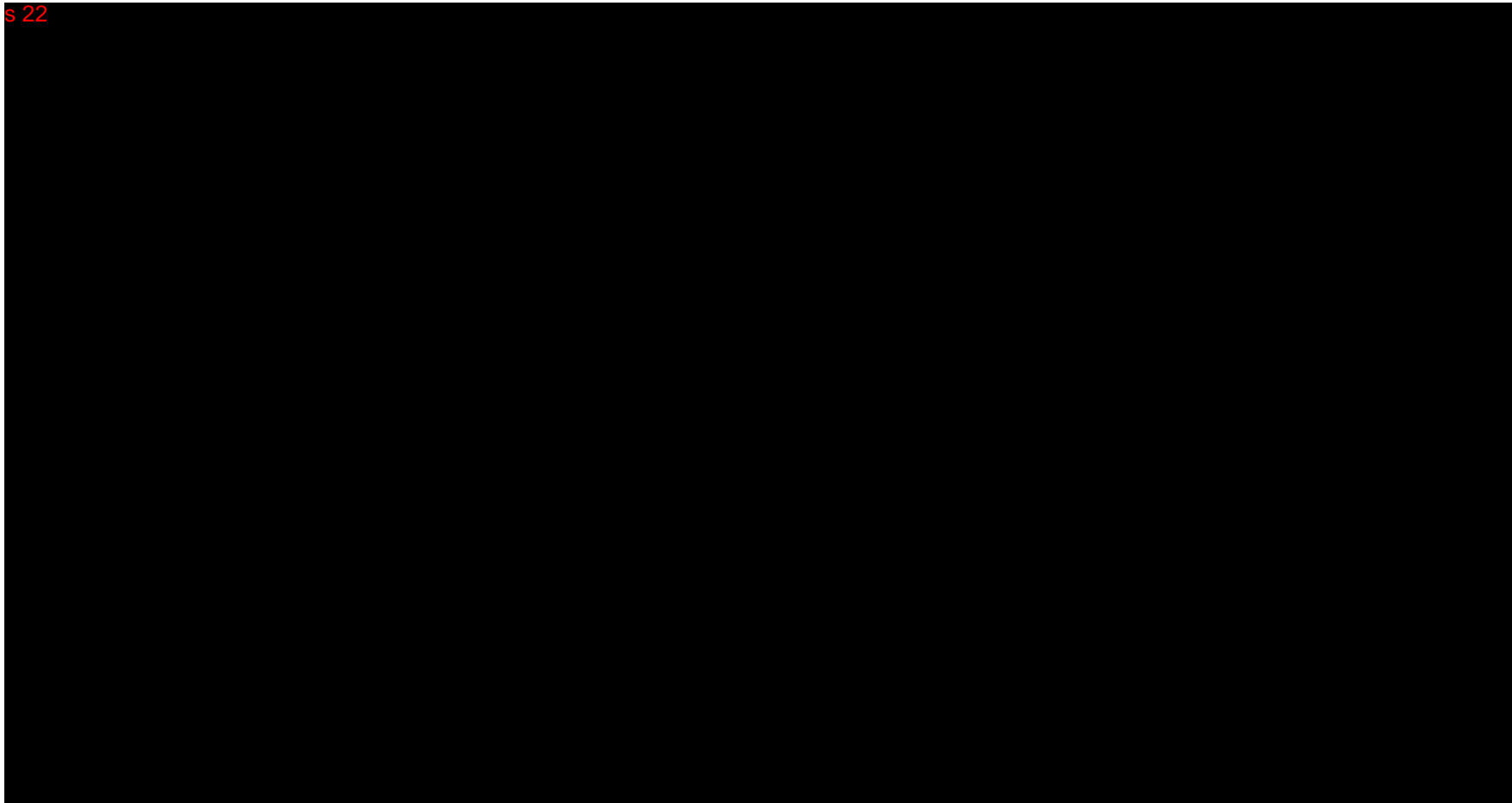
- **Drug and Alcohol Support Workers** – This service provides non-clinical support to people suffering from mental illness, including alcohol and drug misuse, and problem gambling, to ensure they are connected with appropriate services. This service is tracking to meet its projected usage.
- **Alcohol and Drug Outreach Workers** – The uptake for this service fluctuates from month to month, and demand is susceptible to external factors. For example, demand for this service increased when the community experienced a significant amount of Sorry Business.
- **Mobile Outreach Street Beat** – This service provides a mobile outreach service to support vulnerable people. Due to the nature of this service, some clients may require multiple interactions with the Mobile Outreach teams who patrol the streets on fulltime basis. Their primary contact is with people engaging in risky and anti-social behaviour, removing them from the situation and the possibility of causing harm to themselves and/or the community.

Support Services – Ceduna

- **Alcohol and Other Drugs Brokerage Fund** - The Brokerage Fund was established to provide rapid assistance to people with substance misuse problems who have immediate needs unable to be met by existing services. Government continues to work with the provider on a communication strategy to encourage more applications.
- **Family Violence services** - This service provides funding for workshops and targeted support, such as legal help, sexual assault counselling and child protection support, to address family violence and related issues in families and communities. Family violence workshops have been scheduled over the next six month period, in consultation with the community
- **Financial Wellbeing and Capability services** - Funding under this service is being utilised to expand the capacity of existing financial management services and offer intensive one-on-one support to assist people transition to the Cashless Debit Card. The take-up rate for this service has been strong so far.

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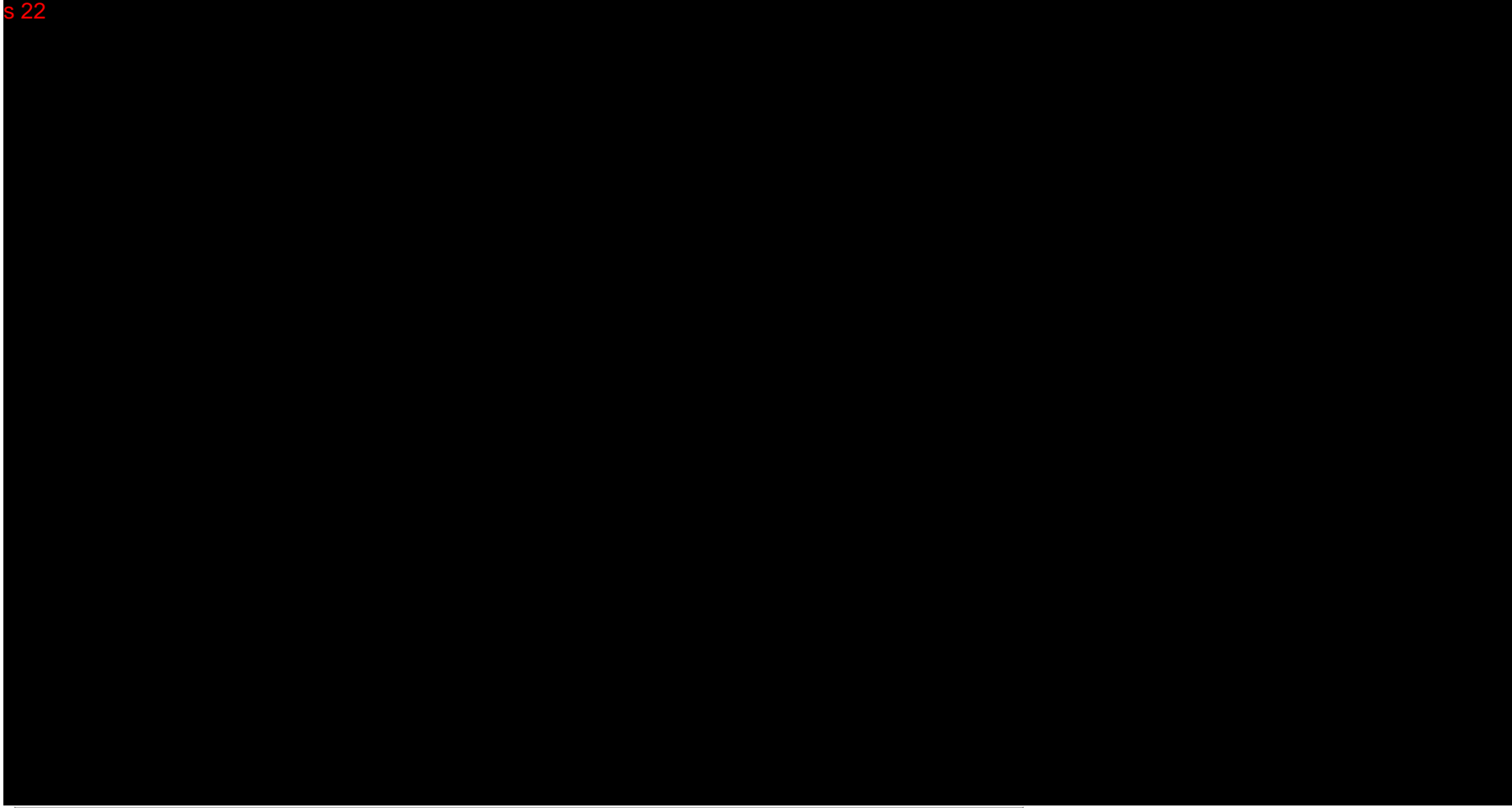
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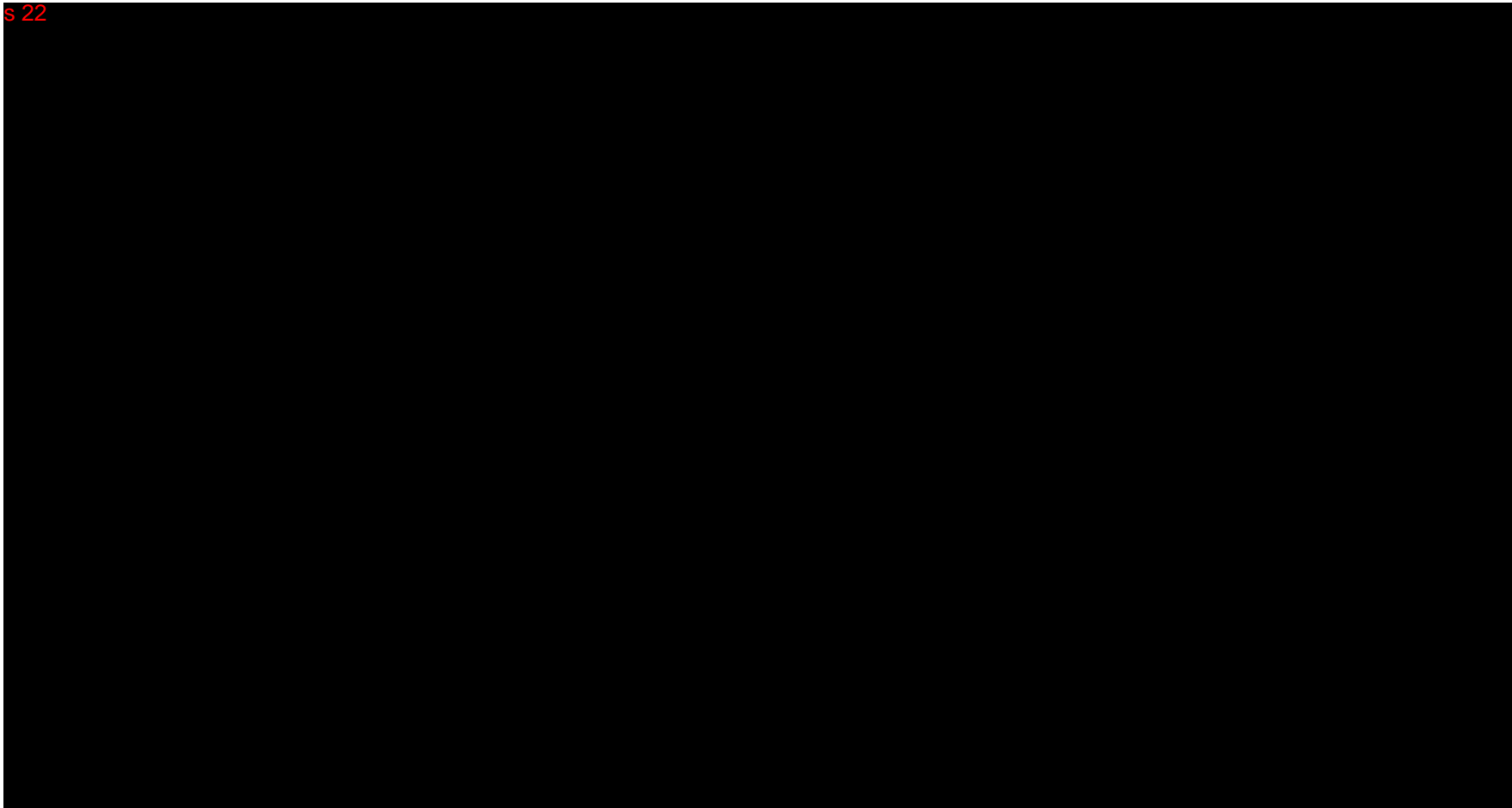


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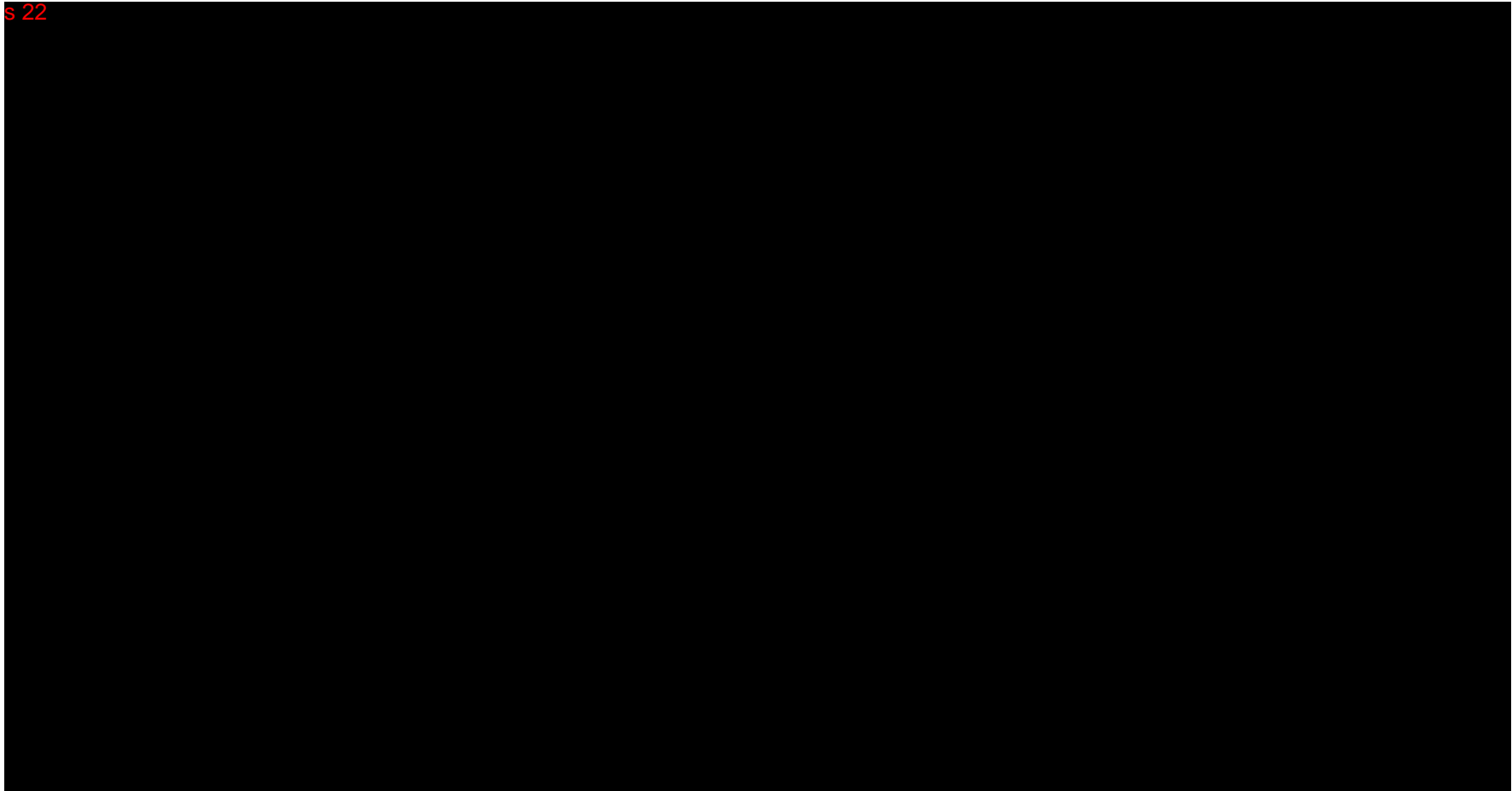
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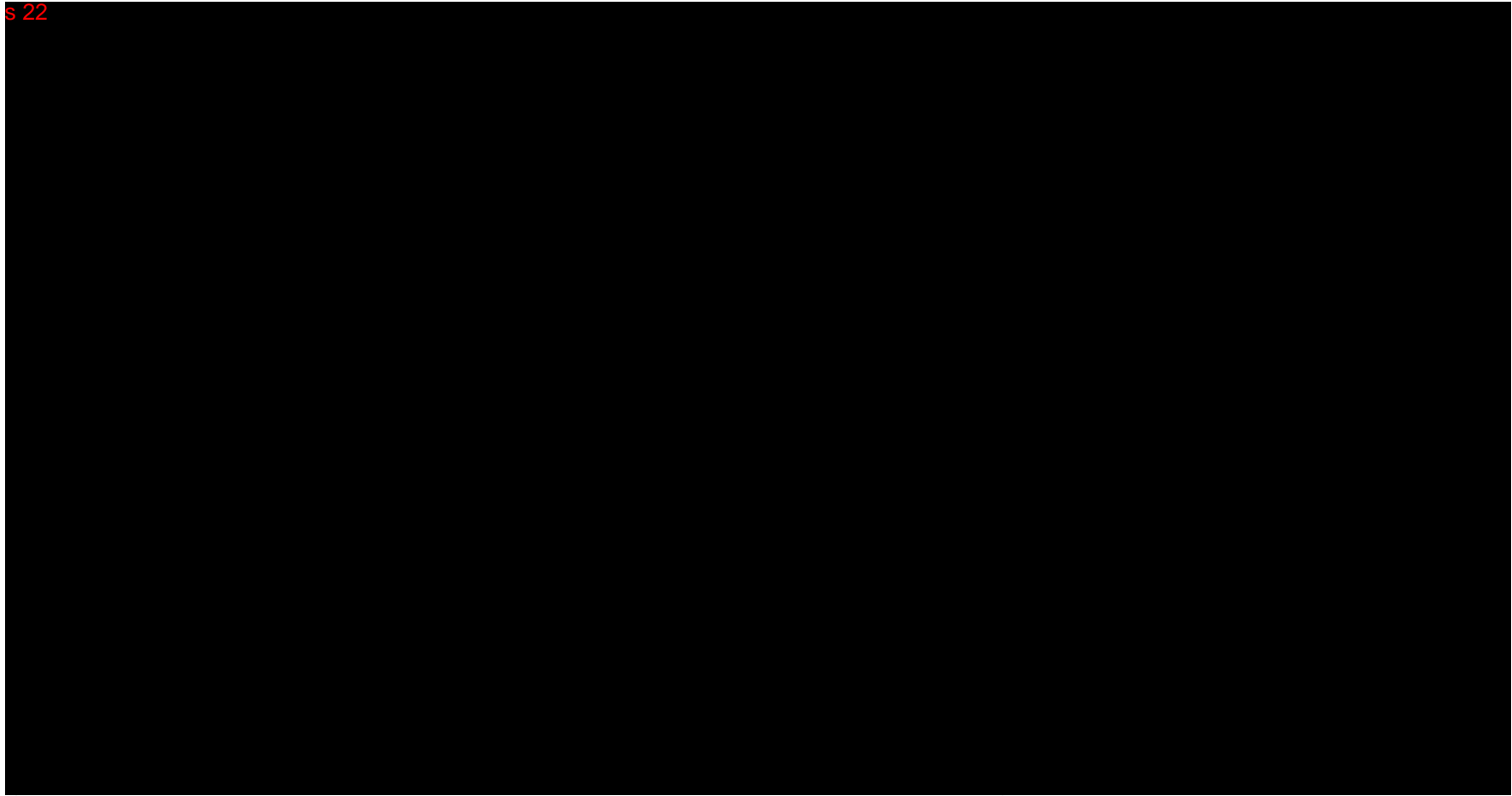


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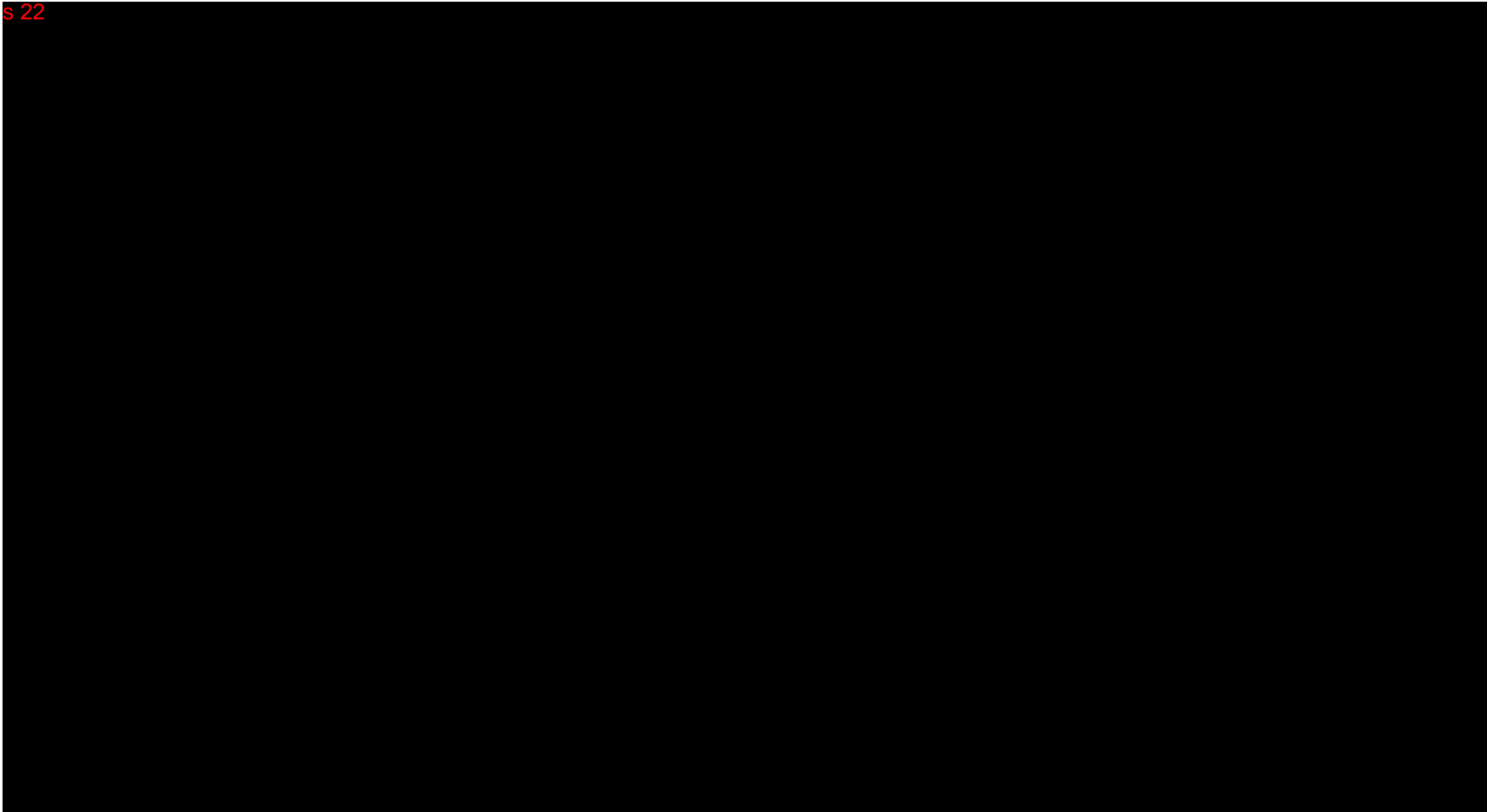
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