# [***A great night for a party***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:47K2-KHS0-01K9-418S-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

As the clock ticked over to 2003, ***cellphone*** transmission failures and traffic congestion proved to be the biggest problems of the evening for revellers at one of New Zealand's most popular holiday spots.

Thousands of travellers faced a long, hot wait at the entrance to the Coromandel Peninsula when traffic backed up for several kilometres on either side of the notorious one-lane Kopu Bridge near Thames.

Vodafone users in the area were unable to call or text on their ***cellphones*** from midday yesterday when half of the company's 35 peninsula cell sites stopped transmitting.

As midnight approached technicians were still working on the problem and were unable to say when it would be fixed for users to call or text their New Year greetings.

Vodafone spokeswoman Sarah Williams said congestion was not the cause of the failure and she hoped people would keep trying to use their ***cellphones*** during the evening.

Telecom reported no problems with its mobile network.

An absence of boy racers and an unpacked Queen Street marked the beginning of the New Year in central Auckland.

While the night was still young at 11pm, the streets were quieter than the average Friday night.

The only lively spot on Queen Street was a church group singing in front of Mid-City, who managed to block the footpath with clapping admirers. While down at Aotea Square's family event, First Night, revellers seemed more attuned to the food stalls than the concert going on at the time.

But despite rumours of potential bomb scares at the Viaduct Basin, bar owners noticed big crowds - some even bigger than last year.

Danny Doolan's general manager, Gary Connolly said they stopped letting people in at 11pm because it was too packed.

"We started picking up at 9pm - we were a bit worried about the bomb rumours, but a lot of people have come in now and there's queues all around the area."

Milano Bar reported it was busier this year compared to last year and Spy bar expected punters to party on until midday.

"Last year it was absolutely nuts and we're expecting it to get like that after 12.30. Even though there's three big dance parties I'm guessing they'll come here as a destination bar and if they want to stay past midday, we'll stay open longer," said Chris Barron, manager of Spy Bar.

As the midnight countdown approached a helicopter hovered overhead and two ambulances were on standby at the entrance to Princes Wharf.

Police said the crowd was slightly better behaved than last year with just 30 arrests between 10pm and midnight across Auckland City for liquor ban breaches.

Auckland were treated to an impressive fireworks display at midnight from the Sky Tower, although it caused a traffic jam with cars bottling up in streets around the tower as motorists readied themselves for a good position to watch the display.

Last New Year's Eve the display brought traffic to a standstill in some inner city streets.

The Coromandel Peninsula is one of the most popular summer holiday destinations for revellers, and towns such as Whangamata, Coromandel and Whitianga more than treble in population.

Around 152,000 people visit the area each year.

But travelling to the peninsula is not always a relaxing trip, and yesterday's long queues at the Kopu Bridge frustrated thousands of motorists forced to sit in hot cars waiting for the bridge traffic lights to change.

Motorists face at least five more years of having to queue at the one-land bridge until a replacement is built.

The problem was compounded by a logjam of cars on the Thames side of the bridge, waiting to turn on to State Highway 26, which links Thames and the Kopu-Hikuai turnoff.

Communication problems also caused confusion further up the peninsula and led to a delay of nearly three hours before an ambulance arrived to treat a man with a serious leg injury.

The 21-year-old was hurt when a car rammed into the back of a parked car, pinning him, at Waikawau Bay Farm Camp near Coromandel just after 2pm.

Generally, all was quiet around the country as revellers prepared for the countdown to midnight.

Eventually thousands of young people gathered at Whangamata's Williamson Park, where bands Xcalibre and Contagious were on stage.

But celebrations got off to a slow start in the town's surf club, with only a handful of people gathering for the 8pm start of entertainment.

Private celebrations were in full swing, however, with large groups filling outdoor areas of almost every second property - avoiding the liquor ban by not venturing outside their own land with alcohol.

Police continued to enforce the town's liquor ban, which by yesterday morning had resulted in the arrest of nearly 400 young people.

In Mt Maunganui only 43 people were in the makeshift police cells "Alkatraz" by 11.30pm - only half the number of those arrested last year.

Senior Sergeant Duncan MacLeod said police were very pleased with the night, and said the atmosphere was very family-orientated.

Police had made a visible impact as they strolled along the beachfront town during the evening wearing flourescent yellow jackets.

Two furniture trucks parked behind the police station and set up with beds for youngsters who had over-indulged had yet to be used at midnight.

There had been 285 arrests from Boxing Day - when anti-social behaviour was targeted as part of Operation Lustrate - until last evening. Most had been for breaches of the 24-hour liquor bans, which cover most of Mt Maunganui's central business district, downtown Tauranga and parts of Papamoa until January 6. Flouting the ban can cost up to $500.

"There is a relaxed atmosphere and a general holiday mood," Mr MacLeod agreed. "Let's hope it stays that way."

In Rotorua, crowds gathered at the lakefront for a big concert, to be followed by fireworks at midnight.

At the Haruru Falls concert near Paihia, high-profile Kiwi acts rocked young revellers into the New Year.

But early on, concertgoers were kept in the dark over when bands and singers such as Che Fu, Tadpole and Fur Patrol were playing after organisers decided not to print programmes with the order of performances.

"You don't know what is happening when," said Olivia Willard, who had travelled north from Wellington.

In Whangamata, police were tonight investigating a hit-and-run in which a 12-year-old boy received minor injuries on Monday night.

The boy was thrown on to the windscreen and carried on the bonnet for a couple of metres before falling off the car in Hauturu St.

The small, white hatchback, drove on without stopping.

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