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Bligh Park

Community Services Inc.

Parliament of NSW Inquiry into Graffiti and Public Infrastructure.

Bligh Park Community Services small contribution to reduction of tagging and creation of art for the youth.

Bligh Park Community Services Inc (BPCSI) and NSW Police's Youth Liaison Officer in Windsor LAC had been working closely in addressing the major tagging issue we have in the area of Bligh Park and South Windsor. For two years prior the community development worker had been watching the increase of tags in the area, on private property, Government and Council properties, and a community stall was held graffiti was one of the major issues for the neighbourhood of Bligh Park. Due to the community response we worked on a joint program with the youth centre and the community development worker looking at options on the internet and with state peak organisations and arts services to combat the issue of tagging in the community.

The service BPCSI set about creating a program that would work for the workers and youth in the area as many youth who were not tagging illegally were being blamed for images found in the area. The youth workers and youth were able to discuss issues and then the program was born. As happens within this sector of youth workers they create great programs and then workers get snapped by other organisations with more money to work for them. The program has been committed to by the management structure of BPCSI so it will always happen. Due to weather constraints the program runs only in the hotter months of the year.

During this program the police had kept Intel on the new Graffiti in the area. This was to gauge if the program we were running was effective, having proved our program worked for 6 months and over that time the YLO Alex Davies decide to assist in the program and get involved in the further development of the program.

The program was joined by the YLO Alex Davies, and the program developed further with Juvenile's that had been cautioned or arrested and sent through court for graffiti or related issues attending the course, with

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Police supporting the program the mix of youth from the local neighbourhood and those with connection to the police, the youth were able to join the program only when they had completed hours of cleaning property with tagging on it.

Through this very basic start to the program, we are very aware that there are not programs with youth in the Sydney area teaching youth to clean their own tagging (and other friends or opposing group's tags) off community property and private property. For us the program was working well but many more doors were opened when the YLO Alex Davies attended and assisted the program. Magistrates and Schools were sending youth to the program. Over the past few years many policy decisions have been made around graffiti with the purchase of cans raised to 18 years and youth finding other materials to tag.

Unfortunately for the program with the Police Officer Alex Davies leaving the Windsor LAC this program has not been high on the police's process and that is ok as the needs within services change. It is a shame that all the hard work with the data base has not been kept up to date.

The depth of the program was fantastic. Each member of the program brought so much intelligence into the program through their particular skill.

Police – Alex and the VIP volunteers were able to create a data base of photos with tags around the area.

Information that the police needed with the tag was where it is located, when it went up, picture of the tag.

These things were able to connect youth to the tags through a multiple intelligence gathering that the Police had access to this was used to book youth and get them in a legal graffiti program.

In creating the program it was important that the tutor that Bligh Park Community Services Inc employed had not done any illegal graffiti pieces, this is one aspect that helped the program and gave it creditability within the area.

This program is not by any means the whole solution of the problem but it was one program that was working in specific target areas we chose to monitor with tags.

One of the issues we had within the program was Police Assistance Hotline (PAL) as forms that the workers had to work on were about property owners having the issue not others reporting on council or other people's venues.

Why was that and issue, the local Police command did not have any real data on the system about tagging graffiti on property as part of the Community Development Worker role the community were to ring the PAL and take photos of the tags and send photos to an email Alex set up at the police station to add to the data base. This seen some increase in police response due to it being on the radar. (Please don't miss understand the police were and are very supportive but they need to have numbers to rationalise their time being used on the program).

From this program being conducted many companies contacted the youth service wanting some graffiti on their buildings to cover the tags. One very major thing that happened was one particular local high school had many tags appearing in the school and they were looking at addressing the issue, they found out about the program and for one term at the school for one lunch time 10 youth were able to participate in the program run in the school. This was a success with the reduction of tagging happening in the school.

The youth centre was riding high on the success of the program applied to Youth Action Policy Association YAPA for funds to run the program and were successful.

We are ways on the look out at other graffiti programs to support or work with there is one very good program that is running at Katoomba youth services. Is another graffiti program that is running, this program runs very differently to BPCSI but is fantastic? This program proving very special with business rushing to request a piece of art from the program.

Carriage works are also running a great graffiti program.

Many different types of programs are running which is great and they are covering the needs of the area, but the program is so expensive to run. Responsibility on service with Spray cans are high if any go missing and youth tag somewhere the responsibility of the service is held to cause, so more staff and volunteers are needed to patrol this. Finding an artist who does not have illegal pieces is difficult, from our perspective it is all about making this legal.

If you would like any more information please contact me on the numbers below.

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