



BEENLEIGH  
TOGETHER AGAINST  
TRUANCY  
PCYC



# **Background**

## **What Is Truancy?**

Truancy is any intentional unauthorised absence from compulsory schooling.

The term typically describes absences caused by students of their own free will, and usually does not refer to legitimate "excused" absences, such as ones related to medical conditions.

The term's exact meaning differs from school to school, and is usually explicitly defined in the school's handbook of policies and procedures. It may also refer to students who attend school but do not go to classes.

Official statistics show that Australian State Schools have an average unexplained absenteeism rate of between 9.5 and 11% of the school population, with the private schools averaging around 6%.

Of the total unexplained absences around 25% are never explained. In a school with an enrolment figure of 1,000 students this could be as many as 5,000 unexplained absences per year.

Even then, to get the figure down to 25%, schools have to put considerable resources into calling or writing to parents, tying up valuable administrator and teacher time and using scarce budgeted dollars. Schools are well aware that casual truancy is very difficult to detect and therefore prevent, and in many cases if this goes unchecked casual truants become problem students.

# **Beenleigh Together Against Truancy Project**

## **Objective**

The BTAT Program aims to reduce the number of good order offences and calls for service committed in and around the Beenleigh and Windaroo CBD by targeting students who are truanting from Beenleigh State High School and Windaroo Valley State High School.

## **Stakeholders**

- Beenleigh PCYC
- Beenleigh District Police (Queensland Police Service)
- BSHS
- WVSHS
- BSHS School Based Police Officer
- Beenleigh Yatala Chamber of Commerce
- Volunteers in Policing
- Beenleigh Marketplace
- DAVBRIDGE Construction
- Beenleigh Business Owners/Managers
- Community members
- Community groups
- Chaplains
- Guidance Officers
- Young people
- Parents and Youth Agencies.

## **Target Group**

- At risk students
- Ages between 13 – 17
- In years 8 - 12
- Attend Beenleigh SHS or Windaroo Valley SHS
- Testing the system by truanting

## **Start**

Term 1 – 27th January 2009

## **Hours**

8.00am – 3.00pm

# **Beenleigh Together Against Truancy**

## **BTAT Outcomes**

- Reduce truancy amongst the years 8 - 12 at Beenleigh SHS and Windaroo VSHS
- Reduce crime (shoplifting, disturbances, fighting, graffiti, anti-social behaviour)
- Reduce calls for service
- Increase community satisfaction levels
- Decrease the number of “gangs” hanging around shops at inappropriate hours
- Increased satisfaction from shop owners
- Educate the businesses on the “ID Attend” Card system
- Encourage businesses to place a sign up stating they will not serve school students without “ID Attend” Card.

## **BTAT Outcomes**

In pursuit of reducing the number of repeat calls from business owners, the BTAT Program focuses on:

- Patrolling businesses, hot spots and known frequented locations prior to school starting, during and various times throughout the school hours
- Target known places where young people are congregating
- Promoting a positive image of police and Truancy Officer
- Recording names and grades of young people who are identified without “ID Attend” Card;
- Ensuring information is recorded and provided to school for follow-up by school/chaplain/youth worker
- Street Checks conducted by QPS officers.

# Beenleigh Together Against Truancy

## Duties

The Beenleigh Police, the School Based Police Officer and the Truancy Officer will work together to locate students who are frequenting the Beenleigh and Windaroo CBD during school hours. If the student produces an “ID Attend” Card (photo generated leave pass) than no further action is required.

## Process

If the student is unable to produce this photo generated leave pass then police will take the opportunity to record a street check and the Truancy Officer will take note of the student’s name, time, grade, school and make comments before emailing this referral through to the relevant school.

## Sample Referral Slip

### **BTAT PROGRAM SLIP**

NAME:  
DATE:  
TIME:  
GRADE:  
SCHOOL:  
COMMENTS:

### **REFERRAL**



# **Beenleigh Together Against Truancy**

## **Process**

The Beenleigh Together against Truancy Program targets the problem of truancy and its associated issues such as increased calls for service to police in the following ways.

### **Prevention Strategy (Businesses and Community)**

The support of local businesses and stores is integral in the success of the program by cutting of the availability of places to go for young people who are truanting. A key feature of BTAT has been the engagement of 140 local businesses (with 98% of businesses approached joining) to implement a policy refuse service to students without a BTAT accredited leave pass during school hours. In addition they display a large sticker to this effect at the entrance.

In addition, community members residing or working in hotspots have been provided with contact details for the BTAT Truancy Officer in order to reduce unnecessary calls for police service.

### **Engagement Strategy (Youth and Parents)**

BTAT was marketed to parents during school orientation for year eights and through the school newsletters. The Beenleigh Youth Chamber of Commerce and PCYC Youth Management Team were consulted and supported BTAT.

### **Absence Identification (PCYC and Police)**

The Beenleigh Police, SBPO and the BTAT Truancy Officer work together to perform highly visible patrols of known hot spots where students congregate in the Beenleigh CBD during school hours. If the student produces an "ID Attend" Card (photo generated leave pass) then no further action is required. If the student is unable to produce this photo generated leave pass in the case of the BTAT Truancy Officer the school is immediately emailed details by wireless laptop. The student is then advised to return to the school. Police are able to advise the school direct; however in most cases the BTAT Truancy Officer is able to attend the location allow the police to resume usual patrols.

### **Absence Management (Schools and Parents)**

On every occasion the BTAT Truancy Officer identifies an unexplained absentee a letter generated by the school to the child's parents/carer advising of the location and circumstances of the incident. An allocated school staff member (Chaplain/School Guidance Officer) will then follow up with the young person with a view to identifying any underlying issues contributing to the behaviour.

# **Beenleigh Together Against Truancy**

## **Youth Development (Schools and PCYC)**

It was recognised that absence management of itself would not address the underlying issues contributing to truancy. Many of these factors including child abuse and bullying required a significant coordinated effort. In this regard, the school undertook to address underlying issues such as bullying and learning difficulties using existing internal networks.

The PCYC made a Youth Worker available and provided services to youths referred from the school with underlying issues. Ongoing leadership and mentor support was given to a number of youths with significant history of child abuse; offending and victimisation behaviours.

## **Pre-program planning**

- Inclusion in school induction booklet
- Attended school parade to inform students of the BTAT program
- Sign business up to support the BTAT program
- Have businesses agree to put sign/sticker in the window acknowledging the BTAT program and their commitment to not serve students who do not have the photo generated leave pass
- Attend Chamber Meeting and advise of the program – enabling a huge network effect of the support
- Work with schools at Primary level to advise High School of potential students at risk

# **Beenleigh Together Against Truancy**

## **Staff**

- A Truancy Officer
- Police from Beenleigh Station on rotation system (rostered 7am-3pm)
- BSHS School Based Police Officer

## **Role of Truancy Officer**

It was anticipated that in order for the BTAT Program to be successful in its primary objective, that the Truancy Officer would need to have an extensive knowledge of the Beenleigh and surrounding community and be familiar with the students who attend BSHS and WVSHS.

## **Various roles that the Truancy Officer Carries Out:**

- Attending assemblies to increase the profile and knowledge of BTAT Program
- Be pro-active in the role (play sport during lunch)
- Work alongside Beenleigh Police and frequent the well known hot spots
- Liaise with BSHS & WVSHS and provide referrals numbers
- Keep database of all BTAT referrals
- Provide information to Beenleigh and Windaroo Business Owners/Managers
- Receive information from Business Owners/Managers as to the numbers of truants frequenting their locations
- Respond to calls from BSHS & WVSHS; Business Owners/Managers; PCYC
- Beenleigh Police regarding truants frequenting known hot spots;
- Refer all young truants to BSHS & WVSHS
- Provide feedback to Beenleigh PCYC on a weekly basis.

# **Beenleigh Together Against Truancy**

The costs associated with the program that were provided by the Beenleigh PCYC for the first 6 months included:

- Wages
- Vehicle
- Laptop
- Camera
- Phone
- Uniform

## **Beenleigh Truancy Hot Spots**

- Back of Cold Rock
- Back of Discount chemist
- On steps near Doctors surgery
- Stairs at ALDI facing Alamein Street
- Outside Market Place (Mornings before school)
- Beenleigh Village car park (Mornings before school)
- Side of Beenleigh Mall facing George St (Mornings before school)
- Outside Beenleigh Village (Mornings before school)
- Around Morton Bay figs tree in Beenleigh Village car park (Illegal drinking, smoking and selling of drugs is known by student in this area)
- Back of Beenleigh library
- Hugh Muntz Park George St
- Dauth Park in umpire box
- Storm water drain at the back of Dauth Park under freeway
- Train Station Beenleigh
- BMX Track
- Hyperdome Loganholme