



Summary

Project Booyah commenced in December 2011 as a local partnership between Coomera District Child Protection and Investigation Unit (Queensland Police Service) and Nerang Child Safety Service (Department of Communities). The impetus for the project was police concerns regarding the increasing frequency and seriousness of offences committed by young people residing in youth care facilities. These offences included violent assaults (particularly upon caregivers), property offences and young people absconding from care facilities. Further analysis of police and child safety data confirmed that young people in care were significant participants in offending, anti-social behaviour and drug use within the Coomera Police District.

Initially commenced as a community-based initiative to reduce drug and alcohol abuse and related anti-social criminal behaviours by young people in care Project Booyah has evolved into an evidence-informed, early intervention program targeting criminogenic factors of at risk young people. This has been achieved through program curriculum targeting a selection of known risk factors for adolescent offending, along with increasing protective factors which enable young people to desist from offending, in particular re-engagement with education and employment.

Project Booyah has developed into a workable and cost-effective response, this local idea evolved into a major project attracting widespread attention and gaining approval for a two-year state-wide trial by the Queensland Police Commissioner. Project Booyah establishes “at-risk” youth as a shared local concern, and coordinates government and non-government agencies as well as families, communities, and businesses to cooperatively address the individual, social and structural factors influencing young people. Project Booyah incorporates adventure based learning, social and skills development, community and familial interventions, mentoring, youth support and educational and vocational

scholarships. The Project supports young people and their families by altering structural disadvantage and promoting employment outcomes, re-engagement with school, family and community. Police designed the model around interdependent phases with each successive element building on the previous component, promoting the relevance of the elements and their sustainability. Police assume the central role and, through effective implementation, have developed a workable model delivering tangible benefits for young people, communities and the criminal justice system suitable for replication.

This program is an important example of problem oriented policing in action in which approaches are aligned with the realities of law and order issues within a community and the development of sustainable and effective partnerships with government, non-government and communities in a common pursuit of reducing and preventing young people's involvement in crime, the criminal justice system, disengagement with community and encouraging a commitment to re-engage in education, obtain employment and reconnect with family.

Scanning

Crime Prevention

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) is the Government's coordinating agency for crime prevention with effective and efficient programs acknowledged as contributing significantly to the achievement of stopping crime and making Queensland safer. Effective approaches to crime prevention are outlined in the *National Crime Prevention Framework* developed by the Australian Institute of Criminology on behalf of the Australia and New Zealand Crime Prevention Senior Officers' Group. Amongst other findings, it determined that crime prevention can reduce the long term costs associated with the criminal justice system and the costs of crime, both economic and social, and can achieve a significant return on investment in terms of savings in justice, welfare, health care, and the protection of social and human capital.

The Problem - Youth Crime

In 2013 the [Australian Institute of Criminology - Juvenile justice.html](http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/juvenile_justice.html) identified that Juveniles (those aged 10-16 years in Queensland and 10-17 years in all other Australian jurisdictions) commit more property than violent crimes, and generally commit less serious crimes such as graffiti, vandalism, shoplifting, fare evasion, motor vehicle theft, unlawful entry and road traffic offences. It also found that in Australia children as young as six years were once incarcerated for crimes such as these. However, today's approach to young offenders is quite different. Prison is now widely acknowledged as a solution of last resort for most juveniles. Australia's legislation, policy and practice recognises that juveniles are more vulnerable than adults and need to be handled differently. Compared with adults, juveniles lack maturity, are more likely to take risks and are more easily influenced by peers. They are also more likely to 'grow out' of offending, becoming more law-abiding as they mature. A sentence in prison may entrench a criminal mindset and set a path for an adult life of crime.

Throughout Australia juveniles have been dealt with separately from adults and treated less harshly than their adult counterparts. A range of policing measures has been introduced to divert offenders away from the criminal justice system. These include cautioning, conducting meetings between an offender and their victim (restorative justice conferencing), and convening specialty courts (such as

youth drug and alcohol courts). These options for dealing with juvenile offenders are often more intensive and costly than dealing with adult offenders, but have a better chance of ensuring young people do not go on to commit further crime.

The Children's Court of Queensland Annual Report 2011/12 identified the following issues relating to youth crime;

- There was an overall increase in the number of charges against young people, from 18,878 to 20,712 (9.7%) between 2010–11 and 2011–12 respectively.
- Overall males accounted for 75.6%, while 15 to 16 year olds represented 58.3% of juvenile defendants.
- As in the previous year, theft and related offences and unlawful entry with intent offences accounted for half of all charges against juveniles. These offences saw a combined increase of 15.3% since 2010–11.

Early intervention plays an important part in preventing crime. Engaging in anti-social and criminal activity during adolescence has obvious negative impacts on a person's education and employment outcomes in adulthood, and therefore income, housing and health. For this reason, early intervention is critical to prevent poor outcomes in adulthood. Programs designed to divert young people from offending behaviour and entering juvenile detention can not only be more effective than putting a young person in custody but significantly more cost effective.

The international trend is towards a comprehensive approach to crime prevention, and there is a growing recognition of the characteristics of effective programs that must be adapted to specific circumstances.

Analysis

Research indicates there is a well-documented peak in juvenile offending in mid adolescence. Early intervention and improved relations with police and authority is an important step in helping to eliminate repeatedly exhibited anti-social tendencies, reduce cost to Government, improve health, education and employment opportunities and reduce crime and incarceration rates of young people.

Cost of Youth Crime

Intervening early in a young person's development, particularly in disadvantaged communities, can produce significant long-term social and economic benefits. *Counting the Costs of Crime in Australia: A 2011 estimate* is the fifth report in a series from the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC). In 2011, they estimated that 1.2 million assaults occurred within Australia with a cost of \$2,600 per assault. Furthermore total estimated cost of robbery was \$372.4 million, on average representing approximately \$5,118 with shop theft accounting for a total property loss of \$90.9 million.

The University of Queensland School of Economics Discussion Paper No. 537 December 2014, examined corrective services, youth justice services and community services in the "business as usual" case, estimating the present value of these costs, over the period 2015-2030, to be \$8.862 billion. That is, the taxpayers of Queensland will pay almost \$9 billion over the next fifteen years on the youth justice system if the existing approach to youth justice does not change. However, an upfront investment of \$10m over four years and a focus on justice reinvestment (prioritising resources towards supporting at-risk young people and reducing the risk of them becoming clients of youth justice services), could make a substantial difference.

Youth Offending

The QPS Statistical Review 2011-12 identified the following facts in relation to youth crime;

- Assaults – Both males and females in the 15-19 year age cohort were most likely to offend.
- Robbery – Males and females in the 15-19 year age group were more likely to offend. In fact, males aged 15-19 years comprised 35% of all offenders.

- Offences against Property - Males aged 15-19 years were over three times more likely to commit offences against property than females in the same age group.
- Unlawful Entry - As with most offence types, a large proportion of unlawful entry offenders were male aged 15-19 years
- Arson - Approximately 53% of those proceeded against for arson offences were male aged between 10-19 years,
- Other Property Damage - As with most offences against property, the largest proportion (35%) of other property damage offenders were male aged between 15-19 years.
- Unlawful Use of a Motor Vehicle - Approximately 41% of unlawful use of motor vehicle offenders were male aged 15-19 years. While only 15% of offenders were female, 43% of female offenders were aged 15-19 years.
- Drug Offences - Approximately 77% of offenders for drug offences were male, with the majority aged between 15-24 years inclusive. Females in the 15-29 year age bracket were also more likely to offend compared with those in other age groups.
- Weapons Act Offences - Approximately 89% of those actioned against for weapons act offences were male and most were aged 15-19 years. For females, those aged 15-34 years were most likely to offend (67% of all female offenders).
- Good Order Offences - The majority of offenders were male (80%) with males in the 15-24 year age group most likely to offend (41% were in this demographic).

Disengagement from Schooling

An Education Queensland paper of October 2013 – *Performance Insights: School, Attendance* identified the following;

- Poor school attendance can be linked to a number of related short and long-term adverse outcomes for students including lower academic outcomes, early school leaving, substance use, poverty, unemployment and negative health outcomes.
- A student's regular absence from school may be a critical indicator in disengagement, leading directly to some of these adverse outcomes. Regardless of the nature of the relationship, poor

school attendance, particularly with a high number of unexplained or unauthorised absences, is a readily observable warning sign for potential longer-term adverse outcomes.

- The 2010 state attendance rate was 91% and, at an estimated cost of \$63.662 per student per day, the missed educational opportunities represented a total notional investment of just over \$550 million.
- Persistent non-attendance may require additional resources to re-engage students in schooling and to help them catch up on missed learning. This can involve learning and personal student support staff, and interagency collaborations.

Whilst researching the underlying factors conducive to crime and antisocial behaviour amongst young people analysis revealed a lack of seamless service delivery for dealing with the needs of these young people. Service gaps were affecting society's ability to identify, assist and divert young people at risk of offending, and/or currently offending. It also revealed that previous efforts at addressing this behaviour, typically criminal justice centred responses, were ineffective. This realisation promoted a consideration of multi-systemic approaches to reducing and/or eliminating offending behaviour, as well as reducing and/or eliminating the associated harm. This recognition reinforced the significance of the multi-agency approach as it enables leveraging the expertise of often disparate service providers.

Through an interagency, cooperative approach, it was determined that other environmental factors contributing to the offending behaviour required careful consideration. An attribute of adopting a multi-disciplinary approach to analysis was the collective ability to consider a broader range of issues as opposed to those typically considered by policing agencies in isolation. As a result of this approach, additional familial and social issues and stressors were identified as causing and/or contributing to the identified offending behaviour.

Young people were engaging in unlawful activities on a daily basis, refusing to attend school and were entrenched in the youth justice system with no respect for any person in authority. This had continued inconspicuously for years due to the seemingly harmless and minor infractions committed that was embedding a negative life trajectory of an insidious nature.

Utilising a human-centred design process, liaison with stakeholders established that numerous diversionary programs and intervention strategies had been offered to these young people by passionate people in the non-government sector however they would last one or two sessions and then refuse further engagement. It was for this reason, a program needed to be developed that not only improved the young person's resilience and leadership qualities but moreover develop respectful relationships with everyone they come into contact with.

Project Booyah was conceived with an emphasis towards police not only being role models and mentors however acknowledging the 'human side' of police officers – enhancing approachability and respect. The flow on affect would ultimately be the development of respect for all members of their community. Project Booyah mentors would be required to embrace a concept of choosing to spend time with at risk young people, getting to know who they are and care about their future. In their and their families mind, police are seen as such an integral part of their local community which would translate into them gaining a sense of belonging to their community due to positive relationships forged.

As lead agency it was envisaged that the QPS would have a greater chance to break into various silos of government with an aim of developing and enhancing inter-departmental relationships with a common theme of having a program that is youth focused, strength based and tailored towards the client (at risk youth).

Thorough research had been previously undertaken as it was important that evidence based approach was paramount to ensuring a sustainable and successful early intervention strategy. Wilderness Adventure Therapy and Outdoor Education principles demanded inclusion within the program as a foundation for helping participants embrace the therapeutic benefits of a bush setting. Camp cycles provides an ideal opportunity for police officers, youth justice staff and young people to break down pre-conceived notions of character and office. Police officers and youth justice facilitators are able to learn about the individual young person; identifying strengths, weaknesses, reasons for engaging in their undesirable behaviours and what employment/educational opportunities they want for their future. Youth support officers and teachers also attend these camps, forming the foundation for the youth support framework. Similarly, the young people have an opportunity to see all their mentors in a different

light as they complete all challenging events together and share food and stories over a campfire each evening. The entire group then develop a working agreement that includes rules and regulations to be followed throughout the program and provides the foundation of expected respectful behaviours. The 3 day camp introduces these young people to individual, team and leadership development.

After successfully navigating through a camp component, social and skill development was identified as mandatory through community integration phase. Vocational training through a quasi-government education arm was identified as an ideal 'adult learning environment' that introduces participants into a practical educational environment as previous traditional teaching methodology had proven challenging. It became apparent that young people lacked age appropriate literacy and numeracy skills that ultimately contributed to a proportion of the targeted young people disengaging from schooling. In collaboration with the Department of Education & Training (DET), a functional based literacy/numeracy program was developed and delivered by teachers skilled in dealing with troubled youth. The lessons focus on 'real-life', practical literacy and numeracy. The young people were exposed to resume writing, job readiness/budgeting and time management skills. The aim of this component was to assist Project Booyah graduates with transition to further study and/or employment outcomes including traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities.

Another key component to facilitating change in at risk young people was connections to health services that anecdotally contributed to their undesirable behaviours. School Based Youth Health Nurses were introduced so they could facilitate educational sessions surrounding issues including mental health, sexual health, drugs, alcohol, pregnancy, relationship and general health issues.

The final aspect that needed further analysis was the importance family members and significant others had within the lives of participants and the role they needed to play within the program. It is acknowledged that for the young people to apply their newly acquired skills within the environment from which they live each day, the family must also be taken on this journey as they have undoubtedly contributed on many occasions to aspects of their previous anti-social and/or offending behaviours. Every family and young person needed to therefore be visited regularly to ensure the entire family receive support in their lives to give the young person the best chance to succeed.

The vision was to encourage a whole government program targeted towards giving at risk young people the best chance to exit from or be discouraged from entering the criminal justice system, re-engage with education and/or gain employment.

Response

It was accepted that there are a number of relevant Government agencies currently working in the space of “at-risk youth” dealing with disengagement from school, the criminal justice system, health, indigenous disadvantage and/or youth employment. The Project Booyah model is based on a re-alignment of existing resources within each Government agency to support a whole government working model.

Project Booyah developed a structured 20 week whole government program incorporating social and skills development training, mentoring, youth support, functional literacy/numeracy education, adventure based learning and vocational scholarships to support identified at risk young people regain a sense of their own self-worth, build resilience and enable them to connect with their community.

Recruitment of each cohort is meticulously scrutinised with a maximum of 10 young people, preferably of similar ages (15-16), selected for the 20 week program after undergoing a thorough screening process including a youth support wellbeing assessment. After undergoing a rigorous selection process, the 10 young people attend a goal setting day whereby they are formally introduced to the support staff and complete amongst other forms a ‘working agreement’. This in essence forms the basis for the group rules and supports the programs ultimate aim of developing young people’s consequential thinking.

To understand how a young person’s behaviour develops, Project Booyah considers three factors;

- their genetic make-up,
- their family environment, and
- The community in which they live.

These factors shape the skills, attitudes and abilities young people develop, and also influence behavioural problems. Often, more than one causal and/or contributing factor can be present in a young person’s life.

The eight risk domains indicating risk of long-term involvement in crime (including disengagement from schooling environment) are also canvassed as part of the referral program:

- Prior and Current Offences
- Family and Living Circumstances
- Education/Employment
- Peer Relations
- Substance Abuse
- Leisure/Recreation
- Personality/Behaviour
- Attitudes/Beliefs

All the relevant phases of the program that is designed to challenge and extend 'at risk' young people within a supportive environment. The young people participate in a variety of activities that are designed to have them reflect and draw learnings from the experiences which can be applied in everyday life.

To understand the journey to be undertaken by the young people, the program logic (see attachment one) was been developed to assist in understanding program design, what this will lead to and what the ultimate desired outcomes/results of the project are.

Project Booyah remains committed to encouraging each of their participants to conduct a self-appraisal constantly throughout the journey so that they develop their internal locus of control to make more informed choices that are respectful and in line with community expectations and standards

During the 18 week skills and social development phase, participants attend a local TAFE (Adult Education) campus to undertake a certificate II vocational program in hospitality. This provides a practical educational environment for participants. Participants also undertake programs such as a functional based literacy and numeracy program, health and fitness program, drug and alcohol awareness sessions, employment preparation workshops, resilience training and life skills.

During week four of the social and skills development phase, participants attend a one day leadership day facilitated by experienced Army personnel (where applicable) before embarking on a two day adventure based journey embracing the therapeutic benefits of a bush setting.

At the conclusion of the program, a graduation day and ceremony is held for participants involving all family members and significant others. Police officers remain a constant mentor throughout the program with youth support officers, teachers, SBYHN and VIP's assisting the young people. Whilst graduation represents the end of the formalised aspect of the program, the case management focused approach continues to support our graduates, linking them with local businesses and/or training opportunities.

Project Booyah aims to provide each client with an employability skill set and to support them into their new work environment. To increase the employment opportunities, the program has strong corporate partnerships who have pledged their support to helping these young people by providing work experience and ultimately, employment and training opportunities. This key feature of the program is what sets Booyah apart from other programs and is a recommendation made by Jobs Australia's research report on Youth Transitions (2014) and the Uniting Care (2011) Re- engaging Disengaged Youth: A Research and Program Design Project. Ongoing coordination of agencies and mentoring of young people during transitions into employment and training enhances long term success (Brooker, 2011).

Project Booyah youth support approach encourages shared responsibility for young people through integration and a commitment towards collaboration. With an initial wellbeing assessment, youth support officers are able to develop a comprehensive plan identifying risk domains requiring intervention strategies. Aligned with our program logic, this youth support plan will fundamentally form the basis to document change in young people's consequential thinking and appreciation of respectful behaviours. This involves active family participation throughout the entire program which has anecdotally supported incremental positive change in young people over the journey. Young people are supported beyond the program with ongoing mentoring and government/private enterprise backing enhancing the capacity to achieve long term positive change.

Whilst the QPS assumes coordinating agency, each program relies on the partnerships with government, public and private sector organisations to achieve real change in a young person's life. A key outcome is a commitment to seamless service delivery and providing an environment for graduates to sustain real change.

Assessment

Project Booyah has successfully facilitated fifteen programs over the past three years across Queensland.

- We have engaged with 146 young people with 123 formally graduating between January 2012 and December 2014.
- Of the 123 who graduated, 71 secured employment with program partners with 7 gaining work experience; and 101 re-engaged with education at local schools and/or educational institutions.

In relation to their offending continuum, 66 young people had committed a total of 663 offences that culminated in their referral to Project Booyah. Following participation in the program, this has dramatically reduced to 21 young people committing a total of 102 offences which has obvious cost benefits to the community.

Griffith University were engaged to conduct a formal evaluation of Project Booyah. In 2015 they have produced a formal evaluation report canvassing the first four graduating cohorts (2012-13). Overall, they highlighted that Project Booyah had delivered tangible benefits and demonstrated promise in terms of addressing the criminogenic needs of young people within the target group. For survey participants, it appears that participation in Project Booyah has had a significant impact upon their self-esteem, reengagement with school, employment, and relationship quality with parents/caregivers. Key results of the evaluation include:

- Young people who completed the program were more likely to be regularly attending school after participating in Project Booyah.
- Program participants were also more likely to be in paid employment after completing Project Booyah.
- Program participants reported positive changes in their self-esteem, which they attributed to participation in Project Booyah.

- Both participants and their parents/caregivers reported their relationship quality with each other improved after completion of the program.
- Program participants reported small reductions in their frequency of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs use after their frequency of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs use after their frequency of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs use after participation in the program.
- Indications are that program participants were less likely to associate with anti-social peers after completing the program.
- Overall, participants indicated that receiving mentoring from police officers in the program had a positive effect upon them.
- Both participants and their parents/caregivers reported high levels of satisfaction with the program.

Analysis of participants' arrest data indicates that involvement with Project Booyah may have had a positive effect upon their offending behaviour. Young people who commenced the program, regardless of whether they completed it, were found to have fewer offending episodes in the 12 months after the program compared to the year before commencing the program. This result is not surprising given that some participants left the program for reasons such as re-engaging with school. Some of these participants also continued to receive support from the program despite not completing the program.

Stakeholders indicated that the program has become highly regarded within their agencies, and that agencies derived benefits from involvement. Those benefits included helping to achieve agency objectives and positive media for some stakeholders. Furthermore, stakeholder representatives reported observing the program have positive effects upon the participants.

Overall, Project Booyah has delivered tangible benefits and demonstrates promise in terms of addressing the criminogenic needs of young people within the target group. For survey participants, it appears that participation in Project Booyah has had a significant impact upon their self-esteem, re-engagement with school, employment, and relationship quality with parents/caregivers.

The final comment upon the value of the program deserves to be reserved for the young people who participated and their parents/caregivers. Despite some mixed results, all young people and parents/caregivers indicated that they would recommend participation in Project Booyah, with the vast majority indicating that the program had a highly beneficial effect upon them.

Improved Program Management

Griffith University in collaboration with Project Booyah have developed a pre and post intake assessment battery for future cohorts' evaluation. The intake assessment battery is directly linked to the program's goals and provides measures of participants' school and work status, attitudes to school, self-esteem, quality of relationship with parents/care-givers, drug and alcohol use, self-harming behaviours, aggression, influence of anti-social peers and criminogenic attitudes. The pre assessment survey will again be given to each participant engaging in the program during 2015.

Project Booyah also acknowledges the importance of further analysis and review regarding improving the governance and developing continuous monitoring and evaluation structures, systems and process. Griffith University will develop a number of tools for embedding improved monitoring and evaluation for the Project.

This collaborated approach will see benefits including:

- Development of an overarching monitoring and evaluation framework
- Development of processes and tools for improved management oversight across sites.
- Development of tools to enable regular reporting to stakeholders.
- Development of tools to more effectively monitor program outcomes for participants.
- Increased ability to provide program data in future grant and funding applications.
- Increased ease and reduced expense for conducting future process and outcome evaluations.

Agency and Officer Information

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Appendices

Attachment 1 – Project Booyah – Program Logic

PROJECT BOOYAH PROGRAM LOGIC

Addressing.....	Will lead to.....	Which will result in...
Social and skills development (social skills)	improved communication, increased coping improved decision making improved goal setting development of leadership skills conflict management	Reduced offending Reduced aggression, Improved relationships with parents/ caregivers improved consequential thinking (reduced impulsivity) Decreased negative social media behaviours Increased pro-social relationships
Mentoring (positive role modelling)	Re-alignment to positive relationships with police, teachers, and adults and peers generally	Increased completion rate Reduced offending re-engagement with school Increased employability Stronger attachment to community Improved family perceptions of police Improved perceptions of teachers Development of pro-social relationships with older peers
functional literacy/numeracy	Improved literacy and numeracy	Increased employability increased self-esteem Re-engagement and involvement with education
own self-worth and resilience	Improved self-esteem	Decreased influence of anti-social peers Decreased offending Decreased drug use Decreased self-harm Anti-social behaviours
Drug and alcohol awareness	Decreased drug and alcohol use	Decrease in drug related offending and antisocial behaviour whilst under the influence
Health and physical wellbeing	Improved knowledge of healthy eating and exercise	Improved attitudes towards healthy diet and physical activity

LUCIFERS

POLICE TURNED MY LIFE AROUND

KATLYN Krieger was suicidal, using drugs and committing crimes when she turned to the one group of people she never expected would help – the police.

As a young teen, the Beenleigh resident was using speed and marijuana, fighting boys and other property on fire, and on the verge of expulsion from school.

"I sort of got tricked into doing different things because you weren't really accepted unless you did those things," she said.

"Originally I was dating somebody who first opened that world up to me and then I was introduced to his friends and it just went downhill from there."

Unable to see a future for herself, Katlyn started seeing a psychologist who referred her to Project Booyah, a Queensland Police initiative.

Fast-forward three years and Katlyn has completed her Year 10 certificate and hospitality studies and is in the process of applying for a job with the army.

Katlyn is one of 146 people who have taken part in Project Booyah, an initiative aimed at getting troubled youths back on the right track.

"I would definitely be in jail now if it wasn't for the program, it completely changed the course of my life," she said.

"I was suffering from depression and I was pretty much contemplating suicide because I had so much guilt about the things I was doing."

But that all changed when she signed up for Project Booyah in 2012.

"I had no idea where the project would take me because at that point I really didn't see a future for myself," she said.

"The police were sort of the enemy back then because I saw them as trying to stop me from having fun and doing drugs."

"It was such a crappy headspace because I felt like the only way to live was to do dumb stuff and that kind of headspace just steals your soul."

While Katlyn was never caught committing a crime, she developed such a trust for the officers involved in Project Booyah that she began dobbing herself in.

"I had always thought that the police were going to run my life, change me or put me away but once I sucked up my pride, asked for help and listened to them I was so amazed with the results."



Detective Senior Sergeant Ian Frame

Program guides youth on a safer path

MACENZIE HAWN

WHEN Detective Senior Sergeant Ian Frame looks at the current generation of juvenile offenders he is worried about what the future holds.

The former Coonara Child Protection and Investigation Unit (CPUI) boss sees a group of kids who have absolutely no respect for authority and a penchant to "blame everybody but themselves for the crimes they commit."

Desperate for change, Sen-Sgt Frame decided to take action and created a program to stop troubled

youths from ending up in his office or behind bars.

Now in its fourth year, Project Booyah has become a statewide success, targeting children aged 14 to 16 and taking them off the path to a life of crime.

The project is a 20-week police-run program that uses adventure-based learning, decision-making exercises, resilience training, policing strategies and family involvement to help young people make good choices and it has already had more than 100 success stories.

"There is a lot of potential for these kids to feel a disconnect and they want to validate that they have

been alive by committing these criminal behaviours because previously nobody has paid attention to them."

Sen-Sgt Frame said 146 teenagers had enrolled in the course since it began, with 123 making it to graduation.

And although most kids enter the course viewing police as the enemy, Sen-Sgt Frame said it fortunately did not take long for that perception to change.

"They start to see us as people that they can trust which is a real anomaly in this day and age," he said.

"Even the kids who have never

been caught committing a crime are self-reporting while in these programs."

Statistics show juvenile crime has remained fairly steady in the Gold Coast for the past few years but Sen-Sgt Frame said it was an issue that needed attention.

"It is the typical, generic nature of crimes these kids are committing, such as stealing cars and engaging in break-ins at school, but the social and economic costs to you and me are large and if we don't stop them now then what's going to happen in the future?"

For more information on Project Booyah visit projectbooyah.com.au



Jake Macdonald, Samuel Allbon-Marquis, case worker Cyril Brown, police liaison officer Tommy Governor, teacher Gary Downing, Sebastian Hayward, Dylan Wederell, Senior Constable Jessica Hopkin, Brett Wilson, Brandon Cunningham and Senior Constable Beth Chambers at Project Booyah Capalaba. Photo by Chris McCormack

Booyah gets kids on track

By Stephen Jeffery

BOOYAH! That joyous expression of success is also the name of a program helping at-risk teenagers develop real-world skills in Capalaba.

Ten 14 and 15-year-old boys are taking part in the third local iteration of Project Booyah, a personal development and crime prevention program being rolled out across Queensland.

Police, Education Queensland, TAFE, the PCYC, Youth Justice Services and other groups coordinate the 20-week program, which uses a mix of physical, emotional and educational training to improve the lives of its participants.

The teens spend two days a week working out at the PCYC, studying a Certificate II in hospitality at Mount Gravatt TAFE, and use drivers licence applications and other real world necessities to boost their literacy and numeracy skills.

Project coordinator Senior Constable Jess Hopkin said visits from police officers, Youth Justice Services and other spokespeople helped the kids deal with anger management issues and building healthy relationships.

She said school teachers had put most of the local participants' names forward, though police and judicial officials could also nominate students for the program.

"The main focus of the program is to get those kids that are disengaged from school fully engaged again," she said.

Another major focus of the program is to find employment for the participants.

Senior Constable Hopkin said the program was challenging not only for the students, but also for the organisers.

"I'm used to usually locking kids up and sending them to court and dealing with them when they've done bad things," she said.

"But this has really has made me change my perspective on how important it is to try and get them before they get to that stage."

