



Drum beats the rhythm of hope for street kids

By Penny Doust, Media and Public Affairs Branch



Beat the Streets project managers Constable Greg Newman (left) and Senior Constable Darryn Fry.



Street kids are turning to drums instead of drugs as part of project which saw them march along side police in the recent Brisbane Australia Day parade.

The Beat the Streets project began in November last year and encourages disadvantaged young people to play drums instead of engaging in substance misuse and anti-social behaviour.

It is already succeeding, with many of the street kids who take part in



the project saying they no longer sniff paint.

They look forward to the drumming workshops each week and say the project has changed their attitude to police, with their experiences being ones of positive communication rather than conflict.

The success of the Beat the Streets project is largely due to the dedication and enthusiasm of Senior Constable Darryn Fry and

Constable Greg Newman from the Brisbane City Trail Bike Squad.

Their duties patrolling the parks in and around Brisbane's Central Business District put them in direct contact, and sometimes conflict, with youths engaged in paint sniffing and the subsequent behavioural problems that result.

Constable Newman said boredom was a reason street kids gave for their involvement in substance abuse, prompting the idea to provide them with an interest or hobby.

Both officers are passionate drummers, with Constable Newman playing in several bands including Band of Blue and Celtic rock band Kilkenny.

The officers researched the therapeutic value of drumming and looked at the success of similar projects overseas before launching Beat the Streets.

The project involves three-hour workshops on Friday afternoons during which the kids learn to play snare drums, hand drums and a drum kit. Due to the popularity of the project a second weekly workshop is now being offered.

Senior Constable Fry said the kids were wary at first because police ran the project, but it did not take long before there were more kids than there were drums for them to play.

Supporters of the project include Col Gillies Drummers Warehouse and the Australian Academy of Music who have supplied professional industry people and generous deals on instruments.

The Salvation Army Youth Outreach Service (SAYOS) in Fortitude Valley has also helped by providing a venue for the weekly workshops.

Constable Newman said as the months progressed it was suggested that the kids march in the recent Australia Day parade at South Bank to show off their new-found talents, and they agreed.

"The parade was a complete triumph and the kids would have kept marching and playing all the way to Toowoomba because they were having so much fun," he said.

Since the march, an anonymous Queensland resident has donated more than \$1,800 to the kids through SAYOS and a Brisbane businessman has purchased \$700 worth of drum pads for them to use.