BEATS MANAGEMENT

WHAT IS A BEAT?

- Beats are public places where men meet other men hoping to negotiate and/or engage in social or sexual contact.

- Public Place Examples:
  - Parks
  - Public toilets
  - Beaches
  - Car parks

ARE BEAT USERS GAY?

- Past research has indicated that as many as 70% of men who use beats *do not* identify as gay – they may label themselves as bisexual, straight or not at all

- Some are married, with kids, and want to continue living a heterosexual lifestyle, but also engage in sex with men

- Some are experimenting

WHY FREQUENT A BEAT?

- Historical context – decriminalisation

- Some men use beats as a meeting place because it is the only way they know of, or are comfortable with, to meet other men

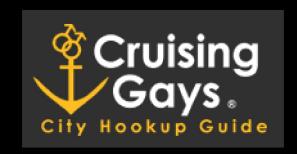- Public places allow men a cover or alibi for being somewhere for a (socially) legitimate reason

MAKE NEW CONTACTS

ANONYMITY

DON'T ID AS GAY SO DON'T WANT TO GO TO A VENUE

EXPLORE SEXUALITY

NO STRINGS

HOW DO PEOPLE FIND BEATS?

- Generally in the past this has occurred organically, or by word of mouth and by chance encounters

- More recently men have been able to access locations easily via the internet and apps such as 'Grindr'.

https://www.cruisinggays.com/sydney/c/toilets/
https://www.cruisinggays.com/sydney/c/areas/
https://www.gaysydney4u.com/cruising/

Local Beat:
- Male toilets Grand Concourse, Central RWS.
- Reports of sexual acts and users targeted
- HVP policing to deter

HOW DO NSW POLICE GET INVOLVED?

- Complaints from residents/locals
- Offences – Assaults, Robberies, Anti-Social Behaviour & Offensive Behaviour
- Media Attention
- Ongoing monitoring of known beats

WHY POLICE A BEAT?

- Prevent and Disrupt criminal behaviour
- Policing beats is the same as policing "lovers lanes" – we want to deter criminal activity and prevent people from being victimised.

CHALLENGES WHEN POLICING BEATS?

- Perceived harassment by beat users
- Ensuring appropriate use of police powers
- Reducing negative interactions with beat users
    - Professionalism
    - Language
    - Sensitivity
    - Understanding of issues associated with beats
    - Recording interactions in COPS
- Displacement
- Overt patrols – Beat Management Policy

GET THE BASICS RIGHT?

- Know your powers and proofs
- USE APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE – WRITTEN AND ORAL
- Don't use emotive terms
- Link comments to the offence itself (Wilful exposure, offensive) instead of the perpetrators (suspicious homosexual activity)
- Consider the appropriateness of warnings, linking vehicles to areas, registered owners to vehicles and criminality, intelligence categories etc.

WHAT POWERS DO WE USE?

- Move Ons
- Person Searches
- Wilful and Obscene
- Offensive Behaviour

- Record everything accurately and comprehensively
- Collection and storage of information must be ethical
- Information should only be recorded in connection with police law enforcement functions – consider in the context of BWV as well

WHAT'S EXPECTED OF US?

- Professionalism (NSWPF Code of Conduct and Ethics)
- Provide a high standard of service to ALL members of the community
- Adherence with Policy
- Continue to be personable and engage with people you meet in public.

GUIDELIINES FOR EFFECTIVE POLICING OF BEATS?

- For example, where an officer encounters men using a beat for appropriate social contact and the officer has been briefed about assaults in the area the officer can discuss issues of personal safety with the men.

- This situation may facilitate the development of rapport with the beat users, building trust and confidence in the local police. It may lead to intelligence on perpetrators of assaults and other crimes in the area.

CASE STUDY

BACKGROUND:

- Local police took report from ACON and NSW Beats Project of beat users being harassed/assaulted by youths at Croudace Bay toilets/beat.
- Police received reports from the public and in local newspaper about the community frightened to use the toilets due to men having sex there and fear of community being approached by users.
- Reports of council workers (landscapers/gardeners) working in the area and frequently patrolling the toilets.
- GLLO met with ACON and Council. Identified some issues and arranged training for council workers and local police.
- Local GLLO and Commander met with NSW Beat Project, in an attempt to identify victims (beat users) to commence investigations. Hatred for police and warned men to not trust police.
- Local Police conducted overt patrols of the area to prevent and disrupt anti-social behaviour of unknown youths harassing beat users to prevent assaults and harassment.
- Victims refused to come forward due to their attitude of police and fear of identity being revealed/ outed.

CASE STUDY CONTINUED

This is a shared space

Please use this space respectfully.

Families, children, seniors and the community use this area.

If you witness or have any information about illegal or anti-social activity in this area, please call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or Lake Macquarie City Council on 4921 0333.

ADDRESS THE ISSUE;

In 2012, NSW Beat Project published comments on their page about this sign …."encourages homophobia and vigilante activity…. This is not acceptable…."

"If you experience and/or witness any homophobic violence or vigilante activity by local residents, council workers and/or police officers …. It's important that you immediately report the incident."

QUESTIONS?