MEDIA MONITORS

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Bouncing to better lives

Sport and recreation programs to be trialled in Midland aim to show anti-social youth alternatives to roaming the streets at night

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ANTI-SOCIAL youths will be bounced off the streets through a series of State Government-funded sport and recreation programs to be piloted in Midland.

Sport and Recreation Minister Terry Waldron said the programs would play an important role in the plan to tackle anti-social behaviour in Northbridge caused by the numbers of young children roaming the streets late at night.

"Initially we will be piloting projects in Midland and Armadale because police and Mission Australia statistics tell us these areas are where many of the kids we are targeting come from," he said.

The announcement came as Midland's successful Midnight Basketball Competition began its second season on Saturday night – identified by the Minister as proof the strategy could work. "At these tournaments the kids are attracted by the fun of basketball, but part of the deal is that they also attend a variety of seminars where they learn important life skills.

"We will be investing in each area to support activities on Friday and Saturday nights."

The Midnight Basketball Tournament operates at Swan Park Leisure Centre from 7.30pm to midnight and is a partnership between the City of Swan, WA Police, Office of Crime Prevention and various youth groups and local businesses. Tournament co-ordinator, Office of Crime Prevention's Ian Westmore, said anecdotal evidence showed a reduction in theft and property damage offences in Ballajura, Ellenbrook and Midland during the eight-week period of the first tournament.

"The biggest thing we achieved was giving kids a safe environment to hang out; and some saw a different side of life by being involved in a structured environment," he said. "This program shows them that if they're serious about it they can really improve their skills."

He said that one young person who had not been to school for two years had since returned to class.

"He had won a 'best player' award and as he felt proud, had a sense of achievement and gained confidence mixing with a variety of people, he actually wanted to go to school.

"That to me is enormously satisfying, as it's these moments that are the life-changing ones."

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Sport and Recreation Minister Terry Waldron

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