

Bridge to Employment Site Reflection

BTE Site Reflection

Sydney, Australia
February 2025



Why BTE?

Located in the Penrith neighborhood of Western Sydney, Cambridge Park High School serves around 600 students from Sydney's suburbs. The area has high unemployment and high immigration rates, with a long-standing lack of investment, leading to higher dropout rates compared to other neighborhoods in the area.

In 2022, Bridge to Employment came to Sydney, Australia, in order to give students at Cambridge Park High School the tools needed to succeed in their post-secondary education journeys, expose them to different career paths, and get them involved in extracurricular activities that mirror their interests.

BTE: A Catalyst for Post-Secondary Education & Career

Janssen Australia partnered with Give2Asia, the Now Effect, and Cambridge Park High School to recruit 43 Year 9 students into BTE. During their time with the program, students explored a wide array of STEM²D professions and disciplines within Johnson & Johnson. Through factory visits with Johnson & Johnson, students not only learned about the different opportunities within the field, but they also got to see firsthand what a day in the life of STEM²D professionals looks like. They discovered cutting-edge technology used within the field and learned how it's used in real-world procedures. During the factory visit, students got to learn about different health-related operations used with the technology they discovered.

In addition to career awareness and exploration program elements, BTE participants also engaged in a variety of post-secondary planning activities. Students got to visit Western Sydney University, where they learned more about what to expect after graduating, created meaningful connections with one another, and discovered the different career pathways available to them. This visit to a post-secondary education facility helped to demystify a challenging transition between life stages, helping them feel more at ease about their next steps. There were also a number of meaningful activities that students participated in, such as the Productivity Bootcamp, where students got to learn about the different careers in construction. Students expressed gratitude from being in the program, as BTE truly helped them prepare for life after school and provided them with practical tools to navigate their last year of high school and the transition to post-secondary education and careers.

Aside from learning about the different options available to them and developing the professional and practical skills needed to succeed, students got to enjoy their time in the program, discover interesting places, and bond with one another by participating in fun activities. Some of these activities included a visit to Cockatoo Island, where students participated in an exciting scavenger hunt, police tag games, and historical tours of the island. These experiences were crucial in creating important connections and bonding among the students as they fostered a sense of camaraderie and enjoyment that helped make the more technical aspects of the program more enjoyable. Students also got to enjoy a visit to the zoo!

Site Profile

Location

Sydney, Australia

Grant Period

2022 – 2024

Sponsor

Johnson & Johnson

Coordinator

The Now Effect

Community Partners

Cambridge Park High

School

Give2Asia

Janssen Australia

IMPACT OF BTE

Out of the 43 students who began BTE in Sydney, 20 completed the program. Being able to engage and connect with Johnson & Johnson volunteers really helped students to obtain the much-needed guidance and confidence to navigate the uncertain and often rocky road that can be life after high school. Participants regularly voiced their feelings of ease and confidence, expressing how the program helped alleviate the complicated feelings of fear and anxiety that often come with major transitions.

Relating to students' anxiety regarding their future, BTE Champion Alicia Nees recalls, *"Growing up, I remember thinking university wasn't even an option—it didn't feel possible. Seeing these students talk about their goals and realize the opportunities ahead was incredibly fulfilling. It felt like their minds were opening to a world of possibilities they hadn't considered before."*

When it comes to the program's success, the BTE Sydney program stood out for the invaluable exposure it gave its students. A sense of self-discovery and exploration was certainly a recurring theme among participants as many of them explored and became aware of careers they might not have previously known about.

Having started shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic, the BTE program in Sydney demonstrated just how valuable and needed extracurricular activities are for students' general satisfaction and motivation as they get ready to navigate their post-secondary education journeys. While the initial stages of the program were mostly virtual due to COVID-19 precautions, students still reported on having learned and benefitted greatly from the program and its mentors. All throughout the program, students got to develop meaningful relationships with companies and working professionals who served as guides and mentors, helping students to develop their soft skills and improve their confidence. *"Seeing their confidence grow was incredibly rewarding. Working with them on mock interviews was inspiring—they were so passionate and authentic. It reminded me of the value of giving back and staying grounded,"* recalls BTE Champion Stephanie Wasylak.

In order to help students succeed in their current academic environment, the BTE program in Sydney also provided them with tutoring sessions to assist them with their school subjects.

Student Outcomes

94% of BTE students who completed the program plan on enrolling in a post-secondary education institution

64% of BTE graduates had been accepted into at least one post-secondary education institution at the time of exit interviews.

100% of BTE students are aware of careers in health and STEM²D sectors.

Students expressed that, while tutors might not have been able to support with all the school subjects, they certainly were incredibly helpful and supportive in key subjects. Students also received ample help with scholarship application processes and attended sessions that focused intensively on time management and organizational skills.

To celebrate students' success following the program's completion, program coordinators organized an exciting theme park experience at Luna Park, and recognized their achievements at a moving graduation ceremony with family members in attendance.

Sustainability

During the final quarter of the BTE Sydney program, coordinators made it their priority to provide students with the final skills, knowledge, and support needed for them to thrive and confidently navigate their post-secondary education journey. In this final quarter, the program saw its highest number of Johnson & Johnson volunteers who were beyond eager to share their knowledge and experience with students. Coordinators also expressed feeling a great sense of fulfillment out of the program. "Professionally, I think I even gained a bit of confidence myself. At first, it felt like I was just going along, doing my job, but then seeing the students' reactions made me realize the impact," said Stephanie.

While there will currently be no future funding for a new BTE Sydney cohort, Johnson & Johnson Champions have made meaningful connections with the Cambridge Park High School staff and have committed to exploring different avenues to benefit students in the future. Some of the possibilities that have been discussed include more facility and factory visits, setting up mock interviews for students to prepare for future professional experiences, and pairing volunteer mentors with students.

Despite not continuing in the future, students had overall positive feedback about the program, expressing they felt readier and more confident to face the next stage of their lives and take on their post-secondary education journeys.