

## Haaglanden

***Report- visit to Casey, Australia to view RAGE graffiti strategy. April 2003***

***A year ago I started exchanging emails with Steve Beardon, (www.rageaustralia.com) in Australia. A member of the Nograf Network, he is also chairman of RAGE. Those email exchanges culminated in a trip to Melbourne, Australia on April 4<sup>th</sup>.2003. Two colleagues and I wanted to learn more about Steve's project.***

Steve and I exchanged information on mutual approaches to graffiti problems in the City of Casey, Melbourne and my home region, The Hague, in the Netherlands. I have created a successful law enforcement program for the apprehension and prosecution of offenders, have almost finished building a good database for our police computer systems, and am exploring the next step, working with volunteers and other partners. Steve and the City of Casey, Melbourne has a good project, and I wanted to explore the possibility of using parts of their program for my next step in our own program.

I was extremely surprised about the clean walls I saw in the City of Casey. They had faced many challenges in achieving this, including:

- A suburb that tended to have low standards-Cranbourne, many criminal activities, including drugs and graffiti;
- Residents who didn't feel safe anymore and didn't talk with the neighbours about unacceptable behaviour;
- Real estate prices that had dropped;
- And meters of walls where covered with graffiti.

Here's the steps they used to respond to this hostile environment:

- They started to clean the walls, off all property.
- Put in a toll-free phone number to report graffiti
- Created a database of tags to map and apprehend offenders, and

Now, after 9 months, the suburb is "graffiti free"! I saw it with my own eyes. Criminal activities have diminished, drug-related activities have vanished, residents are feeling safer, they talk with their neighbors, and prices of the houses have increased. I talked with some of the residents, former victims who live and work in the community. Their comments are consistent: they are very happy with the project and feel safer than before. They also have a good school information project. The kids are educated on the problems that result from graffiti.

# P o l i c e R e p o r t s

We also talked with the councillors about the project, police, volunteers, cleaners, press and members of the parliament. It was a superb basis of dialogue, learning, and growth!. They all do a very good job, and are visibly proud of that.

I also met Don Bone, another member of the Nograff Network. He is working in Frankston Melbourne and doing a good job. The problem he faces is immense, and he is working mostly with volunteers (e.g., the Rotary Club) and schools. The schools have a mural project as well as legal graffiti made for some storeowners. That also looked very nice and is working well. Don Bone just started in Frankston with the project and has long way to go, but I think he is going to do a very good job there.

Although Don Bone & Steve Beardon share common goals, they face different environments, and employ different approaches. The City of Casey Melbourne is, so to speak, "the Gold card approach". It is very expensive, but it is comprehensive. They can do that, because they have the funds to support it. Frankston's current program is like a "small Silver-card approach". For them, it is also very expensive, but they don't have as much money to spend on the project. Thus, they work with priorities. But both are working the best they can. They demonstrate that any approach is better than complacency, and that a community's approach must be tailored to the realities of their environment, including fiscal constraints.

The press, people and parliament in Australia are very busy with the problem of graffiti vandalism, and it is an issue that receives much attention. That is very good and we, as graffiti fighters, need that. But we must not forget to listen to the vandals also. We can learn also from them to fight the problem. They can talk about their experience and maybe they are willing to help us.

I learned much and am going to integrate lessons-learned into my project. I am indebted to and grateful to our hosts "down under." Also, this NoGraff Network ([www.nograffiti.com](http://www.nograffiti.com)) is helping us as we collaborate to identify best practices to employ in battling the graffiti problems everywhere in the world. We can learn a lot from each other and use each other's ideas, experiences, and professional guidelines.

Best wishes to all of you, and feel free to ask me questions.

Jeffry Harteveld

The Netherlands

[jeffry.harteveld@haaglanden.politie.nl](mailto:jeffry.harteveld@haaglanden.politie.nl)