

**KeSAB Conference.
Presentation by Cr Steve Beardon.**

**Keep South Australia Beautiful.
Graffiti Management —
A Shared Responsibility.**

29th June 2006, Adelaide, South Australia.

Good morning and welcome to this fantastic conference.

I'm Steve Beardon, founder of Residents Against Graffiti Everywhere, and an elected councillor with the City of Casey, in Victoria Australia.

Zero tolerance. What does this mean?

Many years ago residents in Cranbourne within the City of Casey where I now live started to vent their anger and dismay at the damage and perception graffiti was having upon our suburb.

As a result-Residents Against Graffiti Everywhere was established in Cranbourne, and successful strategies sourced and presented to Casey council.

In short, graffiti was impacting negatively upon the image of Cranbourne, what our suburb had to offer, and without doubt, contributed to an environment of lawlessness.

All this, despite the majority of homes being brand new, surrounded with parks, playgrounds, preschools, shopping precincts and young vibrant families.

Graffiti is a gateway crime that encourages those involved into other reckless activity.

The fact that it is done covertly demonstrates that those involved know it is illegal.

Why do kids do it? What is it about?

And will free walls and/or murals stop it?

No they won't!

Of course your local politician or councillor will get great press by advocating they are going to

solve the problem by letting vandals spray paint a fence or wall.

Is that responsible to the youth involved in this culture? – I don't think so.

Youth – both male and female, spray graffiti to seek fame.

The fame of an individual tagger or crew is measured

- ✚ by the number of tags,**
- ✚ by the size of the area the graffiti covers, and**
- ✚ the degree of challenge required to place the graffiti.**

Since fame and notoriety are what they seek, tag crews, unlike those involved in gang graffiti, are not usually territorial.

- ✚ They will spray their work wherever they can find a clean wall or canvas.**
- ✚ They love to tag freeways or trains, so that their graffiti will be seen by a wide audience.**

A graffiti crew is where taggers join together.

- ✚ The average in Australia being from 3 to 10 members.
- ✚ Crews are frequently co-ed.
- ✚ Females will often carry the spray paint because they are considered to be less likely to be searched by law enforcement.

Invitation to join a crew is also often dependent upon the quantity and quality of the individual's tag.

That said, to be invited to join a crew,

- ✚ first the individual perfects his tag on our front fences, and
- ✚ then sets about spraying more front fences to be recognised by other graffiti peers.

That's 100's of fences, buildings and trains - just to be recognised.

Gang Graffiti--

This type of graffiti rarely is more than 10% of overall graffiti in Australia. It will include:

- ✚ the name of the gang,
- ✚ nicknames of the members of the gang,

- # slogans, or symbols exclusive to the gang,
- # the territory claimed, and
- # even the names of affiliated gangs.

Gang graffiti often also includes threats and challenges to rivals.

Initiation into a graffiti crew, often requires

- # a demonstration of loyalty by stealing and supplying paint, and,

- # initiation rites into a graffiti gang often also involve serious criminal acts, just to prove loyalty.

Why are kids looking to graffiti?

From our experience, and as expected, our youth have basic needs for:

- # feelings of self worth,
- # identity, acceptance, recognition,
- # companionship, belonging,
- # purpose and security.

When our youth feel that family, schools, churches and communities are not meeting these

basic needs, he or she may turn to anti-social behaviour, and join with other like-minded individuals.

Usually, although not always the case, kids we have worked with, who were involved in criminal activity, were concealing their lack of basic reading and writing skills.

Their world is turned upside down when they fail where others succeed in school tests and assignments. They feel powerless. They become frustrated.

They look to bullying others or intimidating others to fulfil their own self worth, because low school grades make them feel inadequate.

Everybody likes to be a winner, and if you are failing, or not making the grade in school, some kids will look to improve their image as a winner by bullying others, or achieving fame through a graffiti tag.

In Cranbourne, many locals recognise this and work with authorities, local magistrates and governments as a community

- ✚ for bullying programs to be widespread and utilised in schools, and**
- ✚ for those apprehended for minor crime to be entered into post school training courses.**

Cranbourne, where I live, has many single parent families. The community involves youth, in sport, as well as socially;

- ✚ Such as with the annual Cranbourne Car and Bike show where local traders work with young teens to host events.**
- ✚ These youth, many of whom have left school before Year 12, are then exposed to many of our local traders in the motor industry, and possibly traineeships or future employment.**

They also need to

- ✚ interact with role models who treat them as equals, and**
- ✚ share interests often not available to them through family isolation.**

Employment is the best life opportunity to improve self image and worth.

Employment puts dollars in a young persons pocket.

The feeling of a pay packet is a feeling of success. Employment offers the opportunity to purchase goods, houses, cars and builds character.

You feel like a winner.

Many kids we have worked with have destroyed or damaged property out of sheer jealousy

✚ -they view life as not offering them the same opportunity

✚ -clearly their self worth is low.

Engagement of youth is not about the local council giving them a free wall to spray.

I hope people can now see – that's no answer.

Kids involved in crime have low self esteem. They win by stealing, or house breaking, and they feel successful by being good at crime.

What are we doing?

We make these kids feel good

- ✚ by offering them training,**
- ✚ by understanding, not ridiculing their need and inefficiencies in reading and writing, and**
- ✚ by giving them the opportunity to make a living.**

Am I soft on crime or these kids? No!

I advocate zero tolerance to graffiti.

I also advocate zero tolerance to kids getting a criminal record.

Our residents are very important. Casey council removes graffiti at council cost off all qualifying property including private and commercial.

All you do is **PHONE- 1800 VANDAL for free removal of graffiti and it is an ongoing service.**

Residents are the victims of this crime - and it's not their doing. I don't advocate laws that put the responsibility of removal onto victims.

Casey council take's responsibility for removal of graffiti across entire city, and does not penalise the property owner.

The graffiti removal contractor photographs the tag and logs the cost to remove the graffiti-- so Council can track and hold offenders legally and criminally accountable for the cleanup cost of graffiti sprayed.

The slogan--If you spray, you'll pay is real in Casey.

What does all this cost?

Put simply, it costs the City of Casey roughly the same to remove graffiti from all qualifying private, industrial, public and commercial property across the city, as it did back in 2002 when the city only removed the unwanted muck from council owned buildings.

The cost--less than \$2 per rateable property. The result—a beautiful clean graffiti free city.

Education, engagement, enforcement of penalties and eradication of graffiti is the answer.

Zero Tolerance!

So successful is our program that Police from both The Netherlands and the USA have visited Residents Against Graffiti Everywhere and toured with us to see for themselves the success of *zero tolerance to graffiti*.

Am I soft on crime? No I am not.

Personally, I believe one chance is enough. Once caught vandals need to offer restitution, and accept responsibility.

I'm a victim of crime advocate, but I'm also an elected representative who needs to try and offer these youth an alternative. In short—I need to replace negative behaviour with positive alternatives.

As a council we run education programs in primary schools to educate that graffiti is a crime, and as a council we invest heavily in teens with many programs. Self esteem is identified as a major factor.

A number of factors lead to low self-esteem in youth, such as

- ✚ family breakdown,**
- ✚ drug and alcohol issues,**
- ✚ relationships,**
- ✚ health issues (including mental health),**
- ✚ problems at school or work, and many more.**

At the same time, low self-esteem can be one of the causes of some of community's social issues. So it is not always clear and simple.

Graffiti is a word, the reasoning behind graffiti vandalism, its culture, and vandalism, is the issue.

Residents need to be recognised as victims when they have their property damaged by graffiti, as do business and the community as a whole.

Our Council not only removes graffiti on behalf of our residents at council cost, we also invest in proven programs to address self esteem and youth issues.

We are a young, vibrant community, but we have no free walls. No graffiti art programs.

What we do offer however are a variety of programs that assist and engage our youth.

Some examples are:

Youthlinx, which runs 9 ongoing after school program for 'at risk' youth. At various locations across Casey, they rotate every 6 months so that more young people can access them.

Many of the young people who access these programs present with behavioural issues, along with many others.

The youth workers in these groups run a variety of activities aimed at

- ✚ improving social skills,**
- ✚ communication skills,**

✚ relationships and self esteem.

Each year, a number of activities are run to improve family relationships. Such as

✚ the girls weekend away,

✚ boys day out, and

✚ the dad and daughters days.

They are attended by local families seeking improvements and support.

They give parents and their children a chance

✚ to spend time together away from the home and the rest of the family,

✚ to take part in activities that help them understand each other better, and

✚ learn to work better together.

There is also a long-term program aimed at supporting parents to prevent family breakdown.

At Youth Information Centres, young people can

✚ speak to a qualified youth worker about their issues,

- ✚ get support and information, and
- ✚ referral to a program or agency if necessary.

They give young people options which can impact positively upon their self-esteem.

The Youth Support Program provides short to medium term one-on-one support for young people. In this program they meet regularly with a youth worker to talk about their issues.

It provides a comfortable and confidential environment to talk openly and can help them feel much better about themselves.

Council's youth services facilitate a number of committees, including steering committees for

- ✚ the three Youth Information Centre's,
- ✚ the Casey Youth Ambassadors, and
- ✚ Spectrum Entertainment, who stage the local underage music events.

They provide opportunities to participate in and contribute to their local community while they gain new important life skills.

Young people realise how capable they are and become more involved in their community.

There are many general programs developed in response to issues raised by a school or agency.

Council Officers are regularly asked to present short sessions at health and well-being days on issues such as:

- ✚ relationships,**
- ✚ conflict resolution,**
- ✚ drug and alcohol use,**
- ✚ and safe partying.**

Many young people newly arrived from other countries are moving into the Casey community.

As well as the more general issues, they are often

- ✚ trying to cope with very specific issues,**
- ✚ trying to adapt to a new culture, social isolation,**
- ✚ to a conflict between the ideals of the surrounding community and the ideals of their family, and,**

✚ sometimes to torture and trauma.

All these too can impact upon the self-esteem of the young person.

Programs to support these young people are implemented in a way that is culturally sensitive, so that they, and their families, are better able to participate in their local community.

National Youth Week celebrates the achievements of young people, and is another way in which Council contributes

- ✚ to young people feeling good about themselves, and
- ✚ to the community feeling good about its young people.

Each year a number of different activities take place to do just that and they include:

- ✚ the Casey Creations Youth Art Competition,
- ✚ BBQ's at the Youth Information Centres,
- ✚ music events, youth debates etc.

These all give young people an opportunity to showcase their talents and feel connected to their community.

They have a positive impact upon their self esteem.

The City of Casey Council, and many organisations and individuals, work together towards giving youth in Cranbourne, where I live a go.

We can't expect State and local authorities, the community or Church organizations alone to solve the problems of our youth.

But we can expect them to provide resources and services for those needing specialised or long term support and training.

Our youth need support to take responsibility for their future.

They need local Councils to provide opportunities for them to develop as contributing members of their community.

They need the local community to see them as our future, and to help them develop as the parents of future generations. Locally we as a council are investing 37million in a new pool for Cranbourne, another 30 million in Casey fields, and continue to support community centres, libraries and arts within the municipality. Graffiti is a negative-which our city discourages, and replaces by offering vibrant alternatives.

The following is a program I have advocated to Governments for close to 20 years— a program that will ensure you can deliver a graffiti free suburb, and maintain graffiti free status.....

Successful graffiti abatement Strategies.....

- **RAPID RESPONSE**

Removal or covering of graffiti within 24-48 hours (preferably 24 hours) of its appearance or reporting by using either paint out, high pressure cleaning or chemical removal. This counteracts one aim of the offender which is linked to peer recognition, namely to position the graffiti in a prominent public place where it will be seen by many. Rapid response also dispels the sense of disorder which can evolve in communities where graffiti remains.

Depending on the site, graffiti should be removed by council maintenance staff, volunteers, residents, private contractors, offenders through Community Service Order programs, and Neighbourhood Watch.

It is imperative that a strategy include **private**, as well as public and commercial property.

- **'CLEAN SLATE'**

This involves an initial intensive 'removal' and 'paint out' of all graffiti within a given locality, such as a local government area. This is done by moving across the area in a highly co-ordinated manner until graffiti has been removed from all sites and structures at least once. New incidents and 'tags' can then be monitored.

- **REPORTING - TOLL FREE HOTLINES**

The facilitation of increased and timely reporting is fundamental to the success of a rapid response strategy. Mechanisms by which this has been achieved are:

the establishment of a **'graffiti hotline'**, enlisting the assistance of community groups such as Neighbourhood Watch, establishment of a two way reporting process with local police, interaction with public utilities, promotion to the community of a reporting process, and the establishment of a streamlined system for all relevant council departments and/or State Government Departments.

- **TAG REGISTER**

This involves the photographing of tags and the cataloguing of details related to incidents. This enables the identification of tags and the eventual linking of incidents to apprehended offenders. It also enables mapping of incidents to identify patterns, and for cost recovery from vandals.

Monitoring of frequently targeted or highly vulnerable locations and structures for rapid response.

• SURVEILLANCE

Surveillance of hot spots via covert cameras, security patrols and police patrols, with a view to facilitating apprehension of offenders.

• IDENTIFICATION AND CONFRONTATION OF OFFENDERS

Identification via video evidence, reports from local residents and schools, and by linking into local youth networks.

• RESTITUTION

Young offenders can be ordered to do community service work, either as a consequence of having received an undertaking after attending a Family Conference or after receiving a police caution, or via receiving a Community Service Order (CSO) through the Youth Court. Adults can also receive Community Service Orders via the adult court system. In dealing with offenders, councils can adopt a policy of not only accountability, but also cost recovery, and/or fines.

• GRAFFITI RESISTANT SURFACES

Surfaces applied to public and council property. Also strategies involving subsidized purchase of anti graffiti coatings for business etc. operating in a municipality.

• CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

CPTED encompasses a range of design strategies such as: alterations to the design of a site, including improved lighting and landscaping, to facilitate natural surveillance; incorporation of surfaces and materials which will not attract graffiti; and site/building design that will limit access to vulnerable aspects such as walls. Recent moves have seen the beginnings of the incorporation of CPTED principles into Local Development Plans. This will result in crime prevention principles being incorporated at the design stage of a development proposal/

• ADOPT-A-STATION/A-BUS-SHELTER/A-PARK

This involves a local group such as a school, Neighbourhood Watch, or a residents group, adopting a local facility to maintain in good repair, preferably practicing the strategy of rapid response. Councils, public transport operators and local businesses often are quite keen to assist. Ongoing support will be needed, and council

support with the donation of paints and plants will help maintain community support.

- **LEGAL MURALS/SITES - DOES THIS WORK?**

Graffiti artists or artists, are permitted or funded (hence the term "legal") to work with young people to paint murals on public sites/walls. It is argued that the aim is to deter graffitiists from offending, or deter graffitiists from repeatedly targeting specific sites. There is little evidence to suggest that this will assist in reducing graffiti other than at the immediate location, and even then, there are examples where the site continues to be targeted. It needs to be remembered to achieve peer recognition and status, the graffitiist needs to tag on numerous locations.

Obviously, as graffiti is about exposure, risk taking, and marking territory, free walls will not work, and are advocated through a lack of understanding of graffiti vandalism.

- **PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS**

Campaigns can be effective when targeted to a specific audience, and incorporated into a range of other strategies. Not seen to be effective when in isolation.

- **SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

Modules that examine property damage, graffiti, and vandalism are included in the curriculum of local schools.

- **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GRAFFITI PREVENTION**

A voluntary code that provides retailers of potential graffiti implements with a series of measures for monitoring or minimising immediate access to those implements. Some Local Government areas undertake strategies to encourage local retailers to adopt a voluntary code.

***Key elements of "successful"
programs addressing graffiti
vandalism***

RAPID RESPONSE

This counteracts a major goal of the graffitist; namely, to place their graffiti in a prominent public position to ensure that it remains visual to the general public for long periods of time.

It can be undertaken in a variety of ways using a variety of personnel (e.g. volunteers, council depot staff, contractors, community groups, etc.) approaching it from the position of having limited resources available (particularly financial), the following strategies would assist a 'rapid response' process: monitoring of regularly targeted sites and structures, community and/or volunteer involvement in both reporting and rapid response, commitment by utilities to establishing an easily accessible reporting mechanism and a commitment to responding to graffiti vandalism within a determined time frame (recognising that twenty-four hours may be unrealistic). This could also mean that councils take the initiative to determine a process with the various utilities.

ALL PROPERTY TYPES

The majority of councils limit their physical response to council and public property.

This means a rapid response throughout the whole council area is not achieved.

Private and **Commercial** property must be included.

Community ownership and responsibility is regarded as a critical component, particularly if a program is to be sustainable. To achieve successful community involvement requires a coordinated and well managed program.

REPORTING

A coordinated, well structured reporting process is necessary to ensure that graffiti incidents are responded to rapidly.

"Hotline" - highly successful both as a reporting mechanism and as a promotional

tool. Limited resources and/or a limited graffiti problem however, makes this either not feasible or unnecessary for some councils.

Those councils that do not have a 'hotline' but do appear to have reliable reporting and response procedures have established a process to ensure that all reports, no matter how they come into

the council, are channelled rapidly and consistently through to one point.

Customer service or counter staff are well briefed regarding a procedure for responding to reports from the community, and skilled with advice. Council staff themselves, particularly those who move around the council area regularly and council contractors who are not involved in providing a direct response to incidents, know who to report to and understand the importance of reporting. All reports are channelled to one point (which tends to be a key manager or a team leader in the Works Depot).

CLEAR MANAGEMENT - A DEDICATED PERSON TO OVERSEE AND COORDINATE THE RESPONSE.

The word 'dedicated' has two contexts. The person's own attitude towards graffiti, in that they are personally motivated to ensure a successful response to graffiti incidents.

One person is formally assigned to coordinating the program or response. Councils may experience difficulties in program implementation and then in management of a rapid response, if the budget and/or program is split across at least two departments or sections, hence, creating a lack of consistency and commitment and inefficient use of resources.

A DEDICATED TEAM OR PERSONNEL FOR RESPONDING RAPIDLY

This can be internal and/or contracted and involve the following groupings or individuals (determined by financial resources available);

- Council staff who are assigned responsibility for responding to graffiti incidents
- Individuals
- Specifically dedicated teams
- A contractor who is employed to respond to all graffiti or only when high pressure cleaning or chemical removal is required, with the latter working rapidly whilst volunteers and council do 'paint out' by a trained, supported, and dedicated volunteer group
- A weekly contract with a community organisation such as Department of Corrections, to attend to particular site types such

as parks, regularly targeted locations, public toilets, bus shelters, parks etc.

A POLICY

Formal (endorsed by council) or informal policy (endorsed within council departments) ensures a mechanism for being clear about council's response to incidents of graffiti.

- Ensures a framework from which to create a program
- Results in a greater commitment by staff to ensuring it works
- Provides a clear basis for promotion in the community.

The Broken Window Theory

The "Broken Windows Theory" espouses that if a broken window in a building is left un-repaired the other windows will also soon be broken. An experiment to test this theory was performed by Wilson & Kelling (1982), whereby a car was abandoned in two neighbourhoods – one 'respectable' and the other 'run-down'.

1 In both of these neighbourhoods, the car was vandalised, showing that vandalism can occur anywhere once informal social controls are lowered by signals that no-one cares. The authors also suggest that "untended" behaviour can lead to breakdown of community controls (i.e. if a place is left untended, weeds will grow, windows may be smashed, young people will congregate, public drinking may occur etc.) This breakdown may not lead to increased levels of crime; however, it will lead to increases in resident's perceptions of crime. The level of disorder will lead them to assume that crime, especially violent crime is rising, making them feel less secure and more fearful. The suggested result of this is that people will avoid using the streets and have less contact with others, thus reducing community bonds, and installing individual's isolation. The resultant effect is that these environments also make a neighbourhood more vulnerable to crime.

2 The work of Wilson & Kelling (1982) highlights the integral part that local residents can play in maintaining a sense of order through Neighbourhood Watch organisations and the like, and by increasing community involvement, and partnerships between police and community.

1 Wilson, J.Q. and Kelling, G.L. (1982) Broken Windows, *Atlantic Monthly*, March, pp 29-38

2 Bland, N. & Read, T. (2000). Policing Anti-social Behaviour. *Police Research Series 123, Policing and Reducing Crime*, British Home Office, London, UK

**Thankyou for allowing me the time to chat with
you all today, and I invite questions.**

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