

Berwick Pakenham Leader

Edition 1 - BLVWED 02 NOV 2005, Page 009

You spray, you pay

By Dimity Barber

ANTI-GRAFFITI campaigners want spraycan vandals arrested and made to pay for their damage.

And the stance from RAGE (Residents Against Graffiti Everywhere) has support from the US.

Last month anti-graffiti expert Georgia Pedgrift, from the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department in California, met local campaigners to thrash out ways to stamp out the vandalism.

Ms Pedgrift, who heads graffiti removal for the crime prevention unit in northern California, said graffiti hotlines and zero tolerance were important weapons in the fight against graffiti, but the only way to stop it was through apprehension, punishment and education.

"In California they have a taggers' database, like Casey," she said. "But when they identify a tagger they investigate and hold that person accountable."

Punishment included being made to pay clean-up costs, community service and, in repeat cases, jail.

"In my area, we used to just clean it up like you do in Casey. But we found we were just going back to the same places and cleaning the same tags," Ms Pedgrift said. "It just wasn't working. Now we work with the juveniles. We listen to and educate the taggers about the impact of their crime."

RAGE member Steve Beardon said: "Kids need to be caught and put into counselling programs to turn them around. We need to spread the word: If you spray, you pay," he said.