

Bayside Leader

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Hotline bid on graffiti

by CHRISTIAN TATMAN

A CRANBOURNE-based resident's group fighting graffiti is looking to set up a branch in Bayside.

Residents Against Graffiti Everywhere (RAGE) founder Steve Beardon said he had been contacted by Bayside residents upset about graffiti in the municipality.

Mr. Beardon's group lobbies councils for toll-free hotlines to be set up so residents can phone in and report graffiti.

Casey Council, which covers Cranbourne and Berwick, has set up a hotline. After being called on the hotline, contractors photograph the graffiti and then remove it.

Mr. Beardon said he had set up RAGE after becoming frustrated by a lack of response from politicians and his council.

"Nothing was being done ... Casey Council were baulking at (taking) responsibility," he said.

"It has to be tackled by one authority."

He said Casey Council now needed to spend about \$400,000 removing graffiti, because it had ignored the issue.

It was conservatively estimated there was 40,000 sq. m of graffiti in Casey, Mr. Beardon said.

"Once it gets to a certain level, it just attracts more and more," he said.

Mr. Beardon described graffiti as a "visual crime".

"The perception is that it will attract more crime. It's a frustration which builds

through the fact that no one is responding."

Mr. Beardon said it was important for councils to deal with the issue.

Bayside Ratepayers' Association president Chris Carroll said graffiti was an issue in Bayside, particularly around stations.

Mr. Carroll said his group would support a hotline being set up.

He said vandals should be forced to clean up their own graffiti and other graffiti in the area.

"It should be rigorously enforced. It's an area that certainly needs attention."

Mayor Terry O'Brien said Bayside's annual scrub out graffiti day was due to be held soon.

Cr. O'Brien said she supported the concept of a phone hotline, but indicated it would have to be considered as part of the council's budget process.

A council spokeswoman said the council spent \$20,000 to \$30,000 annually removing graffiti.

The spokeswoman said the council's initiatives on the issue included coordination and sponsorship of scrub out graffiti days and producing a booklet for residents dealing with the issue.

Mr. Beardon said his group was keen to support Bayside residents and give them advice on the issue.

RAGE has produced an information booklet on graffiti. Details: Steve Beardon on 0414 290 063.