

Cranbourne Sun Graffiti fix for \$5 each

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2000

CASEY'S streets could be rid of the graffiti scourge for just \$5 a ratepayer.

The Cranbourne Sun has been alerted to a South Australian scheme that has slashed graffiti by 75 percent in two years.

And this week Casey Council community access manager Russell Hopkins confirmed the municipality will consider adopting the strategy.

The zero tolerance approach, named The Graffiti Solution, was implemented in the City of Onkaparinga in 1997.

At a cost of \$428,000, it halved graffiti in its first 12 months. In the second year, \$335,000 bought a 75 per cent drop.

Casey already spends \$100,000 on what has proved to be an ineffective campaign against spray-can vandals.

While the costs initially appear high, they can be offset by income from successful civil court prosecutions, and charges to private businesses for clean up work.

The Graffiti Solution is a comprehensive computer program that allows a city to input all information about its graffiti problem.

It then helps pinpoint hotspots, evaluates the best way to co-ordinate clean-ups, and promotes a concerted assault on the plague.

It recently won the National Innovations Award for Best Local Government scheme.

Pressure group Residents Against Graffiti Everywhere (RAGE) is backing the strategy. Spokesman Steve Beardon believes the vast majority of people would invest \$5 to clean up Casey.

The council is under increasing pressure to take action on the matter. Last week, councillors angered the public gallery when they refused to step



Invest: Steve Beardon N17CSS315

up graffiti-busting measures and carry out immediate work in Cranbourne town centre.

Instead, they voted to defer any possible alteration to the council's existing policy until the authority's mid-year budget review in February.

"RAGE is very disappointed," Mr Beardon said. "With a current budget of more than \$101 million, they could not even find one extra dollar to help clean up our parks and fence lines."

"It seems, even with thousands of signatures, and the answers already tried and tested to be proven successful, the council is still not willing to immediately implement a successful strategy."

Mayfield Ward councillor Graham Smith called for immediate action to clean up Cranbourne before the Oz GP wave-off this weekend. He offered guarded support for The Graffiti Solution.

11 WOULD you pay \$5 for a permanent solution to Casey's graffiti menace? Vote now by calling 5996 3555, writing to 68A High St, Cranbourne, or send e-mail to prescottm@ldr.newsltd.com.au

Anti-graffiti plan supported

by KATE ALLEN

CASEY'S residents have given the thumbs up to paying \$5 each for the council to adopt a South Australian scheme aimed at ridding the streets of graffiti.

Readers were straight on the phone after reading about the scheme last week, hoping it would work just as well in Casey.

Seventy per cent backed implementation of the scheme.

Some who disagreed with paying \$5 were, however, willing to pay for more law enforcement to catch the spray-can vandals. The zero tolerance approach, named The Graffiti Solution, was implemented in the City of Onkaparinga in 1997.

At a cost of \$428,000, it halved graffiti in the first 12 months. In the second year, \$335,000 bought a 75 per cent drop.

It helps the council identify hotspots, work out the best way of targeting resources, and brings in money from fines. Councillors recently voted to defer any possible alteration to the council's existing policy until the authority's mid-year budget review in February.

Pressure group Residents Against Graffiti Everywhere (RAGE) is backing the strategy. Spokesperson Steve Beardon said he knew the majority would be in support of the scheme.

"We knew that when we did the petitions because people were telling us when we were door knocking," he said.

Cranbourne Liberal MP Gary Rowe, who is also in support of the scheme, believed residents paid enough and their rates should cover the cost.

"The City of Casey is saying it's just too hard to seriously examine any alternative strategies – and therefore won't do anything," he said.

"My understanding of the Onkaparinga program is that the initial cost might be quite high, but once it is implemented the recurrent costs drop to less than \$100,000 a year."

Here are a few of your views:

Narre Warren Resident

"Yes, I would do anything to get it off, I would pay an extra \$5."

Devon Meadows Resident

"We don't have a big problem out here, but we are part of the community so we don't mind doing our share."

Cranbourne Resident

"I vote to pay an extra \$5. I live next door to a park and the fence has graffiti on it. Some has been cleaned off, but it leaves patches and looks worse than graffiti. It needs to be painted."