

# Heidelbergleader

## War on graffiti will focus on Banyule

by **Natalie Robertson**

BANYULE is the next target for anti-graffiti group Residents Against Graffiti Everywhere (RAGE).

Hot on the heels of its success in Melbourne's outer south-eastern suburbs, the group has started lobbying Banyule Council to adopt its graffiti-busting program.

RAGE, made up of residents from across Melbourne who are fed up with graffiti vandalism, is canvassing councils with a multi-prong program of tactics.

The program includes firstly eradicating all graffiti in the municipality before setting up strategies including:

- n a hotline to receive reports of graffiti attacks;
- n a contract team to remove graffiti within 24 hours;
- n a database of graffiti tags.

n contact with police and schools to assess the database; and

n surveillance cameras in hotspots.

Casey Council, in the south-eastern suburbs, has embraced the RAGE program and will spend more than \$300,000 this year to get it under way.

RAGE founder Steve Beardon said some councils could be put off by the initial cost of implementing the program, which would be in excess of \$300,000.

But he said ratepayers would have to fork out only about \$5 annually.

"It's not a lot of money to ask for to rid the city of this scourge," he said. "The council may have a good program to clean public property, but the appearance of private and commercial properties is just as important to the overall look of an area."

Banyule Council has a

policy to remove offensive graffiti on its property within four hours and other graffiti by the next working day's end.

Council chief executive Doug Owens said that while the program would be considered in the next budget, many other important projects were vying for funding.

The Mall centre manager Cassandra Kemp said the West Heidelberg complex had a program in place for dealing with graffiti, but a bigger program such as RAGE would be a good idea.

"There are lots of good programs that the council should take up, but if they fund all of them it would cost the ratepayers a fortune," she said.

Ivanhoe Traders' Association president John Morgan said the program was a good idea and he would discuss it with the other traders.

*Tuesday, February 12, 2002*