

Time to attack graffiti



Scourge: graffiti is no more than vandalism

I'm sick of graffiti! Sick of the sight of it, sick of hearing that it is a problem that can't be dealt with and sick of hearing that hours, much less days or weeks, after it is removed it is back again.

The latest vicious attack on residents in Prahran and Armadale this month highlighted how widespread the problem has become.

Large parts of Melbourne have been defaced with graffiti and it served only to compound the feeling of many Victorians that their communities are out of control.

It is past time for us to

reclaim our communities as safe, clean and pleasant places to live.

I wonder sometimes if the strategies we have used to deal with graffiti have had the success we thought they would. Government and councils used to think that providing an outlet for the "artistic" talents of graffiti artists would help prevent the wanton vandalism that adorned so many businesses, homes and public structures. I am beginning to think we were wrong.

Deep down we all know the difference between pure graffiti art and vandalism.

The rubbish we saw recently is vandalism, pure and simple.

Graffiti artists are committing a crime and they know it. If they didn't it would not be done covertly and, usually, after dark.

There are solutions that are proven to be effective in dealing with graffiti and the vandals who commit these crimes.

The City of Onkaparinga in South Australia adopted an award winning strategy to deal with graffiti.

This included:

REMOVAL within 24 hours of it being reported.

A DEDICATED hotline for registering graffiti.

SURVEILLANCE of high risk hot spots to identify offenders.

CATALOGUES of graffiti to help identify individuals who repeatedly offend.

The program was first tested in 1994 and Onkaparinga is the only Australian city to have been granted "graffiti free status".

The collaborative effort between police, the council, community organisations and volunteers has seen a massive

reduction in vandalism and significant improvements in the morale and image of the community.

I am committed to developing strategies like this that will see our communities free of graffiti and the vandals that practise it.

I will consider any plan that will help Victoria become graffiti free.

The onus is now on the Bracks Government to provide leadership in dealing with this problem. The Minister for Local Government must work with councils to help combat this problem and rid communities of this scourge.

It is not good enough to say it is not their responsibility. They must work in partnership with the whole community to reclaim the sense of security and safety that is a right of all of us.

LEONIE BURKE is Opposition local government spokeswoman and MLA for Prahran.

Herald Sun,
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