

Knox Leader

TUESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2002

Graffiti: get tough

ANTI-GRAFFITI campaigners say Knox Council's graffiti and vandalism draft policy is inadequate.

Steve Beardon, founder of Residents Against Graffiti Everywhere (RAGE), and Ferntree Gully hairdresser Christopher Miller, will urge the council to re-think sections of the policy.

Mr. Beardon said to successfully combat graffiti, the city must increase police involvement, end its aerosol workshops and clean graffiti off private properties, not just council-owned buildings.

RAGE lobbied Casey Council to allocate what was arguably the largest amount of funding by any Victorian council to combat graffiti – a total of \$300,000. The move was

very effective, Mr. Beardon said.

Mr. Beardon took a quick tour of graffiti hot-spots in Ferntree Gully last week, describing them as "bad" and the situation as "an epidemic really."

He was also concerned that under the draft policy, the police would only be used to exchange reports of graffiti with Knox Council.

"What alarms me is that there is hardly any mention of the police in this policy."

"The council has to get them more involved." Mr. Beardon said.

Another anti-graffiti campaigner, Mr. Miller, said his main gripe with the Knox graffiti and vandalism draft policy was the trial of a council-run aerosol workshop that cost \$5500.

If the policy is adopted, the council will spend \$22,000 on four workshops.

The workshop trial ran for nine weeks and is aimed at identifying graffiti gangs, changing the behaviour of graffitists and

allowing them to spray paint a mural in Knox.

Mr. Miller said the trial would spread the wrong message to graffitists.

"If they're (the council) aiding and abetting them but not reporting them to the police, what sort of message does that send out?" he said.

Mr. Beardon agreed, saying many Knox ratepayers would be disappointed if their money was used to fund the workshops.

The anti-graffiti campaigners supported the council's proposal to develop a toll-free hotline for residents to report acts of graffiti or vandalism.

What do you think? Write to the *Leader* with your views at PO Box 439, Boronia 3155.