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Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

Submission to the Standing Committee on Public Works inquiry into the effects of graffiti on public infrastructure

Graffiti continues to be an issue of community concern for the City of Penrith, impacting on both public and private property across the City. The community continues to express their preference for Council to take the lead on minimising graffiti through a combination of preventative, educational and removal strategies.

The Penrith Valley Community Safety Plan 2007-2011 identifies malicious damage, which includes graffiti, as a priority issue for the Penrith Local Government Area (LGA).

Under this plan, a Citywide Graffiti Minimisation Strategy has been developed by the Penrith Valley Community Safety Partnership to implement programs that will result in the sustainable minimisation of graffiti across the City.

There are three key elements to the strategy:

1. Education
2. Prevention
3. Removal

Our experience has shown that one graffiti action will not minimise graffiti to an acceptable level on its own. The ongoing removal, education and prevention components are considered to be interconnected and contribute to the overall success of Council's strategy.

Education

Penrith City Council has engaged Warner Awareness Education to deliver their Graffiti Education Program to primary and secondary school students across the Penrith LGA. The program involves an actor/facilitator who delivers a 45-minute interactive and informative presentation that is specifically tailored for Year 5 and Year 8 students. The program encourages students to think about and discover the consequences of writing or spraying graffiti and its impact on the community.

The program also touches on some of the factors that cause young people to graffiti, such as peer pressure and boredom, and encourages young people to engage in more positive activities.

The program message of 'don't be a fool, tags aren't cool' is reinforced through an information pack given to schools to utilise in the classroom, including a comic strip and stickers to distribute to students.

Since the program commenced in July 2008 a total of 235 performances have been delivered to 119 primary schools and to 45 secondary schools throughout the Penrith LGA. A number of these schools have had the program delivered on an annual basis as part of their regular curriculum, due to the effective manner in which the message is delivered to students. Since the program's commencement in July 2008 it has reached approximately 8,085 primary school students and 4,919 secondary school students.

Penrith is the first Council in NSW to deliver the program. Evaluation to date indicates that overall the program has been extremely positive, with great feedback received from schools and students. As a result of the program's success, other councils in New South Wales are also looking to implement similar programs in their respective LGAs. As graffiti is not confined to local government boundaries, this is a great step forward in the continued effort to minimise graffiti vandalism and the associated costs to Council and the community of graffiti removal.

In the 2008/2009 financial year, Penrith City Council expended approximately \$117,000 on the Graffiti Education Program. With each session costing approximately \$651.00, the program constitutes a considerable part of the overall strategy.

Prevention

Under the prevention component of the strategy, Council often incorporates landscaping and design strategies to minimise the opportunity for graffiti to occur. For example, planting along fences and walls which are frequently targeted by graffiti vandalism (known as 'green screening'). Anti-graffiti coatings are also being provided to new Council buildings. Other prevention methods have been applied through commentary in the assessment of development applications within the City.

Expenditure on prevention projects is varied and largely dependent on the nature of the project. Recently funding has been allocated to a green screening project in Lukes Lane Reserve, St Clair to commence in early May 2010. It is anticipated that these works, which include the screening of 3km of fencing, will cost a total of \$40,000.

Removal

Under the removal component of the strategy, Council conducts graffiti removal from council property as well as from private property that can be accessed from the public space. Graffiti on other private property and public authority property is reported to the relevant owner or authority for removal on a daily basis. Council employs a graffiti removal contractor to remove graffiti from private property that can be accessed from the public space. In addition to this Council has three graffiti removal crews that remove graffiti from Council property.

To support prompt graffiti removal, a free call graffiti hotline (1800 022 182) has been developed to help the community to report incidents of graffiti across the LGA. In 2009, there were 4913 calls made to the hotline. Following these reports, 6944 removal jobs were completed in 2009 (a total of 101,954.42 sqm).

In the 2008/2009 financial year, Council expenditure for contracted graffiti removal (from private property) was approximately \$422,000. In addition, approximately \$357,000 was expended on Council graffiti removal (from Council property).

Other key elements of the Graffiti Minimisation Strategy include:

- A "Report It, Don't Ignore It" program that is promoted across the LGA encouraging the reporting of crime to the Police. The reporting of graffiti (malicious damage) is a key focus of this program.
- A Graffiti Removal Information Package which is available to residents and provides useful tips for graffiti removal and prevention.

Graffiti Action Day

Graffiti Action Day is a result of a partnership between Keep Australia Beautiful and the NSW Government and is a first for Australia.

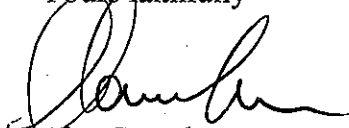
The key aims of Graffiti Action Day are to:

- Engage the community in the removal of graffiti
- Raise awareness of good graffiti removal methods
- Support non-government and community run facilities in repairing damage caused by graffiti.

Penrith City Council was recently involved in Graffiti Action Day on 2 May 2010. Council staff and community volunteers worked together in removing graffiti from a number of key public and private assets across the city. Feedback from volunteers supported Council's continuing pro-active removal efforts as part of its broader Graffiti Minimisation Strategy.

As is evident through the above information Penrith City Council has taken a strategic approach to graffiti minimisation. Council hopes that by continuing with the above efforts we can minimise graffiti vandalism and the associated social, environmental and financial impacts to Council and to the community.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Stoneham', written over a horizontal line.

Alan Stoneham

General Manager