Graffiti submission

Campbelltown City Council submits the follow comments with regard the Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into the effects of graffiti on public infrastructure.

Social and economic impacts of graffiti on public infrastructure.

- Council currently spends in the order of $500,000 per year to remove graffiti within the LGA.

- The social impacts this has on the residents and visitors due to the visual image is hard to quantify but does occupy the discussion at many of Council community meetings and Sub-Committees and the local media. Graffiti can create a negative impression of the area and the local community.

- Council does supply free small area graffiti removal kits to the residents and businesses within the LGA which is mainly to remove graffiti from private properties.

Anti graffiti policies and practices to protect public infrastructure.

- Council at pre Development Application submission discussions encourages developers to use products that allow easy removal of graffiti and/ or coat surfaces with products that allow easy removal of graffiti. Other design option such as setting fences back from the street boundary and landscaping in front of them is encouraged. Another example could be in a recent development located at a prominent corner Council suggested to the developer to consider the installation of 'enose' technology so as to have early and preventative detection of graffiti activities. The developer has taken the suggestion into serious consideration and is allowing provision for such equipment.

- In accordance with the environmental maintenance objectives of 'Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design', the owner/lessee of the building shall be responsible for the removal of any graffiti which appears on the buildings, fences, signs and other surfaces of the property within 48 hours of its application.   This requirement is detailed in the development conditions.

- Government agencies in liaison with Council are increasingly mindful of materials that allow for easy removal of graffiti, however to mandate the use of these types of materials is not always applied, often the appearance of the structure is seen as more important and does not necessarily promote the use of the resilient graffiti products.

- The inconsistent approach to graffiti removal by public government and utility authorities is often disappointing with at times leaving graffiti for long periods of time on structures in clear public view. This significant variation in graffiti removal response time is detrimental to all the other efforts to remove the graffiti quickly. Some authorities even after being approached are very slow in acting and possibly even reluctant to remove the graffiti, for example electrical kiosk and structures along the rail corridors.

Anti graffiti practises such as mural painting programs employed by NSW state and local government agencies.

- Council had discussed the provision of "legal graffiti walls" or commission graffiti style works however these facilities are seen by a large part of the community as providing legal solutions to an illegal public nuisances.

- Council does, where possible incorporate public art by local artists. This is not only for aesthetic objectives but as a strategy to reduce the probability of being defaced with graffiti as offenders often respect the art works.

- Campbelltown has had success for a number of years with murals for example the Campbelltown Bus Rail Interchange. However after several years offenders appear to lose the respect for the works and start to graffiti. Art work need to relate positively to the community to limit the likelihood of graffiti attack. Unfortunately most art works are still subject to the opportune texta pen writer.

- Council also provides a number of regular art programs to encourage artists to develop their talents in constructive ways.

- Campbelltown also uses plants and landscaping to screen walls in an effort to both restrict access to the wall and to hide the wall from public view. This strategy is effective for some locations, each location needs to be examined for the best possible solutions.

    These solutions, as with graffiti removal, are not a one off cost, they all have a range of maintenance costs. The upfront establishment costs of these options are often significant, and preventative measures are considered successful.

Graffiti resistant finishes and other building material suitable for public infrastructure.

- Council uses a variety of resistant finishes with smooth impervious surfaces being the best type for removal without future staining or shadowing of the surface. Some products used by graffiti offenders do react with these surfaces and to varying degrees permanently damage them. From a distance these damaged areas are not highly visible due to there normally smaller scale. Painted surfaces are good both in terms of removal and easy cover over.

- Small signs such as street signs are covered with a transparent film which allows easy removal but also prevents the surface of the sign from being effected. Damage to the surface of these sign often means a loss of reflectivity and easy of night time reading. Larger signs are coated with a liquid protective film. It has the same protective features but becomes more cost effective and provides a seamless cover.

- Porous surfaces such as brick, blocks and concrete are coated with non sacrificial coatings that provide protection from a number of attacks of graffiti and subsequent removal. These coatings described as non sacrificial need reapplication after a number of removal events.

Other relevant issues

Regarding the physical removal of graffiti Council has adopted a number of approaches:

1. Two Council Teams of two persons employed full time to remove graffiti around the LGA.

2. Contractor to undertake chemical based graffiti removals.

3. Corrective Service team functioning up to four days a week.

4. Graffiti offenders through Forum Sentencing are given work alongside Council team to remove graffiti.

5. Council sponsored and support the Police "Blockout Trailer" which encourages volunteer groups to go out and remove graffiti.

6. Provides free graffiti removal kits.

7. Run regular community graffiti removal days for different areas in the LGA. On these days the community help with both removal and protective measures such as screen planting.

In an effort to deter and catch offenders Council:

1. Advertises in local papers and Council's community brochure the Council Graffiti Hotline number.

2. Has trialed paint sniffing technology to detect the use paint and marking pens. The device then sends a sms notification to Police and Council Officers. Council is investigating how this technology can trigger off CCTV surveillance.

3. Has a program of regular inspections of known hotspots where graffiti is removed as soon as it appears. In some cases areas are inspected daily.

4. Activity input information into the central graffiti database for monitoring and liaison with Police.

5. Works in closely with Police to determine ways to catch and deter offenders.

6. Council is also investigating the benefits of setting up a Graffiti Forum where local businesses, residents, community interest

groups and Police to come up with methods to reduce the incidents of graffiti.

- Council wishes to express it's concerns over the recent legislation announcement that graffiti offenders may be permitted to work off their fines imposed by the courts at a rate of $30 an hour. Council employee who have to day in and day out remove the graffiti are currently being paid around $25 per hour. To these employees it has become a concern that they are to be paid less then a person who illegally defaced other persons property. The $30 also does not take into account the cost of providing the protective clothing, supervision and materials to remove the illegal works. Council believes that the offender should be paying off their fines at a lesser hourly rate.

Council thanks you for the opportunity to submit to the inquiry and would be only to pleased provide further detailed input if required.