

Council Reference: DW 14821122; Vandalism; Council Policies
Your Reference:



TWEED
SHIRE COUNCIL

3 May 2010

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Dear Sir/Madam

Graffiti on public infrastructure

Thank you for your letter seeking submissions regarding the issues raised from the recent enquiry into the effects of graffiti on public infrastructure.

Council has reviewed its position on graffiti at its meeting 17 March 2009 and a copy of the report is enclosed for your perusal. The report describes Council's current graffiti protocol and the associated costs of the treatment of graffiti under this regime.

The report also provides options for revision of the protocol, however Council has subsequently decided to maintain the status quo and not change its position.

Should you require any further information regarding this letter, please contact Ian Kite on (02) 6670 2477.

Yours faithfully

Patrick Knight
DIRECTOR ENGINEERING AND OPERATIONS

Enclosure

REPORT:

1. Background

At its meeting on 27 January 2009 Council resolved that:-

- "1. Council pursues a policy of zero tolerance of graffiti.*
- 2. The Roads and Traffic Authority be requested to do the same.*
- 3. The necessary advertising with a direct council contact be implemented as a matter of course to pursue this major problem in our shire.*
- 4. Council investigates other means within their power to incorporate facilities for graffiti artists to be considered in the 2009/10 Budget."*

A letter in accordance with 2 above has been send to the Roads & Traffic Authority of NSW. Item 3 will require a budget allocation for implementation.

2. General Comment

Illegal graffiti is ugly and expensive to remove. It is a crime that affects us all. It can lower property values, make people feel unsafe, reduce business patronage and encourage other types of crime. Keeping our neighbourhoods graffiti free reinforces pride and helps maintain feelings of safety and wellbeing. Graffiti vandals have no respect for private or community property and no regard for the negative impacts of their actions. Graffiti that is left intact attracts more graffiti, and the longer it remains, the greater the gratification for perpetrators.

The considerable financial costs involved in removing graffiti impacts on individuals businesses, Council and the wider community. However, quick removal alone is not as effective as strategies that include the elements of prevention, continual removal and education.

By encouraging an environment conducive to respect, property protection, safety and harmony between all members of the community (particularly young people) Council may reduce graffiti vandalism and maximise community wellbeing.

Illegal graffiti should not be confused with graffiti art which can enrich the social fabric of the community when displayed in public spaces within the principles outlined in Council's Public Art Policy.

3. Current Graffiti Removal Practices

Budgetary constraints dictate that the current practice for response to graffiti is to provide priority response only to those areas containing offensive words or images. Other areas are treated during normal asset maintenance – for example, graffiti is covered when a road is resurfaced or a building repainted.

Treating graffiti is very demoralising for the staff involved, particularly when (as often happens) treated areas are again covered in graffiti within days of treatment.

4. Current Costs of Graffiti Removal

O11 [EO-OC] Response to Graffiti

ORIGIN:

Works, Recreation Services

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

At its meeting on 27 January 2009 Council resolved that:-

- "1. Council pursues a policy of zero tolerance of graffiti.*
- 2. The Roads and Traffic Authority be requested to do the same.*
- 3. The necessary advertising with a direct council contact be implemented as a matter of course to pursue this major problem in our shire.*
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This report advises of the impact of graffiti on Council's operations and provides options for the way forward.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the determination of Council's anti graffiti program and associated costs be referred for consideration along with other priorities with the 2009/10 Budget.

The environmental impact of graffiti management is a priority and therefore a range of safe prevention, removal and disposal strategies are essential.

Because of the various surfaces that encounter graffiti there are many different removal and painting processes required. Different substrates require different finishes. It is also vital to know what materials are being coated over or stripped off. Some coatings may require etching, oil undercoats, stain killers, mould proofing, rust protection or a combination of the above.

Leaded paint is still used in many applications so it is important to know how to test and treat these finishes to protect staff, the public and the environment.

Chemicals used for graffiti removal and the compounds formed by their interaction with underlying paint and surface finishes can have serious personal safety and environmental impacts.

In all operations it is important to use trained workers who are aware of all these issues. Currently these operations are carried out by Council's painter/decorators for public buildings and recreational facilities, and road maintenance staff for roads and associated structures. Valuable assistance has also been provided by the Pottsville Community Association which is greatly appreciated and has very positive impacts for that community.

7. Future Options

There are a range of options and associated costs to consider should Council wish to vary the current graffiti management practices. It is important to note that any option that increases expenditure on graffiti management will require an appropriate funding allocation in the annual budget. The following details of a "Zero Tolerance 24 Hour Response" regime and a "48 Hour Offensive Graffiti Removal plus One Month for Other Graffiti" regime will provide an understanding of the scope and range of options and costs.

Zero Tolerance 24 Hour Response

If a zero tolerance 24 hr response is required to all graffiti, Council would need to allocate resources for establishment and operating costs. Resources could include –

	Resource/Service	Approximate Cost per Year
1	2 additional trade staff, incl on-costs	\$128,000
2	Appropriate vehicle for transport of staff & equipment	\$12,000
3	Materials, tools and equipment eg. pressure cleaner	\$25,000
4	2 mobile phones to allow contact for call-outs and for safety when working alone	\$1,000
5	Establishment of a graffiti hotline, necessary for public to report vandalism	\$3,000

- An extrapolation of costs to date in 2008/09 indicate an annual direct cost of the removal of offensive graffiti of \$25,000.
- The cost of treating non-offensive graffiti is absorbed into normal asset maintenance costs. For example, when a public toilet is repainted as part of maintenance, any graffiti is covered up but no costs are recorded against graffiti removal. A rough estimate of the total cost would be \$70,000 per year.

5. Graffiti Management Strategies

5.1 Guidelines and Procedures

It is essential that all graffiti management measures are compatible with other relevant Council policies and practices. Therefore, a whole of Council approach needs to be undertaken to develop policies, procedures and guidelines for cost effective and sustainable prevention, reporting and recording, removal, education and engagement activities.

5.2 Practical Measures

In the planning and construction of structures, consideration is given to easy graffiti repair by choosing surfaces that are either easily repainted or cleanable.

Anti-graffiti coatings may make it easier to remove graffiti but are not always cost effective. However, in some cases anti-graffiti coatings are essential – for example the clear panels in bus shelters, or noticeboards. In most cases it is more cost-effective to simply paint over affected areas. Where the substrate is bare brickwork it may still be more cost effective to paint the entire building out rather than try to clean off the graffiti. Once bare brickwork is pressure cleaned the pores in the bricks are opened up, so the next time graffiti occurs it is even harder to clean, whereas once it is painted out it is simply a case of "touching up".

5.3 Community Engagement

Policies and strategies to minimise graffiti will require the cooperation and support of the community and private property owners through an integrated and comprehensive "whole of community" approach. Community engagement strategies include consultations and media campaigns for householders and public around prevention reporting and removal strategies; partnerships and collaboration with stakeholders including Police, Roads & Traffic Authority of NSW and businesses; ongoing feedback around success of strategies. Prevention should incorporate inclusive practices aimed at positive outcomes that engage young people to develop ownership, pride and respect for their local community. Legal arts programs, the provision of appropriate services and facilities for young people can become vehicles to engage young people. All require resources and budgets.

5.4 Education

An essential part of graffiti minimisation / prevention strategies are graffiti education programs. A community that is better informed and aware of the issue is more likely to adopt prevention measures and become actively involved in management strategies. Material and programs on prevention, minimisation, reporting and removal needs to be developed and distributed to households, businesses and schools.

6. Graffiti Removal

	Resource/Service	Approximate Cost per Year
6	Advertising of the new policy and hotline	\$9,000
7	Implementation of community engagement strategies, including the provision of free graffiti removal starter kits to ratepayers to clean graffiti off private buildings *	\$50,000
8	Provision of anti-graffiti fact sheet and hints to minimise graffiti on private property	\$2,000
9	Administrative support	\$5,000
10	Delivery of graffiti prevention education programs to schools and other target areas	\$25,000
11	Engagement with community and youth groups	\$25,000
12	Offer rewards that lead to the conviction of perpetrators	\$10,000
	Total	\$295,000

- * *The benefits of kits are questionable. As an alternative Council could engage further in community partnerships (as per the Pottsville example) by providing training and support.*

48 Hour Offensive Graffiti Removal plus One Month for Other Graffiti

This is another option that might be considered. Selecting and proportioning items 1,2,3,4,8, 9 and parts of 10 and 11 from the table above gives an annual cost of say \$100,000.

LEGAL/RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Up to \$295,000 impact on annual operating budget.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

Council may formalise its intentions with a Graffiti and Vandalism Policy.