

GREAT LAKES GRAFFITI BUSTER



TED BICKFORD - VOLUNTEER

TELEPHONE: 6555 2315

GRAFFITI HOTLINE: 0408 440 309

KEEPING OUR SHIRE GRAFFITI FREE

I originally started removing graffiti while living in Cherrybrook, a suburb in Sydney, under the Hornsby Shire Council.

After experiencing heart bypass surgery I took up running to keep fit. While running around the town I noticed the ever increasing graffiti and decided to do something about removing it.

We decided to move to Forster-Tuncurry in 1994, and again whilst running in the early hours I noticed graffiti, so I would come home after my run, hop on my bike together with backpack and cleaning gear and start all over again.

Great Lakes Council found out about my early morning activities and after due consideration and generosity of a local car dealer, purchased a truck for me and now supply me with all the chemicals, cleaning gear, tools etc I need. They also gave me a mobile phone so I can be reached by the residents directly, so as to notify me of any graffiti throughout the Great Lakes area.

Due to this I am usually able to remove the offending graffiti within 24 hours and I am proud to say we now have a graffiti free town, except during school holidays when visitors take advantage of our clean spaces until they are told by our youth in no uncertain terms that graffiti is not tolerated in our area.

Savings compared to other towns regarding the removal of graffiti is enormous and if this can be done in the Great Lakes it can be achieved elsewhere. It just needs:

- A. Co-operation
- B. Education
- C. Organisation

Costs to the community last financial year (after the purchase of the vehicle) were \$3,000 for the running of the vehicle, \$2,000 for the chemicals, majority of which are biodegradable.

In Tuncurry the council built a large competition size skate park – when it first went in we experienced a few problems with graffiti attacks, after which, the park was threatened to be bulldozed if it occurred again. It celebrates 10 years this year and remains graffiti free.

The youth were approached and asked what they needed to improve their park and a request for shade trees was made – these were supplied and the youth had to plant them and tend them- they all have survived. They then requested seating – the timber etc was

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supplied but they had to help erect the seating and paint it – the reasoning behind all this was to make the youth take ownership and responsibility and so far it has worked.

We now have six graffiti free skate parks in the Great Lakes area and dare anyone to graffiti one at their own risk.

I am occasionally asked by Juvenile Justice to take juveniles who receive community service, with me on my rounds to help clean up the area. This has also proved most successful, quite often, after their hours are completed they choose to stay with me and continue to help – I have even had them come up and thank me for keeping their town clean.

Education is the best way to combat graffiti and vandalism – I visit all the schools in the area every few years and talk to the students at assembly – my message is to instil pride in their area.

Each age is different but, for example, with 10-12 years I have a photo of a late model car, owned by an elderly lady who had just purchased it, she came out one morning and found it with graffiti from one end to the other (which is quite easily removed but didn't tell them that) and I show them and ask, How would you like this to happen to your car? And boy does this message hit home.

The council has supplied fridge magnets with the graffiti hotline number – removable graffiti buster tattoos- car tidy bags and leaflets etc which we hand out to each student. Also have the graffiti hotline announced over the local radio station on a regular basis and supply each motel with a fridge magnet for each room, so as to keep the public aware.

I speak at Probus, Lions, Rotary, Pink Ladies etc meetings when asked and talk about this graffiti problem that is everywhere and encourage them to report any that they see.

Above all I believe with:

- Education –To have pride in their community.
- Co-operation – Assistance from Telstra, RTA, Police, Council and Public etc
- Prevention – Anti graffiti paint – growing trees and shrubs- paint exposed surfaces etc.
- And Absolute ZERO tolerance.

All areas can achieve this if they work together.

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Graffiti and Public Infrastructure

1. It is intimidating
2. It decreases the value of surrounding property
3. It is the beginning of the development of criminal behaviour/tendencies
4. It is not art it is an eyesore.

Anti Graffiti Policy

1. Remove it within a 24 hour period
2. Paint graffiti prone structures (where economically viable) with anti graffiti paint
3. Grow trees or shrubs in front of bare walls
4. Good lighting
5. Paint exterior walls and structures (bricks and concrete) so graffiti is easier to remove
6. Most importantly EDUCATE the young to not want to do it in the first place
7. Include fines for tradespeople leaving spray cans and markers in open vehicles and people leaving used spray cans out in council clean ups without breaking off top.

Mural Painting

Have them inside buildings but definitely not outside- how can you say its OK to have it here but not there. It is like a fungus that grows and spreads around adjoining areas. (See photos enclosed of Graffiti wall at Cherrybrook in Hornsby Council area and check out surrounding area).

Graffiti Resistant Finishes

As I have already mentioned:

1. Anti Graffiti paint (was off with soap and water)
2. Painted surfaces (easier cleaned)

Anti Graffiti Approaches

1. Education
2. Early eradication
3. Correct equipment – suitable chemicals for type of graffiti ie paint or marker pens and type of surface ie colourbond, brick, concrete ,etc.
4. ZERO TOLLERANCE

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Just a short note about my experience. I am a self taught graffiti removalist, voluntarily removing all graffiti from all surfaces within the Great Lakes area for the past 15 years. I have the complete backing of Great Lakes Council and their employees. Rarely does graffiti remain more than 24 hours. I have a truck and mobile phone supplied by the council, which the public are aware of, and phone me if they spot any graffiti.

I visit the local schools and speak to the students during assembly, encouraging them "to have pride in their area" and asking them for their co operation, fortunately, so far, I have about 90% who believe in ZERO TOLLERANCE.

We have six graffiti free skate parks which speak for our youth, of which I am very proud. See enclosed photos.

Thanking you

Handwritten signature of E. Bickford

E Bickford OAM

Great Lakes Graffiti Buster

GREAT LAKES COUNCIL GRAFFITI HOTLINE



Phone the Graffiti Buster



0408 440309

IF UNANSWERED PLEASE LEAVE A SHORT MESSAGE AFTER
THE BEEP STATING THE LOCATION OF GRAFFITI AND A
CONTACT PHONE NUMBER