

Submission to NSW parliamentary inquiry into graffiti and public infrastructure

There is nothing in the inquiry's advertised terms of reference about cultural understanding, investigation, or to culture-based addressing of issues related to the impact of graffiti on public infrastructure. The inquiry doesn't seem to be able to ask why people do graffiti in order to figure out how to prevent it, rather than just cleaning it off. Yet prevention is better than cure, and if necessary, the inquiry should request an extension of its terms of reference in order to investigate this matter, considering its centrality to the origin of graffiti.

Asking anyone who works with teens or young adults in any capacity will quite likely reveal an awareness of the culture which surrounds graffiti – especially “tagging”, which is the placement of an identifying symbol (tag) for maximum public exposure to gain status among one's peers. Unless the culture of tagging is understood so that it can be stigmatised in a way applicable to taggers, the government's response to graffiti will remain at its current level of “firefighting”, only addressing it on a local basis after it has appeared.

It is my submission that this inquiry should as a matter of urgency take up the cultural investigation and stigmatisation avenue of addressing graffiti. Failing to do so will result in the government continuing to spend valuable resources removing graffiti, leaving the cause of it unaddressed, rather than challenging the culture that causes it in the first place.