

PRESENTATION BY ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL

NSW STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS - INQUIRY ON GRAFFITI AND PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

12 AUGUST 2010

BACKGROUND

While Rockdale City has not suffered high levels of crime or graffiti impacts there have been concerns in the community that an upward trend was visible.

In 2004 the Council developed its Safer City Program and was successful in being granted approval by the NSW Department of Local Government to fund the initiative through a Special Rate.

The Safer City Program comprises of four key components being:

- Graffiti removal service (removes graffiti off all private and public properties in the Council LGA at no charge);
- CCTV facility and monitoring services;
- Safer Places - community safety audits scheme and
- Safety community education.

GRAFFITI REMOVAL SERVICE

The graffiti removal service removes graffiti from all private and public properties in the Council area at no charge. A rapid removal strategy has been adopted, which ensures all offensive graffiti is removed within 24 hours and non-offensive graffiti removed within 72 hours. Graffiti is often removed earlier than the 72 hours guarantee of service.

Statistics are collected on the number of square metres of graffiti removed; the character of graffiti addressed e.g. piece graffiti, tags etc., and the number and location of incidents of graffiti.

This information is used to measure the rate of reoccurrence, to devise strategies to address a particular graffiti offence e.g. tags (the introduction of the tags reduction education program), and to demonstrate the reduction in the amount of graffiti.

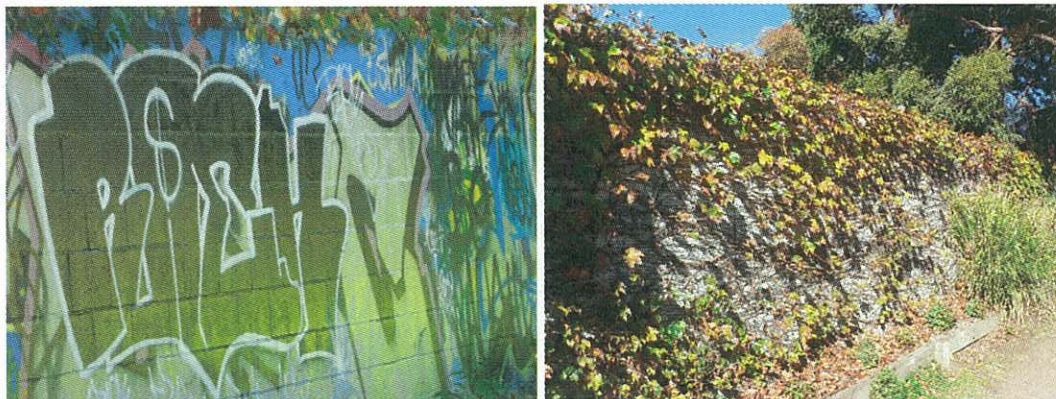
The adoption of the rapid removal strategy and zero tolerance position on graffiti has been successful in reducing vandalism and malicious damage to both public and private property. This has been demonstrated by the reduction in the amount of graffiti requiring removal and the subsequent reduction in the reoccurrence of graffiti in the same area.

Graffiti has been reduced from approximately 8,000 m²/per month into approximately 1,000 m²/per month.

Council is committed to the long term retention of the service for graffiti removal on Council facilities and private property at no cost. A refined set of criteria are being

considered where residents and business owners would be asked to commit to implement a series of agreed actions/strategies to reduce the risk of reoccurrence of graffiti on their property. This commitment would be sought to ensure the sustainability of the service.

Council will maintain its zero tolerance position on graffiti and will not support legal graffiti walls, as a number of councils have indicated that it encourages graffiti in surrounding areas.



SAFER PLACES

The Council's community safety staff undertakes community safety audits in collaboration with the St George Local Area Command and local residents and businesses.

The community safety audits undertaken throughout the City include all of the major Town Centres (e.g. Rockdale, Bexley and Brighton Le Sands).

The audits identify safety concerns, together with appropriate action plans.



The Safer Places Program and related community safety audits have demonstrated that the adoption of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles and strategies can minimise crime risk in a given location. The Audits and subsequent improvements have resulted in a reduction of the opportunities for vandalism and anti-social activities in an effected location.

"Safer Places" signage is erected in areas that have been made safer, as a result of the safety audits. The purpose of these signs is to increase awareness of the

benefits of the community safety audits program and to build community confidence in the progressive creation of a safer city.



CPTED principles have also been incorporated into the Council's Development Control Plan 67.

http://www.rockdale.nsw.gov.au/development/pages/pdf/Development/DCP_67-Crime_Prevention_Through_Envir_Design.pdf

CCTV FACILITY AND MONITORING

The Council has adopted CCTV as a tool to address areas impacted by anti-social activity and/or monitor localities where the community has raised concerns.

A network of cameras have been deployed in Brighton Le Sands and a purpose built CCTV Control Room has been installed with computers/screens to record/view information nearby Council premises.



To respond to concerns in several beachfront precincts over perceived anti-social activity/noise impacts during the summer months, the Council in late 2009/early 2010 installed a static CCTV camera for 3 months to monitor behaviour/follow up on specific complaints. This information assisted the Council in its decisions on management approaches in the area.

The overall CCTV footage has assisted the St George Local Area Command with the investigation of reported assault, break and enter offences and malicious damage to property.

Council has worked collaboratively with the St George Local Area Command with special police operations and it is envisaged that this level of support will continue.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Building the communities' knowledge and awareness of strategies that can be implemented to increase personal safety and contribute to improving the level of safety in public or private spaces, is integral to the creation of a safer city.

Workshops have been held to address crime prevention design for homes, cars and businesses that cover the implementation of CPTED principles. The aim is to prevent "accessible targets" and thus reducing break and enter and other offences.

Encouraging people to also take the safer route when walking to and from a venue has also been vital to prevent and decrease the number of assaults, robberies and stealing from persons categories of offences.



CONCLUSION

The Safer City Program has been both well received by the community/businesses and has provided tangible results in reducing graffiti and other anti-social activity.

This success has been recognised by the State Government when in 2007, Council received approval to continue to levy the Special Rate at 1% per year to continue work across this program.