

Wipe Out Graffiti

Darwin City Council
2008

graffiti management program

endorsed by Council Decision No 20/0016 (22/04/08)



synopsis

Graffiti vandalism is a significant community problem that is costly to remedy and leads to community perceptions of neglect and disorder. Council, in reviewing its approach to graffiti vandalism, has endorsed a management program that is now fully in operation. This document provides an outline of the strategies adopted by Council.

Council is committed to working in partnership with community, the NT Police and the City of Palmerston in order to implement a multifaceted and regionalized long term community safety program. It is well evidenced that no single response will successfully address graffiti and a zero tolerance approach tried by many local governments has proven largely ineffective. Subsequently a range of activities have been adopted by Council that recognise the existence of graffiti as part of community culture and the need to achieve balance in order to create a harmonious and safe environment for all.



introduction

Local Government has a key role to play in the promotion and implementation of community safety and quality of life issues impacting its residents. The increasing concern with community safety including the visible increase in graffiti, alcohol misuse in public places, antisocial behaviour, perceptions of unsafe public spaces/ public transport and perpetration of incivilities in public areas are all clear catalysts for the establishment of a practical Community Safety program

Over the years Darwin City Council has considered graffiti and its response and historically it has not been perceived as a major problem. Legal art programs and rapid removal have been effective however in recent times the incidence of graffiti has markedly increased and has become a significant community problem.

It is well recognised that there are numerous forms of graffiti and its emergence is not new. The word graffiti was born in ancient Greece (yrafo meaning to write and from Latin, graffiti meaning to scratch). It is understood to mean writing on the wall. There is no single demographic for graffiti artists nor one type or style. Types include social, hip hop, tagging, pieces, stencilling and block buster to name a few.



a way forward

Just as there is no single graffitist profile or style of graffiti nor is there one single solution. It is for this reason that Council has reviewed and borrowed from the successful interventions of other governments and local authorities in putting together its management plan. Several discussions with the NT Police and the City of Palmerston have assisted Council to plan a program that is complementary to the NT Police graffiti management plan for the Territory. Together and in partnership with community groups, organisations and residents, we will achieve greater outcomes.

Whilst there is a wealth of information and documentation on the subject of graffiti, this document simply describes the range of strategies Council has and will continue to implement over the next few years. All strategies are evidence based and all are practical in application. It is of absolute importance that the program is practical, streamlined in its implementation and accessible to the community.



context

On a local level, the presence of graffiti on community and private assets has visibly increased and it is well recognised that graffiti is a contributor to community perceptions of disorder and safety. Council currently responds to reports of graffiti on its property or assets by removing or covering it as appropriate. Council also has a by-law which makes it an offence to write on, deface or mark a power pole, sign, post, fixture, wall or pavement in a public place with writing or pictorial representation.

In early 2008, the NT Police established a project officer to create a Territory wide graffiti management plan and have worked closely with Council in the establishment of this partnership. Police have also created a graffiti database and Council contributes to this by photographing any graffiti observed and lodging a simple report for database inclusion. Importantly, reporting graffiti and providing photos to police of the graffiti is a task all members of the community are encouraged to do.

Responding to graffiti requires partners and as a community working together will bring about greater outcomes. Following consideration of the feedback received during the community consultation phase, Council endorsed a number of strategies and activities that in combination form its management plan. In summary, the strategies include:



1. Council taking a leadership role in relation to graffiti management across the municipality.
2. Council endorsing the fastest possible graffiti removal processes within budget constraints.
3. The continuation and promotion of a graffiti hotline.
4. The provision of graffiti removal kits to residents and businesses.
5. The provision of paint vouchers to residents and businesses.
6. The establishment of a mural permit system for business owners/occupiers.
7. The formulation of a coordinated community graffiti management plan to maximise outcomes and information sharing.
8. That Council develop a partnership with retailers via a MOU with the intention at restricting the sale of graffiti materials.
9. That Council seek legislative amendments and petition the NT Government to compel property owners to remove graffiti occurring on their property including increased penalties.

A key theme of Council's approach is that of partnerships. In keeping with this, Council has endorsed negotiations for the pooling of resources with the Northern Territory Government, Power and Water Corporation, Telstra, Casuarina Square and other major stakeholders who are willing to share resources for the purpose of a unified graffiti removal service. It is acknowledged that solutions that involve many stakeholders working together cannot always be achieved rapidly, however it is important that every effort is made to work in partnership to what is a shared problem.



responding to a local problem

There are a wide range of approaches. To some people graffiti is ugly and unsightly. To others it is art and a normal part of community space. Acknowledging the polarity of views, a multi faceted program has been adopted. The response will aim to strike a balance that helps to build community connections, shares the responsibility for surveillance and reporting of vandalism and allows graffiti to flourish in designated areas that are established for legal art. All strategies and responses will be subject to annual funding allocations.

Graffiti costs the community.

Resources of police, the legal system, local government maintenance crews, practical clean up costs on private and publically owned infrastructure, insurance premiums, prevention and response and diversion activities and the time of volunteers.

Council's graffiti program is being implemented over time to provide for change in community attitudes and education. CPTED principles (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) are drawn upon that recognise territoriality, natural surveillance, activity support and access control as key strategies.



activity – community education

- To avoid confusion for the public in regards to who is responsible for which community asset, a graffiti reporting hotline has been established by Council and in the event that a resident telephones Council to report a graffiti attack, Council will advise the property owner or business.
- Council is also encouraging partnerships to share responsibility of surveillance, reporting and responding to graffiti vandalism as a whole of community approach. This may be in the form of a joint grant application for funds, a community safety project or through information sharing.
- At different times, Council will arrange for awareness raising activities and promote services and programs that encourage residents to report all incidents of graffiti.



activity – responding

- Council has established a graffiti reporting telephone hotline to encourage and facilitate easy access to a response and share responsibility with the community and stakeholders in reducing vandalism.
- Council will aim to remove within 24 hours, any graffiti from its assets or buildings that is either racist, offensive or obscene in nature. Council will aim to remove any other graffiti vandalism from its assets or buildings within 72 hours.
- When graffiti vandalism is reported to Council and it does not occur on Council property, Council will endeavour to advise the property owner of the graffiti incident and provide resources where possible.
- Council has costed and developed graffiti removal kits that are provided residents on request. Contents of the removal kits include removal gel, gloves, goggles, scouring pads, and informational sheets including an evaluation form. An alternative to the removal kits are Paint vouchers. One or the other can only be chosen and any subsequent kits or paint vouchers are provided at cost.



- Council will provide graffiti removal kits to residents and or businesses regardless of Council ownership of the property.
- Council has and will continue to report every incidence of graffiti as it becomes aware of it to the NT Police for inclusion to its database and shall information share on graffiti issues so that through partnership better community safety outcomes are achieved.

activities – resources & advice

- Council will continue to provide graffiti removal kits and paint vouchers and offer these kits free of charge (first kit) and at cost for subsequent kits.
- Council's facilitation of community friendly informational resources to assist people work with us to reduce graffiti vandalism.
- An Art bank will be established to facilitate linkages with artists and residents wanting murals etc applied to their buildings.
- Council will promote the graffiti reporting hotline at community events and widely across the community to encourage action by residents to help reduce vandalism.



activities – achieving balance

- Council will partner with community organisations, businesses and residents and support the provision of legal art programs in designated areas.
- Council will establish an Art Bank to help facilitate linkages between artists and businesses/landlords wanting to create artworks/murals on their buildings.
- Council will seek funding sources to facilitate legal art and mural programs where appropriate.
- Council will establish a permit system for businesses wanting to apply graffiti murals to their property in keeping with Council's Signs Code. Linkages with artists can also be provided if required.



activities – partnerships

- Council will facilitate and work with arts organisations, community organisations, residents and NT Police to locate areas that may be designated legal spaces where graffiti is permitted in recognition of cultural diversity and the role this plays in community life.
- Council, in working closely with the NT Police, will ensure coordination of information collection, rapid removal and information sharing for the NT Police database. Rapid removal by Council within 24 hours for any graffiti that is racist, offensive or obscene in nature and within 72 hours or less for graffiti vandalism.
- Council will partner with the NT Police to work together on funding proposals to seek further funds for future program implementation.
- Over time Council will work with the community to establish an Adopt an Asset (care for a community asset by groups or individuals) which is already happening in some circumstances informally.) Resources will be provided to groups on request .
- Council will work with the NT Police to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with aerosol retailers.

