

graffiti *solutions*

This leaflet provides information on North Sydney Council's free Removal of Graffiti Program. It also gives practical advice to property-owners on the removal of graffiti and methods of protecting your property from future attacks and sets out some longer-term strategies on reducing the incidence of graffiti.

Background

What is graffiti vandalism?

The term 'graffiti vandalism' generally refers to illegally defacing private and public property with markings and/or graphics without the owner's consent. Graffiti vandalism can take multiple forms including designs, words, or images using chalk, paint, scratching, textas, acid etching or other material such as stickers and billposters.

In recent years North Sydney has allocated over \$140,000 annually to removing graffiti from council property.



The law

It is illegal to change, without permission, the appearance of property which is not your own.

In NSW graffiti offenders can be subject to a number of laws, the main one being the Summary Offences Act, which can impose:

- A \$2,200 fine or imprisonment for 6 months for damaging or defacing premises or property.
- A \$1,100 fine or imprisonment of 3 months for possession of spray paint, with the intent to deface or damage premises or property.

Courts can order offenders to complete community service work instead of a fine or sentence.

Offenders may also be ordered to remove graffiti and restore the appearance of the premises or property.

Responsible retailing

The NSW Government has implemented legislation to restrict the sale of aerosol spray paints in NSW. Section 10C of the *Summary Offences Act 1988* bans the sale of spray paints to young people under the age of 18 years and carries a maximum penalty of \$1,100.

In May 2006, the government introduced new legislation to restrict access to spray cans at retailer shops in the Summary Offences Amendment (*Display of Spray Paint Cans*) Act 2006. Retailers who sell spray paint cans are required to properly secure them if they are displayed in areas where the public has access.

Under the new law, a spray paint can is properly secured if it is displayed:

- In a locked cabinet, or
- In or behind a counter so that customers cannot gain access to the can without the assistance of shop staff, or
- On a shelf of height 2.1 meters or more, or
- In any other manner prescribed by the regulations.

Spray paints which are colourless and transparent when applied to a surface are exempt from the new law.

This new legislation came into effect on 1 November 2006. A maximum fine of \$1,100 is payable by a retailer who fails to properly secure spray paint cans in accordance with the new law.

Legal alternative

Many local government, community and youth organisations provide legal outlets for graffiti. By creating a stronger interest in the 'art' and skills involved rather than the illicit aspects, these projects aim to:

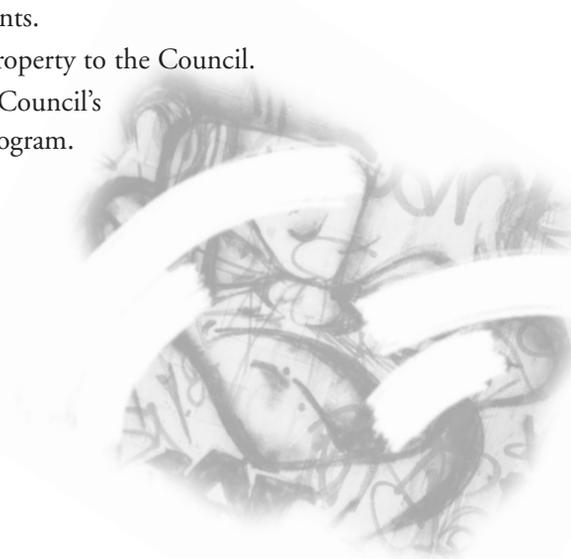
- Provide legal and supervised art spaces and murals.
- Encourage a more focussed interest in graphic arts, design and technology.
- Teach business and general life skills by cooperating with local communities.

Community involvement

Local government and organisations such as *Keep Australia Beautiful*, and *Crime Stoppers*, work to encourage greater civic pride. Volunteer graffiti removal programs and community reporting of graffiti to Councils can help to reduce illegal graffiti.

Some specific activities are:

- Remove graffiti on your own property.
- Help your neighbours remove graffiti from their property, particularly if they are less mobile.
- Plant bushes or trailing plants.
- Report graffiti on public property to the Council.
- Sign up for North Sydney Council's free Removal of Graffiti Program.



If you want to reduce illegal graffiti in your community, you can help by supporting:

- Safe and legal activities for young people.
- Environmental and design measures to reduce opportunities for anti-social behaviour.
- Anti-graffiti protection and removal measures and the promotion of civic pride.

North Sydney Council help & advice

Since 2006, North Sydney Council has offered a free Removal of Graffiti Program to property owners in the North Sydney LGA. To be eligible a signed agreement needs to be lodged with Council, available by phoning 9936 8100 or downloading from www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au.

For more information, also visit the NSW Graffiti Information website at www.graffiti.nsw.gov.au. This site includes excellent advice on CPTED or 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design'.

Practical advice on removing graffiti

To take effective action against illegal graffiti it is important to:

- Remove it as soon as possible.
- Continue to remove it.
- Use various methods to make properties less attractive to graffitiists.
- Make graffiti easier to remove by applying a protective coating.
- Report incidents on Council property to Council by phoning 9936 8100.
- Encourage others in your community to take action against illegal graffiti.

Protective coatings

Removal of graffiti can be difficult and unpleasant, especially when it requires the use of powerful chemical solvents. Often, no matter how strong the solvent some surfaces will retain a 'ghost' of the offending graffiti where materials such as sandstone have allowed the paint or ink

to penetrate. A surface can be protected by sealing the surface with a permanent or non-permanent protective coating.

Protective coatings can:

- Make removal easier and more effective.
- Reduce graffiti's physical effects on a surface.
- Reduce the physical effects of removal.

Care should be taken in matching surface material with coating and removal products. Permanent coatings may damage material such as sandstone, as it prevents the stone from 'breathing'. Some solvents may remove permanent coatings and some may cause more damage than graffiti itself.

Generally, there are two types of anti-graffiti coating: *permanent* and *non-permanent*.

Non-permanent coatings

Sometimes referred to as 'sacrificial' coatings, non-permanent coatings are removed from a surface along with the graffiti when it is removed. Must be re-applied once the surface is cleaned.

Advantages

- Tend to be water-based and not as toxic as permanent coatings.
Sold in single packs, often easier to apply.
- Should be cheaper than permanent coatings.

Disadvantages

- Must be re-applied after graffiti removal.
- May suffer in very hot climates from softening and dirt pick up.

Permanent coatings

Sometimes referred to as 'non-sacrificial' coatings, permanent coatings should remain in place for a considerable length of time and through repeated removal of graffiti.

Advantages

- Relatively non-toxic removers can be used.
- The coating will last for many removal attempts.

Disadvantages

- Usually sold in two pack systems, often require careful application, can be expensive.
- Chemicals in permanent coatings may be more toxic than non-permanent coating.

For more information about coating suppliers and products refer to the Yellow Pages under A-K 'Coatings - Protective'.

Graffiti removal

Graffiti should be removed as soon as possible because:

- Solvents dissolve paint more easily if it has not completely dried and hardened (within 72 hours of application).
- The graffitist will be deprived of the reward of recognition.

Removal from painted or protected surfaces

(ie. wood, metal, stone, concrete, surfaces with a protective topcoat)

These surfaces are easier to clean because the graffiti does not sink below the surface. Removal is best undertaken with a common solvent or commercial cleaning fluid. Test small areas with graduated intensity of cleaning fluid, commencing with detergent, then methylated spirits, turpentine or white spirit and finally acetone.

Removal from bare or raw surfaces

(ie. stone, concrete, brick, wood and metal)

If the surfaces are hard and smooth there is a better chance of removing graffiti without damage. Two removal methods may be effective on these surfaces.

- Apply a solvent or commercial cleaning fluid, wait three to five minutes, then use a wire brush, rinsing with water to remove the graffiti.
- On heavily affected areas apply commercial paint stripper (make sure the surface is dry), wait three to four minutes, then scrub with a wire brush and solvent. Wash the paint stripper away taking care not to splash it onto clothing or skin. Use a hose or pressure washer to remove as much as possible.

Removal from glass, plastics and other synthetics

It is relatively easy to remove paint or ink graffiti from these materials with most cleaning fluids, but **do not** use caustic cleaners near glass or aluminium. Take greater care with plastics and other synthetics.

Painting over graffiti

Removal of graffiti is best, **but as a last resort**, painted surfaces can be repainted.

Some tips for painting over graffiti

- Clean the surface well and try to remove graffiti as much as possible first.
- Get the closest match possible to the original paint or surface finish.
- If the original surface is not a colour, choose colours that match the surroundings, are neutral or don't draw attention.
- Paint over in clean square shapes. Try to blend it in to surrounding areas by overlapping or covering nearby areas.
- Cover the graffiti completely. Glimpses of graffiti will only encourage the graffitist to 'have another go'. Darker colours are recommended for better coverage of graffiti and as a less attractive 'canvas'.

All cleaning and paint products require careful handling. Always refer to the manufacturer's directions for use and follow safety warnings.



Removal products & services

There are three considerations when deciding on which product to use for graffiti removal:

- Safety
- Effectiveness
- Ease of use

Removal products

(can be chemical or natural in origin. Common and effective cleaners include: Foam oven cleaner (caustic), liquid and powder cleansers, liquid laundry detergents, turpentine, eucalyptus oil and cleaning pastes)

Some tips on chemical removers

- Solvent-based products may vary widely in effectiveness.
- Products containing chlorinated solvents (such as paint strippers) are effective against aerosol paint but safety precautions are most important.
- Felt-tip pen removers can incorporate bleaches that destroy rather than dissolve the colour. These are of no use against aerosol spray paints.

Reporting graffiti vandalism

call the Police Assistance Line (PAL) on 131 444. PAL allows you to report crime over the phone. Once your report is completed by a customer service representative, your information is immediately available to your local police.

By phoning PAL, rather than your local police station, you are freeing up police officers who could otherwise be on a street actively preventing and investigating crime in your community.