



Zero Tolerance for Graffiti Vandalism Strategy



***Vision Statement:
Ruapehu is free from graffiti,
and zero tolerance is shown toward graffiti vandalism***

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Contents

Introduction and Background 3

Successful Graffiti Vandalism Programmes..... 4

Community Involvement 4

Resources 4

Strong Law Enforcement..... 4

Graffiti Vandalism Audits 4

Effective Reporting Systems 4

Rapid Removal Systems..... 4

Education 4

Strategy and Implementation Plan 5

Appendix – Graffiti Vandalism Information 7

Who are Taggers?..... 7

Why do Taggers tag? 8



Introduction and Background



Graffiti vandalism is the intentional unlawful defacing of property with writing, markings or graphics. Tagging, a form of graffiti vandalism, is the writing of a stylised signature on a wall or other property and is the most common form of graffiti vandalism in New Zealand.¹ Graffiti vandalism damage is a criminal offence and offenders can be prosecuted under the Summary Offences Act 1981 or the Crimes Act 1961. Penalties include imprisonment for a term up to seven years and a fine of up to \$2,000 for wilful damage.

The Crime Prevention Unit states, “It is not a victimless crime, the people whose property is defaced, the community whose property values are affected, and the citizens who feel insecure in their own community are all victims of graffiti vandalism. Graffiti vandalism contributes to community unease. It can lead to a perception that an area is out of control and can increase the fear of crime. Without action to remove and prevent further vandalism, it can also lead to suggestion that there is a decline in concern for the appearance of a town or city which can, in turn, attract crime.”¹

¹ <http://www.justice.govt.nz/cpu/stop-strategy/Graffiti%20Vandalism%20Contestable%20funding%20guidelines.doc>

Ruapehu communities have traditionally taken pride in their urban environments and are highly concerned about graffiti vandalism. Vandalism costs ratepayers a considerable amount of money in clean up. The Ruapehu community has expressed its views on the importance of these issues. The two Community Outcomes with the highest rating (ie, most important to the community) relating to this issue are:

- The Incidence of crime and violence are reduced and Police are open and accessible.
- A community that respects the welfare and safety of others.

Other Community Outcomes that relate are:

- An urban environment that is tidy, clean, safe easy to get around in and beautified.
- A sense of community pride and togetherness where people work towards community goals and speak positively about the community.
- A community that encourages participation in planning around community or District issues and promotes community responsibility.

Successful Graffiti Vandalism Programmes

According to extensive graffiti research conducted by Christchurch City Council in 1999, the following aspects should form part of a successful graffiti vandalism programme:¹

Community Involvement

Many individuals and groups hold strong views on the issue. Building community involvement and consultation into the planning stage of a graffiti crime prevention strategy will increase ownership of the strategy and support in its implementation.

Resources

A Graffiti Co-ordinator should be established, responsible for co-ordinating the plan, liaising with media, establishing consultative networks, overseeing recording systems and seeking sponsorship for project components as required.

Strong Law Enforcement

The problem of illegal graffiti vandalism can be dealt with more effectively when it is clearly viewed as an offence and treated as such. Cities which have successfully reduced graffiti vandalism rates often have special Police teams addressing the issue and co-ordinating intelligence regarding the problem locally; their Police treat the matter seriously. In many cases, greater efforts have been made to prosecute known offenders, to hold offenders and often also their parents accountable. Having officers focused largely on the issue of graffiti gives them the time needed to really get to know who the offenders are and to successfully prosecute.

Graffiti Vandalism Audits

It is important to obtain some idea of the extent of the problem, in order that the success of the countermeasures can be monitored and evaluated. These do not need to include all areas of the community but, rather, just a few representative areas. With the boundaries clearly recorded, all graffiti vandalism in the

defined area should be recorded in as short a period as possible (ie 2 - 3 days). Auditing all sample areas at the same time gives a snapshot of the extent and nature of the graffiti vandalism problem prior to implementation of a reduction/prevention strategy.

Effective Reporting Systems

Graffiti vandalism is much less likely to be reported to the Police than property crimes involving theft. As a consequence, only a fraction of offenders are caught. In order for the Police to better address the problem of graffiti vandalism, they need to know when and where it is happening. To achieve this, the public need to know who to report graffiti vandalism attacks to. Reporting can be made easier when communities have publicised hotlines. These are usually Council-based, but could work in partnership with large corporations with graffiti-prone property such as railways, power and telephone companies.

Rapid Removal Systems

Rapid removal is a vital component of a successful graffiti vandalism prevention programme. For greatest success, this needs to span private, as well as public, property. Involving apprehended offenders in removal of illegal graffiti vandalism has worked well in some communities, although this can require high levels of supervisions.

Education

Preventive education is an important component of any successful graffiti vandalism prevention strategy. Public education, school-based programmes and promotion of design concepts which reduce the likelihood of a property being tagged need to be promoted and undertaken to achieve lasting reduction in the problem. Education aimed at recognising it as a crime, developing intolerance of, and action against, illegal graffiti vandalism, stopping young people from starting such activity and preventing graffiti vandalism on one's property or removing it soon after it occurs all support a wider strategy.

¹ <http://www.justice.govt.nz/cpu/stop-strategy/Graffiti%20Vandalism%20Contestable%20funding%20guidelines.doc>

Strategy and Implementation Plan

The following plan will be implemented by the Graffiti Vandalism Action Group and monitored regularly.

Strategies	Milestones	
1. Rapid removal of graffiti		
Goal: The Ruapehu community has zero tolerance for graffiti vandalism.		
Rapid removal	Callers can report graffiti vandalism to advertised phone numbers, with a system of response developed to support this.	Council and NZ Police
	Provide 48 hour turnaround for graffiti vandalism removal.	Council contractor
Develop a graffiti vandalism removal process from all properties	<p>Council to pursue the following graffiti vandalism removal system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public places - Council remove. Private - Responsibility of property owners, who are encouraged to report to Police and take photos before clean-up. Council will source free grey paint as first paint-out response for property owners to access. Council will not paint property for people. Utilities - Telecom has an agreement in place with NZ Police. For other utilities they will be given the option of either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Utilities remove themselves in 48 hours; or (b) A Memorandum of Understanding is developed where they fund Council to remove, or remove themselves. 	<p>All parties as identified.</p> <p>Council to contact Utilities to form agreements for graffiti vandalism paint-out.</p>
Offenders removing graffiti themselves	Supervise offenders removing graffiti as part of the consequence for their offence.	NZ Police
2. Prevention of graffiti through education		
Goal: Graffiti is seen as anti-social behaviour, and disrespectful to communities.		
Education of young children	Establish programmes that include education of children about graffiti vandalism and litter, pride and responsibility.	Taumarunui High School to lead in the north, with NZ Police as partner.
Youth art programmes	Liaise with secondary schools, to support as required, art programmes to redirect creative talents to positive outlets.	Ruapehu College to lead in the south, with NZ Police as partner.
Enhanced media portrayal of graffiti related issues	Liaise with media to ensure they understand the objectives of the Graffiti Vandalism Strategy and to seek cooperation for positive publicity. Promotion drive every six months. Timing to be linked to peak in graffiti incidence reporting (advertise January for February peak and October for November peak).	Council
Education of retailers	Ensure retailers are aware of responsibilities under the Summary Offences Act.	NZ Police

Strategies	Milestones	
3. Effective legal remedies		
Goal: The Ruapehu community is an advocate for appropriate legal action to fight the graffiti vandalism problem.		
Detection of young offenders	Maintain good working relationships with NZ Police so graffiti vandalism eradication is a key objective through the apprehension of offenders and youth aid programmes.	NZ Police lead
	Establish a network amongst schools and NZ Police to identify youth offenders.	
	Policing targets patrolling at identified hot spots and times of the week.	
	A graffiti vandalism database is maintained to compile graffiti vandalism as it is reported, linking incidences to offenders.	
	Funding for CCTV is investigated in Taumarunui, Ohakune and Raetihi urban areas	Council lead, ETI, Ohakune 2000, Raetihi Promotions, NZ Police
Appropriate and effective penalties established	Offenders compensate for the clean-up of graffiti vandalism.	NZ Police
	Maintain family group conferences and marae based programmes aimed at changing offender behaviour.	NZ Police
4. Beautification		
Goal: Ruapehu is seen as beautiful, clean, and taking pride in its environment.		
Community pride goals are introduced through voluntary neighbourhood groups.	"Neat-Street" and "Adopt-A-Reserve" Groups established to take responsibility for clean-up and beautification projects in local areas.	Council lead. NZ Police to explore in conjunction with Neighbourhood Support Groups
Undertake community pride campaigns	Annually host Neat Street Awards in partnership with local business.	Local promotions groups lead as desired, in conjunction with Neighbourhood Support Groups
	Host Clean-up NZ Campaign annually (20-27 August 2011)	Local promotions groups lead as desired, in conjunction with Neighbourhood Support Groups
	Community paint-out days held, with volunteer groups as part of Clean-up NZ Week annually.	Council assist local promotions groups as they desire, in conjunction with Neighbourhood Support Groups

Appendix – Graffiti Vandalism Information

Who are Taggers?

Tagging	Graffiti varies in type and purpose, from political, racial, threatening or obscene messages (known in the US as “junk graffiti”), to personal or group identification, or “tagging”. Anyone can obtain a can of spray paint or marker pen and “make their mark”. US researchers estimate that around 80% of young people do at some time.
Tags and taggers	Today, tags are most commonly written with marker pen onto surfaces, although some are spray painted. A tagger is someone who adopts a nickname, or tag, and then writes it on as many surfaces as possible, usually in highly visible locations. The more often their marks appear in different locations, the more publicity they receive. As a consequence, a small number of taggers can cause a disproportionate amount of property damage in a community.
Crew	While all taggers have their own tag, identifying them by a nickname, those more entrenched in this behaviour usually belong to a crew, a group of other taggers, who also have their own collective tag, often including the initials of its members. Crews usually have between 3 - 7 members who know each other well and spend time tagging together. Some taggers have more than one tag, often keeping one for legal graffiti and another for their illegal vandalism.
Throw-ups	A throw up is normally bigger than a tag, and uses bubble-shaped letters, usually using a single colour. Throw-ups are used in the same way as tags, but take longer to put up, consequently exposing the artist to more risk of being caught.
Bombs, Pieces and Burners	These are large, colourful throw-ups, usually with a list of the crew’s tags beside them. Bombs and pieces are an opportunity to demonstrate artistic ability to others and bring great status. They are closely aligned with the hip hop culture and are more likely to have been undertaken by those motivated by artistic exposure. A more elaborate piece again is called a burner.



Why do Taggers tag?

Fame to address low self esteem	The number of tags one paints increases fame. While putting up large works is now the more important source of mana in hip hop culture, proliferating one's tag has attraction to those young people who lack any opportunity to excel in other aspects of their lives and who may lack the artistic skill to compete with the skilled artists who put up bombs and burners. For young people performing poorly at school and at sport and with poor employment prospects, the fame from tagging is a way of boosting self esteem. These are described as "dangerous" graffiti vandals, often having no respect for private property or for the codes of ethics strong within many groups of graffiti artists and often involved in other forms of vandalism and theft.
Gangs	Graffiti is a part of the youth gang culture, marking territory. As with those motivated by fame, graffiti vandals who are involved because of gang affiliations are more troublesome because of a lack of respect for private property, for others' work and a greater tendency to also be involved in other forms of offending.
Crime	A small group of taggers are involved in graffiti vandalism because of a desire to be involved in illegal activity. Chances of detection are low, yet the profile of their offending is high.
Hip Hop Culture	Hip hop culture does attract the bulk of young people towards tagging. Those motivated by hip hop tend to follow a strong code of ethics which does not support the theft of art materials or the tagging of private property. In the hip hop culture, it is disrespectful to tag over another's work and especially when it is large-scale work. Many younger taggers are not aware of such hip hop ethics. There is also a different art form associated with the "skateboard culture".

