

Stop graffiti vandalism

Fact Sheet 7 – Volunteer paint-out programs

Introduction

Involving the community in graffiti vandalism prevention programs can provide benefits for the entire community. Reporting offences, providing education and graffiti vandalism removal by volunteers are options for local government. Along with some of the well-established organisations and programs such as Keep Australia Beautiful, Community Safety Precinct Committees and Crime Stoppers, a number of communities have responded positively to local government initiated programs to encourage greater civic pride. Volunteer graffiti vandalism removal programs and the encouragement of the community to report incidents to council appear to be working well in a number of local government areas. There is a broad range of programs that can be chosen to suit your unique community.

OBJECTIVES

Depending on the type and extent of your volunteer program, the objectives may include:

- To give local residents and community groups the opportunity to take part in beautifying their local area.
- To provide volunteers with the opportunity to meet and work with people from within their community.
- To develop an attractive local environment, so that people are encouraged to use public space.
- To deal with graffiti vandalism efficiently and effectively.
- To encourage the general public to become involved in identifying and reporting graffiti vandalism damage, even when their personal property is unaffected.
- To provide assistance to the general public to repair graffiti vandalism damage by way of advice on removal and prevention of graffiti vandalism.
- To initiate, extend and enhance public services and programmes offered by Council.
- To encourage community independence.
- To improve the quality of life for the community.

BENEFITS

In addition to providing a cleaner and more inclusive community, the benefits of these types of programs also extend to the individual volunteers involved. These include increased participation in community life, developing and implementing services in the community, enhanced personal development, a broadening of life experiences and choices, the ability to meet new friends and develop networks and meeting personal needs.

GOOD PRACTICE VOLUNTEER GRAFFITI PAINT OUT PROGRAMS

Step 1 - Understanding your local graffiti problem

The problem of graffiti vandalism is different across NSW. In some places there is a greater focus on graffiti as an art form and the community enjoys some legal graffiti. Other places have problems with large numbers of tags. Piece walls may be the biggest attraction for graffiti vandals in some locations. The demographics and motivations of graffiti vandals may also differ according to time and place. For these reasons it is very

important to understand what is happening in your local area before you implement any graffiti vandalism prevention project. *Fact sheet 2 – Understanding your local graffiti vandalism problem* provides resources and information to help you with this step.

Step 2 – Choose a project

The type of volunteer project that you choose should be relevant to your organisation and for your local community. Projects that are successful are well coordinated and monitored regularly. Some existing program styles are:

- Individuals are assigned small areas (1 block) and provided with the resources to monitor and respond to graffiti vandalism on a regular but individual basis.
- Volunteer groups are formed to 'adopt' a specific area such as a street or park and they meet there on a regular cycle e.g. the first Sunday of every month. Council provides on-site support such as transporting equipment and providing supervision.
- Volunteer groups are formed as above, however council simply supplies materials such as paint and brushes which are collected from Council's depot.
- Council calls for volunteers for specific single events such as Paint Out Days.

In all cases, regular volunteer procedures such as application and OH&S Training would be undertaken prior to any graffiti vandalism removal. Many councils already have these procedures in place for other volunteer programs such as BushCare and library volunteers.

Step 3 – Develop supporting policies and documentation

Many councils will already have supporting documents such as a Code of Conduct in place for general volunteer use. Existing policies such as travel reimbursement, insurance, workers compensation and incident reporting could also be used for graffiti vandalism removal. Policies specific to the project may include a job description or scope of work to be undertaken and minimum standards, activity reports for evaluation and resource order forms. Some councils have developed a specific graffiti vandalism removal volunteers manual which draws together the generic and specific documentation. In cases where a volunteer may paint over graffiti vandalism on non-Council property, appropriate approvals will have to be organised and kept on a central file, in compliance with Section 67C of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Step 4 – Investigate training requirements

All volunteers generally undergo basic training in the organisation such as OH&S training. Graffiti Paint Out volunteers will also require training in the expectations and minimum standards of the role, and on how to complete any paperwork. In addition, training on paint handling, environmental management (appropriate cleaning and disposal of materials) and working on a road reserve may also be required. For paint handling and cleaning issues, some councils have utilised in-house painters to run the training. In addition, manufactures and hardware stores may provide the training as part of purchase. You should always have on hand a copy of the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS).

Depending on the nature of the program and the type of paint used, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE's) may be required. This should be supplied by Council and instruction provided on appropriate usage. Supervision of volunteers should be organised and documented. Some programs may require initial supervision as part of the training program followed by annual updates. Volunteer groups are often allocated a supervisor for regular activities. The level and type of training and supervision required will depend on the type of program being offered and the expectations of both Council and volunteers.

Step 5 – Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework

To be effective monitoring and evaluation should be built into the program from the beginning. Program goals and objectives should be clearly articulated, and ways to measure the performance of the program should be decided. Performance indicators should include ways to measure how well the project was implemented (e.g. Did we do what we planned to do?) and the level of success of the project (e.g. Did we achieve what we set out to achieve?). A sample set of measures is included at the end of this fact sheet.

The program should also be monitored on a regular basis. Monitoring may include a stocktake of resources and materials, measuring the amount of graffiti vandalism removed or the number of volunteer hours. Monitoring should help you improve your project by reducing costs, increasing effectiveness or improving community safety. Monitoring will also help you to manage risks, supervise and support volunteers and may aid in recruitment.

Step 6 – Identify locations

All Volunteer programs should decide at the outset the types of locations from which graffiti vandalism will be painted over. Before volunteer recruitment begins, it is worthwhile to have a list of priority target locations and a secondary list should the number of volunteers exceed expectations. In each location, all structures which may require graffiti vandalism removal, should be identified and the type and colour of the paint required noted in a register. OH&S hazards and management techniques can also be listed in the register. This register can then be used to allocate resources and monitor activity.

When volunteers are supported to remove graffiti vandalism from their own property, issues of consent and paint matching are the responsibility of the volunteer. If the program chooses to focus on council property only, the locations of activities should be clearly defined and council will organise suitable paint colours. When painting over graffiti vandalism on either residential or commercially owned private property, or the property of other organisations, written consent should be secured before the program begins. The consent should include details of the expiry of the consent, the paint to be used and the frequency of application. This information should then form part of the volunteer's job description.

It is a good idea to limit the available colour range and ask private property owners to agree on a particular colour. By limiting the range, paint may be purchased at discount rates or in bulk, and the number of different tins required will be reduced. Additionally as a reduced number of brushes will be used, the set up and cleanup time will be reduced and therefore more graffiti vandalism covered.

Step 7 – Decide on material use, distribution and storage

Policies will be required for issues such as access to and storage of materials, carriage of materials, the types of paint, and environmental considerations. The type of project you implement will provide guidance for these policies. Where volunteers are working individually on small areas with limited colour schemes, it may be appropriate to allocate small tins of paint and other materials that can be stored at the volunteers' residence. In this case, the volunteer should receive training or information on safe storage and disposal methods, including a copy of the MSDS. The register created in step 5 will allow you to track material access and usage. Some councils have reported successful outcomes when

volunteer groups have been given access to a trailer or material box which contains all necessary resources for a paint out program. The trailer/materials storage box may be transported to removal sites by a staff member performing supervision duties, or by a volunteer with additional training and coordination responsibilities. It should contain all safety materials, including the relevant MSDS and PPE's in addition to paints, brushes, drop cloths and other tools.

Step 8 – Recruit and train volunteers

Different people will be attracted to volunteering for a variety of reasons. Your recruitment campaign should focus on the positive aspects of volunteering while not diminishing the amount of work involved. Having a number of options for volunteers such as small areas, team work and individual monitoring will make the project more attractive to people with limited time or other responsibilities.

You may be able to advertise for recruitment through an existing volunteer service, on Council documents and publications, through posters at local services and public spaces, on a local radio station or through a media release.

It is essential that all volunteer applications are assessed for understanding of, and suitability for the role, level of commitment and willingness to undergo training. All volunteers should be subject to reference checks, Working with Children Checks (where necessary) and be able to provide contact details. Upon completion of all checks and required training, councils should note the volunteer's accreditation for involvement in the volunteer program.

When undertaking a recruitment drive, training of volunteers can be organised into a group event before the paint out project is launched. During ongoing recruitment and volunteer turnover, training programs can either be organised on a rolling basis, or performed for individual new volunteers.

Step 9 – Ongoing aspects of the project

The success of your project will depend for a large part on the ongoing coordination of volunteers, volunteer recruitment and paperwork. By managing all necessary paperwork, such as volunteer applications and training certificates, you ensure that insurance requirements are met. Keeping up to date with activity reports provides data for reporting to the community and for evaluation

purposes. This information may also be useful for recognition of volunteers' efforts.

A key ingredient in ensuring that your project is sustainable and attractive to volunteers is recognition of volunteers. Recognition may be as simple as an annual lunch or discount movie tickets for all volunteers, or it may be designed to reward individuals by providing incentives based on hours worked or amount of graffiti vandalism removed. Consultation with volunteers may provide additional suggestions for recognition.

Step 10 – Evaluate your project

Evaluating your project will allow you to understand and demonstrate what works in volunteer paint out projects for your area, and can help you to improve the current project. Evaluation should include an examination of the costs and benefits of running the project, the impact of the project against its objectives and how easily the project can be replicated in other areas.

Listed below is a selection of measures that you may like to use in your evaluation. You should develop and use measures which are relevant to the objectives of your project and which will give you enough information to ascertain whether the project is achieving what you set out to achieve.

Example process measures

- Before and after audits
- Number of tags and pieces removed
- Volunteers – numbers, hours, activity
- Square metres removed
- Project attracts support and resources
- Cost effectiveness
- Partnerships - businesses/agencies cooperating

Example impact measures

- Reduces graffiti vandalism in targeted location
- Reduces fear of crime for users of an area
- Length of time that the graffiti vandalism stays off
- Number of legal actions against offenders
- Number of reported offences
- Volunteers – satisfaction
- Changes in activity in targeted location



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