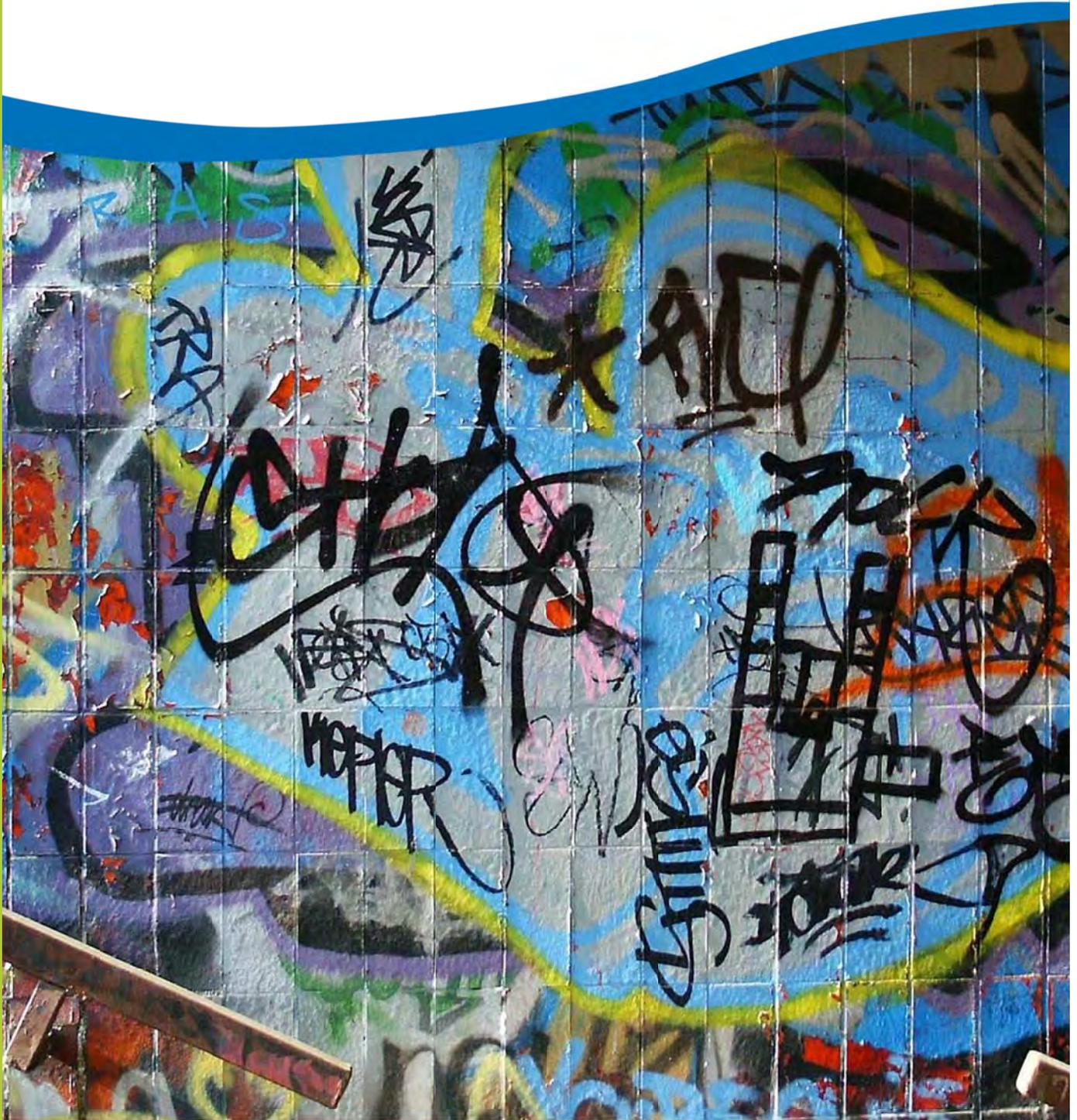


Coffs Harbour City Council

Graffiti Management Strategy

2016– 2020



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1. BACKGROUND

Graffiti vandalism has a direct and immediate impact on the community by reducing the social amenity of public spaces, creating visual pollution and leading to increased fear for personal security. Graffiti is an offence under the *Graffiti Control Act of 2008 (updated in 2010)* and the role of Local Government in managing graffiti is identified under Part 4 of that Act (see appendix 5.i).

At a Coffs Harbour City Council meeting on 18 December 2014, Resolution No. 361 resolved that Coffs Harbour City Council:

“will engage members of the community by way of invitation to develop a policy on graffiti management and a strategy to undertake prevention, mitigation and education activities to minimise the impact of graffiti vandalism in the local government area.”

Community engagement undertaken in response to this resolution highlighted:

- a strong and dedicated commitment to progress a plan and strategy by the stakeholders.
- a need for information sharing and mutual understanding of the issue.

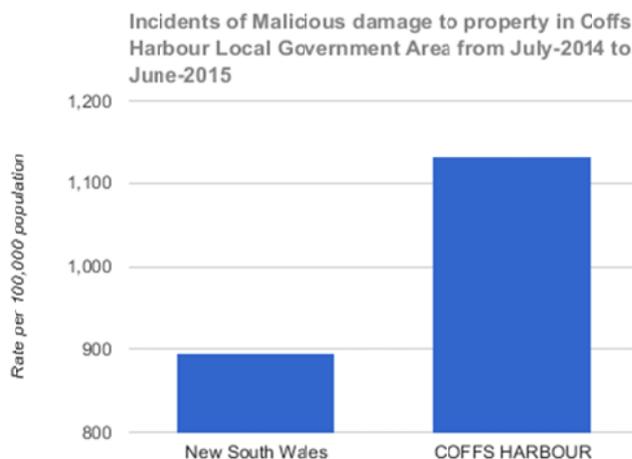
Council currently invests significant resources on graffiti removal from Council property. Given its cost to Council and the community, decisive measures are required to tackle graffiti vandalism and particularly the ‘tagging’ that proliferates in parts of the central business district, and on public amenities, road assets and signs, and playgrounds. Whilst it is generally acknowledged that our public spaces may never be completely free from the issue of graffiti vandalism, Council recognises that some methods of early intervention can be successful in effectively reducing the amount of graffiti vandalism across the City and potentially even the number of people who illegally ‘write’ or ‘tag’.

Currently, Coffs Harbour City Council has an effective but informal approach to graffiti vandalism removal but no formal policy or procedures on graffiti vandalism removal, removal timeframes or graffiti reporting systems.

The scale of the issue

The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) data reports on incidents of malicious damage to property, this includes graffiti vandalism. Coffs Harbour is ranked 45 out of 152 LGAs in NSW for malicious damage to property. BOCSAR identified that between July 2014 and June 2015 Coffs Harbour City Council Local Government Area recorded a rate of 1,133 incidents per 100,000 population, compared to a rate for NSW of 895 per 100,000.

Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research July 2014 – June 2015 Malicious damage to property, Coffs Harbour Local Government Area.



When comparing specific graffiti incidents across the region, the BOCSAR data shows a fluctuating trend for Coffs Harbour City Council Local Government Area but an incident rate that is generally higher than neighbouring Councils and the NSW average.

NSW Recorded Graffiti Statistics July 2010 to June 2015

Number and rate of graffiti incidents recorded by the NSW Police Force:

Coffs Harbour, Clarence Valley, Nambucca, Kempsey Local Government Areas and NSW

Local Government Area	Measure	Jul 2010	Jul 2011	Jul 2012	Jul 2013	Jul 2014
		- Jun 2011	- Jun 2012	- Jun 2013	- Jun 2014	- Jun 2015
Coffs Harbour	Number of incidents	129	91	68	65	81
	Rate per 100,000 population	183.3	128.2	95.7	90.5	111.9
Clarence Valley	Number of incidents	46	48	35	43	34
	Rate per 100,000 population	90.2	93.6	68.6	84.3	66.7
Nambucca	Number of incidents	15	8	12	5	10
	Rate per 100,000 population	78.4	41.6	62	25.6	50.9
Kempsey	Number of incidents	18	17	25	22	18
	Rate per 100,000 population	62.2	58.4	85.4	74.9	60.7
NSW	Number of incidents	9557	8998	9931	7800	6969
	Rate per 100,000 population	133.8	124.7	135.9	105.3	92.7

Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

2. CURRENT RESPONSES BY COUNCIL

Council has the legislative authority to remove graffiti from private property within the reach of public land. Council only removes graffiti from private property if it is deemed as offensive in nature and/or in the community best interest.

Council already undertakes a range of activities in relation to graffiti management within several service areas of Council including:

- Property and Infrastructure Maintenance – removal of graffiti vandalism and responding to customer requests.
- Cultural and Community Services – community education, stakeholder engagement, street art projects, and community development activities.
- Planning and Design – Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles are adhered to in planning, design and landscaping.

In 2011, the NSW Government, in conjunction with Rotary Clubs and Dulux Paints, announced a plan to establish volunteer graffiti removal squads across the State. In 2014/15, Council supported the Rotary Club of Coffs Harbour with financial and in-kind sponsorship to establish a volunteer Graffiti Removal Day which was successfully held in October 2015.

However, evidence from current literature based on both local and international experience shows that only addressing removal will not stop the problem of graffiti vandalism. In order to respond comprehensively it is necessary to deal both with the symptoms (reactive measures that occur after the event) and the causes (preventive / before the event).

Purpose of the Strategy:

Council is committed to reducing levels of graffiti vandalism to support the maintenance of a safe and welcoming environment for the community and visitors. The purpose of this Strategy is to provide a clear and consistent framework for managing and reducing the incidents of graffiti vandalism so that “we have created through our urban spaces, a sense of community, identity and place” - *Places for Living” (Coffs Harbour 2030)*

This Strategy provides a framework for graffiti management that outlines proposed objectives under six principles:

- **Stakeholder engagement** – consultation and ongoing engagement with business, government agencies and private landowners
- **Reporting** – simple graffiti vandalism incident reporting mechanisms. To provide timely data for clean-up crews and enforcement agencies, as well as provide statistical information for education and progress monitoring.
- **Removal** – timely removal based upon set prioritisation criteria as resources allow
- **Prevention** – implementation of design-based approaches to assist in the prevention of graffiti vandalism
- **Education** – information and educational material provided to assist the community in the prevention and safe removal of graffiti. This would include information sharing on the legal and community consequences of graffiti vandalism.

- **Enforcement** – reporting systems that assist in the mapping of graffiti vandalism incidents in the LGA to inform stakeholders of ‘hotspot’ areas.

The Strategy acknowledges the need to consider a variety of approaches that include graffiti management and removal within the context of both Council and private property.

Council has a role to play but is only one of many stakeholders that will need to participate to deliver effective graffiti management. Council will undertake several roles including:

- **Provider** - falls within Council’s area of responsibility;
- **Facilitator** - Council may provide assistance to others;
- **Advocate** - Council lobbies on behalf of the community.

Collaboration with business, the wider community, including both groups and individuals, and the media, is essential in creating and maintaining neighbourhoods that are skilled in preventing and managing graffiti vandalism.



Graffiti vandalism



Street Art

3. STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

Best practice graffiti vandalism reduction models recognise that an effective approach to graffiti management needs to incorporate a variety of interventions including stakeholder engagement, reporting, removal, prevention, education and enforcement. These principles and practices need to be undertaken collaboratively to be most successful. Each is linked to one another and need to work in unison to successfully reduce the level of graffiti vandalism within Coffs Harbour LGA.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The solution to the problem of graffiti vandalism is not up to any one particular agency but is the responsibility of every person and organisation. Graffiti vandalism impacts a range of Council property but there is also a considerable level of graffiti vandalism on commercial and residential property and utility infrastructure. Stakeholder engagement and consultation with business, government agencies, utility companies and private land holders is integral in ensuring that a similar level of attention, priority and consistency is given to graffiti vandalism reporting and removal throughout the LGA.

Objectives:

1. Encourage businesses, government agencies, utility companies and private land owners to actively participate in initiatives and actions that will reduce graffiti vandalism.
2. Maintain a productive and collaborative Council approach to the coordination of graffiti matters.
3. Communicate on activities undertaken to address this Strategy.
4. Develop protocols/procedures for legal street art to be undertaken on public and private property.

REPORTING

Timely reporting and photographic logging of graffiti vandalism are critical for the prompt prioritisation of removal and availability of statistical data for education, enforcement and research activities. Photographic logging is also essential for 'tag' identification and can be correlated to locations to provide evidence.

Objectives:

1. Promote the timely reporting of graffiti vandalism by Council services, businesses and community members.
2. To expand Council's use of field based technology to support staff in being able to report graffiti hits on all Council owned assets

REMOVAL

It is acknowledged that Coffs Harbour City Council as well as local businesses, utility companies and non-government agencies have limited resources for the removal of graffiti vandalism. Through increased education and promotion of safe removal practices the whole community may assist in reducing the level of graffiti vandalism within their local area in a timely and cost effective manner.

Objectives:

1. Support the prompt removal of graffiti vandalism from all Council and non-Council owned facilities.
2. Council to continue with rapid removal of offensive graffiti.
3. Promote and encourage community based volunteer removal groups.

PREVENTION

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) refers to the use of environmental design and place management principles, such as landscaping and lighting, to reduce the opportunity for crime. Businesses and the community are to be made aware of these mechanisms that will assist in managing graffiti vandalism through simple actions in the design phase or redesign of 'hotspots'.

Objectives:

1. To reduce opportunity for graffiti vandalism through promoting and implementing design-based approaches.
2. Develop policy and procedure to outline legal opportunities to express creativity through street art on Council managed public assets. It is proposed that three levels of opportunity are made available for graffiti street art:
 - i. Level 1 – highly visible and high profile locations. Expression of interest to be sought from established artists against a brief prepared by Council.
 - ii. Level 2 - moderately visible and non-high profile locations to facilitate development of emerging street artists.
 - iii. Level 3 – low visible and low profile locations permitting free expression
3. Continue to liaise with Police Crime Prevention Officer to gain feedback on Council designs from a CPTED and crime prevention perspective.

EDUCATION

As previously stated, responsibility for preventing and removing graffiti within the LGA must be a shared approach. This is a function for the whole community, businesses, Council and other government agencies. Information sharing and distribution of educational material will assist the community in the prevention and safe removal of graffiti vandalism.

Objectives:

1. Promote community education and awareness of graffiti management practices and strategies.
2. Encourage and support graffiti education programs in schools by Police School Liaison Officer.
3. Work with local youth agencies and aerosol artists to undertake 'legal' graffiti practice in approved designated locations and publicise as such.

ENFORCEMENT

A close working partnership with NSW Police is essential in confronting a complex social issue such as graffiti vandalism. This working relationship will require successful data sharing and acknowledging that graffiti management is not a problem to be confronted by one agency or organisation alone. The reporting system should assist in the mapping of graffiti vandalism incidents within the LGA to inform stakeholders of the worse affected areas or 'hotspots'. Photographs of 'tags' and identification of locations should be made available to the NSW Police.

Objectives:

1. Maintain close working relationship with NSW Police and other agencies in providing timely data and information for enforcement activities.
2. To produce positive media, factsheet, and web information on graffiti incident reduction and opportunities for safe removal of graffiti vandalism.

4. REVIEW OF THE STRATEGY

The objectives within the Graffiti Management Strategy aim to reduce and minimise the impacts of graffiti vandalism.

There is currently no identified budget allocation or capacity within the existing budgets for implementation of initiatives which are additional to Council's current activities regarding graffiti management. If any new activities are to be undertaken, above and beyond Council's current approach, then additional funds will need to be allocated.

The actions considered necessary to be undertaken to address the objectives in this Strategy will be developed annually in a collaborative process by Council's staff and identified in Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan, with budget requirements, for adoption by Council. This will identify resources required to undertake these initiatives and who will be responsible for delivery.

The success of these actions, and progress against the Strategy, will be measured and evaluated through:

- Data gathered from reporting mechanisms, statistical sources, stakeholder and community feedback; and
- Reported through Council's annual reporting framework including 6-monthly progress updates and Annual Report.

Noting that graffiti vandalism will never totally be eliminated but that long-term data gathering will assist in understanding costs, trends, 'hotspot' areas and the benefits and cost savings of any actions undertaken.

5. APPENDICES

i. DEFINITIONS

Graffiti	Writing or drawings that have been scribbled, scratched, or painted on a surface.
Graffiti Vandalism	The act of marking or defacing premises or other property without permission.
Tagging	A style of calligraphy writing that depicts the initials, nickname or made up word to represent the writer. It is comparatively smaller in dimension from other graffiti and is often written in multiple times at the same site.
Street Art	Refers to artistic work implemented with the permission of the person/authority who owns the surface/wall that the artwork is being presented on.
Preventative murals	A painting or other work of art executed directly on a wall which can be used to prevent graffiti within an area. This is usually applied with the owner's consent.
'Hotspot' areas	Areas in which graffiti vandalism is marked on a regular basis.
Offensive graffiti	Graffiti vandalism that includes racist or political overtones, offensive language or discrimination against any person or group.
Visible graffiti	Graffiti vandalism that is visible to the community from main roads, open spaces, and reserves.

ii. ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE GRAFFITI CONTROL ACT 2008

Graffiti Control Act 2008 No 100**Part 4 - Graffiti removal work by local councils****10 Interpretation**

In this Part, **occupier**, **owner**, **private land** and **public place** have the same meanings as in the Local Government Act 1993.

11 Graffiti removal work - by agreement with owner or occupier

A local council may, by agreement with the owner or occupier of any private land, carry out graffiti removal work on the land.

12 Graffiti removal work - without agreement of owner or occupier

(1) A local council may, without the agreement of the owner or occupier of any land, carry out graffiti removal work to property on that land if the graffiti concerned is visible from a public place.

(2) The graffiti removal work referred to in subsection (1) may only be carried out from a public place.

(3) The local council concerned is to bear the cost of graffiti removal work referred to in subsection (1).

(4) If a local council carries out graffiti removal work in accordance with this section, the council must, within a reasonable period, give the owner or occupier of the land concerned written notice that the work has occurred.

(5) A local council must pay compensation for any damage caused by the council in carrying out graffiti removal work in accordance with this section.

Note. Section 730 of the Local Government Act 1993 provides for the resolution of claims for compensation relating to damage under this section in cases of dispute between the person claiming the compensation and the council.

13 Register of graffiti removal work

(1) A local council must keep a register of graffiti removal work carried out in accordance with this Part.

(2) The register is to specify in respect of each incidence of graffiti removal work carried out:

- (a) the owner or occupier of the premises on which the graffiti was situated, and
- (b) the nature of the work carried out, and
- (c) the actual cost, or an estimate of the cost at current market rates, of carrying out the work, and
- (d) in the case of graffiti removal work carried out in accordance with section 11 - the actual amount charged by the local council for carrying out the work.

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