

Graffiti Removal Policy

Adopted: 16 March 2017

Background

Local Government New Zealand estimates that councils throughout the country can individually spend up to \$1 million removing graffiti. In the Far North, an estimated figure of \$150,000 a year is spent on graffiti removal on Council-owned property.

Research has shown that if graffiti isn't removed, it is likely to attract further vandalism to property and inspire other street crime, which may result in members of the public having negative perceptions with regard to their safety and wellbeing. Ultimately, it may have a negative impact on the economic performance of the district.

It is anticipated that the graffiti problem will continue to grow and that to tackle this issue, more than one approach needs to be taken to minimise the effects.

Objectives

That the Far North District remain graffiti-free and that the Council demonstrate a zero-tolerance policy to graffiti on Council-owned property.

Definitions

GRAFFITI – means a mark or symbol placed on a property without the owner's permission. For the purpose of this policy, the term graffiti is used to refer to 'graffiti vandalism' or 'tagging'. Different types are:

- a. **CONVENTIONAL GRAFFITI** – means often isolated or spontaneous acts of "youthful exuberance," which are sometimes malicious or vindictive
- b. **GANG GRAFFITI** – means graffiti often used by gangs to mark turf or convey threats of violence, and sometimes copycat graffiti, which mimics gang graffiti
- c. **IDEOLOGICAL GRAFFITI** – means political or hate graffiti, which conveys political messages or racial, religious, or ethnic slurs.
- d. **TAGGER GRAFFITI** – means graffiti ranging from high-volume simple hits to complex street art

Policies

1. Council will maintain an operational standard to remove graffiti from its property within 24/48hrs of being reported. This approach directly addresses the motives of many offenders by reducing the notoriety associated with graffiti's visibility.
2. Graffiti in skate parks or skate bowls, being part of the culture, will not be removed unless deemed objectionable as per Section 3 of the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993.

3. Council will seek reparations from offenders who graffitied Council property. In the majority of cases, it is anticipated that a family group conference will be called. An appropriate council officer shall attend as determined by the relevant departmental manager. Suitable reparations include:
 - a written apology
 - recovery of financial cost to Council to remove graffiti
 - community service.
4. The council officer will have discretion to choose the appropriate reparation(s) on a case by case basis.
5. The Council will identify graffiti hotspots and facilitate multi agency (e.g. Transit New Zealand, NZ Police) meetings with affected property owners. Additionally, 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)' protocols may be used to help facilitate graffiti reduction within hotspots.
6. Council is not in a position to fund removal of graffiti from private property. The cost to ratepayers cannot be justified, and there are logistical and legal issues that restrict Council's ability to take such responsibility. However, those who vandalise property with graffiti do not necessarily distinguish between public and private property, and damage to private property can have much the same social and economic impact of graffiti on Council property. Accordingly, Council will contribute to anti-graffiti measures by:
 - a. working with developers to promote CPTED with respect to reducing the incidents of graffiti on new buildings
 - b. educating the public with regard to why graffiti happens and the importance of quick removal
 - c. supporting good community solutions to the graffiti problem and, when appropriate, assisting communities in applications to funding providers.
 - d. producing information via website, leaflets, ratepayers letters, etc. on how to remove graffiti effectively and where to get help
 - e. encouraging the public to report the matter to the police. Council will use its own communication methods
 - f. continuing to support community led beautification and clean up campaigns through existing Council programmes as a way of encouraging and nurturing civic pride within the district
7. Each year Council will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in the following areas:
 - a. the costs of graffiti removal to the Council.
 - b. the cost and effectiveness value of Council-assisted funding programmes to community groups to deal with graffiti (i.e. either by direct funding granted by Council, its Committees and Community Boards or via independent funding applications to other providers where these have been supported by Council).
 - c. a review of community involvement in the initiatives outlined in this policy.