



## **Blue Mountains Graffiti Summit**

September 12, 2009

Blaxland Community Centre

### **Session 1**

#### **Alan Cattermole, Manager, Assets & Contract Management BMCC**

See attachment (homepage library) BMCC presentation – Overview of Graffiti Management

#### **Michelle Black, Independent Consultant**

See attachment (homepage library) Research Presentation – Graffiti Management Strategies

#### **Karyn Paluzzano, Member for Penrith**

Blue Mountains City Council need to develop a Crime Prevention Plan in order to apply for funds through the Attorney-General's Department for graffiti reduction initiatives. See "Investing In a Better Future" document (homepage library).

#### **Tony McWhirter, Police Local Area Commander**

Police don't just enforce, they educate. The Youth Liaison Officer works with schools and youth services. Police need people to report, as they rely on the community to tell them what's happening. The Police database is supplemented by Council. It's not children who form the bulk of apprehensions. There is a great difference between art and malicious damage; as graffiti is highly visible people consider it a big issue.

#### **Tom Colless, Community Volunteer - Graffiti Removal**

Eradicate yes, but educate as well. Street art/ murals are not graffiti, and usually remain untouched; a good preventative approach. Young people have worked with the voluntary clean-up team on Community Service Orders (CSO); this has been effective. Young people on CSO's are covered by Juvenile Justice's insurance. \$10, 000 trailer financed by NSW Government. OH&S and insurances (public liability and personal injury) very important – paid for in previous years by Katoomba Chamber of Commerce, this year by Blue Mountains City Council. Volunteer teams concentrate on CBD.

### **Questions Following Session 1**

**Q. [Helen, Lower Mountains Resident]** Have parents of children under 18 (caught for graffiti crimes) been prosecuted for their children's crimes?

**A.** No

**[Tony McWhirter, LAC]** when an under 18 year old is arrested, 9 out of 10 times when asked if they know where their child has been the parent will say "they're in bed". It is a very difficult proposal to hold parents responsible.

**[Sharon, business owner]** Possibly the incidence of graffiti in Blaxland is showing up as high because we have an exceptional reporting system. (Blaxland volunteers distribute cards to people experiencing graffiti incidents to report to Police, get an event number and photos)

**Q.[Councillor Howard McCallum to Police]** Is there data on home addresses of people who graffiti in the Mountains(are they local young people)?

**A. [Tony McWhirter, LAC]** It's equally distributed; there are a lot from Winmalee, Glenbrook, East Blaxland and Springwood; a lot are transient, difficult to track; there is high mobility with train travelers. Police have a good database of local offenders.

**Q. [Chris, local resident to Police]** if most offenders are over 18 years, why don't we lock them up, why just caution them?

**A. [Tony McWhirter, LAC]** if an offender is under 18 years, they are entitled to a Caution; (under the Young Offenders Act) policy in the Blue Mountains LAC is 1st offence: Caution, 2<sup>nd</sup> offence: Conference (Youth Justice Conference – victim/offender), 3<sup>rd</sup> offence: Court. Offenders over 18 years are served with an infringement notice and go to Court (no Police discretion is used for over 18's)

**Q. [Greg, Hazelbrook Progress Association]** Council is funding volunteer trials in Winmalee and Blaxland. I am concerned about what progress is being made toward services for Springwood and Hazelbrook – why have another trial, (isn't the model already established)?

**A. [Alan Cattermole, BMCC]** Each case is individual, involving different people, and insurance cover; Council has limited resources to contribute at any given time.

**[Patricia Lane-Gonzalez, BMCC]** The trial refers to the ability of each community to sustain the momentum required to operate a volunteer removal program. If a community can maintain the enthusiasm, Council is happy to get behind it.

**Q. [Cecily to Michelle Black]** What was happening at the high points in the graphs (referring to incidents of graffiti/malicious damage)?

**A. [Michelle Black]** There would have been an increased incidence of reporting at these periods; the population in the Blue Mountains is relatively small and this can inflate the figures. Number 1 in the state shouldn't imply that there is more graffiti; it means that there is a higher incidence of reporting per (head of) population.

**Q. [Laurie, Save Our Springwood Group]** Springwood is second to Katoomba in amount of graffiti, why aren't they included in the (volunteer removal team) trial? Why is Winmalee considered more important?

**A. [Alan Cattermole BMCC]** In terms of the financial contribution from Council, there are only resources to target two areas.

**[Councillor Alison McLaren]** The original Notice of Motion was based on the number of complaints received – there were none from Springwood, and many from Winmalee.

**[Councillor Mark Greenhill]** Following from today, when developing the Graffiti Management Plan, we will look at including other areas.

**Q. [Michael, local resident to Police]** Are you getting the resources you need to do your job?

**A. [Tony McWhirter, LAC]** In order to get more resources, I have to show that I'm using the ones I have properly; there is no Local Area Commander who won't say they don't need more resources; we cover an area of 1800 square kms, with 26 towns, but the population is fairly small and contained in that area. At the moment we have enough to respond to the calls for assistance that we receive; we can always do with more.

**Q. [Tony, local business owner to the Mayor]** It appears that this all boils down to money – how much would a levy generate at \$20 per quarter?

**A. [Mayor, Adam Searle]** Would residents rather pay a levy to clean up graffiti, maintain infrastructure or look after the environment? Council is already spending \$300 000 of general revenue on graffiti management; a levy is one possibility; if that's what the community want us to do.

**Q. [Damian Cooper, Mountains Youth Services Team, to Council]** Given that prevention is better than a cure, with the great work done by Tom (Colless), has there been a decrease in costs? We could draw on a range of preventative options if we can demonstrate a reduction in the rate of graffiti.

**A. [Alan Cattermole]** Tom's team removes graffiti from non Council owned assets, so in terms of costs to Council, there has been no reduction, the Council team is not working less.

**Q. [Suzie Van Opdorp, Blue Mountains Women's Health Centre]** We need to look at ways of working with young people to prevent this problem; why is it such a problem in the Blue Mountains?

**A. [Eric Sidoti, MC]** This is a good lead in to our next session.

## Session 2

### **Jarrold Wheatley and Nick Margerison, Mountains Youth Services Team (MYST) Blue Mountains Street Art Collaborative (BMSAC)**

BMSAC's aim is to provide local young aerosol artists with opportunities to do street art legally.

BMSAC believes in the legitimacy of street art because:

1. it validates the place of young people in our community;
2. it provides a positive outlet for street artists;
3. it builds positive relationships between the broader community and young people.

Most of the artists working with BMSAC are aged 17-23 years and are keen for legal opportunities. BMSAC provides the opportunity for a facilitated process between young people involved with subcultures and the wider community through commissioned murals. Policies and frameworks for working provide legitimacy to the process; MYST are able to provide public liability insurance. There are great benefits for all of us when we have validated young people developing a positive relationship with the rest of the community.

## **Questions Following Session 2**

**Q. [Nerida to Council]:** Does Council apply anti-graffiti paint to its structures?

**A.** Yes, from time to time. It's expensive. Bus shelters are generally painted. Tom [volunteer clean up team] uses anti graffiti paint. The problem is that when graffiti is removed, the paint is removed with it. It costs about \$100 for five litres.

**Q. [Councillor Howard McCallum to Mountains Youth Services Team]:** What motivates people to tag illegal graffiti?

**A. [Jarrod Wheatley]** Alienation and ownership when people are early in the culture. If they stay long enough in the graffiti culture, they tend to be either channeled into legitimate art or they fall off the culture. The reasons are varied. Adrenalin, anger at society, validation within a cultural group are all factors.

**Q.** Is mural art less likely to be attacked?

**A.** Yes. Murals are effective in dealing with graffiti.

**[Councillor Chris van der Kley]:** Bus shelters and railway tunnels – kids take pride and it's their turf. There should be areas where they are allowed [to graffiti]. We need education, removal of illegal graffiti and penalties. We need a combination of everything. As a retailer I am annoyed with illegal graffiti on property that's destroyed. It can't just be replaced every time.

**[Steve, local resident]:** The gym in Hope St (Blaxland) is covered in graffiti. It's an invitation that it's a bad area. It looks like a disaster zone. It has an impact on property prices. There is tagging and vandalizing late at night on the street. It's midnight trouble. We may need law reform to address it.

**[Tony McWhirter, LAC]** Shops need to employ Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), appropriate lighting etc.

**Q.** Is there a correlation between tagging and noise?

**A.** Not really.

**[Peter, Mt Riverview PS]:** A Year 1 girl felt sad about Mt Riverview because of graffiti. Children at school are upset about it.

**[Councillor Mark Greenhill]:** Hope to look across the Mountains. Tom's activity (volunteer clean up team) could be resourced across the Mountains as part of the overall (graffiti management) strategy. The diversity in the audience is pleasing.

**[Patricia LaneGonzalez]:** Council's Crime Prevention Plan was adopted in 2002. We will renew the plan in conjunction with the Community Safety Committee, and aim to get sign off from the Attorney-General's Department. We will also aim to seek funds from the Attorney General's Department once the review of the current Crime Prevention Plan is complete in mid 2010.

**[John, local resident]:** We have been cleaning Blaxland and Glenbrook since 2005, got a negative response from the Springwood Chamber of Commerce. Chambers pay for paints. Does same route every day, as there is less and less graffiti, moves out from centre of town; removes from railway and BMCC property as well, cleans whole area; gets private property owners to call Police, report and get an incident number – then will clean; All signage should have protective coating; Mitre 10 leaflet no. 64 – how to combat graffiti

**[Leah Weber, Youth Action Policy Association]** comment on 'catching the little buggers' – it is important to look at the cost correlation between incarceration and preventative measures

**[Carmel McCallum]** Good to incorporate kids in project management, creating tourist track of murals celebrating the bicentenary of the crossing of the Blue Mountains – offer Certificate 2 or 3 in Project Management.

**Summary, Eric Sidoti, MC**

Strong coalescence of opinion:

- there is no single response that will solve the problem;
- There is a distinction between street art and illegal tagging;
- 4 E's;
- Cost for infringement;
- Strong ideas coming through for prevention;
- 72% of offenders are young adults 18-25yrs;
- Mural work (BMSAC) was the only strategy mentioned that responded to this age group;
- Children offending on the decrease may be due to education strategies;
- Number of issues around funds - question of a levy, what are the cost benefits of prevention;
- Youth Council made a strong case for young people to be fundamentally involved, not peripheral;
- Protective coatings on signage important;
- A community response is needed;
- Graffiti will not be eradicated, but can be minimized or diverted.

**Mayor, closing remarks**

Graffiti crime is opportunistic – it is unrealistic to expect Police to apprehend people in the act;

- The community need to provide information to the Police;
- Young people need useful diversion;
- Teenagers are not the problem, it's 18 – 24 year olds who are the major offenders.