

## GRIP guidelines toward a successful Graffiti abatement program.

### Knowledge

#### Audit, audit, audit!

The first and foremost component is awareness. For both the city and LEA, precise knowledge of your issues is vital. By performing a self audit or using a service this will create a foundation of knowledge that will supply LEA's with all basic and extended criminal information on your prime offenders and their underlings. Most importantly, in the initial stages an audit will give the city every piece of knowledge to form the base and reference to make vital program decisions, tactics re removal policy, and other vital decision making processes.

Without a self audit using GRIP, a city will be simply guessing and making uninformed decisions based on what they think the situation is.

E.g

City 1 thought that 500 graffiti removal kits would be a great pro active hands off idea to provide to their local residents and shopkeepers to collect and use at will. Costing \$10,000.

After an audit they soon realized that 97% of the graffiti in the city was on bare masonry or bare timber fences or other such substrates meaning the graffiti kits were not use able by the average member of public or retailer and were a waste of funds.

City 1 before GRIP, thought they had approximately, \$70,000 of graffiti damage. Reality showed they only had \$38,000 in damage.

The city decided to do a one off clean up at their expense and were able to direct the contractors to precise locations, exact dollar amounts per removal so there was no bogus claims for payment or additional measurements possible.

City 1, recorded all power, mail, Telephone and other stakeholder graffiti damage and even provided GPS locations, asset ref numbers which allowed the city to direct them to clean up all their own property with diligence.

It was realized that the Shire only had approximately 25 core offenders allowing the Police to focus on those particular offenders and their underlings.

Hot spots were identified and Tripwire cameras deployed in the worst known hotspots realizing in 2 months 31 interactions with offenders.

After the initial one off clean up, GRIP used ongoing for any new events for tracking and case building.

During the audit process it was realized that 50% of the cities considered Rampant graffiti issues were actually over 12 months old. The reality was the city only had a mild ongoing graffiti problem and not the devastation that was originally thought.

The city implemented many components including media campaigns, diversion programs, citizen reporting models and other successful aspects.

A second audit 12 months later using GRIP, gave the city a complete understanding and comparison from the previous years result to appreciate that they had succeeded in reducing events overall by 55% and in some townships by up to 87%.

## Engage, interrupt, arrest and be aware

We see in the course of our work cities who complain year after year about the never ending cyclic damage that is unrelenting and simply a rolled over budget amount with little or no direction or pro active measures in place.

Many spend thousands, hold graffiti summits and discuss how best to manage the problem, pay less for paint, use volunteers or simply better manage the damage. Cleaning it off quickly is seen as one of the most common catch cries of a winning program. Realistically it does help but this is in itself a form of band aid reactive measures that do little to actually deal with the problem, the offenders.

We have seen a rail client who spends \$1.2 million dollar a year continuously painting out their graffiti on the rail corridors which is maddening. All this does is provide a clean canvas for the offenders with little or zero attempt to actually reduce the damage, arrest or deal with the offenders. We have seen the same offenders 3 years running with little or no resistance and with new offenders joining with them continuing the evolution of new offenders.

Yes ,we will mention Tripwire cameras. Referring to the model on the website. You only need to apprehend a few solo or crew members using technology or services that are available affordably and instantly and within weeks reduce your offences we would suggest by minimum 20% immediately.

You cant rely on random Police patrols as graffiti is such a random, ad hoc crime. Using GRIP, knowing all your favored hot spots its simply a matter of preliminary gathering of evidence, drop a couple of Tripwire cameras in, and bang within days you have potentially your cities worst habitual serial offenders. Makes sense.

Think of it this way. Your top 10 offenders will have their favourite walls or locations they always tag or do their murals. Doing a city audit or at minimum gather new evidence upon removals in to GRIP BEFORE you deploy your Tripwires.

Lets say your top 10 are worth say \$80,000 per annum in damage every year not counting those new offenders they recruit.

By locating their favoured sites, deploying the rapid apprehension technology will allow your LEA to apprehend and shut down these offenders in weeks. Being habitual, you know they're coming back so gather your intelligence and offences and upon arrest you could potentially net a further 5 offenders by association but importantly you've halted theyre damage right there and then. Added to this is the potential for restitution. If your city is pro active and has a good Attorney, follow this path and go for it. It may cost half or more in city attorney fees but the far reaching effects of the offenders being made to pay or their parents send a shock wave through the vandal community that the city means business.

Depending on your cities situation as with Cardinia Shire and several others the use of Tripwire allowed the cities Police to be on site in minutes. They had dozens of instant, reactive interactions with suspects. Although these suspects weren't all offending, the simple increased directed alerts to Police made the suspects simply move on and no longer frequent these hot spots with the likely issue of criminal damage being possible.

CCTV, dummy cameras or cameras that shout a message aren't reactive and once discovered are typically either targeted or avoided with little or no concern to the vandals.

Tripwire or similar technologies and the services we deploy can shut your offenders down in weeks not years. Graffiti unlike in the 70's and 80's is no longer a fad that comes and goes. Its an ongoing battle that needs resistance and diligent consideration to arrest the behavior.

## **Educate** – halting the environmental carnage at the source.

Graffiti and vandalism to a 13-18 year old offender is a kick, a thrill, a buzz and gives them empowerment either as an individual or couple of friends or an organized tagging or mural crew.

The buzz and power these individuals feel at 2.00am as they mark their turf, get their tag up or create a mural under the cover of darkness drives them, motivates them and makes them feel absolutely bigger than life and untouchable.

They care little for the victims they affect, the damage they cause or the community that gradually erodes to the locals and visitors to your city.

Anti graffiti campaigns can be designed in many ways and SHOULD NOT be copied simply off another cities as every demographic is different and each city has singular issues that aren't the same in another. The age of the offenders, whether they are transients just passing through, gang related, of school age will all play a part in the development and tailoring in your education but more importantly implementation of any education component.

It is pointless creating a school age level campaign for your city if your offenders are older or transients and never going to realize or be touched by the education component.

Diversion programs, education and mediation must be hard hitting, directive and shocking to make an effect.

Like the DUI, smoking and other education campaigns, it has taken 20 years for those to gradually find their mark in society starting as a soft soap campaign to a hard hitting, in your face abrupt and engaging working component that it is believed makes an impression on youth and offenders.

We have witnessed city pantomimes wasting city funds targeting the wrong age group tickling the topic.

We have witnessed free walls and designated graffiti friendly zones with disastrous results with the city taking the approach of "give them a spot and they get their thrills there and wont touch anywhere else" Bahaha!

We can provide your city with a hard hitting, specific education awakening project that is tailored to the city, its landmarks, its people and its specific set of vandals to engage, shock and make aware the vandals and their peers as to whats going to happen when they are caught. We don't mince words, we don't tolerate wanton acts of vandalism and we assist those cities who are sick of the environmental carnage.

The thought processes of a serial vandal is limited to their own needs wants and likes. Our campaign is delivered in a way to interrupt these vandals thinking and take the blinkers off and make them realize without question the impact, the determined action when caught the city can and will put upon them and potentially their family WHEN caught.

You have to consider that education may cost your city 5-10% of the cleaning budget but if that education campaign stops even 3 current vandals and engages those who are potential future offenders, then the campaign cost is nothing to what the city will save in future damage. It is amazing in this age of instant communication be it graffiti vandal forums, sms and other means , how quickly the word spreads on solid, forthright city anti graffiti efforts can impact and have offenders take notice.

When interviewing past offenders and through our day to day work, the common thread from all is they simply don't realize firstly the impact of what they are doing nor the ramifications and potential hardship they could be causing themselves and or their families when caught. As said, GRIP can create and tailor a model for your city so its identifiable, recognized and listened to without question.

Simply it takes a city to make the decision to stop the damage in its tracks and make those offending or likely to offend to sit up and take notice.

## APATHY – Any graffiti strategies worst enemy

As mentioned we have audited dozens of cities, reviewed their strategies and seen the best and worst programs used, in use, and being designed for future use.

Graffiti should be treated like environmental carnage. Many cities look to graffiti as “just one of those things”. Its often discounted as “not our problem if its not on our property”. The truth of the matter is that the victims affected pay rates or local taxes, choose to live in your city and bring up their children there.

Leaving graffiti damage to fester and build up brings down a cities personality, vibrancy and considerations to outsiders passing through.

We travel through cities initially prior to their audit and review and get a “feel” for the city. A cities graffiti damage is often seen as a measure of how it cares for its community, community pride, lawlessness in the city and the potential for other crime types such as theft from vehicles, other vandalism, drug use as these crimes are often linked in the minds of the public.

It shocks us constantly to see cities who have upper middle class residents and nice housing completely scarred and pulled down due to an uncaring city policy that does little toward abatement.

Cities MUST take ownership of the situation and have direction.

The victims who are often the public are victims of the lawless offenders in your city. They have no power over the situation so look to those they pay rates and taxes too to get it under control, remove it, offer assistance and ultimately catch the offenders.

We implore cities affected by graffiti to try to implement some core components to be close to totally successful. Some points may seem impossible due to cost or the cities stance but should be considered to bring about serious forthright change and a new direction that halts future damage or at minimum reduces it to a manageable level.

Holistic removal campaigns win hands down in bringing about a completely clean slate from the outset but are commonly discounted as impossible to implement due to cost or the inability for a city to afford or take ownership of the cities problem in a total way. A city who only cares for its own property without exception will never have a clean city.

Some cities who choose not to remove from anyone elses property but the cities may be equally effective by making their utilities companies, telco, mail and so on responsible and attentive in keeping their own assets clean and graffiti free which helps but still has a long way to be seen as graffiti free.

The broken windows theory often referred to talks about buildings with smashed windows insighting and encouraging further vandalism so if looking at a cities partial removal program is akin to fixing only several windows and leaving the rest broken.

Applying a city only cleaning regime, does little to work on the theory of the “rapid removal helps reduce the buzz or glory” to the offender. The offenders may choose to hit every other store and the city library but with a single minded policy ,the truth is that there will be a patchwork removal campaign in place and those stakeholders affected be it light poles, the library, shops and houses and mailboxes will remain unclean and the buzz to the offender stays in place.

Much is to be said for a city who engages their other stakeholders and has an agreement for compensation if the city cleans their assets or for rapid removal agreements by the other stakeholders.

Put simply, the truly successful city will take on the role of graffiti removal Sheriff itself, taking on all stakeholders graffiti without consideration. Funding this model through stakeholder contributions or back charging (Telco, commercial, mail, power, road) is an option, along with restitution and rate levy increases to support funding.

Unfortunately, anything less than a holistic, reactive, removal campaign will always see graffiti hanging on be it on the post box, the residents house, the store front or other slow to respond victims.

# CITY CHECKLIST

## AUDIT & Database creation–

Do we know how much graffiti we have, where it is, property types affected? (Considerations for holistic or increased assistance to other stakeholders removals. (Public, retail)

Do we know how old it is? (Relevant to whether a large percentage is historical build up of old graffiti)

Do we realize the age group of the offenders –(Relevant to education campaign design and direction)

Do we know where it is or where our hot spots are? (Relevant to removals and focus for Tripwire arrests)

Do we know what its on? Brick, timber, painted surfaces? (Will potentially affect removal considerations/cost)

Do we know if our offenders are solo offenders or offend with others? (Critical for LEA's. By knowing this and diligently making note on each offence allows your law enforcement agency , upon an arrest to quickly link offenders, crews and gangs for additional compounding arrests)

Do we know how our abatement team or contractor are performing? Are we being overcharged? By using GRIP it has identified incorrect measures and overcharging for removal works. GRIP allows you to monitor time to remove and their performance also.

Building data on existing graffiti will allow your city to create a huge array of data on offenders, other damage, even public safety issues. With this intelligence will allow neighboring cities to request searches on known cross boundary offenders also.

Can our LEA track offender movements, run at will searches and monitor gang activity? Can the LEA add intelligence to records and create offender profiles and case build?

## POST AUDIT – CLEAR, EDUCATED POLICY DESIGNS, EDUCATION COMPONENTS

Any city serious about not only painting out their graffiti but stopping the never ending cycle of graffiti damage need an armory of solid components that work in synergy to bring about a solid campaign that's not only effective but tailored and refined so it halts the mindset of the vandals.

Once you have your audit and have a full database you are already half way to implementing smart strategies from informative current information and no longer guess work. Your LEA has a full stable of existing criminal damage and a full list of known associates to each offender and crew/gang.

From the audit your may have chosen to focus on only graffiti or all other issues to the city be it vandalism, sanitation, evidence of drug use/truancy or vagrancy. The audit on post audit recording of information allows you at any time to know exactly where you city stands but most importantly allows your LEA to make exacting arrests for all damage pushing toward restitution if you wish.

**GRIP / Tripwire are here to help and assist.**

**For independent impartial assistance feel free in contacting us and gaining knowledge on city strategies that work and those that have failed.**