

FAQs: Yarra City Council Draft Graffiti Management Framework

General

Q: Why has the policy been revised?

A: The policy proved a risk for Council in that some practice is inconsistent with policy, most notably our approach towards removing graffiti from private property.

Current policy does not promote the removal of graffiti from private property by Council, but rather promotes the idea of property owners to undertaking this task themselves.

However, in practice Council removes graffiti from private property when requested. This leaves open the problem of managing increasing resident expectations (and escalating costs) for removal.

Q: So you don't have a policy then?

A: We do, but we've gone above and beyond the call of duty in responding to our residents and traders' needs.

Q: How do other Councils tackle the issue?

A: There is no definitive best practice approach towards graffiti management, with success meaning different things to different Councils.

'Success' of a graffiti management approach depends on a Council's position towards graffiti (zero-tolerance or a more tolerant approach), and what they hope to achieve through the implementation of their strategy (for example a total reduction in graffiti incidents or more opportunities for public art).

Q: How much money do you expect to save under the new policy?

A: Council is looking to contain costs, rather than save money. The policy that includes working with local business and establishing partnership initiatives to remove graffiti whilst supporting street art installations, which is an approach based on getting full value from the allocated budget.

Q: What's the difference between graffiti and street art?

A: Graffiti can be an inscription, figure or mark written, painted, drawn or otherwise displayed on any surface. Tagging, a common practice of graffiti, is a signature often illegally placed on public and private property.

Street Art is a public visual art form that has grown out of the graffiti movement.

Traditionally both art-forms have been unsanctioned and illegal however contemporary understandings have accepted street art for its broader aesthetic appeal over graffiti. The cultural nature of graffiti maintains an illegal context to its practice; however works can be both sanctioned and unsanctioned.

Q: What kind of graffiti/street art does the council want to encourage, and discourage in Yarra?

A: Council is supportive of graffiti/street art where the property owner has provided consent for it. Council will not tolerate offensive graffiti and isn't supportive of unsanctioned graffiti/street art.

Council has and will continue to support local based artists as well as acknowledging the fact that street art is international. The policy addresses the importance and value of street art for local economy in terms of tourism, with Yarra's street art being recognised as a key tourist attraction.

Q: Which internal stakeholders have been consulted with?

A: There have been four meetings with internal stakeholders – Community & Corporate Planning, Engineering Operations, Family, Youth & Children's Services, and Arts, Culture & Venues. In addition to this there have been numerous meetings with in Community & Corporate Planning.

Q: Which external stakeholders have been consulted with?

A: Melbourne, Knox, Port Phillip, Frankston, Darebin, Casey, Hume and Stonnington City Councils were also consulted in relation to the development of the Capire report – Graffiti Management Review and Best Practise.

Q: Will the new strategy require any additional resources?

A: All year 1 actions, and indeed, the majority of actions within the proposed strategy will be delivered within existing budgets.

Q: What about communicating with CALD communities?

A: Officers liaised with Council's Multicultural Planners about the best way to engage with CALD communities. They will continue to contribute in an advisory capacity throughout the length of the consultation.

In the first instance, the consultation will be publicised through local multicultural services. Materials will contain multilingual access information, and translated materials and interpreters for CALD community members attending consultations will be available upon request.

Q: What are the key differences in the revised policy?

- Definition of graffiti, street art & legal public art forms (sanctioned and unsanctioned)
- Inclusion of an item around, and deprioritising of, removal from private property
- Boundaries around what constitutes minor treatments, major treatments and curated public art
- Greater emphasis on celebrating Yarra's public art, and potentially promoting it

Removal

Q: How is removal prioritised?

A: Council will prioritise removal of offensive graffiti (defamatory or degrading remarks or graphics about race, religion, sex or personal privacy) from Council property.

With regard to private property, Council will prioritise support to private property owners through community education and urban design advice that avoid and reduce incidents of graffiti. Council will also continue to provide paint vouchers and graffiti removal kits to local residents.

However, Council will work with the community to remove graffiti from private premises where it has a significant impact on public amenity (for example, where it is deemed offensive), and/or is a shopping centre, a gateway or an area of high prominence.

Q: How will prioritising removal from private property contain the budget for removal?

A: The tiered approach to removal will ensure that residents and traders are presented with options other than removal by Council. Officers will report back to Council after the implementation of the first year of the strategy regarding the amount of graffiti removed from private property, and the costs associated with this.

Q: What does this mean for property owners who aren't in a priority zone?

A: Council will prioritise support to private property owners through community education and urban design advice that avoid and reduce incidents of graffiti. Council will also continue to provide paint vouchers and graffiti removal kits to local residents. Council conducted an extremely successful trial with Department of Justice in 2012 where we worked collaboratively with local residents to remove graffiti. The aim is to continue with this community based approach.

Q: Is escalating cost the main reason for the change regarding removal from private property?

A: No. The policy proved a risk for Council in that some practice is inconsistent with policy, most notably our approach towards removing graffiti from private property.

Current policy does not promote the removal of graffiti from private property by Council, but rather promotes the idea of property owners to undertaking this task themselves. However, in practice Council removes graffiti from private property when requested

Q: What about all the vacant properties that have been heavily graffitied?

A: Council could look at finding short and medium term uses for buildings that are currently vacant, disused, or awaiting redevelopment, as has been done in Newcastle's CBD.

Renew Newcastle aims to find artists, cultural projects and community groups to use and maintain these buildings until they become commercially viable or are redeveloped.

Enforcement

Q: What about enforcement?

A: Victoria Police are responsible for enforcing the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007; Council places a greater emphasis around improved amenity and increased perceptions of safety.

Q: What about diversion?

A: Council is referred people from the Criminal Justice Diversion Program, however they're considered on a case by case basis. An example of a diversionary strategy might be using alternative treatments such as graffiti walls and murals.

Place management

Q: How will we engage the community in understanding and responding to graffiti?

A: Place management involves the participation of stakeholders in the development of specific responses to address local issues.

In year 2 of the strategy, Council – in consultation with the community – will develop place management strategies for graffiti hotspots and places with emerging graffiti issues.

Q: What's the difference between a treatment and curated public art?

A: Commissioned public art in Yarra has typically been delivered by Council in a number of ways, either as graffiti management treatments, or as curated street art.

Both forms require consent from the property owner. Even when this permission exists, planning approval is required for graffiti on property where there is a heritage overlay.

Treatments

The primary purpose of a treatment is graffiti management; a mural or other type of graffiti is used to improve the appearance of outdoor walls and spaces covered in tagging and as a result, reduce the chance of future incidents occurring. Treatments can be minor or major, and involve direct commissioning of local street artists as quick, short turn around projects. Treatments are temporary and are not defended by Council.

A minor treatment:

- is small scale (for example, on a signal box) or low profile (for example, in a laneway)
- is coordinated by Engineering Operations.

A major treatment:

- is large scale
- is coordinated by Engineering Operations, in consultation with Arts, Culture & Venues
- must be approved by the Director, Infrastructure.

Treatments are not curated, nor do they form a part of Council's Public Art Collection. However, photographic evidence must be recorded through Council's prospective treatment register, noting the date, location, artist and cost.

Curated Street Art

When street art is curated, Council provides parameters for the artists involved with a focus on work that is site-specific and/or within particular themes or aesthetic approaches. Another model that has been successfully adopted involves outsourcing the work to an external work to bring a level of expertise, resources and capacity unique to the partner and different to what Council can deliver.

Curated street art:

- requires consultation as works are generally large scale and high profile
- can be temporary or permanent
- is defended by Council
- is coordinated by Arts, Culture & Venues.

Q: The policy says the council will identify and promote places designated for public art. Where would these be for example?

A: This will be decided upon in consultation with the community and will be addressed in the Year 1 Implementation Plan. The organic nature of the street art scene will also need to be considered as it is not a matter of Council becoming curatorial, but offering legal spaces and large scale projects.

