



Writing on the wall for vandals

COLIN KERR

NOTHING unifies politicians more than a war against crime.

And when vandals scrawl their graffiti on public amenities and deface private property, they stir up local councillors.

Persistent graffiti around Epping has brought together the three councillors representing the Lachlan Macquarie Ward on Parramatta City Council in a united attack on their handiwork.

When independent councillor Lorraine Wearne, who lives in Epping, suggested taking on the vandals, she won instant enthusiastic support from Labor councillor Pierre Esber and Liberal councillor Andrew Wilson.

Together they launched a campaign to encourage residents to "dob in" a graffiti vandal and receive a \$1000 reward if their information leads to a conviction.

The campaign is modelled on the highly successful project that has practically rid Dubbo of graffiti.

Councillors Wearne, Esber and Wilson appealed to the community get behind the initiative.

They said vandalism had become a major problem for private property owners and council as its community property such as playgrounds and sports facilities were easy targets.

Last year Parramatta City

Council spent about \$240,000 cleaning up graffiti.

"We are all agreed that a reward of \$1000 for a successful court conviction may create a greater willingness in the community to get involved," the councillors said.

"All they have to do is to report any acts of graffiti to either the police or council's graffiti hotline."

Eastwood Police, whose command area covers most of the councillors ward, support the campaign, Insp Martin Fileman said.

"We want to encourage people to report call the hotline or Crimestoppers," he said as the councillors launched the project.

"And we want to remind people that callers can remain anonymous."

Teams from the Epping Rotary Club have been cleaning off graffiti in Epping for the past year

and local chambers of commerce are active in anti-graffiti campaigns.

Parramatta City Council is offering free graffiti cleaning kits to residents upon request.

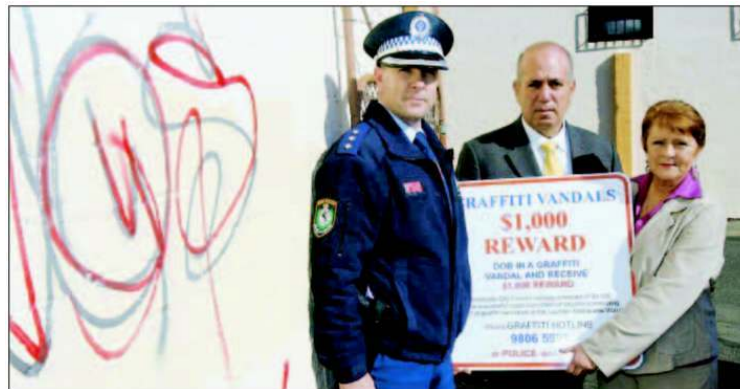
"Our initiative has been tried in other council areas and Dubbo Council has reduced its costs of removal and repair from more than \$200,000 to just \$30,000 in two years," Cr Wearne said.

"Council amenity blocks in places such as George Kendall Reserve are targeted on a regular basis and this must stop," Cr Esber said.

Cr Wilson suggested "local schools and organisations need to get behind our initiative and we will be contacting them seeking support".

The councillors said they were very happy to have the local police on board.

The council's Graffiti Hotline is 9806 5995 and Crimestoppers is 1800 333 000.



Getting the anti-graffiti campaign under way in Epping last week were (left) Insp Martin Fileman of Eastwood Police Local Area Command and Parramatta councillors for Lachlan Macquarie Ward, Pierre Esber and Lorraine Wearne in Hunts Lane, Epping.

Picture:
DAVE SWIFT
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