

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2012

### GRAFFITI CONTROL (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (17:54):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise, too, to support the Graffiti Control (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill, and I also want to add commentary from my electorate, the electorate of Hammond. Being a grain-growing area we certainly see all the railcars that come through, whether they are bulk grain cars (which are quite obvious targets for graffiti) or other types of railcars, and graffiti attacks on trains seem to be something that has gone on for decades. We also see graffiti on buildings and fences. I know that the fences of electorate offices can be a bit of a target but it soon gets cleaned up. We have a good Neighbourhood Watch group especially in Murray Bridge. Bob Wheare has been a great anti-graffiti campaigner for many, many years, making sure that it gets cleaned up so that these hooligans cannot have their tags up for very long at all.

It is great to see the local work of volunteers—whether they be organised through Neighbourhood Watch or just individuals in the community—who all do their bit to stem the flow of graffiti in communities. I just want to relate an email that came from a group, Graffiti Hurts-Australia. It came to my office several years ago but it is still quite apt in regard to this bill today because, obviously, graffiti still goes on:

Graffiti, a gateway crime that affects more fabrics of our society than most people would realise.

It is an issue that is often not seen as important yet affects businesses, local economies, the health of many in our community, the cost borne on local community groups and service providers and helps increase insurance premiums, public transport safety, public service utilities , and we could go on.

In fact, although the real amount of money spent by communities, private property owners, small business, public agencies and governments each year to repair, replace and clean up property defaced by graffiti vandalism has yet to be definitively documented in Australia, we do know one thing, the costs are rising. Through [this organisation] Graffiti Hurts-Australia's research—

and this is from 2008—

of all Local Governments across Australia, it costs them over \$250 million annually on graffiti vandalism removal, which equates to just under \$12 per Australian each year being spent solely on graffiti vandalism.

While seemingly a small issue or as some would believe a way for youth to express themselves, it is in fact a gateway crime that can, and has reduced the sense of community across Australia.

Graffiti Hurts-Australia believes, and the reason for our existence, is to highlight that graffiti has never been a one government department issue, in fact it has never been solely a government issue at all. It is a whole of community issue.

The economic impact on local businesses can be great as customers decide to shop in other neighbourhoods where they feel and think are safer due to less graffiti vandalism other anti-social behaviour.

Graffiti vandalism can also lead to the potential loss of much needed funds for community organisations, youth groups and school programs as they spend money that could be used for such community programs and services or even employing more people.

Graffiti vandalism in public areas sends a message to the community that the places where they live, work and the public transport they use are no longer controlled by the agencies responsible for their management but are controlled by those undertaking antisocial behaviour.

This perception of increased personal risk can also be carried over into neighbourhoods. Left alone, graffiti vandalism is one in a sequence of events in the decline of pride within a neighbourhood known as the 'broken window' syndrome.

According to sociologist George Kelling, 'If a window in a building is broken and left unrepaired, all of the rest of the windows will soon be broken. One unrepaired window is a signal that no-one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing.'

New South Wales—

and these are New South Wales' figures I will quote here—

police figures show a steady increase in the number of recorded graffiti incidents between 2004 and 2005 by type of premises as follows:

Business/Commercial +73.8%

Education +41 %

Industrial +91 %

Religious +74 %

Residential +49.2%

Transport +26%

Vehicle +520%

The above figures show that there is not one aspect in our community that is not affected by graffiti vandalism. Madam Speaker, I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.