

5. PROACTIVE GRAFFITI STRATEGY – LEGAL ART PROGRAMME

Officer responsible Community Relations Manager	Author Robyn Moore, DDI 941-6406
---	--

The purpose of this report is to update the Community and Leisure Committee on the work of the proactive graffiti strategy (Legal Art Programme), inform the Committee of organisational and operational issues with the programme, and to ask the Committee whether or not they want the programme to continue.

BACKGROUND

The Legal Art Programme works directly with taggers who have been referred by police, parents, schools, or youth workers.

The young people go through an assessment procedure to ascertain immediate life needs and if necessary referrals are made to agencies who can help with such things as accommodation and health issues. When these immediate needs are in hand, the young person may enter the Legal Art Programme. Here they are tutored in aerosol art and go through a carefully formulated series of steps which see them move from buffing (or cleaning) areas prior to a Legal Art project, acting as assistants to experienced artists on small projects, completing a small project such as an Orion Kiosk under the guidance of a more experienced artist, assisting on large projects and ultimately reaching a level where they become lead artists and mentors to new recruits. The final stage sees young people in a position to accept and organise their own business projects. Throughout the process a young person can immediately be dismissed from the programme if they have broken their agreement not to tag.

It has been interesting to note that those who have developed their artistic ability through the Legal Art Programme to the point where they are being offered paid work painting murals still want to work with the programme on a voluntary basis in their spare time.

So far the programme has been operating for two and a half years. It has been breaking new ground and as such there has been a steep learning curve for those involved. Last year the programme won the Creative New Zealand Award for Community Involvement which was a credit to the Legal Art Co-ordinator and the Council. Given the learning that has occurred over the last two and a half years we are now at a point where we believe we can outline exactly what is required for this programme to be able to operate safely, efficiently and with positive outcomes for the young people referred to the programme and for the city generally (in terms of reducing the level of graffiti vandalism).

IS THE LEGAL ART PROGRAMME REDUCING GRAFFITI VANDALISM?

As the Legal Art Programme was introduced for this purpose, this is an important question but one which cannot be answered with any degree of certainty. It is easy to make the assumption that because the costs of painting out graffiti vandalism have been higher than expected, the Legal Art Programme is ineffective in meeting its primary objective. However, one must consider some of the variables that make this conclusion too simplistic, the most obvious of which is the increased public awareness of both the Council's graffiti hotline and the fact that the Council is prepared to assist property owners by painting out tags. According to City Care, at the start of 2002, 850 sites per month were being cleaned up and that has dropped to 500 per month, so even though the cost of cleanup is higher than expected this is clearly due to factors other than a rise in graffiti vandalism.

In areas where major Legal Art pieces have been completed, tagging is rare or non-existent. People who regularly use Ferry Road would be aware of the Buffalo Hall in Woolston, which for years has attracted taggers. The artwork (a full wall of buffalos) which went up on this building last year has on only one occasion attracted a small amount of tagging. This was fixed within two days and there has been no repeat.

The Legal Art Programme has a strong working relationship with some of the major utilities that are hit hard by graffiti vandalism. One such example is Orion whose property acts like a magnet to the city's taggers. Rick Lees of Orion reports that the Legal Art Programme has significantly assisted in cutting down vandalism on kiosks. Not only that, Orion estimates that wherever a kiosk has been used for a Legal Art project there is a noticeable lack of tagging within a half a kilometre radius.

In October last year a variety of stakeholders (31 in total) completed a questionnaire on their perceptions related to a range of effectiveness outcomes of the Legal Art Programme (LAP). These stakeholders were a representative group which included Police, Council staff, representatives from utility companies, young people, youth workers, and elected members of Council.

- “87.1% of respondents affirmed the statement that LAP has assisted graffitiists to raise the standard of their art (this is supported by the graffitiists themselves)
- 76.7% of respondents affirmed the statement that LAP has increased community respect for graffiti art (anecdotally agreed with by several graffitiists and ‘key’ interviewees)
- 80.0% of respondents affirmed the statement that LAP has diverted young people involved towards positive pursuits (graffitiists indicate LAP has assisted with this and ‘key’ interviewees provided anecdotal evidence to support this)
- 80.0% of respondents affirmed the statement that LAP has promoted in the community knowledge of ways of dealing with graffiti art
- 87.1% of respondents affirmed the statement that LAP has enhanced the cooperation between the participating agencies and businesses in addressing graffiti vandalism (some ‘key’ interviewees suggested that this could be further enhanced)
- 74.2% of respondents affirmed the statement that LAP has facilitated a coordinated response a coordinated response to the issue of graffiti vandalism amongst participating businesses and agencies (some ‘key’ interviewees suggested that this could be further enhanced)
- 67.7% of respondents affirmed the statement that LAP has been administered in a manner promoting civic pride”

In answer to a question asking whether the Legal Art Programme has reduced the incidence of graffiti vandalism, of the 31 respondents 11 agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, four were neutral, six disagreed, one strongly disagreed and nine indicated that they didn't know.

OPERATIONAL ISSUES

In October last year operational issues around the Legal Art Programme were examined as it was apparent that improvement needed to be made to Legal Art Programme processes and to support mechanisms for the Legal Art Co-ordinator. This examination highlighted health and safety issues, along with the need to provide the Legal Art Programme with items which will require some capital expenditure and a greater level of operational expenditure than is currently available.

The most significant need identified was for an additional staff member to ensure that young people on the programme are well supervised. The Legal Art Co-ordinator has been in an extremely vulnerable position working with challenging young people and has (until recently) had to rely on community organisations to provide supervision at Legal Art events. Sometimes this has been less than adequate and as an employer we must ensure that someone is readily available at all times to assist with supervision and unforeseen issues that may occur. Because of the gravity of this situation an additional person has already been employed on a temporary contract through to 30 June 2003. This is a health and safety issue which could not be ignored.

Another significant item which will add to the operational budget is a dedicated vehicle. The Legal Art Programme does not have a vehicle which is specifically set up to carry equipment and people in a safe manner to Legal Art sites. There are logistical difficulties in getting the young people and the equipment to each project site safely when reliant on booking vehicles from our Council fleet. An additional frustration is the time and effort taken to continually pack and unpack vehicles. A dedicated vehicle would mean that basic equipment such as ground-sheets and ladders could remain in the vehicle between visits to the project site, thus eliminating the unnecessary handling of heavy equipment.

If the Council chooses to continue in the business of Legal Art the programme will need to be provided with materials, operational budget and a minimum of two staff to ensure that the programme operates safely, efficiently and effectively. The budget outlined below gives a good indication of what the Legal Art Programme will cost should it continue.

BUDGET

Note that the difference between the current budget and what is considered realistic for the Programme to operate on an ongoing basis is \$66,898. Also note that the five murals mentioned are but a small proportion of the overall picture. It has been normal practice for the Legal Art Coordinator to encourage groups wanting a mural to cover costs themselves or seek funding independently.

	2003/04	Update	
Legal Art Programme			
Employment and Associated Costs * 2 FTEs	36,872	*77,330	
Administration Costs (including vehicle hire, programme expenses and operational costs)	14,219	37,088	
Projects (5 murals per year CCC funded)			
Contract Tutors	-	1,500	
Paint	0	15,000	
Miscellaneous materials	13,929	1,000	
	-----	-----	
Total Project Costs	13,929	17,500	
	-----	-----	
Subtotal Operational Costs	65,020	131,918	66,898
Allocated Overheads	19,278	38,556	
	-----	-----	
TOTAL PROGRAMME COSTS	84,298	170,474	

While the total "Output" Council cost is \$170,474, \$38,556 are overhead costs currently incorporated in the Community Relations Unit Budget and therefore are not seen as additional costs. Therefore on this basis given that the 2003/04 budget provision for operating costs are \$65,020 **an increase budget of \$66,898 would be required.**

CONCLUSION

For the city to deal effectively with the issue of graffiti vandalism it is important to view it not simply as a maintenance problem but as a complex social issue. Although less of a problem than in many other cities, tagging is still a crime that affects the entire Christchurch community. It hurts businesses, neighbourhoods, schools and impacts on the image of the city. The Legal Art Programme takes care to ensure that taggers understand the hurt they have caused and staff endeavour to move them from destructive anti-social behaviour to a productive legal hobby. Even when young people have developed considerable artistic skill, they still receive the message that the difference between graffiti art and graffiti vandalism is "permission".

The effectiveness of the Council's Legal Art Programme in decreasing the overall level of graffiti vandalism in the city is uncertain. Individual projects such as the Belfast Rugby Club, the Woolston Buffalo Lodge, the Hoon Hay Youth Centre and Wainoni School clearly demonstrate positive outcomes for participants and it is generally accepted that such projects lead to a decrease in graffiti vandalism on that particular wall and in the immediate vicinity. In the opinion of Richard Bailey, Amenity Maintenance Team Leader, the amount needed for the reactive paint out has decreased for one of the categories, community. One of the main contributing factors to this has been the success of the Legal Arts Programme. Positive outcomes experienced by young people involved in projects include increased self confidence, improved artistic skills, positive interaction with aerosol artists who are not taggers, a return to the education system and the confidence to enter the work force.

Despite these positive experiences, the long term effectiveness of Legal Art Programmes in terms of reducing graffiti vandalism remains an area of intense debate.

To call an end to the Legal Art Programme would leave Christchurch with only a reactive paint out strategy. This would remove the only possibility we have of understanding the graffiti culture and changing the behaviour of taggers.

To date no "budget bid" has been submitted to the Annual Plan Subcommittee to fund the additional costs of the programme.

If the programme is to continue additional funding options include:

- A bid through the Annual Plan process; or
- Reallocation from the reactive programme.

Staff

Recommendation: That the Council give favourable consideration to continuing with the Legal Art Programme and that additional funds for the programme be provided.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted and that the additional funds be provided from the reactive budget.