Graffiti Prevention Grant survey report

A summary of feedback from recipients of grants for projects delivered between 2012-2017
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Introduction

The Graffiti Prevention Grants program (GPG) is managed by the Community Crime Prevention Unit (CCPU) of the Department of Justice and Regulation. The program provides grants to Victorian councils to partner with community stakeholders to deliver projects to prevent graffiti vandalism in local communities.

Since the program commenced in 2011, over 150 Graffiti Prevention Grants projects totalling more than $2.7 million have been funded. Projects range from murals and public art to anti-graffiti education campaigns, with all projects given 12 months for completion from the time of approval. Prior to 2018, councils could apply for grants ranging from $5,000 to $25,000. In 2018, the grant amount was increased to a maximum of $30,000.

In December 2017, a survey was sent to 102 successful project applicants who delivered GPG projects between 2012 and 2017. A total of 43 surveys were completed. The purpose of the survey was to determine whether:

- councils feel their GPG project was effective in the prevention and reduction of illegal graffiti
- certain types of graffiti prevention approaches are more effective in reducing illegal graffiti than others
- Murals/public art approaches have been effective in the prevention and reduction of illegal graffiti.

Survey Summary

- a total of 29 councils participated in the graffiti prevention survey and 43 surveys were completed (due to some councils having multiple projects)
- 87 per cent of respondents felt the graffiti prevention project to be effective in preventing or reducing illegal graffiti
- 66 percent of projects in the survey had a mural/public art component and of those, 92 percent of the mural/public art works are still at the site
- 22 out of 39 sites indicated having no subsequent graffiti after installation of the mural/public art
- respondents felt murals/public art is the most effective tool in preventing or reducing illegal graffiti, followed by Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and rapid removal through trailers/kits for residents and businesses.

Limitations

The GPG survey was sent out electronically to successful project applicants (councils) who delivered GPG projects during 2012–2017. The survey was voluntary. Unsuccessful applicants were not asked to provide feedback. It is acknowledged that several factors may have influenced the findings of this report such as:

- all survey respondents were recipients of GPG funding (and have the opportunity to apply for future funding) which may influence the findings
- responses were not anonymous
- the sample size (43 responses; response rate of 42 per cent)
- due to staff movements over time, not all survey respondents were directly involved in the GPG projects
- survey respondents were asked to subjectively assess public sentiment regarding the final deliverables and outcomes of the project.
Types of graffiti prevention approaches adopted by Councils

Survey respondents indicated the main approach adopted for each GPG project (refer figure 1). Out of the 43 GPG projects encompassed by the survey responses, the most common approach used was murals or public art (66 per cent of projects).

Approximately 15 per cent of GPG projects focused solely on graffiti education activities, such as educating community groups and schools or producing graffiti prevention DVDs. It should be noted that most of the mural projects also included an education component, which is mandatory under the GPG guidelines where mural projects involve young people.

A further 13 per cent of projects focused on graffiti removal, for example rapid graffiti removal and providing graffiti removal kits to the community. A small number of projects (3 per cent) used a research approach such as investigating council’s current graffiti management framework.

Figure 1: Types of graffiti prevention approaches adopted by councils
Types of mural/public art

The most common types of medium used in mural/public art were aerosol and paint. One council used paste-up, which involves gluing posters to walls, and one council used mosaic tiles. The types of mural/public art imageries varied between locations in response to local circumstances. Common motifs and themes included nature, landscape, animals, writing, locally-based images and historical and cultural images. One council noted that incorporating historical and cultural context in murals and public art provided young people with a sense of place, community pride and ownership.

Over half of councils who utilised mural/public art involved young people in the production of the mural/street art projects (refer to figure 2) with the assistance of experienced artist/s. Experienced artists have acted as mentors, providing guidance and teaching different techniques to students.

‘The education component of the project played a major role in educating the students on different types of art and the significant role that public art is having on our communities...’
(Survey respondent, 2017).

One council noted that through the GPG project, students were able to have an ongoing mentoring relationship with the artist, which has helped them develop their own artistic careers and direction.

Figure 2: Engagement of stakeholders in mural/public art projects
Effectiveness of Graffiti Prevention Grant projects in preventing or reducing illegal graffiti

Overall, 87 per cent (n=34) of the survey respondents felt their graffiti prevention project was moderately or highly effective in preventing or reducing illegal graffiti (as shown in figure 3). Although public perception was not directly measured, when survey respondents were asked to subjectively assess public sentiment, 87 per cent (n=34) of the survey respondents indicated positive public perception towards the final deliverables and outcomes of the project.

The Department of Justice and Regulation’s Strategic Planning Unit was commissioned by the CCPU to undertake an in-depth evaluation of five GPG projects from across Victoria between December 2015 and December 2017. The Summary of evaluation findings (2017) show illegal graffiti provides negative public perception of an area as a place of crime in the community. Therefore improved aesthetics and feel of a space may be linked towards the final deliverables and outcomes of the project.

In line with Strategic Planning’s evaluation findings (2017), many survey respondents stated that GPG projects provided opportunities to develop new and existing relationships between different areas within council, with partner organisations, local residents and the wider community in general. This shows that a whole-of-community approach was seen as an effective way of leveraging community knowledge and additional support, such as resources or funding, for GPG projects.

‘The communities who were involved in the project reported a greater understanding of graffiti removal, they felt their work was valued and contributed to the amenity of their townships, they made new connections with new people in their local community, they realised that together they achieve more.’

(Survey respondent, 2017).

A total of 10 per cent (n=4) of survey respondents indicated that their projects were neither effective or ineffective, or moderately ineffective. One survey respondent indicated that it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of illegal graffiti reduction in a short timeframe, especially for research and anti-graffiti education approaches. Additionally, one survey respondent felt their project was highly ineffective because the mural was subjected to ongoing tagging partly due to the artist lacking credibility within the art community.

Figure 3: Perceived effectiveness of Graffiti Prevention Grant projects in preventing or reducing illegal graffiti by survey respondents

1 The number of survey responses for whether the project was effective in preventing or reducing illegal graffiti and what was the public perception of the final deliverables and outcomes of the project are not related.

2 Positive public perception refers to community feeling positive towards a particular space. In this instance, community’s feeling towards the GPG sites after the project implementation.
Effectiveness of different graffiti prevention approaches

Respondents were asked to rank in order the activities they felt were the most effective in preventing or reducing illegal graffiti. The top three ranked effective graffiti prevention approaches were:

1. Mural/public art projects engaging young people
2. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)
3. Rapid removal through trailers or kits for residents/businesses (figure 4)

‘Murals are incredibly effective in preventing further graffiti in a hotspot. Giving ownership to community to make decisions on where artwork should be placed and the types of designs that need to be incorporated in the mural’ (Survey respondent, 2017).

It is important to note that more than half of the survey respondents’ projects involved murals and public art, hence there is a likelihood that survey respondents found more value in this type of activity compared to the other graffiti prevention approaches. Some survey respondents have noted that using multiple graffiti prevention approaches, i.e. graffiti removal and anti-graffiti education, in a location was the most effective method for reducing illegal graffiti. One respondent noted that it is ‘important to have the correct equipment and materials when graffiti is detected for removal,’ (survey respondent, 2017).

Figure 4: Ranked effectiveness of different graffiti prevention approaches
Effectiveness of mural/public art

Results show that mural/public art has been effective in graffiti prevention as the level of illegal graffiti occurring in the GPG targeted areas has decreased since the installation of mural/public art. Overall, 66 per cent (26 out of 39) of GPG projects in the survey had a mural/public art component and of those, 92 per cent of the mural/public art are still at the site.3

Prior to the GPG projects, 39 sites across the local council areas had been identified as experiencing an illegal graffiti problem, including 36 per cent of the 39 sites experiencing illegal graffiti on a weekly basis or more (figure 5). Following the delivery of the GPG projects, only one site indicated experiencing illegal graffiti on a weekly basis or more, and 22 of the 39 sites indicated having no subsequent graffiti.

One council which utilised the paste-up method explained that there was no subsequent graffiti after the art installation however, when the maintenance and re-installation of the paste-up was ceased due to limited funds, the site was subjected to ongoing illegal graffiti.

One survey respondent stated that although there was ongoing illegal graffiti after the mural/public art installation, ‘the anti-graffiti coating applied to the mural was essential for its protection’ (survey respondent, 2017). Anti-graffiti coating can be applied over the mural/public art as a seal to protect the mural and allow easy removal of illegal graffiti.

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3 It is important to note that there can be multiple sites within one GPG project, i.e. one Council proposed to install three murals in different locations as part of their GPG project. For the 26 GPG projects which had a mural/public art component, there was a total of 39 sites.
Conclusion

This report provides a summary of feedback received from 43 successful project applicants who delivered GPG projects. Key learnings and challenges of GPG projects were identified through the survey responses, which has also contributed to some changes in the 2018–19 Graffiti Prevention Grant guidelines.

Overall, survey respondents found GPG projects to be effective in preventing or reducing illegal graffiti. Many councils have adopted the mural/public art approach to prevent or reduce illegal graffiti. Anti-graffiti coating is recommended after the installation of mural/art for protection and easy removal of illegal graffiti. Survey respondents felt murals/public art is the most effective tool in preventing or reducing illegal graffiti followed by CPTED and rapid removal through trailers/kits for residents and businesses.

GPG projects provide opportunities to develop new and existing relationships between different groups of people living within a community, increase use of community service and improve use of a space. Mural/public art projects provide a sustainable approach to prevent graffiti, improve amenity, proactively engage young people, strengthen community pride and improve local relationships.

Graffiti Prevention Grant 2018–19 changes

A number of changes have been made to the 2018–19 Graffiti Prevention Grant following this survey. The maximum funding has increased from $25,000 to $30,000 per project. The funding cap for graffiti removal activities and resources has increased from $5,000 to $10,000, or one-third of total grant funds (whichever is the lower). Councils have been recommended to adopt a multi-faceted approach to preventing illegal graffiti within a particular area, and incorporating strong community engagement to encourage sustained project benefits. In addition, councils have been encouraged to utilise situational crime prevention strategies to directly target the causes of illegal graffiti in their local area.

References
