

WRITING ON THE WALL FOR GRAFFITI VANDALS

November 8, 2009

Premier Nathan Rees today announced a crack down on graffiti vandals across NSW.

Mr Rees said that the Government will take a hardline approach to graffiti and has developed a number of tough initiatives aimed squarely at tackling this crime.

The Premier made the announcement in Blacktown today, a suburb that topped the State with the highest number graffiti incidents last year with 737 incidents.

“The community is fed up with their streets being defaced by senseless vandals who think they can operate above the law,” Mr Rees said.

“Today, I’m putting graffiti vandals on notice – we have you in our sights and the community, police and business are right behind us.

“Graffiti is not a victimless crime – it makes people feel unsafe, eats away at the pride people have for their towns and suburbs and this is simply not on.”

Major highlights of the package include:

- **Graffiti Action Day:** a dedicated day each year for community-based graffiti clean up in partnership with Keep Australia Beautiful;
- **Banning possession of spray cans:** an offence for juveniles to possess spray paint cans unless for education, employment or legal art;
- **Doubling penalties:** A doubling of penalties for graffiti vandalism to 12 months in prison and 6 months for possession of a graffiti implement;
- **Clean up orders:** More vandals to clean up graffiti instead of paying fines (most offenders are currently fined) and increasing the use of clean-up for offenders sentenced to a Community Service Orders;
- **Designing out graffiti:** make planners of all new state government buildings take graffiti and crime prevention measures into consideration;
- **Graffiti hotspot funding:** \$1 million annual grants program to fund the implementation of anti graffiti design treatments in identified hotspots.

The Graffiti Action Day will occur on the first Sunday in May each year – beginning 2 May 2010.

“The Graffiti Action Day will empower communities to take charge and make a difference,” Mr Rees said.

Mr Rees said it will now be illegal for a juvenile to have a spray can in their possession unless they have a legitimate reason.

“If they can not prove to Police that they need the spray can for legitimate reasons like school or work they will face fines of up to \$1,100 and even 6 months jail in some cases.

“These changes build on the reforms that began earlier this year which enable police and other officers to issue penalties to retailers for selling spray paint to young people.”

Keep Australia Beautiful CEO Peter McLean said: “Everyone can get involved in the Graffiti Action Day – councils, schools, businesses, community groups, and individuals.

“It is an important opportunity to raise awareness of how we can collectively remove graffiti. Volunteers can play an important role to increase the pride and morale of their local communities.”