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A line to be drawn

BY WINSTON TAN
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A KNOX anti-graffiti campaigner has called for a community effort to combat graffiti vandalism.

Graffiti Hurts Australia chief executive officer Scott Hilditch said there was a need for a concerted national and community approach to tackle the problem.

"The big thing for us is to educate the community.

"The issue of graffiti vandalism is not a local government one.

"It is not an industry or a law enforcement one. It is actually a society one."

Railway corridors were among the target areas in Knox for graffitists.

Mr Hilditch said graffiti was a "gateway crime" with things such as littering more common around areas with graffiti.

"One of the things you always notice with graffiti vandalism is that there are always other antisocial behaviour that start to take place."

Creating 'legal graffiti walls' had proven unsuccessful here and overseas, he said.

"What they've actually found is that it attracts more graffiti vandalism.

"Once the wall has been covered ... people just look for another blank wall in the surrounding area."



Fighting back: Scott Hilditch is leading a community campaign to clean up graffiti in Knox. Picture: Rob Carew

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Mr Hilditch said legal walls opened up questions such as who would maintain the wall and who would ensure it didn't contain offensive material.

He recommended councils instead look at community paintbrush murals, where people worked together in painting on a board or wall.

A Victoria Police spokeswoman said it was supportive of any community initiative which would help reduce incidences of graffiti.

She said the Graffiti Prevention Act, which came into effect in early April, had given police greater powers to issue on-the-spot fines to anyone carrying a spray paint can without a lawful excuse or where a person was trespassing.

Knox Council director of community services Kerry Stubbings said it had introduced a graffiti management plan, which was focused on removal, education and prevention through a "work together approach".

Mr Hilditch was the Victorian senior program manager for Keep Australia Beautiful for a decade and has also been involved with Tidy Towns.

He said Graffiti Hurts was a national organisation which would "educate the community from a community perspective".

Details: www.graffitihurts.com.au

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