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## NEWS

# Brunswick traders employ graffiti artists to fend off illegal tagging

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Hamid Jamal, owner of Lygon Convenience Store, with his newly painted wall.

MORELAND traders are employing graffiti artists to decorate their walls in a bid to ward off illegal taggers.

Businesses around Sydney Rd and Lygon St say they are turning to commissioned street art to deter vandalism and add character to the neighbourhood.

But anti-graffiti advocates say any graffiti \_ commissioned or not \_ generates vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Hamid Jamal, owner of Lygon Convenience Store on the corner of Brunswick Rd, said he took up an offer from a young customer to paint his heavily vandalised wall earlier this month.

“That wall has always had lots of graffiti marks so I hope painting the wall will stop that,” he said.

“One of the boys is a customer who comes past every day. He said if I give them paint to paint the name of the shop other people won't touch the wall.”

Xiong Ling commissioned an art student earlier this month to jazz up the wall of his business, Ling's Fish and Chips in Glenlyon Rd.

He said he had been approached by dozens of art students looking for a blank canvas, and believed it would earn the respect of taggers if it was maintained.

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“The wall looked good for the first four years, but about two years ago it started looking pretty ugly; and not just graffiti, but little stickers and advertising was all over it,” he said.

“It gives the art students somewhere to practise, then they won’t do it elsewhere. If we keep it looking good, and in dark colours, then I think it’ll stay good.”

Mayor Lambros Tapinos said the council’s graffiti strategy, which was currently being developed, made a clear distinction between approved and illegal graffiti.

“Clearly if graffiti hasn’t been approved by businesses or residents then it’s illegal, but if traders want to go down this track of commissioning work then they should be encouraged,” he said.

But Graffiti Hurts Australia chief executive Scott Hilditch said commissioned graffiti walls actually attracted more graffiti.

“We haven’t found one study that shows they deter graffiti; It shows people that graffiti is OK in that area,” he said. “Will these businesses take responsibility for the increase in graffiti in the area that will accompany this?”

**Do you think commissioned graffiti breeds vandalism? Email us at [moreland@leadernewspapers.com.au](mailto:moreland@leadernewspapers.com.au)**

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