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Frankston vandals' clean getaway

NEWS > LOCAL NEWS 14 APR 09 @ 10:00AM | BY DONNA CARTON

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GRAFFITI vandals in Frankston can't be forced to clean up their mess in case the cleaning solvents cause them harm.

A Frankston Council bid to make graffiti artists remove the paint themselves has failed because of occupational health and safety concerns.

"It's back to the drawing board on this one," said the council's safety manager, Geoff Cummings.

Councillor and policeman Brian Cunial said it was "ludicrous" criminals who regularly defaced public property had to be protected from risky cleaning chemicals because of OH&S regulations.

"I'm allowed to clean my bathroom with chemicals, spray them on the garden to kill weeds, but we can't make people who commit wilful damage use them to clean up their mess. It's a disgrace," he said.

Council officers have met police and a senior magistrate in an effort to come up with a clean-up scheme.

"The obstacle we have encountered is we are not able to manage the risk element from a health and safety point of view, because of the chemical in paint-removing equipment," Mr Cummings said.

"But we are still investigating."

Cr Cunial suggested offenders be made to pay for the graffiti's removal if they were not allowed to do it themselves.



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"Adult offenders who have a tax file number should have it recorded on conviction and clean-up costs taken from them through the tax office.

"Juvenile offenders should be issued with a tax file number on conviction and the money taken from them as soon as they start earning."

Tiffany Overall, from the community legal centre Youthlaw, said Frankston should be able to overcome the problem.

"In some parts of Melbourne, magistrates are ordering offenders to remove their graffiti rather than issue huge fines," she said.

"We would support councils introducing schemes to get these kids using their energies and paints in a more legal forum."

Grffiti removal consultant Ben Cirelli said skin irritants in paint removers would probably not be safe in the hands of very young people.

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