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BY ROBERT FEDELE
21/07/2009 9:27:00 AM

GRAFFITI vandals in Moonee Valley are moving away from traditional spray painting and turning to etching as their weapon of choice.

Traders on Union Road in Ascot Vale are the latest to report an increase in shop windows being damaged by extensive tags in recent months.

A string of businesses in Niddrie's Keilor Road were hit by vandals early on July 1. The rampage spanned three kilometres from McDonald's to the Calder Freeway entrance ramp.

Police reported a 14.9per cent spike in property damage during June, with offences up from 59 in May to 79.

Union Road Traders Association president Helen Robertson said she knew of about half a dozen businesses that had been affected.

She said such incidents occurred overnight and generally in areas not covered by CCTV cameras.

"It's a nuisance damage. It costs a lot more to fix," she said.

Senior Sergeant Erik Krauklis, of Flemington police, said etching was on the rise across Moonee Valley.

"An etching tool is small and discreet and the etching can be done at any time, whereas graffiti is mostly done at night," Senior Sergeant Krauklis said.

He said etching was far more destructive than spray painting because of the greater costs associated with replacing glass panels.

"You can remove paint, you can't remove the etching. It's more permanent."

Union Road trader Rodger Beiser, whose business Upfront Recruitment was recently vandalised, said the cost of replacing the glass was too high for some traders to afford.

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Costly damage: Rodger Beiser considers the damage to his business. Picture: Scott McNaughton

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