

Monday June 29 2009

## **YOUNG GRAFFITI OFFENDERS FORCED TO CLEAN UP THEIR OWN MESS**

NSW Premier Nathan Rees today announced the NSW Government would introduce tough new laws to force young graffiti offenders to clean up their mess.

The new laws are part of a renewed push by the NSW Government to tackle graffiti.

“It is time they got the message – if you make a mess you have to clean it up,” Mr Rees said.

“Frankly the community has had enough, I’ve had enough.”

The NSW Government will amend the *Young Offenders Regulation* to mandate outcomes for graffiti offenders.

Youth justice conferences will then be requiring vandals to agree to either:

- Clean up graffiti or perform other available community service work;
- Pay compensation to their victim; or
- Participate in training or education programs.

“The community is fed up and I’m determined to force young graffiti vandals to make amends for the damage they cause,” Mr Rees said.

As well as the crackdown on young offenders, the NSW Government’s plan to target graffiti includes:

- An overhaul of prevention and clean-up measures;
- Working with local councils to come up with new ways of tackling the problem;
- An instruction from the Police Commissioner to all Local Area Commands to target graffiti and vandalism;
- A blitz by the Office of Fair Trading to ensure retailers are complying with new laws on the sale of spray cans.

“I want vandals to be held responsible for their destructive behaviour,” Mr Rees said.

“If the young offender does not comply with these directives then they will face the full force of the law and may spend time in juvenile detention.

“Just three months ago the NSW Government toughened laws against graffiti vandalism and possession of graffiti implements.

“If people tell me these laws do not go far enough – we will take them even further.”

Currently around 400 referrals are made each year to Youth Justice Conferences for young offenders on graffiti or malicious damage charges.

Some 59 per cent of the outcomes of these conferences involve the young offender doing community service work which may include graffiti clean up.

“These new mandated outcomes will help ensure more offenders perform graffiti clean up work.

“Juvenile offenders subject to community service orders are already being forced to perform graffiti clean up work, more than 64,000 hours of graffiti clean-up work has been completed since the program commenced some eight years ago.”

Mr Rees said the NSW Government would be working on further measures to combat graffiti and vandalism.

“I want a tougher approach to this problem,” Mr Rees said.

“There is no magic wand, but we need to work in partnership with the community, local government and parents to drive down the incidence of graffiti and vandalism.”

Ken Marslew from the Enough is Enough anti-violence movement endorsed the reforms.

“Youth Justice Conferencing is very successful in forcing young offenders to confront their victims and face up to their behaviour”, said Mr Marslew.

“But we need to make sure we’re getting the right outcomes so the punishment fits the crime.”

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