



## Police, council link graffiti to clandestine drug deals

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**BRISBANE graffiti artists are using secret codes in their vandalism of city walls to co-ordinate clandestine drug deals, it has been revealed.**

mX can reveal a joint Brisbane City Council and Queensland Police crackdown has managed to crack the codes of several "tags" across the city which have exposed other criminal activities.

"To some they're meaningless words or artworks but (the taskforce) has found hidden messages," said Families and Community Services councillor Geraldine Knapp.

Illegal graffiti artists have been hit with eight criminal charges a day since the Taskforce Against Graffiti (TAG) was launched a year ago.

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The offenders have been hit with 3144 charges while police have recorded more than 31,000 incidents. The team has also identified 124,691 different tag names.

Up to 12 council teams have removed graffiti from approximately 16 hectares of walls, costing ratepayers \$1.4 million.

TAG has also focussed on profiling offenders and developed an extensive database of artwork.

"It means if we catch someone in the act we can link them to all their vandalism across the city," Cr Knapp said.

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"The figures really do speak for themselves. TAG was designed to do that intelligence in respect to who these graffiti artists are and why they do what they do."

Just last month, police arrested two offenders and managed to link them to more than 108 graffiti pieces across town.

TAG crews have also been scouting out notorious graffiti spots and one offender has even joined crews to help track down other artists.

"He came to us from the Magistrates Court for his community service and is now working with TAG and police in identifying graffiti ... and we've offered him a job," Cr Knapp said.

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