his paper is based on facts and figures collated over a five-year period at the City of Gosnells. Attempts have been made to identify the extent of vandalism and graffiti, and introduce a strategy to reduce the problem as the cost to the ratepayer and private companies is escalating at an alarming rate.

The City of Gosnells is located 20 kilometres south east of Perth, Western Australia, and at the base of the Darling Ranges. The Municipal Council covers 125 sq km in area with a population of 68,000 persons and the projected population in the year 2001 is 86,000.

One of the objectives of the City of Gosnells is to reduce vandalism and graffiti by providing alternatives for the youth of today.

Rising Cost of Vandalism
Since 1977 a 'vandalism' record has been kept by the Council. The damage recorded is of building-related matters and does not include engineering and gardening department figures. However, recently, vandalism to parks and gardens has been recorded also. Vandalism is increasing. Because of the ever-increasing costs of damage to council buildings a special committee was formed to look at ways of curbing this trend.

It was recommended that in 1987 a public meeting concerning vandalism be arranged and a vandalism working party consisting of four councillors and the principal building surveyor was formed.

The main topics of discussion were:

- activities and programs being conducted in an effort to reduce vandalism;
- young people's lack of pride in their public facilities;
- neighbourhood watch, industrial watch;
- the need to set up a system to prevent and cure the problem;
- the cost to the public;
- community services orders; and
- graffiti offenders.

Two recommendations arising from the meeting were:
• that student councils from the four high schools be invited to a discussion session; and

• that a public meeting be held.

School Involvement
On 4 September 1987, a discussion session for school principals and prefects on vandalism was held. The agenda included issues such as why vandalism occurs; ways of preventing vandalism; responsibility of offenders; can student councils influence students or young people in the area on vandalism; and do the student councillors think it is a good idea that one of the group represents today’s workshop findings at a public meeting?

Why does vandalism occur?
Suggestions were: boredom; peer group pressure—the ‘in thing’; emotional reasons—young people get hurt and retaliate; individuals as well as groups make statements, tags, and initials; media influence; it is a challenge to see if kids can get away with it; it is a form of art rather than vandalism and it was not seen as damage; they have pride in their own work; parents not knowing where their children are; parents letting their children out at night; children seeking attention and resulted from frustration and low self-esteem; children rebelling against parents; children are not being brought up in the proper way; there are not enough activities for teenagers or children to do; there are not enough places for people to meet, for example, public parlours or arcades; more social activities are required, together with public transport to the venue; jealousy; and both parents working.

Ways of preventing vandalism
Suggestions were: Blue Light discos for children from fourteen to seventeen years of age; more advertising in schools for ‘drop-in’ coffee shops; to have a School Watch system; to publish acts of vandalism more predominantly in community newspapers; to improve lighting; to have more activities for the young; to provide a wall to show off art; to restrict the sale of spray cans; that the Council should provide more entertainment to prevent boredom; that painting of cars should be made available; install trail bike tracks; that less advertising of vandalism would reduce copycat acts; to publish what goes on in Council and where the money goes; to place billboards in parks; to initiate more community watch systems; to provide more supervision; to introduce tougher penalties; to provide wider surveillance; to provide plain clothes police to check out places; to develop neighbourhood watch; to provide a number to ring if you require help; and that age groups should be encouraged to discuss vandalism with their own age group.

Responsibility of offenders when caught

Suggestions were: to have the parents to watch culprits clean damage; that those without money do community service; that those with money repay out of their wages; that offenders do community work in their own time or counselling in certain cases; that fines not be increased because the kids will retaliate; that kids fix it rather than parents pay for it; that when caught to do social work to restore damage and/or to attend lectures; that the cane should be reinstated in schools; and that culprits should be made to clean their own mess.

Public Meeting on Vandalism
One hundred and fifty people representing church groups, interested ratepayers, Progress Associations, the Red Cross, schools, police, Rotary, sports clubs, Scouts, District Information Centres, and other service groups attended this meeting.

Question time was very lively and many important points were put forward. Comments during the question time covered many of the aspects that the students had come forth with at their previous meeting. It was interesting to note that both the young and the older
populous had similar ideas. Interested people were asked to form an investigation committee.

**Community Service Orders and Youth Participation**

A meeting on community service orders was held on 25 February 1988 to which all service groups in the district were invited. The speakers were Kevin Endersby and John Pavlinovich from the Department of Community Services. It was stated that the Salvation Army, Gosnells Refuge and Anglicare were the only local groups participating in the community service order program at the moment, so that youths have to travel to complete orders during the weekends. If the service orders are not completed the kids are fined.

The program is successful for approximately 90 per cent of youths. These youths have generally committed crimes of vandalism, disorderly conduct, crimes related to cars, or traffic offences. Service orders are for approximately ten to sixty hours duration and the hours worked dismiss the charges, therefore no conviction is registered.

The number of youths participating in the program is increasing. There are 60 per cent more youths in the program this year than last year, with there being approximately 1,500 participants in 1988.

The project performed must be non-profit and a particular job must not be taken from a paid worker. The work can be spread over a number of projects within an organisation and hours are flexible. Participants are covered by insurance. At the conclusion a report must be filled out by the organisation detailing the hours worked and the attitude of the participant.

**Police Involvement in the Community**

*Neighbourhood Watch*

There are six suburbs within the Gosnells City Council which are established as Neighbourhood Watch Areas. All suburbs have property identification programs in full swing and the program is seen as very successful.

*Industrial Watch*

This program is operational in the Maddington Industrial Area with some nine business companies involved, each paying around $1.40 per night for about six visits by a patrol company.

Business watch in Gosnells no longer operates due to lack of commitment by business companies.

*School Watch*

Within the Gosnells district, seventeen schools have been included in the school watch program.

There has been no major damage to schools since this program commenced in January 1989.

*Safety House*

There are fourteen schools involved in Safety House in the Gosnells area, each with their own committee, reporting to a state coordinator.

*Police And Citizens—Blue Light Disco*

The Gosnells Police and Citizens Youth Club is the only one of this type run by the police within the Gosnells district.

The club is situated in Maddington and last year catered for some 80,000 children. An extension to this club is proposed in 1990 at the Thornlie Community Centre.

There are two Blue Light discos and one Police and Citizens disco held in the Gosnells District catering for up to 800 children. These discos are held approximately every five weeks.

*Truancy Patrols*

Two Truancy Officers service the Armadale Division of which Gosnells is a part.
Since its commencement, the scheme has apprehended 2602 potential offenders about the streets of the metropolitan area. Of these, 27 per cent were truants from school. The 73 per cent of non-truants included juveniles that have left school for work who are generally unemployed, are under suspension from school, or those who had left school for other reasons.

During the operation of the Truancy Patrol, a total of 692 charges were laid against 308 offenders. In reality, 11 per cent of the juveniles on the streets in the metropolitan area were committing criminal offences.

The Truancy Patrol in conjunction with other community policing schemes has resulted in an overall reduction of 20 per cent in daytime related crime, particularly break and enter.

In suburbs such as Forrestfield and Girrawheen, the Truancy Patrol has reduced daytime break and enter by over 70 per cent.

It was of concern that 73 per cent of these juveniles were male and 26 per cent were Aboriginal.

Community Policing Liaison Officer

There is one appointed Community Policing Liaison Officer stationed at the Gosnells Police Station. This position is to assist all persons involved in the community policing initiatives mentioned above.

Divisional Committee

The Community Policing Divisional Committee for the Armadale Division meets every five weeks to discuss and inquire into problems within the community and it seeks assistance from government departments in solving the problems raised.

The Gosnells City Council assists Neighbourhood Watch by making available (free of charge) Community Centres for meetings, ordering and supplying Neighbourhood Watch Signs to be placed on road verges. A Council representative attends these meetings when requested to do so.

The Gosnells Council assists with Blue Light Discos by supplying premises at a reduced price and having the premises cleaned.

The Council assisted the Thornlie Blue Light Disco by extending the size of the Hall to comply with Health regulations and to enable more children to attend.

The Division is assisted by the Council making available premises for meetings.

Council Buildings

Inspections have been carried out on all Council buildings and within defined areas, particularly those areas with high vandalism.

In areas around buildings that have screen walls or shrubs obscuring vision, these have been removed. Low lighting (bollards) have been removed and high pole lights installed (mercury vapour type). For windows, glazing is one of the high costs of damage. Perspex glazing has been tried, but tends to scratch easily and can be popped out. Laminated glass seems to be the most successful. It has not stopped breakage, but does prevent entry.

Partly-lit car parks have had better lighting installed and security patrols are used on an ad hoc basis when problems are identified in an area.

At one recreation centre, adjoining owners agreed to set up a 'watch'.

A reduction in vandalism is apparent from the Council's initiatives and police pilot programs in the Gosnells area.

Graffiti

Graffiti or Suburban Art, as we prefer to call it, is usually carried out in most cases, by very talented young artists. From interviewing these youngsters, it has been found that most come from good homes, are not down and out and are not street kids as such. In fact most
seem quite intelligent and are keen to gain legal sites. These youngsters are expressing their need for status in our society. They do not appear to be involved in sports or be interested in club orientated activities.

Definitions

'Graffiti expression'—occurs when racist comments are written and is a means of expressing an individual's views.

'Tagging'—this seems to fall into two categories:

- where the urban artist or graffiti artist signs his name in a special way or wording, which is his own signature on a piece which he has done;
- where a person who has no artistic skills imitates tagging signatures of skilled graffiti artists or creates his own tag. Tagging on pieces also indicates he either likes the person's work, or by writing over it indicates that he is not impressed with that type of art. This usually happens when an urban artist either copies someone else's design or copies one from a book.

'Pieces'—this is work carried out by 'kings' or up and coming 'kings'. Pieces are murals which can cover large areas of walls. The design is well thought out and sketched by the artist prior to the actual work being carried out.

Graffiti—where do you start?

A seminar on graffiti was held. Proposals put forward at the seminar were:

- to establish a 'Drop-in' Centre for youth involved in urban art;
- to establish the position of Community Youth Worker, whose responsibility it will be to approach and coordinate the youth in directing them away from illegal graffiti to approved urban art locations. This person would also liaise with local government, Transperth, Westrail and private enterprises for legal sites; and
- that the Community Youth Worker position be funded by the state government.

There was great concern by all at the seminar that if immediate action were not taken, the youth who have been approached will see it as another bureaucratic, long-winded, 'twelve months down the track' decision.

It became apparent at the seminar, that the majority of the graffiti kings live in the South-East Corridor, hence the high amount of graffiti within the City of Gosnells area. With this in mind, the Mayor suggested that a meeting should be held at Gosnells to seek further information and ideas.

This meeting recommended among other things:

- that a Committee be formed to establish an ongoing involvement in the implementation of such a scheme within the City of Gosnells; and
- that the principal building surveyor arrange a meeting with available Councillors and the Chamber of Commerce and any other interested local business people to discuss the matter of graffiti and possible suitable approved sites within the City of Gosnells.

A further meeting was called on 25 January 1989 to establish a working party regarding graffiti. This meeting was derived from realising that graffiti or urban art had to be treated separately from vandalism. The objective of the Working Party was to redirect the artists' energy by making graffiti legal and providing specific approved sites.

Two days later local graffiti artists were invited to air their views on all aspects of graffiti at a public meeting.

Twenty-five to thirty youths attended the meeting, some being the kings with others being their followers and taggers.
Discussions were held and their opinions were sought on many aspects of graffiti and what the Council could do to support this activity.

The positive help given by the Gosnells Chamber of Commerce was pointed out; as was the need for guidance, the idea being to formulate some policy initially to try and find space through the Committee.

A father, who was accompanied by his son a 'king' and several other artists said he would like to see an association formed of young people who could control to a degree some of the other 'toys' and 'kings' who caused damage. If this could be worked in conjunction with the City of Gosnells, and areas and sponsorship be made available, it would be a workable project and they could control the illegal section. He felt that maybe after five to six weeks legal walls could be repainted and used again. He also emphasised that their talent which was genuine should be recognised, and felt that the City of Gosnells could help in this respect.

The Community Policing Officer asked if the artists had ever wanted to attend art school. The Project Officer explained on their behalf that a lot of schools tended to look down on urban art as an art form and this was one reason it was hard to develop.

The Community Policing Officer pointed out that in respect of the police in general, there had always been an aggressive attitude towards graffiti artists because of legalities, but that he was pleased that the City of Gosnells was trying to organise legal sites and he was prepared to work with the City to help in any way he could.

The Youth Affairs Bureau spoke of the pilot scheme they had inaugurated to get young people involved and to also include locals, police and local groups.

It was proposed that a youth worker be employed to liaise with local government and to investigate where the main problems areas lay. The employment of a part-time officer who would liaise with the youth worker to seek legal sites and get young people together who were interested in urban art was also sought.

An application for a 'Future Plus Suburban Art Project Grant' was successful in February 1989.

At the local government executive committee meeting held on 15 February 1989, Councillor K R Trent reported:

The Minister for Youth has announced the Suburban Art Project which will be piloted between January and June 1989 with the idea to develop the ideas and skills of young people from unlawful graffiti into positive and artistic work at approved community sites. Any established youth centre preferably with links to local government is eligible to sponsor a Suburban Art Project and applications can be made with the Youth Affairs Bureau.

The development worker to coordinate the Suburban Art Project commenced on 9 January 1989 on a part-time basis working twenty-five hours per week for the first three months to be reviewed after that period. The worker is currently preparing a record of areas with most damage and making contact with local and state government offices.

The council sought further support from the business community:

The recent thinking is to channel these artists' talents into more productive outlets by providing areas for them to do their art on. Some suggestions were walls of commercial buildings, where the art could take the form of advertising.

**Hip Hop Jam**

It was decided to hold a Hip Hop Jam at one of Council's Recreation Centres.

A Hip Hop Jam is a group of artists getting together to do a few spray painting pieces with music, rap singing and beat boxing.

Part of the art program is to get the artists involved into organising and programming these projects with the back up support of the Project Officer and the Council.

It is anticipated that another Hip Hop Jam Session will be organised prior to the conclusion of this project sometime in September.
Other future events that have been organised are two workshops for the Richard Rushton Holiday program in July, participation in the National Art Week in October 1989 with demonstrations in spray can art at Maddington and Thornlie Shopping Centres and the provision of a ‘Drop-In’ Centre bus with large boards incorporated for spraying (windows down).

What this Program has achieved

In the 1988-89 financial year, a record of graffiti vandalism on Council buildings showed approximately $14,000 in insurance claims, where paintwork had been removed from buildings and bus shelters.

This figure does not highlight the cost which has occurred on the ongoing maintenance of these buildings. Every time a building is sprayed, even with the use of anti-graffiti material (high labour and material costs), building surface is affected.

However, with the initiation of the Seminar on Graffiti and the word having spread that Councils, police and the government were serious about supporting a graffiti project and making it legal, graffiti became non-existent on Council buildings until the end of the financial year with only one public building and one piece being sprayed with anti-racist slogans.

This is prime evidence that the youth are supporting the program and it is up to the Council and the government to keep up this support, so that the youth do not get frustrated and feel let down. With this in mind, the prime move of this Council will be to keep that interest going for as long as it is needed.

The Western Australia Police reported that insurance claims in the Perth metropolitan area totalled some $192,000 in 1988. This graffiti bill does not compare with the Eastern States. However, it is obvious that if this trend cannot be stopped now, it will escalate out of control. As a result this program was initiated to turn illegal graffiti around, making it legal, safe and seen. Without the support of the artists, this would not be possible.

To this end, we feel we have made a most successful beginning.