Harm Minimisation and Zero Tolerance: A Graffiti Perspective
A Qualitative Study of Graffiti Management Approaches

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts by Research

Samantha Lee Spooner
B.A. Criminal Justice Administration (with Distinction)

School: Global Studies, Social Science, and Planning
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University
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This mural depicts the work of an Aerosol Artist interviewed for this research. It is an example of public art on display in the research setting.
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Thank you one and all.
Declaration by the candidate

I, Samantha Lee Spooner, declare that:

a) except where due acknowledgement has been made, this work is that of myself alone;

b) this work has not been submitted previously, in whole or part, to qualify for any other academic award;

c) the content of this thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and

d) any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

Signed: ............................................

Dated: .............................................
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Abstract

This is a qualitative collective case study that seeks to understand the phenomena of graffiti and its related subcultures. By employing Interpretivist techniques, the research attempts to raise questions about harm minimisation, zero tolerance and graffiti, as well as broaden the debate about these distinct policy approaches for local communities. The research setting encompasses the geographic area of the Knox municipality, situated in outer eastern Melbourne. The researcher has openly disclosed a working relationship between herself and the Knox City Council, where she has been employed as both a Graffiti Management Officer, and a Community Safety (Crime Prevention) Officer, for the past six years.

The study has canvassed the views of young people immersed in the aerosol art culture, and this has contributed to the unique nature of the study. Two professionals working in the area of youth policy and welfare were interviewed to assist in answering the research question proposed (What is the value of harm minimisation and youth inclusion approaches, using graffiti as the basis for debate?). The views of the professionals have particularly contributed to the debate around public space management and appropriate opportunities for youth participation. The perspectives of the young people involved in this research have been gauged using a focus group of six young people, all involved in producing legal street art, and all over the age of 18. A freelance aerosol artist was also interviewed to include the views of a professional street artist in this research.

This research used an Interpretivist theoretical approach. The semi or unstructured interviewing techniques employed in this study have provided rich data and a broad range of responses from the professionals engaged in the study. Whilst a similar methodology was employed to canvas the views of the street artists, their responses were less elaborate, and the researcher comments extensively on the secrecy of graffiti and aerosol art subcultures.
The results of the individual interviews and focus group (involving the participants described above) were organised into four important themes to fulfill the ‘presentation of findings’ component of this research. These themes were The Political and Policy Tensions of Graffiti Management, Valuing and Involving Young People, Strengthening and Connecting Young People, and finally Young People in Places and Spaces. The presentation of findings and subsequent analysis has showed that there are significant opportunities to meaningfully engage with young people and work in partnership to examine public space management, including creating options for aerosol art.

The analysis also reveals that the young people participating in this study do not necessarily want absolute power and control over deciding on options for public space. Rather, they merely want their opinions to inform local policy in this arena. Indeed, the findings of this research are contingent upon local authorities’ capacity to shape and mentor communities in understanding the graffiti phenomena. Clearly, graffiti needs to be first understood in the context of local communities before it can be ultimately controlled and managed.
Chapter One: Why Read the Writing on the Walls

1.1 Introduction

The image illustrated above demonstrates the work of the individual street artist engaged for this research. It underlines that there is a general acceptance of, and some admiration for, aerosol art in local communities. The photographic collation of the aerosol artist’s work was not put together by the artist him/ her self; rather, it was designed by a community member (photographer) who had been admiring the public art along a transport corridor in Knox, the research setting. Community appreciation for aerosol murals will be elaborated on in later sections.

This research examines the use of public space, as a medium for graffiti, aerosol art, and for other legitimate community activities. It investigates the views of young people (as prime users of public space) about graffiti and aerosol art. The Chapter commences with information about graffiti, art and related controversies. It presents the background and rationale for the research, as well as information about the research setting, and contextual information. Following this, the framework is introduced by exploring the objectives of the research (which examines the value of harm minimisation and youth inclusiveness approaches for local communities, using graffiti as the basis for debate). Finally, the Chapter explores contribution to knowledge, and then presents the structure of the thesis.
1.2 Defining Graffiti, Art and Controversies

1.2.1 Providing a working definition of graffiti:

Graffiti has been described in many different ways. It can be regarded as an art form (irrespective of whether the work is permission based), or alternatively a disrespectful act against others and their property (Collins, 1998). Graffiti is often considered a form of vandalism, or willful and criminal damage that is punishable by law (Collins, 1998). Illegal graffiti is generally recognised to cause damage or destruction to property through the use of written, scribbled, scratched or painted messages (Sharratt, 2002). Although illegal graffiti is understood to be markings applied without the permission of the affected property owner, the researcher acknowledges that some illegal graffiti can still have artistic vigour. However, illegal graffiti with aesthetic value will not be considered in the confines of this research. Aerosol art and street art (in the context of this research) is understood to be permission based. This allows for more lively debate about the suitability of street art in community spaces. (See Chapter 2.2.1 for detailed definitions that relate to graffiti).

Recently in Victoria, graffiti has begun to be understood according to the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)* and means to write, draw, mark, scratch or otherwise deface property by any means so that the defacement is not readily removable by wiping with a dry cloth. Similar to the working definition of graffiti provided above, this kind of marking, when conducted without permission, is illegal.

Even when permission based, legal street art can be controversial. A photographic exhibition celebrating street art was hosted by a Melbourne gallery in 2006 (Kelly, 2006b). Police were urged by Residents Against Graffiti Everywhere (RAGE), an outer South Eastern lobby group, to infiltrate the exhibition’s opening night and try to identify illegal graffiti artists by catching offenders admiring associates’ work (Kelly, 2006b). The exhibition organiser, Jake Smallman countered the view of RAGE founder Steve Beardon, arguing compellingly against RAGE that the exhibition was done legally, and that he was doing nothing wrong by photographing images of street art already in the public
Further, Mr Smallman said he believed it was important to document stencil graffiti on city walls because it was so transient (Kelly, 2006a). The fact that the exhibition took place demonstrates not only community tolerance for street art, but also the willingness of some community members to celebrate and admire it. However, controversies are highlighted by the contempt for the exhibition demonstrated by lobby group RAGE (Kelly, 2006a). This research argues for more permission based art, not simply more graffiti that has artistic merit, and it is important that this distinction is made from the outset.

1.3 Background and Rationale for the Research

In 2002, this researcher was employed by Knox City Council to implement, monitor and evaluate the Knox Graffiti and Vandalism Management Plan. The position involved the coordination and implementation of all actions outlined within the Plan. In coordinating the internal graffiti and vandalism reference group, liaising with other sections of Council, liaising with stakeholders such as Police, the local Magistrates Court and neighbouring municipalities, the researcher developed an increased interest in the phenomena of graffiti, and wanted to understand the various types and styles of it (such as aerosol art demonstrated in Figure 1.1), as well as the motivations for its application.

The researcher’s role at Council required reporting to Council on the progress of implementation, evaluation outcomes and recommendations of future directions for graffiti management. This included the development of crime prevention and community safety initiatives for specific problem areas (such as the community art implemented on the underpass above), and the implementation of safer design principles. To provide Council and community with crime prevention and community safety advice and solutions based on best practice models and strategies, a deeper level of understanding of graffiti and related theory was
required. The researcher and the Council agreed that there was scope to have
greater input in planning processes and better informed Council
recommendations about graffiti management and control. The undertaking of a
higher degree by the researcher could help enlighten these significant Council
decisions.

Furthermore, the researcher's role at Council required an up to date knowledge
and understanding of best practice crime prevention theories and practice, as
well as community development principles. In her role at Council, the researcher
was:

- conducting graffiti audits;
- implementing programs in partnership with other agencies; and
- promoting and facilitating community involvement in the management and
  prevention of graffiti.

It was important for the researcher to challenge traditional zero tolerance models,
popular in some contemporary graffiti management strategies at the local level
because of the controversy surrounding contemporary graffiti management
approaches (Municipal Association of Victoria [MAV], 2002).

Further, the researcher wanted to discover the value of alternative models,
particularly addressing the value of harm minimisation in the context of local
community and graffiti. A broader objective for the researcher, both in her
capacity as a practitioner and student, was to improve the effectiveness and
efficiency of existing processes at Council, and to find 'better ways of doing
things' (MAV, 2002). Both at the local government level and beyond, there is a
need to constructively challenge existing approaches to graffiti and crime
prevention management, to seek and embrace change and find innovative ways
of approaching service delivery. Critically, the undertaking of research created
opportunities to document, communicate and evaluate changes made in the
industry of graffiti management, and subsequently improve performance in that
arena.
1.4 Research Setting

The data collection for this research has taken place in the Knox municipality. Several factors need to be considered regarding the composition of Knox and young people in relation to graffiti. The municipality of Knox is, at its closest point, approximately 20 kilometres from the Central Business District (CBD) and at its furthest point just over 30 kilometres. The municipality consists of several outer suburbs and is also exceptionally spread out in comparison to many other municipalities, covering an area of 113.84 square kilometres (Knox City Council, 2004). The combination of these two factors appears to have created some infrastructural problems throughout the municipality in terms of public transport, provision of some services and the planning of open spaces. Over 300 minor parks, reserves and playing fields are scattered throughout the municipality (Knox City Council, 2004), many of which are lacking infrastructure and planning and are often massive fields of grass, with trees only in corners or around borders. This naturally provides a haven for graffiti activity, given that such parks tend to be poorly monitored.

There is an overrepresentation of some types of graffiti in the Knox local government area (see Figure 1.2), and this area replicates the research setting. The data collected concerns worker’s perceptions of areas where graffiti concentrations are high. Therefore it is important to reflect statistically how much graffiti there actually is in the suburbs of Knox (see Figure 1.3).
In the research setting (Knox City Council) and beyond, it is important that a Graffiti Management Plan demonstrates internal partnerships. For example, these partnerships should exist amongst Facilities and Assets, Community Services, Landscape Design and Parks and Gardens teams.
(Vassallo et al., 2002; Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002a). Externally, strong connections with Victoria Police, the Magistrates Court, justice and welfare agencies, transport and utility providers, traders, and residents are vital for minimising the perceived harm caused by graffiti. Any effort to curb graffiti levels beyond traditional non-tolerance approaches requires local practitioners to subscribe to evidence based research. Further, policy needs to be based on best practice, not traditional crime ‘reactionary’ models (Vassallo et al., 2002).

1.5 Contextual Information

The research attempts to investigate whole of community, multi-faceted approaches to reducing illegal graffiti, through discussions with young people and youth services providers. It also canvases young people’s views and opinions on a range of issues pertaining to graffiti and its related subcultures. The researcher intends to ‘hear the voice’ of sometimes marginalised, however key stakeholders such as young people, and convey their opinions about graffiti and its related activities. It is hoped that the research will provide a range of policy and practice approaches that will enhance future local strategic directions.

Though generally in their infancy, some community groups and governing agencies have begun to implement a range of strategies to minimise the impact of illegal graffiti. The majority of such programs have been developed and implemented in partnership with community agencies, businesses and residents. It is relevant to explore the outcomes of such approaches, to suggest future directions in similar policies. The research has also examined the capacity of relevant stakeholders, being Councils, policy makers, and community groups, to implement sensitively developed and empirically informed strategies with regard to graffiti. By examining graffiti management plans, particularly locally and nationally, it is anticipated that some best practice case examples can be demonstrated.

It is important to acknowledge the lack of research in existence that canvasses the views of young people about graffiti and aerosol art (Lewis, 2007). The most
prominent in existence at this stage, is Australian research titled ‘\textit{Graffiti Culture Research Project}’ undertaken by Halsey and Young (2002). Halsey and Young (2002) suggested that one of the most appealing aspects of graffiti is the social enjoyment attached to the activity. It is suggested that schools can be the catalyst for this graffiti related behaviour, involving either the defacement or perhaps beautification of school property. Halsey and Young (2002) argue that despite contrary beliefs, socio-economic background, illicit substances, rebellion and boredom are not key indicators for young people involving themselves in the graffiti sub-culture. Their research is unique because, controversially, it highlights the primary motivations for participation in graffiti may not necessarily involve anti social tendencies. Acceptance and recognition of others and the desire to have fun were seen as the main reasons for engaging in the subculture. Recognising and respecting the rules surrounding where graffiti can be placed was also deemed paramount (Halsey and Young, 2002). Halsey and Young (2002) support proactive graffiti interventions and management plans, as opposed to traditional crime reactionary models.

As referred to in the Definitions (1.2), there is increasing legislative activity relating to graffiti and graffiti management in Victoria. In America, the debate over preferred graffiti management approaches (see McDonald, 1999) has been taking place for over three decades, and to some degree this has influenced Australian culture (particularly in regards to the infiltration of the American Hip Hop culture). Until 2007, the only Australian State to enact graffiti specific legislation was South Australia. Victoria has recently adopted graffiti specific legislation, and this is discussed in Chapter 2.2.2. Arguably, the pressure to develop this legislation has resulted from increasing urban sprawl and a general non tolerance for the appearance of graffiti in the suburbs (Halsey and Young, 2002).

1.6 The Objectives and Research Question

The research project used an Interpretivist qualitative research paradigm, and a collective case study methodology as outlined by Stake (1994). The interest in
this study arose from the frequently held view that illegal graffiti is regarded as a blight on the community landscape, and that community perceptions of safety are influenced by the presence of graffiti in communities. For example, a Knox Councillor, Dinsdale Ward Councillor Adam Gill stated:

Residents have had a gutful of the graffiti scrawls throughout the streets. We have had enough of smashed bus shelters, and filth written on shelters and Council buildings.


This research sought to understand the complexity of graffiti and determine community tolerance for aerosol art.

The objectives of this research are:

- To discover the value of early intervention strategies, with a focus on graffiti. This involves examining notions of diversion and redirection as a response to minimising the perceived problems associated with graffiti\(^1\);
- To discover the applicability of the harm minimisation and zero tolerance debate for graffiti;
- To develop a comprehensive and working understanding of the importance of graffiti, and its related subculture for young people. This involves an examination of if and how young people develop an interest in, or attachment to, specific sites and facilities; and
- To identify best practice approaches pertaining to youth, public space, with particular regard to inclusiveness approaches in the context of graffiti.

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\(^1\) In order to understand the benefits of diversion and redirection, notions of zero tolerance will also need to be examined.
1.6.1 Research Question:

What is the value (in the City of Knox) of harm minimisation and youth inclusiveness approaches for local communities, using graffiti as the basis for debate?

1.6.1.1 Sub Questions:

- What are the issues facing youth engaged in the graffiti sub culture?
- How does the Knox community respond to the needs of young people who are engaged in experimenting with graffiti, or immersed in the aerosol art sub culture?
- How is graffiti best managed in areas where it is perceived to be a problem?
- What types of strategies do practitioners, policy makers, researchers, youth, and community groups consider best practice (with reference to preventative approaches and proactive programs, as well as more traditional approaches)?

1.7 Contribution to Knowledge

It is intended that the research should contribute to policy development related to graffiti. Graffiti has only begun to be examined in the context of management plans by peak bodies and local governments. The research is intended to provide a greater breadth of understanding about graffiti and its related subcultures in the City of Knox. It is also intended that there be scope to generalise findings from this research for other local government areas.

This research has examined the relevance of existing graffiti policies (including for young people) applied at a local level, and has provided strategic direction for local government policy makers working in the area. Evidence based research on ‘what works’ in terms of graffiti, prevention, management and control should also empower local communities as informed decision-makers. The research
contributes to knowledge in the harm minimisation field, with particular emphasis on graffiti related offences. It raises more questions about harm minimisation and young people for a broader spectrum of traditionally assumed ‘youth based’ problems, such as alcohol and drug issues. In short, the research assists in broadening the debate about graffiti in local communities.

1.8 Structure of this Thesis

Chapter Two reviews and analyses the pertinent literature for this research. It commences with detailed information on the nature of graffiti and examines current debate around the issue. It also provides information on programmatic responses (particularly locally) to the graffiti issue. Chapter Three discusses the theoretical framework and methodology of the research. Chapter Four and Five present the findings and discuss and analyse these findings. The final Chapter, Six, concludes the research with future policy and research recommendations.
2.1 Introduction

The management of graffiti needs to be based on evidence based research, as what works for one community may not work in another. For example, the graffiti ‘problems’ encountered in the inner city where politically motivated messages are evident, can be quite different to what is seen in the outer suburbs where opportunist scrawls are more prevalent. However, the composition of graffiti in any municipality can be quite diverse, with a range of types and styles evident (see photograph above in the City of Knox), each being driven by various motivations (Vassallo et al., 2002; Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b). Further, adding to the complexity of harm minimisation approaches to graffiti at the local level are embedded ‘youth inclusive’ models. These approaches underline an increasing demand for Councils to attempt to diversify opportunities for young people. Opting for inclusion, as opposed to social exclusion, non tolerance, and zero tolerance, suggests that young people are legitimate users of public buildings and open space. As stakeholders, young people should be influential in the design and management of these areas (McDonald, 1999; Crime
Prevention Victoria, 2002a). It has been acknowledged in Chapter One that the specific focus of the thesis is quite narrow, however, the ideas it locates this within are multiple and substantial, contextualised in this chapter according to harm minimisation, zero tolerance, social inclusion, and social exclusion.

This Chapter presents and analyses the pertinent literature for this research. The information is organised into themes. The first theme ‘Understanding Crime, Young People and Graffiti Perceptions’ includes information about some of the various types and styles of graffiti present in local communities, providing a background about the graffiti sub culture. This theme explores perceptions of crime relating to young people and community fear, and notions of space, place, graffiti and young people. Following this, the theme ‘Graffiti, Zero Tolerance, and Social Exclusion’ is explored. Zero tolerance manifests in these exclusionary approaches and creates an unsustainable environment to manage the impacts of graffiti. The third theme, ‘Harm Minimisation: Social Inclusion and Crime Prevention’ considers harm minimisation in relation to social inclusion, inclusive State perspectives and local policies targeted at managing graffiti. This section also considers young people and diversion. The Chapter concludes with the theme ‘Legal Reform: Who benefits?’ This theme unpacks the implications of the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic). This legislation was produced in a manner which was not consultative, and its impacts are contrary to best practise approaches underpinned by harm minimisation and social inclusion principles.
2.2 Understanding Crime, Young People and Graffiti Perceptions

‘Vandalism’, as depicted in Figure 2.1, is the act of destroying or defacing property, whether it is private or public. It is a criminal offence, and constitutes a form of wilful damage; yet punitive approaches have proved to be ineffective.\(^2\) McDonald (1999) considers that graffiti may not always be a form of vandalism, but either an art form or a quest for place and belonging in the context of an individual’s community. Similarly, Sharratt (2002), believes that through raising the self-esteem of offenders, promoting a sense of citizenship, active community participation and providing outlets for graffitists to practice their work legally, positive outcomes can be achieved for community amenity. Traditional crime models relating to graffiti and vandalism reiterate the notion that crime breeds crime (McDonald, 1999). That is, graffiti attracts more graffiti, and an act of vandalism such as smashing a window, as depicted in Figure 2.1, will incite similar behaviour such as more smashed windows and further defacements. This theory, as revisited over the past two decades, is commonly known as the Broken Windows Theory (Wilson and Kelling, 1982; McDonald, 1999)\(^3\). The theory implies that if a space ‘feels’ as if ‘nobody cares,’ then that space will continue to degenerate. Wilson (1998) described how graffiti locations are often

\(^2\) To achieve long-term results, it has been suggested that it is necessary to provide multifaceted strategies that also address social and economic factors (Sharratt, 2002; McDonald, 1999).

\(^3\) The development of solely-focused fast graffiti removal strategies across the world have been largely incited by this Broken Window Theory (McDonald, 1999).
characterised by the absence of anyone with responsibility or control over that location. These areas might include public areas, vacant lots, and schools that are not particularly well lit in the evening.

Conversely, if a space is well maintained and appropriately cared for, then it will appear less attractive to opportunistic vandals (Wilson and Kelling, 1982; McDonald, 1999; Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002a; Berger, Free, and Searles, 2009). Under Mayor Rudy Giuliani’s leadership of New York in 1994, William Bratton was appointed to lead the City’s Police Department (Berger, Free, and Searles, 2009). Bratton employed a strategy of aggressive law enforcement against quality of life offenses such as graffiti writing (Berger, Free, and Searles, 2009), and based his approach on the principles of the Broken Windows Theory as described by Wilson and Kelling (1982). Bratton’s aggressive stop and search techniques consequently led to a significant increase in citizen complaints about police brutality and harassment (Anderson, 1999, cited in Berger, Free, and Searles, 2009). McDonald (1999) has argued the Broken Windows Theory has proved to be a politically attractive approach to managing graffiti and vandalism because of its swift nature. Further, McDonald (1999) felt that the Broken Windows Theory could be considered a short term crime prevention principle (see also Berger, Free, and Searles, 2009). This is because the theory assumes ‘environmental determinism’, and that opportunities presented in the built and natural environment (Reppetto, 1976; Crime Prevention Victoria, 2005) influence individual decisions to engage in criminal behaviour (Reppetto, 1976). According to McDonald (1999), long term evaluation of ‘Broken Windows’ has indicated that the application of this theory (in isolation) can be an expensive and counter productive process. In contrast to the Broken Windows Theory, Sharratt (2002) describes a more pertinent approach, such as considering the social causes of crime, and the motivations for applying graffiti (see below for further information).

2.2.1 Defining the Indefinable

It is important that definitions pertinent to the graffiti sub culture are clarified from the outset. Some definitions relate to commonly known graffiti, others imply
artistic merit in the medium known as (legally commissioned) aerosol art. Further, this section highlights the hierarchy that exists within the graffiti subculture. The definitions of graffiti can be controversial, as is demonstrated below in the description of aerosol street art and gallery exhibitions of aerosol work. With the exception of Halsey and Young (2002; 2006), and as far as can be determined, limited research exists to support the artistic merit of legally commissioned street art.

Aerosol art has not been defined as illegal graffiti (see Chapter 1.2), and an assumption has been made that aerosol art is permission based (within the confines of this research). Aerosol or street art has its genesis in the 'Hip Hop' culture. ‘Hip Hop Graffiti’ (Figure 2.2) is generally found on train carriages, or properties adjacent to or facing train tracks. It may be found in highly visible locations such as rail locations and main roads (Csiszer, 2002). From the hubs for street art around Melbourne’s central business district, street art and graffiti dissipated to the suburbs along the north, south, east, and western rail corridors (Cubrilo et al., 2009). Despite a geographic divide, many suburban Melbourne graffiti writers formed strong bonds and friendships through their underground graffiti connections, sharing Polaroid pictures and amateur photos of their own pieces and other street art they admired (Cubrilo et al., 2009). ‘Hip Hop Graffiti’ art involves a complex and multifaceted hierarchy, as described below (Knox City Council, 2002). Aerosol art is generally considered a legitimate contemporary art form and this is illustrated by picture book and magazine publications celebrating aerosol works, and even street art shows (see Csiszer, 2002; Sharratt, 2002).

‘Murals’ and ‘Pieces’, short for the word masterpiece, are large-scale, multi-coloured features including characters, backgrounds and letters. These pieces, usually of large proportions, were put up to entirely cover the New York Subway system in the 1980's (Sharratt, 2002). Such pieces are a collaborative work, put together by groups of graffiti writers who have a great deal of mutual respect and trust in one another, and are able to work together (Sharratt, 2002).
Generally, extensive murals and pieces are not undertaken individually. Groups of artists are involved, who seek pleasure in ‘putting up’ their work and consider aerosol productions to be a personal gift to local communities (Melbourne City Council, 2008). According to Cheetham (1994), graffiti writers generally operate in underground groups. Cubrilo, Harvey, and Stamer (2009), three prominent professional graffiti writers, chronicle how the early eighties in Melbourne saw the birth of a music television generation heavily influenced by New York street culture, including break dancing, hip hop music, and graffiti. Parallel with the emergence of Melbourne hip hop writing was the rise in inner urban street art work, some of which was legitimised as legal murals in the late eighties (Cubrilo et al., 2009).

‘Hierarchy’ is the organisation of persons in a graffiti ranking system based on experience and personal attributes. Hierarchy is a key component of the ‘Hip Hop’ graffiti sub culture, and it is generally understood that cutting edge artists practice this form of graffiti. The more permanence and fame they receive, the further they progress in the hierarchy. Further, their notoriety in the culture can lead to significant demand for their productions as professional street artists (Kelling and Coles, 1996; Knox City Council, 2002).

The following definitions relate specifically to illegal graffiti (a form of vandalism as described in Chapter 1.2). ‘Hotspots’ are the areas regularly targeted by graffiti writers (Sharratt, 2002; Knox City Council, 2002). In a similar vein, ‘Bombing’, as depicted in Figure 2.3, is the targeting of a particular area or building by graffitists by throwing paint onto walls and surfaces (Sharratt, 2002). Such bombing activities could involve a collation of ‘Tags’.
‘Tags’, as depicted in Figure 2.4, are the writer’s name or alias developed over a period of time, and are generally illegible scrawls. It is unlikely individuals not involved in the sub-culture could identify them. Tags could be representative of an individual or gang. Most often, they deliberately involve misspellings, a social comment toward those they do not wish to be identified by (Knox City Council, 2002). Tags can be understood as the precursor to more skilfully developed aerosol art (Sharratt, 2002). Arguably, the aerosol art street culture may not exist if an artist does not first undertake an ‘apprenticeship’ in tagging (Halsey and Young, 2002). Regardless, this thesis condones only permission based aerosol art.

Crews of illegal graffiti taggers are the main groups who participate in physical violence and this is a result of rivalry and protection of territory. Halsey and Young (2002) discovered interconnectedness between belonging, risk, but also violence as accepted ‘norms’ of the graffiti culture. According to Collins:

Gang-related (crew) graffiti in this country developed with the increase in popularity of Hip Hop culture which had rapidly developed in Los Angeles and New York during the 1970’s. … three artistic strands … These were music, dance and graffiti.

The general response to graffiti in its illegal forms has been speedy removal, as described previously by the ‘Broken Windows Theory’ (Wilson and Kelling, 1982; Berger, Free, and Searles, 2009). The notion of the ‘Clean wall’, meaning the implementation of policies to ensure all structures are free of graffiti, was first favoured by New York’s governing bodies in an effort to curb their perceived graffiti problem, particularly along the subway (Sharratt, 2002; Berger, Free, and Searles, 2009). It became known as a rapid response and involved the removal of, or covering up of graffiti within twenty four to forty eight hours of appearance or reporting. The approach was one of intolerance (Sharratt, 2002; Knox City Council, 2002; Berger, Free, and Searles, 2009), and was effective only during periods of strict enforcement.

Making one site less attractive to relevant groups, so that they invariably seek out an alternative venue, is an approach to graffiti management which involves the displacement of perceived graffiti problems (similar to implications of zero tolerance strategies discussed below). Situational Crime Prevention tends to focus on reducing crime opportunities rather than on the characteristics of criminals or potential criminals (Crow, 1991; Clarke, 1995). It seeks to reduce opportunities for crime by increasing the associated risks and difficulties and reducing the rewards (Clarke, 1995; Lab, 1997). It has been argued by Repettoo (1976) that ‘environmental determinism’ is an insufficient explanation for the cause of human behaviour and does not have the capacity to confront the roots of crime. Further, it has been contended that physical design is a result, not a cause, of human behaviour (Repetto, 1976; Lab, 1997; Crawford, 1998). Critics of Situational Crime Prevention suggest that the design of the physical environment only has the potential to affect the type and perhaps location of crime (Rosenbaum, Lurigio and Davis, 1998; Wilson, 1998). Boba (2003) describes how problem analysis can be integrated with modern policing techniques, such as problem centred policing, in order to better understand graffiti and ultimately control it.
2.2.2 Young People, Crime, and Community Perceptions

2.2.2.1 Young People and Criminal Behaviour

Lamm Weisell (2004) describes the community misconception that graffiti is not a genuine crime problem. Further, she states that because of this misconception, the community does not believe police can control the issue. Research suggests that many young, first-offenders limit their offending to minor crimes such as property offences, including graffiti (Halsey and Young, 2002; Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002a; Dennison, 2006). Because graffiti can be considered illegal (Sharratt, 2002), criminal justice statistics should be considered in the context of this research.

Analysing statistics that relate to graffiti is a very difficult exercise, given that official statistics at a State level do not always break down offence types, age of perpetrators, or other demographic information. Whilst young people (10 – 24 years) comprise 20% of the Victorian population, they are consistently over-represented as both victims of crime (23%) and even more dramatically as offenders. For example, 53% of all offenders recorded by Victoria Police in 1999-2000 were aged between 10 and 24 years (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002a; Dennison, 2006). This level of analysis is no longer conducted by Crime Prevention Victoria, following the reorganisation and redistribution of the organisations funding in 2006, to focus on the development of punitive graffiti legislation (Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 Vic). It is worth noting that in the research setting, crime statistics from Victoria Police reveal that Knox has significantly fewer reported offences than the Victorian average (Knox City Council, 2004a). Despite this, in 2003-2004 there was a 15.5% increase in the number of reported property damage crimes (Knox City Council, 2004a). Overall however, there was a 15.9% decrease in the number of reported crimes across arson, theft, burglary, property damage, deception and handling of stolen goods offence groups (Knox City Council, 2004a).
The precedent in Australia for categorising graffiti as a separate crime is the *Graffiti Control Act 2001* in South Australia. Whilst other States have incorporated legislation around wilful damage to cater for graffiti, South Australia was the first State in Australia to formalise the *Graffiti Control Act 2001*. The South Australian statistics are currently more explicit in terms of their categorisation of graffiti related crimes. Before the development of this legislation, there were a total of 728 cases of adults and juveniles before South Australian Courts charged with graffiti vandalism. On average, 59.5% were juveniles. Of all cases, only 20% involved multiple charges (Hunter, 2001). Consideration must be given to the notion that graffiti is poorly represented in official police statistics as it goes largely unreported in many local communities.

Whether or not a young, offender becomes a repeat offender depends upon their success in moving through the transition from childhood to adulthood (for example a young person may lose interest in applying graffiti as they grow up). Coffield (1991) described how graffiti offered little material reward for young perpetrators, but did have meaning to them. Rather than being a senseless act of vandalism, applying graffiti can fulfil certain psychological needs for some younger individuals. According to Crime Prevention Victoria (2002b), the common determinants of success in making the transition to adulthood for young people include; the individual’s own self-image, the individual’s own feelings of safety, support and security, as well as the individual’s exposure to positive adult role models and mentors;

The level of exposure the individual has had to ‘risk factors’ such as low educational achievement, drug use, family abuse, disconnectedness or break-up, family financial difficulty, unemployment or inadequate housing.


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4 The researcher attempted to negotiate access to statistics for Victoria’s graffiti offences. Currently the Victorian statistics do not appear to break down graffiti beyond the context of property damage. It is anticipated that the way this data is organised will change with the further implementation of the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)*, which was fully enacted in 2008, see Chapter 2.5.
Conversely, a poor progression is likely to result in a young person entering adulthood unprepared for and unable to become an adult who engages in life in a positive and connected way. Rather than becoming a successful, happy, law-abiding and fulfilled adult, this young person is likely to suffer poor self-image and have an increased likelihood to continue to develop anti-social, violent or criminal behaviour (Richards, 1990; Vassallo et al., 2002; Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b). The extent to which young people see themselves as part of mainstream society also has an impact on their progression to adulthood (Richards, 1990; Dennison, 2006). Therefore, interventions which re-introduce offenders (young offenders) to mainstream society are highly successful in reducing anti-social behaviour, such as property damage (Richards, 1990; Vassallo et al., 2002, Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b). These interventions could be considered in relation to perceived ‘youth gangs’ described below.

2.2.2.2 Crime Perceptions and Implications for Young People

The most recent Perceptions of Local Safety (POLs) survey, the only localised perception of crime data source of its kind, was conducted across Victoria during February, March and April 2004 by Crime Prevention Victoria. It is important to note that prior to the implementation of the POLs survey (2004), Crane (2000) had already concluded that perceptions (of young people) are not always indicative of reality and he felt that local governments needed to work together with the youth community to promote their learning, working, engagement, and positive contribution to local neighbourhoods (Crane, 2000; Crane, 2005). The main objective of the POLs survey was to provide meaningful information regarding perceptions of crime and safety. This data is particularly useful as it can underline disproportionate fear in the community, in relation to crime, graffiti and young people (Crane, 2000b).
The survey asked a series of questions relating to crime and safety in their local Knox area. Some of the topics included were:\(^5\)

- changes in perceptions of crime, safety and road safety over time;
- feelings of safety in various locations or situations;
- the identification of local crime issues;
- sources of local information; and
- the identification of perceived unsafe locations and the reasons why these are seen as unsafe.

(POLS Survey, 2004).

The information collected through the POLS survey was provided to local Councils, local Police, local Safety Committees and informed the development of State Government policy (such as the afore mentioned Safer Streets and Homes Strategy [Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b]). The data could be used to support Councils to better understand community safety and crime prevention issues in the local area and to assist in the development of sustainable local solutions for priority issues, such as graffiti prevention (POLS Survey, 2004).

Through both anecdotal and statistical data, policy makers became critically aware of the unreasonable levels of fear being experienced by the community in terms of crime expectancy (Crane, 2000). In Knox, 36% of residents surveyed in the 2004 Perceptions of Local Safety (POLS) Survey perceived their local area as being less safe than it was five years ago. This compares with 22% in the 2001 survey (POLS Survey, 2004).

\(^5\) The most recent Perceptions of Local Safety (POLS) survey was conducted across Victoria during February, March and April 2004 by Crime Prevention Victoria. The main objective of the POLS survey is to provide meaningful information regarding perceptions of crime and safety in Victoria and at the local level that is both timely and relevant. The survey, which has been conducted over a number of years (1999, 2000 and 2001), collects data on community perceptions of crime and safety issues at the local level. Typically the survey includes a sample size of 100 people, aged 15 years and over, randomly selected by telephone and asks a series of questions relating to crime and safety in their local area.
Of concern to the study setting was that community activity centres (for example shopping centres, where young people can congregate) were perceived as the most unsafe places in Knox. Crane (2000) would argue that conditions like the ones described above create a wonderful opportunity to promote young people's engagement in their local community. Over half (53%) of Knox respondents indicated that there was a particular location in the area where they felt unsafe (POLS Survey, 2004), despite significant reductions in actual crime rates in the municipality (POLS Survey, 2004). To respond to crime misconceptions, such as those described above, Crane (2000; 2005) promotes community centric approaches which underline the disparity between crime perceptions and reality.

Property damage, specifically vandalism and graffiti, were perceived as the second largest crime problem in the Knox area. Compared to the metropolitan area and Victoria, a significantly greater percentage of Knox respondents considered this a crime of major concern. Despite this perception, graffiti and vandalism related offences remain some of those most underreported crimes (POLS Survey, 2004), and it has been speculated that it was this underreporting that influenced the development of the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)* (see Chapter 2.5).

Youths and youth gangs were also identified as a greater crime threat in Knox than across Victoria and the wider metropolitan area (POLS Survey, 2004). This is important because it underlines that negative perceptions of young people can influence people’s belief that they are more likely to be a victim of crime (see Table 2.1). Youths hanging around are not necessarily committing crime, and this activity is not recorded in the reported crime figures (Vassallo et al., 2002). Therefore, it is difficult to address perceived crime problems, such as young people, and it is impossible to measure how much crime 'youth hanging around' may indeed commit (Knox City Council, 2004a).

Higher than average proportions of Knox respondents (POLS Survey, 2004) indicated that they felt unsafe at railway stations (mentioned by 55%), local shops (28%) and car parks (15%). Arguably, these could be the same places
where young people choose to ‘hang out,’ and by virtue of their visibility, they tend to make communities feel unsafe (Knox City Council, 2004a). This is despite the fact that, as outlined previously, young people themselves are in fact most likely to be victims of crime. Specific ‘hot spot’ locations with the highest number of mentions were Boronia railway station, Knox City Shopping Centre, Knox ‘Ozone’ and the Knox / Bayswater Bike Track (POLS Survey, 2004). Ferntree Gully and Bayswater railway stations, Stud Park Shopping Centre, and the Ferntree Gully Hotel also featured, but to a lesser extent (POLS Survey, 2004).

Table 2.1  Perceived crime problems most often identified

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Problem</th>
<th>Knox</th>
<th>Metro</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism / Graffiti</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft of / from Cars</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youths / Youth Gangs</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Key priorities set out by the 2005 Knox Youth Council in their Youth Action Plan developed some thoughtful responses to perception of crime issues and young people (Knox Youth Plan, 2005). The Plan is designed, created, and produced entirely by Knox young people ranging in age from 12 to 25. Of the six priority areas stipulated in the Knox Youth Action Plan, one deals particularly with the image of young people. The Youth Council for Knox has articulated that young people want to challenge the negative stereotypes that exist about different groups of young people. Similar to Crane’s (2000) model for positive youth promotion, they have proposed ideas to place contributions in the Knox Journal Newspaper to raise awareness of youth issues including bullying, racism, and negative perceptions of youth in the community.

In the 2004 POLS survey, respondents were asked to identify their sources of information about their view of the level of crime in Knox. It is significant that 57% of respondents noted their source to be the local newspaper. This
underlines the need to work towards better crime and safety related articles with the local media, for the benefit of the whole Knox community to hopefully reduce their disproportionate fear of crime (Crane, 2000; Crane, 2005; POLS Survey, 2004).

Social Crime Prevention endeavors to confront the social causes of crime by addressing underlying issues such as fear of crime, often neglected by previous crime prevention approaches (Rosenbaum et al., 1998; Tilley, 2005; Goldsmith, Israel, and Daly, 2006). The State Government has also demonstrated a commitment to addressing perception of crime issues, as well as youth crime prevention, through the Safer Streets and Homes Strategy (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b). The Strategy focuses on four key areas (Vassallo et al., 2002; Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b), and one of these areas involves reducing offending and violence by young people (in the POLS survey, young people have been identified as influencing negative perceptions of crime). The Safer Streets and Homes Strategy (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b) is discussed later in the literature with reference to harm minimisation (see Chapter 2.3.4), and also aims to divert young offenders and potential young offenders away from the formal justice system, as well as improve community perceptions of young people (Vassallo et al., 2002; Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b). Notions of diversion and redirection shall be elaborated upon later in other sections, and are reflected by Rance (2003) in the quote below:

If you can't beat them (young people), just channel their creative energy is an approach that is winning support from businesses and graffiti artists alike….It's difficult to prevent graffiti altogether unless you ban all the products involved, but if young people are given opportunities, they have scope to change.


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6 The other priorities identified by Crime Prevention Victoria are; Improving Safety in Streets and Neighbourhoods, Preventing Family Violence, and Safety in the Home.
It has been described how a lack of community safety can have adverse impacts on the strength of a community, namely, a communities’ level of activity, confidence and resilience (Department of Victorian Communities, 2004). The activities of younger people obviously have a significant effect on the actual safety and perceived safety of communities. Graffiti and vandalism in their opportunistic forms (graffiti found in areas with minimal natural surveillance such as toilet blocks and parkland), have been generally identified as youth activities (Heywood and Crane, 1998, cited in Crane, 2000). These anti-social behaviours have been demonstrated to cost a community significantly, not only in dollars, but also in heightened fear of crime among the community and by reduction in overall quality of life (Heywood and Crane, 1998, cited in Crane, 2000). The issue of safety translates across all spheres of life and incorporates perceptions of feeling safe and the reality of being safe (Heywood and Crane, 1998, cited in Crane, 2000).

2.2.3 Space, Place, Graffiti and People

The graffiti sub culture has significant implications for individual citizens in the context of their community and in public space, thus related definitions must also be clarified. Marshall (1988) described the socially democratic State promoting citizenship as, “civil, entailing the freedom for the market economy and capitalism; political, facilitating democracy; and social, enabling people to participate fully in social life” (cited in Kingdom, 1992, p. 27). Citizens rights are a key argument when considering whether or not graffiti artists should freely ‘use’ property regarded as ‘public space’ to put up their work. This section shall endeavour to contextualise notions of graffiti by examining issues of young people, public space, and individual’s preferences for the use of public property.

Public Space refers to the open, publicly accessible places that individuals or groups can go in order to participate in activities that are formed in an ad-hoc or organised manner. Obviously, local communities are the key occupiers of public space (Ife, 1999). Public spaces are channels for people to share expression and communal feelings and it is important for all opinions to be expressed to
ensure equality, where all citizens are starting from the same point (Mill, 1989). Debate and discussion can then follow about how space is used and decisions are made (Carr, Francis, Rivlin and Stone, 1992). This is significant because very few town planning activities over the past 20 years have set out to achieve ‘belonging’ and ‘site attachment’ objectives for young people (Department of Victorian Communities, 2004).

Public space provides a chance for people to interact and socialise in a common place, and the opportunity for groups to form together to promote public action because it is owned by all. Occupiers of public space can vary depending on the particular resource concerned. Generally, stakeholders of public space will include a range of demographics, young and old, male and female, culturally diverse groups with various interests, and perceptions of community areas (Carr et al., 1992). These groups possess a critical intelligence as to how functional those facilities and assets are (Carr et al., 1992). Public space concerns areas such as playgrounds and other forms of recreational space (Carr et al., 1992). There is strong argument to suggest that nobody should have greater claim to a voice in the management of public space than young people, as they walk, ride, skate, and catch transport around in it (Crane, 2000; Crane, 2005).

The importance of contact with natural environments for human health and wellbeing is paramount, particularly for young people (Frumkin, 2001; Wilson, 2001). It is claimed by some that many psychological and physical afflictions are due to withdrawal from contact with nature (Hillman, 1995, cited in Roszak, Gomes, and Kanner, 1995). Despite its potential health benefits, increasing urbanisation is resulting in diminishing contact between humans and their environments, and health is being negatively affected (Hillman, 1995, cited in Roszak, Gomes, and Kanner, 1995). It is therefore particularly relevant that the needs and wants of young people be better accommodated in public space.

A report titled ‘Out and About’ (Heywood and Crane, 1998, cited in Crane, 2000) proposes a comprehensive and integrated framework for thinking about public space and young people. This suggests that public space issues essentially
arise out of the interface between key areas of process and activity which involve policy, planning and design, and management. The framework underlines that all of these areas need to be considered if tensions and issues commonly associated with young people’s use of public spaces are to be usefully responded to (Heywood and Crane, 1998, cited in Crane, 2000).

Community development responses to local issues, which engage the community in collaborative and inclusive approaches to planning and design, as well as youth friendly principles are generally very successful. The approaches might involve incorporating youth participation and consultation into city planning and refurbishment of public spaces (Heywood and Crane, 1998, cited in Crane, 2000).

Whilst consideration needs to be given to the property of others and the right not to have it defaced or damaged, graffiti cannot be considered a generic term for all work undertaken with an aerosol can, or indeed the work of predominantly young people. The aerosol art exhibition hosted in Melbourne in early 2006 demonstrates that aerosol artists are a range of ages, and their ‘appreciators’ are also a diverse group (Kelly, 2006a; Lewis, 2007). Despite this, for some individuals like Steve Beardon and the lobby group RAGE, aerosol work does not have artistic vigour (Kelly, 2006a) or aesthetic value in any capacity (irrespective of whether it is permission based). Clearly, lobby groups like RAGE would not appreciate aerosol art decorating any publicly accessible community spaces (Kelly, 2006b; Lewis, 2007). Irrespective of the passionate views of RAGE and their lobbying to shut down any celebrations of contemporary aerosol art, it is useful to remember those previously explained sub-categories which suggest diversity and sophistication in the type of work that can be produced with an aerosol can. As with other art forms, appreciation is perception based and audiences have the right to choose to enjoy the types of art they prefer, even in the public domain (Halsey and Young, 2002; Lewis, 2007).

Melbourne pioneered legal street art exhibitions in the late eighties, with renowned New York street artists expressing admiration for Melbourne’s
emerging style and culture (Cubrilo et al., 2009). However, Gill (2010) has highlighted in The Age Newspaper that eighteen months ago, Victorian Premier John Brumby and Tourism Minister Tim Holding condemned graffiti in Melbourne’s lanes as a “blight on the city” and “not the way we want Melbourne to be promoted to a global audience” (p.21). Despite this, Planning Minister Justin Madden and Arts Minister Peter Batchelor stood in Hosier Lane, a renowned street art location, as they announced a review on how to celebrate street art’s unique heritage value. Mr. Madden subsequently asked Heritage Victoria to investigate how the street art in Melbourne could be protected. Noting that the Lonely Planet tourism guide had nominated Melbourne’s street art as one of Australia’s top cultural attractions, Peter Batchelor, Minister for Energy, Resources, and the Arts also said that wall art found in city laneways and parts of St Kilda and the City of Yarra was an important contribution to the city’s artistic values (Northover, 2010). This directly contradicts the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic) which thwarts the capacity of young aerosol artists to produce street art in Melbourne.

Graffiti and community murals (in the context of this research, aerosol art) are examples of permanent change to public spaces which would be considered Situational Crime Prevention initiatives (defined in 2.2.1) if they did not involve the artists in planning and design. Such murals can positively or negatively contribute to the distinctiveness of an area, dependent upon an individual’s perception (Halsey and Young, 2002; Halsey and Young, 2006). The formation of youth groups to undertake illegal activity, such as graffiti, can indicate the diminishing opportunities for specific groups to legitimately express themselves in public areas (Farrington, 1996). Further, the health of individuals is promoted by social interaction, and Farrington (1996) suggests that the removal of public space creates sub-cultures that provide the same stimulation and relationship base as participation in social action. Notions of subcultures and criminal behaviour are explained below.

Strain theory was developed by American Sociologist Robert Merton, who suggested that dreams of opportunity, prosperity and freedom saturated the
‘American dream.’ (Merton, 1957). This ‘dream’ in turn becomes a significant psychological and cultural motivation. Merton (1957) also refers to the term ‘anomie’ as a dichotomy between what society expects of individuals, as opposed to what those citizens actually achieve and how they behave (Merton, 1957). If social structures are unequal, some individuals may be prevented from reaching their full potential or dreams. In turn, these individuals may resort to illegitimate means in order to realise their aspirations (Merton, 1957). For individuals interested in graffiti, legitimate opportunities for aerosol art may be difficult to locate, and they may pursue illegal graffiti because of the limited opportunities for permissible aerosol art. Further, these individuals may retreat, participating in deviant sub cultures such as gangs, or in the case of graffiti, gang related tagging (Merton, 1957).

Cohen (1966) also examined criminal behaviour as a result of limited opportunities for young people. Further, Cohen (1966) suggested that delinquency amongst lower class young people is a reaction against the social norms of the middle class. Young people from poorer areas, where opportunities for individual success are scarce, may adopt social behaviours specific to their local neighbourhoods, for example tough behaviour, disrespect for authority, and criminal behaviour consistent with the norms of a deviant sub culture (Cohen, 1966). These sub cultural theorists generally relate that small cultural groups fragment away from mainstream society to form their own values and meaning about community life (Cohen, 1966). This theory is consistent with the secrecy that surrounds illegal graffiti. According to Coffield (1991) the motives to apply graffiti could potentially include some type of anger or hostility towards society, and acts of vandalism could potentially fulfill a certain psychological need for individuals interested in tagging. The act of applying illegal graffiti might arise from individual boredom, a sense of resentment towards society, or a sense of personal frustration (Coffield, 1991).

Sociologist, Claude Fischer (1982) further developed the ‘subcultural theory’ and concluded that subcultures are a direct result of urbanism and their creation enables people to associate meaning to environments in city settings (cited in
This definition is pertinent because, as has been demonstrated, quite often graffiti is about establishing place or belonging in the context of the built or geographic environment, and graffiti writers have been identified as a subculture in their own right. Graffiti can provide the opportunity for personal pride in the creation of complex works of art, for example along train lines (Wilson, 1998).

![Image of Bridge Art - Hip Hop Style](image)

**Figure 2.5: Bridge Art - Hip Hop Style**

The Bridge Art (Figure 2.5) above also facilitated a ‘belonging’ space for those stakeholders responsible for producing the work. According to Kingdom (1992), concern remains that, “(d)evotion to one’s country, or the significance of this notion, declines in all social classes and in all age groups, especially among the young” (cited in Mouffe, 1992 p 18). Similar to the objectives of Social Crime Prevention (a theory to be further developed in relation to harm minimisation) to intervene early with young people and engage them in a positive and meaningful way, the bridge art project engages with young people and validates their ‘stake’ on community property (Lab, 1997; Crawford, 1998). A challenge remains to rediscover and reinvent the fundamental underpinnings of citizenship and social democracy whilst still recognising that society requires the inclusion of a social justice framework (Mouffe, 1992). Current political and social systems promote the privatisation of people’s lives, particularly in cities, where there is a focus on individual rather than collective concerns. Consequently, people of all ages become insular with decreased levels of communication, and therefore crime is perceived to have increased within communities (Mouffe, 1992; Tilley, 2005).
The mural above was produced by a group of local Knox artists to lift a derelict underpass, which was underused and perceived as an unhappy and unsafe area by neighbouring residents. Community art generally deters future graffiti attacks, particularly subsequent tagging or bombing (Knox City Council, 2002). This art project has been successful in empowering a group of young people to contribute positively in their local community (Crane, 2000; Crane 2005).

Involvement in political activity is an example of citizenship and the expression of collective concerns rather than personal needs (Carr et al., 1992). Graffiti might be deemed a political activity because of its hierarchy and complex sub cultures (McDonald, 1999). Inherent in this perspective is the assumption that access to public space for graffiti purposes is most often illegitimate. Graffiti is also considered to be a political issue because many stakeholders are intolerant of aerosol works in any capacity, such as the lobby group RAGE (Kelly, 2006b). The notion of dominance can lead to a lack of recognition for minority views and their preferences in deciding options for public areas (Halsey and Young, 2002; Halsey and Young, 2006). Arguably, it is these ‘minority’ views that have not been taken into account in constructing the new graffiti legislation for Victoria, to be examined later in the literature (Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 Vic). This Act limits opportunities for street art in public areas (Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 Vic).

Despite definitional debates of what constitutes art and graffiti, Carr et al. (1992), believes that there are limits to what the public will accept, and inconspicuous art (such as traditional painted murals depicting landscape) blending into the background is less controversial than prominent aerosol forms. They further state:

Making a personal statement or dedication by adding something to the public environment is most commonly seen as graffiti. Despite the unattractive quality of much graffiti, well-placed, carefully conceived graffiti murals (both sanctioned and unsanctioned) add a sense of place and distinctiveness.

The Burnley Abattoirs in Melbourne provided a disused meat works for writers to decorate an abundance of spaces and admire the work of their street artist peers. These works were also captured in the underground street art magazine, ‘Kings Way’ (Cubrilo et al., 2009). Because of the critical foundations formed by early Melbourne graffiti writers, there is now a dignified, internationally renowned street art culture in Melbourne (Cubrilo et al., 2009; Northover 2009). Further, Cubrilo (et al., 2009) articulates the popularity of graffiti in Melbourne in more recent decades, beyond amongst graffiti writers themselves. There is a broader audience, including readers of the Melbourne Age newspaper, who appreciate this kind of art work (Northover, 2009).

The challenge is to find an acceptable compromise to preserve democratic rights to self-expression, whilst not disenfranchising those who may use the public space for other activities (McDonald, 1999). Democratic space and individual rights are important arguments in relation to graffiti, as demonstrated in the quote above (Carr et al., 1992) and are based on ideologies about whether or not spaces are ‘accessible to all groups and provide for freedom of action’ (Carr et al., 1992).

Because of the debate ignited in many local communities around issues of young people and graffiti, it is necessary to examine some of the philosophical underpinnings and responses to these issues, including zero tolerance and harm minimisation.

2.3 Graffiti, Zero Tolerance, and Social Exclusion

Debate continues over the best way to manage and control graffiti. It is for this reason that a variety of theoretical and practical approaches to graffiti management must be outlined. Inherent in these approaches are notions of deviance and labelling (the Interpretivist paradigm and notions of labelling will be expanded upon in Chapter Three). Zero tolerance has been referred to in earlier sections, and is a more traditional crime ‘reactionary’ model. Its applications were underlined in rapid removal explanations and in reference to
‘Broken Windows Theory.’ In order to change current approaches to graffiti and perceptions of youth, consideration needs to be given to the role of young people in creating healthy, safe, and inclusive communities (McDonald, 1999; Berger, Free, and Searles, 2009). Investigation and consideration of young people and deviant behaviour reveals that much of what policy makers ‘deal with’ (particularly in relation to ‘move them on’ policies) results from poor understanding and intolerance of why young people ‘hang around’ in public space (White, 1998). Clearly, zero tolerance cannot be considered in isolation. Further, notions of social exclusion are inextricably linked to zero tolerance because of the theory’s concentration on eliminating a certain activity, like graffiti. In this vein, non-tolerance of street art can socially exclude aerosol artists.

2.3.1 Zero Tolerance: A ‘not here, not now, not ever’ approach to graffiti and vandalism.

Historically, zero tolerance interventions have been applied to manage drug problems. In the 1970s, Australia’s primary means of preventing drug-related offences was through a series of situational crime enforcement strategies (Mendes and Rowe, 2004). Most famous of which was zero tolerance, or ‘prohibition’, which, as the name suggests, was based on applying strict policing to a range of drug-related offences in certain areas (Ryder, Salmon, and Walker, 2001). All drug related crimes, according to zero tolerance theories, require immediate and strict responses, whereby no offence would be exempt from prosecution (Ryder et al., 2001). The rationale behind the ‘war-on-drugs’ mentality was to produce a tight system so that drug use would be eliminated after a short period of time, either through abstinence or the fear of being caught supposedly instilled in drug takers (deterrence). What zero tolerance created in this scenario was an un-sympathetic environment for drug users, where discretion was all but eliminated from policing, leading to huge number of people being imprisoned, many for minor drug offences (Mendes and Rowe, 2004).

‘Zero Tolerance’ (in relation to graffiti) is the implementation of approaches that do not tolerate the visibility of any graffiti within a local area. It is a concentration on restitution and punishment of offenders after the performance of an illegal
activity, such as the application of graffiti to property without permission of the relevant property owner (Ryder et al., 2001; Knox City Council, 2002).

Non tolerance, as the title suggests, has also been applied at a national level to driving offences. National drink driving policies operate on the premise that the fear of losing one’s license to drive should also have a significant deterrent effect (Ryder et al., 2001; Department of Human Services (DHS), 2001). Specific deterrence refers to the direct consequences and effects for an offending individual. It aims to prevent and preclude a certain behaviour that is unfavorable in a social and/ or legal capacity for that particular person (DHS, 2001; Mendes and Rowe, 2004).

General deterrence refers to the wider effects of deterring a behaviour in an individual. It relates to zero tolerance because it is about complete non-tolerance of deviant behaviour. Put simply, the wider general public will be suitably deterred from engaging in an illegal or anti-social behaviour, given the repercussions suffered by ‘exemplified’ individuals (Ryder et al., 2001; DHS, 2001). Different State governments in Australia dictate that they will not tolerate certain behaviours and adopt punitive approaches to enforce such measures, and this is then made explicit in the broader community. Watson (1996) described how many jurisdictions warn graffiti offenders about the cost of being apprehended. Warnings are intended to increase the perceived risk of detection and apprehension (Watson, 1996). In general, offenders perceive this risk as quite minimal (Watson, 1996). Governments commonly experience very limited success in implementing these approaches (Ryder et al., 2001; DHS, 2001). Zero tolerance has been considered in terms of it applications for ‘the war on drugs’ and drink driving, and will be examined below.

2.3.2 Graffiti Removal and Zero Tolerance

The relationship between graffiti and zero tolerance can be illustrated by case example. One predominant approach relates to a subway system in an American city. The train or subway had traditionally been used by ‘Hip Hop’ graffiti artists as a mode of transporting a tag all over a city. As indicated above,
Hip Hop artists strive for reputation, fame and advancement and need their work to be permanent and visible so others in the culture can appreciate it (Sharratt, 2002). In this instance, a zero tolerance based fast removal policy was somewhat successful in reducing the levels of graffiti in the subway system of this city. The removal of tags within 24 hours sent a strong message to Hip Hop graffiti artists, that permanence and exposure would not be found on the subway (Sharratt, 2002). Interestingly, the success of these programs did not account for the effect they had on graffiti in other communities, in terms of displacing the criminal activity to surrounding areas (Rosenbaum et al., 1998).

Displacement (similar to the example of location displacement described in relation to graffiti previously) refers to the tendency for crimes to be dislocated instead of entirely prevented (Cozens, Saville, and Hillier, 2005). There are five forms of displacement which include the modification of the time, location, method, target or type of offence the offender is motivated to commit (Cozens et al.; 2005, Rosenbaum et al., 1998). Displacement raises ethical issues as more affluent neighbourhoods are able to financially support the implementation of graffiti clean up programs, and this can displace property damage to less fortunate areas (Cozens et al., 2005; Rosenbaum et al., 1998). Indeed, a possible solution to this dilemma is to focus more closely on motivations of graffiti artists instead. Furthermore, displacement is almost impossible to measure as there is no practical means to quantify how much crime did not occur (Rosenbaum et al., 1998; McDonald, 1999).

Following ‘success stories’ such as the above-mentioned Subway case study, many local governments attempted to reduce graffiti through zero tolerance strategies which involved harsher local penalties for graffiti crimes and fast removal initiatives for all graffiti (MAV, 2002). A number of Melbourne Councils have opted for a ‘tough on crime’ approach, proving to be quite popular in the broader community. Although graffiti zero tolerance initiatives are generally in their infancy, they have unfortunately failed to minimise the social and economic impact of graffiti thus far. It could be inferred that some failures are due to the
high costs associated with implementing a uniform zero tolerance approach (Rosenbaum et al., 1998; McDonald, 1999; Knox City Council, 2002).

Casey Council, in outer eastern Melbourne, was one of the first Councils to trial a Local Law which precludes business owners and sales staff from storing or displaying aerosol products in spaces accessible to the public (Municipal Association of Victoria, 2002). Further, the local law prohibits the selling of spray cans to persons under the age of 18 (MAV, 2002). Therefore, the Casey approach embraces some of the more punitive elements (for example fines) that may contribute to a zero tolerance policy. The Casey model also encapsulates the eradication component of a traditional zero tolerance graffiti approach. Further, Casey Council has removed over 77,000 metres of graffiti from Council and privately-owned property (MAV, 2002). A cross reference database has been established and tags can now be matched with identified taggers, reinforcing this enforcement approach.

The introduction of a graffiti reporting hotline 1800 826 325 (or 1800 VANDAL) has further assisted Casey Council to address their graffiti eradication targets (MAV, 2002). The graffiti is removed at no charge to the owner occupier of a given property. This program is delivered with the support of significant funding from Council that was raised with a special rate levy (MAV, 2002). No formal evaluation however has been provided to date on the success of Casey’s zero tolerance efforts.

By comparison, Knox and other Councils (such as Maroondah and Whitehorse in Victoria) have, since 2002, supported the ‘Retailers Kit for Responsible Sale of Solvents’ disseminated by the Department of Human Services (Municipal Association of Victoria, 2002). Under Victorian legislation, stores already have the right not to sell solvents to particular customers. Additionally, retailers have the right to withdraw particular items from sale (Municipal Association of Victoria, 2002).

The shortfalls of fast removal or non tolerance approaches may be attributed to the fact that much of the graffiti present in local communities is the work of
opportunistic taggers (McDonald, 1999; Knox City Council, 2002). This group may engage in graffiti simply because it is ‘dark’ or there is ‘no one around’. Unlike Hip Hop graffiti, Taggers do not strive for permanence or fame, therefore fast removal will not affect their behaviour (McDonald, 1999). The installation of lights and security cameras, in contrast, could make a specific hotspot less appealing (Situational Crime Prevention), and it is likely that taggers would cease the activity in that particular location (Halsey and Young, 2001). The retrofitting of certain facilities to prevent crime, along with other community safety measures will be discussed later in greater detail. These approaches involve notions of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design and Safer Design Principals.

In the lead up to the Commonwealth Games, the Victorian State Government invested more than $1 million into cleaning up Melbourne streets in order to rid Melbourne of its present graffiti problem (Agg, 2006). The crackdown on graffiti in Melbourne led to 19 arrests, with several individuals charged with various types of offences, including criminal damage and possessing articles for criminal damage. During this time the media (mostly local) commenced campaigning to ‘wipe out graffiti.’ Weekly articles were published in newspapers (for example the Knox and Maroondah / Lilydale Leader) to generate broader community awareness of the graffiti problem, and to supposedly devise ways in which community could help reduce its presence in the community. Many local residents surveyed conveyed that the perceived trouble spots were around train and bus stations, as well as local parks and reserves. They also demanded zero tolerance strategies to assist in the ‘war’ on graffiti (Maroondah Leader, 2006).

If not for the interest of a Melbourne train driver with a secret interest in graffiti during the eighties, many of the images in Kings Way- The Beginnings of Australian Graffiti: Melbourne 1983 – 1993 would not have been captured for appreciation by a mainstream audience (Northover, 2009). Because of his role operating trains, the driver was able to capture some of the graffiti scene’s most renowned works, reportedly stopping trains at times to capture the colourful images that mesmerised him along the rail corridors (Northover, 2009). His perspective provides a direct contrast to those community members who
perceive rail corridors as problematic from an illegal graffiti perspective (Northover, 2009).

At the time of the Commonwealth Games, the Melbourne Herald Sun (2006) encouraged readers to write into the paper and express their point of view on graffiti, including what they felt should or could be done to combat graffiti. Of those compelled to express opinion, some were particularly retributive in what they perceived to be an appropriate punishment for graffiti perpetrators. One Herald Sun ‘opinion’ contributor suggested that individuals should be placed into ‘special uniforms’ so that the public could identify (and perhaps shame) them. They also expressed that the perpetrators of graffiti should be made to clean it up (Herald Sun, 2006). Inevitably, these types of community opinions elicited passionate debate on graffiti as a community issue, but also led to community perceptions that graffiti was an offence spiraling ‘out of control.’ Arguably, this level of community angst about graffiti could have also served as a precursor to the development of the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic), which is discussed below. Duffee and Maguire (2007) have described how ‘get tough’ legislation can generate advantages for policy makers irrespective of the legislation’s actual impact or degree to which it is enforced.

Perpetuating graffiti tensions (as outlined above) encouraged populist opinion that the State Government should employ zero tolerance strategies to combat graffiti (Herald Sun, 2006). Despite embracing graffiti tolerance zones and legal locations for graffiti murals in 2005 (Herald Sun, 2006), Melbourne City Council elected to employ strategies of a zero tolerance genre to coincide with Melbourne’s hosting of the Commonwealth games in 2006. These zero tolerance strategies included using Corrections clients along the rail corridor for rapid removal of graffiti at the city’s gateways (Maroondah leader, 2006). This example highlights the political tensions of graffiti management and the capacity of policy makers to alter theoretical approaches to graffiti, according to local political conditions of the day.
2.3.3 Young People, Zero Tolerance, and Social Exclusion

The ‘Hanging Out: Negotiating young people’s use of public space’ report conducted by Rob White details the issues that concern young people and public space from a youth crime prevention perspective (National Crime Prevention (NCP), 1999). White’s (1999, cited in NCP, 1999) approach embraces youth leisure opportunities in public spaces as a diversion from negative, antisocial or criminal behaviour rather than coercive intervention by authorities and social exclusion (for example, curfews). White (1999 cited in NCP, 1999) interviewed young people, including those from minority groups (young women, rural and indigenous young people), older adult users of public space and commercial stakeholders, and concluded that developmental approaches to youth crime (as opposed to social exclusion) are a more viable solution to perceived issues of antisocial behaviour, as young people are then seen as legitimate users of public space.

Local press can be notorious for scrutinising the presence of young people that occupy public space. Moreover, instances of illegal graffiti are inevitably inferred to be the resultant of a ‘youth problem’. While there are obvious examples of antisocial behaviour by young people there is also a lack of understanding and intolerance exhibited by the ‘wider community’ (White, 1990, p.37):

Youngsters who hang out at an abandon Milk bar in the Colchester Park estate say that they aren’t doing anything wrong and want people to leave them alone…If there was somewhere else in that area for them to hang out in or something else to do, they wouldn’t need to stay there at the Milk bar.


The extract above demonstrates that there are limited opportunities that offer young people a sense of place and belonging to their local areas, and often young people are socially excluded from community life. It also infers that a lack of provision for informal youth facilities by local policy makers. Young people have different needs and motivations to other members of our community (and they are anything but a homogenous group). This is exemplified by the diversity
that exists in the graffiti sub culture alone. Councils and agencies often have difficulty consulting with young people because of their wide variation and accessibility and, as such, encounter difficulty in developing inclusive and healthy policies and practices (McDonald, 1999). However, it is clear from the scenario described above that exclusionary policies can result in young people creating their own recreation options, sometimes with detrimental impacts on community perceptions of safety.

Responding positively and effectively to youth issues, particularly pertaining to graffiti, not only requires a timely response but also long term and sustainable solutions. The promotion of inclusiveness and tolerance for the needs of all people across the community is one of the key challenges for policy makers and local authorities (NCP, 1999; White, 2001; Cunneen and White, 2011). To effect sustainable change in the context of local communities, all areas of government must first gain knowledge and develop understanding of the underlying issues. Local Councils have a major role to play in the management of public space and provision of support to local communities. They are the closest level of government to local people and are often expected to have the answer for every community problem. This is particularly pertinent for graffiti and aerosol art opportunities in local communities (NCP, 1999; Knox City Council, 2002).

Local authorities can be characteristically reactive, responding to problems with quick fix simple solutions (as detailed previously in the Broken Windows Theory). Zero tolerance graffiti interventions can be perceived as ‘hard line’ politically attractive approaches, palatable to the community because of their apparent ‘tough on crime’ stance (NCP, 1999). Many of the issues facing our local communities today are anything but simple and require a different level of understanding if we are to deliver appropriate, effective and sustainable solutions (International Association for Public Participation, 2006):

Art has forever been at odds with the general public. Whenever it challenged and provoked new thought and outmoded societies, there have been outraged cries of disbelief... Open-mindedness requires a non-judgmental approach... We need to be shaken out of our comfort zones and become aware of our
surroundings, so as to come to appreciate all the sights, sounds, colours and ways of being. In this we can truly experience our entire community.


Hasting’s (2002) view underlines the capacity of aerosol art to move beyond the traditional realms of community art on public infrastructure, and its capacity ‘to shake things up.’ Interestingly, examples of press publications condoning legally channeled aerosol art or positive youth community engagement, are far outweighed by populist headings of ‘youth crime waves.’ Increasingly, local authorities are receiving reports of issues in streets, parks and other areas of public space (White, 1998; Krelle, 2006; Biviano, 2006; Cunneen and White, 2011). In many instances complainants are concerned about antisocial behaviour and implicate young people as the perpetrators (White, 1990; Biviano, 2006). The requested solution often involves increased policing, installing lighting or removing existing facilities (Lab, 1997; Crawford, 1998). While these interventions may appear to be effective in the short term, the activities can simply displace the perceived problems of anti social behaviour (Tilley, 2005), rather than solving them (notions of displacement have been linked to Situational Crime Prevention, discussed below).

Wood (2002), a local Knox resident, underlines the complexities involved in the graffiti and art debate and demonstrates that graffiti can be aesthetically pleasing. Moreover, Wood (2002) credits the community for knowing the difference between graffiti art and tagging:

In your previous edition, Cr Boyle claimed that Aerosol Art is always considered graffiti by the community and we just need to get rid of it. This is a gross generalisation. Having spent my childhood in this area, it is easy to tell the difference between a marking that defaces public property and the brilliant piece of art that represents a section of the Knox community…the artists should be proud of their work, as should the community to which these artists belong.

Fast removal graffiti management approaches (similar to notions described in the Broken Windows Theory) can tend to prevail over more strategic interventions that advocate for the needs and wants of young people in public space (McDonald, 1999; Sutton, Cherney and White, 2008; Berger, Free, and Searles, 2009). Young people are transient and cross borders, and inconsistencies between policies from one municipality to another can only serve to fuel young people’s mistrust in local authorities (NCP, 1999). Unfortunately, current practice in Australian youth policy reveals the rather sporadic implementation of ‘now and then’ youth activities which have little bearing on young people’s recreational choices in the long term (White, 1990). To develop solutions that are less about ‘oiling the squeaky wheel’ and more about healthy, tolerant and inclusive neighbourhoods for young people requires time and research investment. Indeed, it is difficult for some practitioners to deviate from being controlled by the needs of their organisation and the constraints and demands of the ‘vocal minority’ (McDonald, 1999 p.39). Arguably, this same ‘vocal minority’ has been prioritised and catered for in the development of the problematic Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic), to the exclusion of young people with a stake on community property.

2.4 Harm Minimisation: Social Inclusion and Crime Prevention

Historically, harm minimisation aimed to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of the misuse of a certain substance, predominantly illicit drugs. More recently, it has been applied to other ‘morally condemned’ activities (Walter, 1999). The approach lends itself to minimising or limiting the hazards or harms at a community level. It focuses equally upon the individual with the problem and the issue itself, demonstrating principles of social inclusion. Further, harm minimisation policies are not necessarily concerned with eliminating certain activities (Walter, 1999; Biviano, 2006), rather these approaches attempt to promote more healthy and inclusive communities. Four main principles underpin harm minimisation at a State level. These principles were developed under the 2001 Victorian Harm Minimisation Policy (DHS, 2001) and thus reflect the priority for decentralisation. They are:
- to put people first and not to over prioritise institutions or systems;
- to ensure a fairer distribution of limited resources;
- to obtain value for the coveted tax payer dollar; and
- to provide individuals with a better health status

(DHS, 2001).

The potential strategies in a community-based harm minimisation program are numerous, some include legislative and regulatory provisions and are commonly associated with the role of local government, others such as school-based education or parenting forums may be one of many interventions in a broader community-based program (King and Richards, 2003).

Typically, community-based harm minimisation projects in Australia tend to be much smaller in scale and there is evidence that they are often time-limited due to on-going funding difficulties (Midford et al., 2001 cited in King and Richards, 2003). It is important that this section considers specific policy and program initiatives that attempt to address young people, their recreational choices, and opportunities for social inclusion and participation in community areas. The policies presented demonstrate varying levels of success in engaging with young people and in ultimately demonstrating harm minimisation outcomes.

2.4.1 Harm Minimisation and Social Crime Prevention

There is little material in the literature that links harm minimisation to the graffiti debate, however an analysis of local press conveys a correlation:

Many young people regard aerosol art as a legitimate art form and they are looking for legitimate opportunities to express themselves...Council's role is to find a balance between wider community views and expectations and to engage the area's youth in meaningful activities and projects.

The term harm minimisation has been applied across a variety of disciplines, however in Australia it is predominantly used in the drug sphere. The willingness of some State governments to adopt a harm minimisation approach to drug issues has been a direct result of the climate created by illicit and licit drugs (Mendes and Rowe, 2004). The scope of harm for drug use identified was deemed beyond criminal realms. Rather, both psychological and physical consequences of drug misuse were identified, and it was clear that punitive approaches could not solve these complex issues. Thus minimising the harm was the next step for human service professionals (Walter 1999; DHS, 2001). The Victorian Government identified the psychological, physical and social consequences of drug use as important for both for individuals and families (DHS, 2001).

Identifying the ‘harm’ caused by illegal graffiti is imperative for deciding a framework of service delivery at a local level for graffiti policies. Contemporary harm minimisation strategies are concerned with ensuring access for all (DHS, 2001). They aim at eliminating barriers to services for young people (for example, young people attempting to negotiate access to public space to create aerosol murals), for those with linguistic differences, for those with cultural barriers, and for those previously unable to gain access to existing services (Walter, 1999).

In contrast to zero tolerance strategies that aim for immediate impacts in removal of graffiti, harm minimisation is concerned with early intervention and prevention at a local level (Biviano, 2006). This might involve the development of a framework for the provision of services or setting a standard of specifications to ensure consistency of services (DHS, 2001). In the context of graffiti related policies, harm minimisation could be concerned with: information and referral services for young people, strengthened community based treatment services, training for local aerosol artists, and community education and information campaigns about graffiti management, via local media (DHS, 2001).
Empowering young people as decision makers is a critical approach to developing a successful graffiti management strategy. The Social Crime Prevention model represents a shift in focus away from victimisation (Mulroy, 1997; Shaftoe, 2002). Further, according to social crime prevention theory social and economic surroundings have some bearing on criminality, including for young people (Rosenbaum et al., 1998). The underlying assumption is that crime is not caused by the physical structures in the environment such as opportunistic vandalism in public space; but by a vast range of social problems (Rosenbaum et al., 1998; Crane, 2000). Effective Social Crime Prevention involves a series of interventions, enabling people to lead a life where they do not have the inclination, motivation or need to offend against others (Lab, 1997; Crawford, 1998; Shaftoe, 2002). In colloquial terms, Social Crime Prevention ensures that babies grow up to be considerate children, pro-social adolescents and responsible adults (Lab, 1997; Crawford, 1998; Shaftoe, 2002).

The Social Crime Prevention approach has identified a number of social causes of crime such as health, family life, education, housing and employment, similar to the precursors for crime outlined by Crime Prevention Victoria (Rosenbaum et al., 1998). Social Crime Prevention concentrates on constructing cost-effective interventions which address these issues by targeting vulnerable groups, particularly youth (Hughes, McLaughlin and Muncie, 1998; Rosenbaum et al., 1998). Interventions are situated within various forms of support such as family support services, community-based programs, comprehensive partnerships, and employment and training (Hughes et al., 1998; Rosenbaum et al., 1998). Shaftoe’s (2002) perspective aligns with Mulroy (1997) and underlines the importance of support services and long term investment for Social Crime Prevention to be effective. However, Shaftoe (2002) also stipulates that citizens will be more inclined to do the right thing if the social, economic and political system they live in is perceived as fair and just, inferring the environment can still have some bearing on criminality.

Mulroy (1997) measured the effectiveness of community-based service network support programs that attempt to prevent crime (particularly child abuse and
neglect). His study highlights the effectiveness of interagency approaches in preventing crime and bears some relevance for graffiti related offences. For graffiti management interventions to be effective there must be cooperation between all levels of government, as well as private infrastructure owners, including road and rail providers (Knox City Council, 2002). Mulroy’s (1997) study also found that support from multiple organisations required partnerships between businesses, social service agencies, community leaders, health professionals, educators and residents (Mulroy, 1997). Unfortunately, due to relatively recent emergence of Social Crime Prevention, there is a general lack of research which endorses its virtues in an enduring way (Shaftoe, 2002).

The fact that graffiti is an unlawful, criminal act, not permitted on private property without owner permission remains undisputed. Despite this, there are opportunities within communities to create a more positive, welcoming environment through implementing the principles of harm minimisation (Walter, 1999). The following section describes how physical changes to infrastructure can complement early intervention and prevention principles set out in harm minimisation theories.

2.4.2 Harm Minimisation, Crime Prevention and Design

Crime Prevention can be generally described as a form of harm minimisation because it involves strategies to reduce the incidence, severity and impact of crime through understanding and explaining types of crime (Crow, 1991; Gardner, 1995). An example of such strategy is ‘Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design’ (CPTED). This is an approach suggesting that specific crimes can be effectively reduced by modifying the physical environment (Gardner, 1995; Rosenbaum et al., 1998; Sutton, Cherney, and White, 2008). CPTED is based on the philosophy that proper design and effective use of public and private areas can lead to a reduction in the incidence and fear of crime, thus contributing to the wellbeing and safety of the community (Crow, 1991; Knox City Council, 2002). The Chula Vista Police Department (1999) highlight the value of increasing natural surveillance, or the opportunity for natural observation by community members around graffiti prone areas. This value is further increased
when coupled with lighting enhancements (Chula Vista Police Department, 1999).

Although more reminiscent of Situational Crime Prevention (Chapter 2.2), CPTED can be based on early intervention principles which aim to prevent crime from occurring in the first place (Crow, 1991; Farrington, 1996). CPTED works most effectively with multi level timeframes for implementation, meaning crime should be designed out incrementally (Farrington, 1996; Lab, 1997). Strategies in the CPTED approach encourage community influence, such as via passive surveillance, to reduce crime. This concept is similar to the principles underpinning the definition of harm minimisation which underline the importance of putting ‘people first’. CPTED creates an awareness of how individuals can alter their physical environment to discourage criminal acts, such as graffiti (for example the dummy cameras in Figure 2.6).

![Figure 2.6: Dummy Cameras are an example of CPTED application](image)

The use of lighting and landscaping, and appropriate security devices are ways individuals can take responsibility for their local environments and reduce the incidence or perception of crime (See Figure 2.1 for an example of the type of opportunistic vandalism that this approach attempts to prevent). Designing community spaces so that they will not fall prey to crime, as opposed to fast removal and repair responses described under the Broken Windows Theory, has more value in reducing the likelihood of graffiti and vandalism occurring again (Farrington, 1996; Lab, 1997; Berger, Free, and Searles, 2009).
2.4.3 Harm Minimisation: Relevant Policy at a State level

This section explores socially inclusive models for graffiti management and control, including community centric approaches touted as best practise by the State Government. Safer Streets and Homes (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b) was part of the Victorian Government’s ‘Growing Victoria Together Policy’ framework, focusing on making streets, homes and workplaces safer. Safer Streets and Homes (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b) addressed the impact of crime; evidence of viable solutions to local crime concerns; and the evaluation of programs to provide evidence of achieved results (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b). The strategy aimed to reduce the opportunities for crime (Situational Crime Prevention) and the underlying motivational causes of criminal and anti social behaviour (a Social Crime Prevention, harm minimisation approach). Along with other agencies, the role of local councils was to improve the way communities were responding to offending and to take action to intervene at an earlier stage to prevent future offending behaviour (Tilley, 2005).

Safer Streets and Homes (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b) also encouraged the identification of issues through community consultation and multi-agency information sharing and interaction. It developed integrated municipal profiles and action plans to identify and address local priority community safety issues, as well as complementary local action plans which had the capacity to evaluate and report on outcomes (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b). For the first time, the State Government provided a framework for tackling crime and its causes at the local level, and municipalities appreciated the practical nature of the strategy (Knox City Council, 2002). The strategy aimed to promote and strengthen links between local communities, government, local police and local business (see also the earlier definition of harm minimisation in 2.3.3). It also facilitated the work of locally based task groups convened to analyse specific issues and places (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b). Of critical importance was that the State Government funded a central point of contact based at the Department of Justice, providing a point of reference for local government practitioners and community planners about the strategy. Following a restructure in 2005, there
was no longer an officer based at the Department of Justice to inform local practitioners about how to implement the strategy, and various local government areas across the State expressed their disappointment in losing this critical resource (MAV, 2006).

Safer Streets and Homes (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b) focused on improving safety in streets and neighbourhoods by:

- Partnerships at the local and State level;
- Safer environmental design;
- Targeting specific crime problems and the places where they occur;
- Focusing on inclusive strengths that aim to strengthen community capacity; and
- Improving the safety and access of public spaces and amenities.


- Increasing community usage of public places (daytime and evening);
- Achieving connection and integration of streets and public spaces;
- Reducing opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour; and
- Improving the quality of life for the community by improving perceptions of public places.
Whilst Safer Streets and Homes (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b) has been described above as embracing the principles of Social Crime Prevention, it is clear that the Safer Design Guidelines, a sub component of the strategy, focus more on designing out crime, and elements of Situational Crime Prevention (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b; Crow, 1991; Lab, 1997). In contrast, Rosenbaum (et al., 1998) has described confronting the social causes of crime by addressing underlying issues such as fear of crime, as a more thorough approach.

### 2.4.4 Young People and Harm Minimisation Policy in Victoria

The State Government has also set out to embrace the principles of harm minimisation in scoping State youth policy. In 2002, the Victorian State Government launched, Respect: The Victorian Government’s Vision for Young People. This document serves as a framework for policy and program development and outlines the Victorian Government’s commitment to working with, and for, young people by employing a strategic interventionist approach (cited in Department of Victorian Communities, 2004). Whilst ‘Respect’ builds on the Growing Victoria Together Policy (2001) and complements other whole-of-government initiatives, it is unclear whether the document enables linkages to all areas of youth policy (Growing Victoria Policy, cited in Department of Victorian Communities, 2004; Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2006). Further, the document does not set out how the State Government might achieve Social Crime Prevention objectives, similar to those described by Rosenbaum (et al., 1998).

The policy framework is structured around the four key themes of:

- Involvement;
- Learning and Working;
- Support; and
- Celebration.

(Growing Victoria Policy, cited in Department of Victorian Communities, 2004).
The key aims of the framework include expanding opportunities for young people’s participation in their communities: enhancing young people’s experiences of, and pathways between, education and employment; providing support for young people’s positive health and wellbeing; assistance for young people experiencing disadvantage; and celebrating the personal and community benefits from young people’s contribution to society (Growing Victoria Policy, cited in Department of Victorian Communities, 2004). Again, whilst these aims are complementary of Social Crime Prevention, it is not clear how the success of these aspirations can be measured (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2006). Social Crime Prevention is often scrutinised (Shaftoe, 2002) because it is difficult to demonstrate the benefits of this approach in the short term. Hence documents like Respect: The Victorian Government’s Vision for Young People are not often rigorously evaluated and loose credibility as a valid crime prevention intervention (Growing Victoria Policy, cited in Department of Victorian Communities, 2004).

2.4.5 Intervening Early: Diversionary Graffiti Theories

There are a range of options and strategies to respond to young people and graffiti. Efforts that focus on diverting prolific graffiti offenders from illegal behaviour show the most promise, because typically a minority group are responsible for large amounts of illegal graffiti (Lamm Weisell, 2004). Diversion programs are also a form of early intervention as they aim to break the cycle of re-offending and crime (Farrington, 1996). Whilst the State Government considers diversion programs to be of a harm minimisation genre, it is important to note that these initiatives are most often court mandated and are therefore, only relevant following an offence or incident. This understanding deviates from traditional understandings of harm minimisation and Social Crime Prevention, which aim to eliminate the causal factors which contribute to an individual’s decision to engage in criminal behaviour (Rosenbaum et al., 1998; Hughes et al., 2002). Diversion programs can also offer alternative sentencing options to low level offenders, and options cover a range of conditions to which offenders must agree with in order to demonstrate their capacity for rehabilitation and remorse (Farrington, 1996). Programs can include a combination of medical treatment,
counseling, anger management, compensation, apology to the victim (for example to victims of property damage, such as graffiti), community work, mental health support, curfew and so on. These options can be available at the discretion of a participant, or might be included as a compulsory program condition. They attempt to address underlying issues for clients such as unemployment, which may contribute to their engagement in criminal activity (Mendes and Rowe 2004).

Diversion, in the context of local graffiti initiatives, most often involves clean ups facilitated by low level offenders in a supervised capacity. This might involve the painting over of hot spot locations in a given locality. It could also involve more creative mediums which result in greater harm minimisation outcomes, such as the creation of a legal and supervised mural via the cooperation of youth counsellors and community support networks as described above (Knox City Council, 2002). Theoretically, diversion represents a whole of government response to young people, which includes Youth Service Professionals, Criminal Justice Practitioners, the Courts, Victoria Police, and Community Safety Networks (Hunter, 2001). In essence, diversion programs targeting graffiti aim to discourage recidivism, redirect anti-social behaviour, provide adequate support networks for young people, and build practical skills (Knox City Council, 2002).

In 2002, the Victorian Government developed Grappling with Graffiti: A Graffiti Management Strategy for Victoria (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002a). The strategy identifies that managing graffiti requires a multifaceted and whole of community approach. It also underlines that local solutions to local issues are preferable to a ‘one size fits all’ strategy (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002a). Notions of diversion and youth engagement programs were also identified as particularly important in ‘Grappling with Graffiti’ (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002a). Despite these credible objectives set out by the Victorian State Government, positive youth engagement and diversion away from the criminal justice system has clearly not been prioritised in their development of the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic). The legislation does not embrace the ‘prevention and
early intervention’ priorities of harm minimisation, and will not satisfactorily divert graffiti offenders away from the criminal justice system into more productive areas such as street art. Initially, there was no distinction made between legal aerosol art and illegal graffiti in the Graffiti Prevention Act Exposure Draft (2006). Many Victorian local government areas lobbied passionately for distinct definitions to be included in the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic) (Municipal Association of Victoria [MAV], 2006); because they felt legal street artists could be unfairly persecuted by the Act. The implications of this legal reform and its impact on young people will be discussed later in this Chapter, however, it is important to note that in Grappling with Graffiti, the State Government identified long term causes of graffiti should be addressed as part of any comprehensive graffiti strategy.

For diversion initiatives to be thorough, all key stakeholders should recognise the need to discourage conviction of low level offenders. This notion could be jeopardised by the new graffiti legislation (MAV, 2006). Individuals engaged in their first encounter with the Courts can benefit from having their behaviour redirected at a local level (Hunter, 2001; Knox City Council, 2002). Diversion activities and community based sanctions are extremely suitable mechanisms, when applied at a local government level. Strong partnerships between Police, the Courts, and Welfare agencies can ensure their perception “not (as) alternatives to prison, but prison as an alternative to other sentences” (McShane and Williams, 1989, cited in Richards, 1990, p. 2).

Strategies that utilise pre-existing community groups and structures, traders, community organisations, local government and local police assist communities to identify and meet their special needs. Reducing opportunity for crime to take place can also prevent it (Walsh, 2001). This can be done in many ways, by increasing the perceived effort against crime, increasing the perceived risks of crime, reducing the anticipated rewards of crime, and removing the excuses for crime (Knox City Council, 2002).
2.4.6 Harm Minimisation: Positive Practice at a Regional Level

Harm minimisation policies that demonstrate commitment to involve young people at the local level in their development will inevitably fare better in terms of their long term sustainability and relevance to young people (Crane, 2000). This is because young people possess a critical intelligence about how community spaces can be made functional and relevant (Crane, 2000; Crane, 2005). Programs that showcase better youth outcomes generally have clear and measurable aims and objectives (Crane, 2000). They are cognisant of accommodating young people and move beyond tokenism in their consultation. Young people can be involved in anti graffiti efforts to increase their sense of ownership over public areas (Lamm Weisell, 2004). For example, in designing bus shelters and platforms which are generally prone to illegal graffiti (Lamm Weisell, 2004).

Port Phillip’s Youth Policy (Port Phillip Youth Council, 2001) demonstrates a strong commitment to youth, in that young people’s needs and interests should be represented and met. They subscribe to an ethos of increasing access to opportunities, which in turn enhances wellbeing, development, enjoyment, and expression of youth (aerosol art could well constitute one such diverse interest). Diversity exists amongst young people, especially in the areas of recreational, social, sporting, cultural, voluntary, employment and educational activities (Port Phillip City Council, 2001).

Port Phillip’s Youth Policy (2001) also notes that young people have little political power and that consequently, youth policies tend to be formulated and constructed by the adult community and their assumptions of what is best for youth. Port Phillip Council (2001) has recognised the need to foster a sense of place, identity and belonging in young people, by listening to them and encouraging their inclusion and participation within the community. However similar to Knox, there is little evidence of how particular aims set out in the document will be achieved and evaluated for successes. This is important because (as the Playgrounds Recreation Association of Victoria (PRAV) report
highlights), the community perceives young people as a source of anxiety and a threat to social cohesion and safety, rather than perceiving them as an asset (PRAV, 2004). PRAV (2004) also note that requests for ad-hoc forms of leisure space by young people are often met with bureaucratic processes. Despite this criticism, the Port Phillip policy (2001) should be applauded in terms of its celebration of youth culture. The City’s Action Plans are examples of sound youth policies because they provide a realistic and fairly in-depth framework for the provision of youth services and projects. The fact that Council advocates at least some measurable outcomes underlines its advancement in contemporary youth policy.

With less focus on tangible outcomes, Bayside City Council’s Youth Policy attempts to demonstrate its commitment to the municipalities’ 12,700 young people aged between 10 and 25 (Bayside City Council, 2004). The Council actively promotes their diverse methods of consulting with young people in the formation of their services and policies. This model echoes the sentiment of Crane’s (2000) preferred approach in working with young people around public spaces policies. Bayside Youth Services divide their objectives into five areas including coordination and collaboration, planning and development and service delivery. Within these areas there are specific objectives around encouraging youth participation in ‘community life’ and decision making processes. Both Knox and Bayside documents contain general references to young people’s use of public space, but neither directly reference aerosol art opportunities in a meaningful way.

In the design of the Regional Skate and BMX Strategy, (Frankston City Council, 2002), the Frankston City Council consulted with current and prospective users in a variety of ways. These methods included conducting surveys at existing formal skate and BMX facilities and other informal venues. Frankston City Council held focus group meetings with young people and relevant Council staff, as well as organising onsite discussion groups with students at four schools. The Council also had interviews with skate and BMX retailers in the region and telephone interviews with neighbouring Councils’ staff and relevant agencies. Finally
Frankston City Council created a skate advisory panel with whom they met at various stages of the project and Council staff went on a bus trip with local skaters. The Frankston City Council (regional skate facility) community engagement model is a best practice example of an effective consultation process, which allows for the involvement of young people in projects that cater to their specific interests. Frankston’s engagement approach has many useful features which can be applied to aerosol art opportunities because its main focus is the use of public open space by young people and their involvement in a decision making process.

Councils such as Port Phillip, who have a strong commitment to youth and more substantial policy documents, allow for young people to be better represented and involved in decision making. The City of Whitehorse demonstrates a policy document that is commendable in its intent, however it is only Frankston that offers examples of best practices techniques which are useful in involving various youth groups in decisions regarding public open space.

2.4.6.1 The Knox Graffiti Approach

An example of innovation in graffiti management can be cited in the Knox initiatives. The Knox City Council has been progressive with its research via extensive community consultation. It aims to implement a multi-faceted preventative harm minimisation approach to graffiti and vandalism instances. The following initiatives provide examples of service delivery that targets a number of groups within the one sub-culture. Knox highlights the diversity amongst the graffiti phenomena (Knox City Council, 2002). The Knox City Council launched its first Graffiti and Vandalism Management Plan in July, 2002.

One aspect of the Knox Plan included aerosol art programs. Council conducted a series of eight ‘Redirection: Aerosol Workshops’ to target graffiti, as depicted at work in the picture below (Figure 2.7). The workshops aimed at identifying a local gang and redirecting their behaviour through weekly ‘Aerosol Workshops’ (Knox City Council, 2002). The final outcome of the workshops was the
development of an aerosol mural along one of the bike tracks in the municipality, similar to that depicted in Figure 2.5 (Knox City Council, 2002).

![Figure 2.7: Redirection Program at Work](image)

Giving young people a positive experience with art encourages them to move away from Spray Cans to paint brushes, and pursuing painting as a profession or legal hobby…community art fosters talent and gives young people opportunities to be involved in projects that have lasting results, as well as adding to community pride…the art has encouraged a sense of ownership.


‘Community Art on Poles’ involved the identification of a set of street light poles that were subject to high levels of graffiti and illegal advertising (that is, traffic light poles, street light poles, power poles and telephone line poles). Council approached TRU, an electricity provider, and Vic Roads to gain their support for this program. The program is based on the application of community art-theme designs (Figure 2.8) to deter illegal advertising and graffiti (Knox City Council, 2002).

![Figure 2.8: Art on Poles](image)
To assist in the collection and analysis of data, a reporting line was developed to better understand the criminal activity in the area. This initiative is seen to be a partnership between the Council and the community. Discount paint for residents and information for the Victoria Police are also services attached to this project (Knox City Council, 2002).

‘Operation Buff’ is an initiative of Victoria Police, and has been piloted in the Knox region (MAV, 2006). It is a central, structured system of reporting, which allows local Police to conduct crime mapping, and prioritise highly targeted graffiti locations for surveillance and crime prevention interventions (MAV, 2006). Pending an evaluation of Operation Buff, a similar program could be resourced and implemented across Victoria. Such a comprehensive program would need to be coordinated at a State level (MAV, 2006).

2.5 Legal Reform - Who Benefits?

2.5.1 The Graffiti Prevention Act 2007

As described above, graffiti is poorly represented in official Police statistics, often because many jurisdictions do not characterise graffiti offences separately. Sampson and Scott (2000) described the expansion of laws applicable to graffiti. These included move on laws and anti loitering ordinances as well as criminal trespass laws. Only more recently has the development of graffiti specific offences become evident (Graffiti Prevention Act Vic 2007). The Victorian Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic) was developed to resolve underreporting of graffiti in 2006. Victoria is utilising a staged approach to enforce the Graffiti Prevention Act (Vic) 2007, with restrictions on the sale of spray cans to minors becoming fully operational in the second half of 2008 (MAV, 2006). Whilst selling a spray paint can to a minor is an offence under the new legislation, an exception involves circumstances where the person can demonstrate that they need the paint for employment purposes. For retailers found guilty of selling a spray can to a minor, a fine of up to 20 penalty units ($2,202.40) or an on-the-spot infringement
penalty of up to two penalty units ($220.00) applies. Interestingly, there is no conclusive evidence, either locally or internationally, that suggests prohibiting the sale of aerosol cans results in decreased levels of graffiti in local communities, or indeed a reduction in graffiti related offences.

The *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)* has provisions which enable authorised persons to remove graffiti on private property. It is recognised that this provision may align with a small minority of Councils who commit to the removal of graffiti from all private, residential and commercial property (such as Casey), at cost to their ratepayers (Australian Retailers Association, 2007). Furthermore, it is understood that the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)* does not compel local government authorities to remove graffiti on private property. Despite this understanding, Councils and the Australian Retailers Association have concerns about the legislative intent of the Act, and are opposed to the development of any protocols that may place the onus of swift graffiti removal from private property (or similar zero tolerance strategies) on Local Councils (MAV, 2006; Australian Retailers Association, 2007). Graffiti removal programs need to be defined according to local contexts, and municipalities have an expectation of the Victorian Government to manage graffiti on the land which they control (MAV, 2006).

In early 2007, stakeholders were provided the opportunity to comment on the proposed graffiti legislation for Victoria via formal submission. Local Councils took part in consultations convened by the MAV, a Local Government peak body. Consultations with Local Government were not instigated by the State Government, despite the significant impact the legislation would have on municipal graffiti plans (MAV, 2006). The MAV consultations were designed to inform Local Government of the proposed initiatives in the Draft Bill, and to begin to form a Local Government position on the proposed graffiti legislation (MAV, 2006). A number of key issues relating to the marginalisation of young people, implicit in the draft Bill and its accompanying Discussion Paper, were
raised at this forum and many individual Councils’ resolved to lobby State Government in opposition to it, via the MAV position paper (MAV, 2006).

While graffiti is recognised as criminal damage, the most significant impact of graffiti on our communities is the impact that it has on a resident’s sense of safety (Australian Retailers Association, 2007). There is recognition of the harmful impacts of graffiti in the discussion paper accompanying the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)*, in section 2.7 (MAV, 2006). Significant amounts of graffiti in an area can create a sense of lawlessness and perceptions that the area is not ‘safe’ (Halsey and Young, 2002). This can result in people avoiding these areas and may result in decreased community participation, increasing individual isolation with subsequent impacts on health and wellbeing (MAV, 2006; Australian Retailers Association, 2007). It is also important that any approach to graffiti and vandalism management is based on community involvement and partnerships rather than a Government led, top down response to manage the whole issue (MAV, 2006). According to Local Government professionals consulted by the MAV, the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)* does not adequately involve community in graffiti management initiatives, and its concentration on punishment and deterrence is to the detriment of other more credible alternatives for graffiti control (MAV, 2006).

The *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)* raises the maximum penalty for graffiti offences, from six months or 25 penalty units (for property damage under $500, such as broken letter boxes) to two years or 240 penalty units (equal to $25,600). Both Victorian Councils’ and the Australian Retailers Association have reservations that raising maximum penalties may offer precedence to custodial sentences over credible options provided for in Corrections managed, non custodial programs (MAV, 2006; Australian Retailers Association, 2007). Whilst the need for both specific and general deterrence should to be maintained, it is important to take heed of empirical evidence inferring custodial sentences are expensive and ‘do not work’ (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b). Moreover, evidence suggests that incarceration increases the likelihood of recidivism (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b; Stensholt, 2002). ‘After the fact’ graffiti
punishment and deterrent initiatives are important and remain the province of the Victoria Police and the judicial system. However, any amendments to current powers for enforcement, punishment, and deterrence need to be considered as part of a broader context for graffiti prevention and control in Victoria. Amendments should complement policies like the afore mentioned Grappling with Graffiti strategy and Safer Streets and Homes approach (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002a; Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b; MAV, 2006). The Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic) should be presented as part of a holistic State approach to graffiti management and control, rather than operating independent of positive youth engagement programs and diversion initiatives developed in Victoria (MAV, 2006; Australian Retailers Association, 2007).

During the MAV consultations, Local Government professionals were particularly concerned about disempowerment of young people, because if a person possessed a prescribed graffiti implement on or near transport property, or when trespassing on private property, it was initially proposed that the defendant bear the burden of proof (MAV, 2006). That is, the person would have been presumed guilty and required to provide a lawful excuse as to why they possessed the prescribed implement (Australian Retailers Association, 2007). This approach was designed to respond to the difficulties experienced by Police in catching graffiti offenders in the act, but the clause was reviewed due to the significant concerns (about potential disempowerment of young people) raised as an issue by young people and Local Government professionals during the MAV consultation sessions (MAV, 2006).

Of paramount concern was that the Bill, in its first draft form, served to undermine the basic principles of our adversarial system of justice (MAV, 2006). Particularly, the reversal of the legal burden of proof set out in the document initially (for those suspected of possessing a prescribed graffiti implement or trespassing on or adjacent to public infrastructure land), contravened the assumption of innocence that underpins our legal processes (MAV, 2006; Australian Retailers Association, 2007). A person charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law
under new directions set out in the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibility Act 2006*. The reversal of the legal burden of proof was overturned, following strong opposition by Local Governments in Victoria to this aspect of the Bill (MAV, 2006).

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) also felt consideration needed to be offered as to the gravity of graffiti offences, and whether enhancing processes to prosecute graffiti perpetrators should take precedence over the recently developed *Victorian Charter of Human Rights 2006* (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2007). More broadly, YACVic felt attention should be given to the implications of suggesting the reversal of the legal burden of proof for graffiti on other crimes, and indeed whether it is in-fact Victoria’s intention to reflect a more inquisitorial system of justice (MAV, 2006; Cunneen and White, 2011).

Section 11 (part 3) of the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)*, initially involved enhancing Victoria Police powers of search and seizure for graffiti implements (including upon young people under 18) without warrant. Stakeholders were aware of the difficulties currently facing Victoria Police in prosecuting graffiti offenders, and this was reflected in their commitment to improving intelligence gathering techniques (MAV, 2006; Australian Retailers Association, 2007). The rationale for these proposed provisions was clear, assuming there were reasonable grounds to suspect an individual was in possession of a graffiti implement. YACVic (2007) had significant reservations about the disempowerment of young people in the search and seizure process, particularly if the reason for the search was not explained to them (MAV, 2006). Again, Local Governments in Victoria lobbied the State Government to observe safeguards to protect young people who may feel vulnerable in the presence of Police (MAV, 2006).

It is important that the physical and psychological wellbeing of a young person suspected of carrying a graffiti implement be assessed and documented (White, 1998). Initially, the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)* did not provide for situations where an individual may resist arrest or refuse to be searched.
YACVic (2007) had particular concerns about the powers of Police to search (suspected) graffiti offenders without arrest, arguing that searches of this kind could result in ‘net widening’ young people contact with the criminal justice system. Councils, via the MAV, have also recommended Police provide an explanation of their grounds for suspicion, prior to the search of any individual suspected to be in possession of a graffiti implement (MAV, 2006).

Interestingly, Section 5.15 of the Graffiti Bill Discussion Paper referred to similarities between the Control of Weapons Act 1990 and provisions for search and seizure set out in the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic) (MAV, 2006). It is a point of contention that possession of a graffiti implement be considered in a similar vein to possession of a weapon. Importantly, graffiti crimes do not traditionally involve a physical victim and this distinction needs to be made clearer (MAV, 2006). In their recommendations to the legislators of the Graffiti Prevention Act (Vic) 2007, YACVic (2007) recommended that the Government undertake a study drawing from local community responses to graffiti across Victoria, and responses that operate in a diversionary and rehabilitation focused framework.

Overall, there is support for the efforts of the Victorian Government to address illegal graffiti through a range of programs and initiatives, of which the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic) forms only one part.

2.6 Conclusion

Evidence presented in this Chapter overwhelmingly indicates that community centric approaches are imperative to the success of graffiti strategies implemented in a local, regional, and State context. Much can be learned from the range of existing policies addressing graffiti, but most importantly local issues must be addressed according to local contexts (Vassallo et al., 2002). This Chapter has underlined the importance of recognising the social, economic and environmental impacts of illegal graffiti in neighbourhoods. It has highlighted the relationship of graffiti with community perceptions of safety.
Reducing the fear of crime within Australia is a challenge faced by many municipalities and community groups (Tilley, 2005). Sustainable partnerships need to be established, to ensure crime prevention initiatives are implemented by those with a vested interest in their community (Crawford, 1998; Halsey and Young, 2002). Importantly, young people need to be included as key stakeholders in discovering creative options to manage illegal graffiti. Beyond elementary zero tolerance graffiti removal and punishment approaches, graffiti management can focus on reducing the opportunity for illegal graffiti by designing community spaces accordingly, or on tackling the underlying causes of graffiti offending behaviour. Irrespective of the wide variation of these approaches, all need to be consultative in order to ensure their success and long term viability.
Chapter Three: How to Read Writing on Walls - The Rules of this Graffiti Research

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter provides a framework for this research. It commences by describing theoretical perspectives and the research design, and follows with information about qualitative approaches. The research considers the views of young people involved in aerosol art, as well as two professionals working in the area of youth policy. Further, the case study approach employed to gather this information. The collective case study model has been utilised in this research because it enables the researcher to examine a number of cases together. Interpretivist techniques inform the analysis of results from the semi structured interview. The qualitative methodology (which involves the interpretive approach) emphasises the ‘human factor’ in contemporary graffiti issues and contributes to the debate surrounding harm minimisation and zero tolerance management approaches (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Semi structured interview techniques are also described in this Chapter. Finally, Chapter Three presents and organises information about individual interviews (including reference to relevant permissions from the organisations that the professionals belong to). Information is presented relating how the focus group interview was structured, and reference is also made to the ethics approval pertinent for this research.

3.2 Theoretical Perspective: Interpretivism

Interpretivists are particularly interested in how members of society understand their own actions. How an Interpretivist researcher interprets or constructs meaning around a certain situation is reliant upon constantly evolving settings or conditions (Neuman, 2000). Notions of social and physical reality should be considered critical for the Interpretivist, and has been a significant consideration for the researcher in the interview process (Neuman, 2000). In the context of graffiti, Interpretivists would not necessarily be interested in obtaining a representative sample of graffiti writers or artists in a particular area
This perspective is opposed to the positivist school where interest is in an adequate snapshot, or representative sample of graffiti writers and other stakeholders (Travers, 2001). Further, positivism assumes that individuals share the same meaning system and that everyone experiences the world in the same way (Neuman, 2000). The positivist school would suggest that a representative sample of graffiti writers could be obtainable, based on the premise that they would all share the same world view (Neuman, 2000). In contrast to the positivist school, Chapter Two has highlighted the hierarchy that exists in the graffiti subculture and described young people as far from a homogenous group.

Interpretivists would be keen to understand how a particular individual engaged in graffiti or aerosol art perceive themselves within the phenomena. As the name suggests, this perspective relies upon the interpreting abilities of the researcher (Travers, 2001). Neuman (2000) further consolidates this notion, suggesting that social reality is quite reliant upon an individual’s definitions of it. For Neuman (2000, p. 72), two questions are paramount for the Interpretivist researcher to bear in mind: How do people experience the world?; and Do they create and share meaning? Interpretivist researchers rarely ask questions that are purely of an objective nature, instead they are particularly interested in perceptions, and how personal experiences can influence different perspectives about a variety of issues (Neuman, 2000; Patton, 2002).

Interpretivism invests some faith in interpreting body language, smiles, nods, and so forth. Much like the study undertaken, an interpretative perspective would not subscribe purely to large data sets to produce a meaningful body of work (Travers, 2001; Patton, 2002). This research has attempted to convey different individual understandings of graffiti, such as those views belonging to aerosol artists and youth services providers. The following themes are used in Chapter Four and Five for the purpose of analysis; and include political and policy tensions (of graffiti management), valuing and involving young people, strengthening and connecting young people, and young people in places and spaces. These themes have been deliberately linked to the literature for the
purpose of analysing the date. It is important that symbolic interaction also be described, because this approach examines how social networks can influence shared meaning (Patton, 2002; Hayes and Prenzler, 2009).

3.2.1 Symbolic Interaction

Symbolic interaction suggests a social-psychological approach and relates to the Interpretivist paradigm (Patton, 2002; Hayes and Prenzler, 2009). It assumes not only that individuals create shared meanings through their social interactions, but also that these meanings become their social reality (Patton, 2002; Hayes and Prenzler, 2009). According to symbolic interaction theorists, human behaviour is a result of social conditions and the way an individual interacts with or interprets these conditions (Hayes and Prenzler, 2009). Further, the way individuals view themselves is shaped by the opinions of others (Hayes and Prenzler, 2009). Interpretivism includes notions of symbolic interactionism and also notions of deviance and labelling (Patton, 2002; Hayes and Prenzler, 2009). For example, labelling theory highlights social reaction, including social reaction to crime (Carrabine, Cox, Lee, Plummer, and South, 2009). It emphasizes the symbolic dimensions of social life (Carrabine et al., 2009). Community responses to criminal behaviour can shape community perceptions about acceptable conduct in public areas (Carrabine et al., 2009). Because graffiti is often implicated with criminal behaviour, community members could choose not to tolerate it at all, even in a permission based context. Carrabine (et al., 2009) described this as a ‘give a dog a bad name’ phenomena (p.93).

Subscription to the Interpretivist paradigm, and aspects of symbolic interaction, have a precedent in the work of Lachmann (1988, cited in Neuman, 2000), who relied on interpretive explanation in his study of graffiti in New York City. Lachmann (1988; cited in Neuman, 2000) noted the career of the deviant graffiti writer and how their identity became shaped by those labels assigned by non deviants. He addressed the quest for permanence and fame undertaken by those engaged in graffiti, and examined notions of values and culture in the context of graffiti writing (Lachmann, 1988, cited in Neuman, 2000).
According to the labelling perspective, deviant behaviour is best seen as a career (Carrabine et al., 2009). This is understandable in the context of graffiti and its related subcultures (Plummer, 1979; Patton, 2002). To some degree, the exercise of labelling a graffiti writer has parallels with notions of stereotyping. Young people are often exemplified in anti-graffiti campaigns, depicting them in possession of spray cans (Halsey and Young, 2002; Wood, 2002). This is also a form of stereotyping.

There are significant social factors involved in the production of the deviant role, in terms of identifying and labelling a particular behavior that supposedly runs against the norm (Clinard, 1971; Clinard, 1973). The labelling perspective would not suggest that it is the graffiti writer who condemns his or her activity and deems it criminal. Identification of an activity as criminal (such as graffiti produced without permission) is underlined by a larger social group, known as the definers (Plummer, 1979). The graffiti writers assume the role of the ‘defined’ group, as identified by wider society, and they do not partake in the ‘defining’ activity.

Notions of the deviant graffiti writer, as identified by the non-deviant member of society, can be made more explicit. Primary Deviance encapsulates not only that which is morally condemned, but moreover that which is generally distributed, such that an act may go undetected (Plummer, 1979). This is particularly relevant to graffiti, as much of the activity is undertaken at night when writers cannot be clearly seen or identified by authorities. The act of graffiti is then isolated by wider society, offered significant attention socially, such that graffiti artists or writers might be stigmatised (Becker, 1963, cited in Plummer, 1979). The isolated nature of graffiti, be that as a crime or artistic endeavor, renders the Interpretivist paradigm appropriate. This is because Interpretivists are not necessarily preoccupied with a large or representative sample, but rather how those who are engaged in, or involved with graffiti perceive the subculture.
3.3 Research Design

Much of the current graffiti data available is quantitative. This includes official Police and Court Statistics described in Chapter 2.2.2, which are unfortunately not all organised in the same way, restricting the capacity for comprehensive benchmarking and analysis. The applications of both quantitative and qualitative paradigms are relevant to the study of graffiti. Chapter 1.5 has referred more extensively to the absence of qualitative literature in the area of graffiti, young people, and relevant policy approaches. Together, both qualitative and quantitative methods may collectively contribute to trustworthiness of a study (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Patton, 2002). That is, while it is possible to quantify the need for a graffiti policy via audit results and actual graffiti levels, governing bodies also need to understand why the activity occurs. The importance of understanding graffiti in order to control the phenomena underlines the relevance of qualitative approaches in this study.

3.3.1 Qualitative Methods

Qualitative research is used across a variety of disciplines, and any research in this domain must find its place in a complex historical realm (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, pp. 2-3). A holistic definition might suggest that qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to a given study (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 3). The researcher has used a qualitative approach to help understand the graffiti phenomena. Employing this paradigm has informed a more holistic understanding of the graffiti sub culture and enhanced the study (via conducting in depth interviews with young people involved in the producing graffiti of predominantly artistic forms). By employing Interpretivist techniques, more questions have been asked to broaden the harm minimisation and zero tolerance debate for graffiti. This qualitative research has facilitated ‘hearing the voice’ of those often marginalised, yet critically important groups in the relevant graffiti sub cultures (who are predominantly young people). Embracing the qualitative research paradigm has also assisted in consolidating, clarifying and
possibly amending some of the more pertinent key findings in previous graffiti studies (Stensholt, 2002).

Neuman (2000) refers to ‘field research’ as also ethnography or participant observation (p. 344). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) are most explicit, they refer to qualitative research as involving the study of and collection of materials, case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional and visual components to construct meaning (p. 3).

Defining qualitative research is a complex exercise. The term itself has many an ‘alias’. Neuman (2000) observes that the qualitative researcher most often emphasises a human factor and an intimate working knowledge of a given research setting, they do not distance themselves from the events or the people that they intend to construct knowledge about (p. 126). Moreover, Neuman argues that adopting the qualitative research paradigm does not necessarily mean that evidence shall be biased, data collection methods questionable, nor should the researcher’s personal opinion be mandatory (p. 126). Rather, the researcher involved makes his or her own presence explicit and has the intention of being forthright about their intentions (Patton, 2002; Neuman, 2000). In exchange for integrating their own personal insights, human perspective and feelings, the qualitative researcher is empowered to understand social phenomena in a much more enduring way (Patton, 2002; Neuman, 2000).

This research has sought insight into the community graffiti issue, rather than pure statistical analysis about the presence of graffiti in local communities (Bell, 1993, p. 6). The insights gathered from professionals, an artist and young people interested in graffiti have been valuable in supporting the researchers intention to ‘hear the voice’ of a sometimes marginalised sector of the community.

3.3.2 The Case Study Approach

The case study approach is particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in
some depth within a limited time scale [...] It is much more than a story about or a description of an event or state. As in all research, evidence is collected systematically, the relationship between variables is studied, and the study is methodologically planned.


The collective case study approach has it genesis in the instrumental case study, where often the case is of secondary interest, and merely serves to provide supportive evidence for a particular theory. According to Stake (1994) the collective case study is in fact an instrumental study extended to many cases (cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 237). Such cases may precipitate a common characteristic, however, Stake (1994) points out that this is not a mandatory component of the collective case study. Rather, ‘cases’ might be similar or dissimilar (cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 237).

According to Stake (1994 cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), case study is not a methodological choice but rather it concerns the case chosen to be studied. Case studies (such as this research) are generally of the qualitative paradigm (Stake, 1994, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Further, purposive sampling can be a non representative sample of a larger population, and this complements Stake’s (1994, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) description of a case study. Stake (1994) also suggests that a researcher may be interested in a phenomenon rather than an individual case (cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). This is relevant to the study of graffiti, in that its related aerosol art and ‘hip hop’ subcultures are often perceived to be a ‘phenomena’. The research favours Stake’s collective case study model, because of the diversity of human experience that may be encountered in examining graffiti (Wade, 1996).

This research study has been concerned with discovering the ‘case for’ perceptions of aerosol art, and paradoxically the view of graffiti, vandalism and willful damage. Because the study concerns crime, it has the potential to be particularly emotive, as described in the first Chapter in reference to graffiti, art and controversies (Chapter 1.2). This research has not concentrated on one
particular case and as such, the study is not preoccupied with the case for aerosol artists exclusively. Rather, it has investigated a number of cases jointly; including the case for artists, policy makers, youth, and youth practitioners.

### 3.3.3 Data Collection

Structured questions have not dominated this research and the only instances where structured questions were used relate to introductory questions intended to provoke further conversation. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 649), refer to the structural aspect of the interview as pertaining to pre-established questions, with a limited set of response categories. There is generally little room for variation in responses when structured interviewing is utilised exclusively, however it is a technique considered useful for introducing a topic or area.

Semi structured interviewing techniques had a substantial bearing on the case study employed. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 259) imply that semi or unstructured interviewing has the potential to provide rich data, and thus a greater breadth of responses that other data collection techniques might only acknowledge in a superficial sense. The semi structured interviewing technique is therefore renowned for its qualitative nature. Whilst the key purpose of the interview might be to ask open-ended questions which should in turn invite frank and ‘uncategorised’ responses, it is helpful to also remember that the interview itself remains a managed process when delivered by a confident researcher.

The study subscribes to the principles of semi-structured field interview (Malinowski, 1989, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000 p. 653). For example, Malinowski’s ‘day in the field’ approach commits to some general topics but does not use formal methods to influence interview responses (Malinowski, 1989, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 653). Despite this, the process of interviewing remains structured in the sense that there are informants, respondents are identified (in the study concerned, aerosol artists and various stakeholders), and there is a particular setting in which the research takes place.
3.4 Interviews and Focus Groups

3.4.1 Interviews

Three individual interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview techniques. The individual interviews occurred with professionals working in the area of graffiti and youth policy; a Youth Leisure Worker, and an Anchor Knox Youth Outreach Worker (Appendix Five). An individual interview also took place with a renowned local professional street artist. In Chapter Four, more specific information is provided about interview participants (Table 4.1). Each individual interview took approximately one hour to complete. In writing up the responses (from both the worker and artist interviews), the researcher gave some consideration to integrating responses so that the workers opinions were presented together with those of the young artists. However, the professional street artist was reluctant to have his/her opinions presented together with the views of policy professionals. The researcher made contact with the professional aerosol artist on 22 December, 2005, and confirmed their willingness to have the results of his/her interview presented together with the focus group discussion results. The artist felt this would better inform community views about aerosol art in public space, and supported the presentation of the results in this manner.

3.4.2 Focus Group

The focus group involved participation from individuals undertaking the Knox Redirection Aerosol Art Program (see Chapter 2.4.3 for more information about this program). The six participants in the focus group were all over the age of 18. This interview (with young people interested in street art) was of a ‘focus group’ genre and asked 13 questions to illicit conversation about street art and related issues (Appendix Six). The conversation amongst the group drew to a close after one hour. As with the individual interviews, semi-structured techniques were employed to gauge the opinions of the focus group participants.

The focus group component was undertaken off site at a location where the Knox City Council had sanctioned a legal aerosol art mural. There was a
supervisor on site for the program and access was obtained through that supervisor.

3.5 Ethics Approval

The RMIT Ethics Committee initially had some concerns regarding the safety of the researcher. These concerns centered on locations in which the interviews with street artists would take place, and security provisions in the event of duress. The interview with the local aerosol artist also took place on Knox City Council property. The interview was deliberately scheduled during regular office hours and staff frequented the building during this time. It is worth noting that the Conference room of the Eastgate Building at Knox City Council is also the Municipal Emergency Management Coordination Centre. As previously referred to (see Chapter 3.4.2), the focus group interview took place at a mural site (sanctioned by Knox City Council) and a supervisor was present at all times during the interview. Formal Ethics Approval was received from the RMIT Human Research and Ethics Committee at RMIT University on 7 May, 2004 (Appendix One).

Because the research project pertains to property crime, it was subject to vigorous ethical considerations. Anonymity and confidentiality was maintained on behalf of all interviewees, and consent was obtained from all respondents over 18 (in written form). Permission was sought (and obtained) from the relevant agencies allowing professionals (from their organisations) to be involved in the research, including Knox City Council (Letter received 16 April, 2004, see Appendix Two) and Anchor Inc Community Care (Letter received 19 April, 2004, see Appendix Three), and plain language statements were provided to all of the interview respondents (see Appendix Four).

The subject of graffiti and offending was not broached during the course of this focus group interview. If the discussions amongst focus group participants did allude to illegal graffiti, the interview would have ceased to continue and the researcher would have taken steps to review the appropriateness of questions before pursuing the interview further. (If necessary, the researcher would have
written to the Human Research Ethics Committee to inform them an interview had been cancelled due to inappropriate disclosures of offending or criminal behaviour).

All questions in all interviews were perception based and were not posed in such a way that they would ‘lead’ the interviewee to disclose inappropriate information. This was particularly pertinent for the individual street artist and the focus group, as the researcher did not wish to compromise these participants in any way.

Permission to interview a representative from Anchor Inc Community Care was obtained from the Anchor Team Leader. This interview was undertaken at a local café outside of regular office hours (see Appendix Three). The researcher initially sought permission to tape record the interviews and this permission was not granted, therefore interviews were not recorded.

3.6 Conclusion

This Chapter has provided a framework for how this research was undertaken. It has described the research design and related qualitative approaches, including collective case study model. Chapter Three has made reference to the data collection techniques employed to inform this research. It has drawn together the relevant interviews and commented on how the results of these interviews and the focus group have been organised. Finally, the Chapter has presented information relevant to ethics approval. Ethics approval has been critical in the construction of this ‘human’ based research which gauges important perceptions about graffiti and related issues.
Chapter Four: Trying to Stop the Unstoppable?

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents the findings for the research. The information has been organised into themes that emerged from the individual worker interviews, the aerosol artist interview, and the focus group interview. This Chapter commences with a profile of the three individual interviews and focus group participants. Further, it outlines the dilemmas of combining information from professional interviews with that of participants involved in the aerosol art subculture.

The first theme presented in this Chapter includes both policy considerations and the political nature of graffiti in communities. The theme of political and policy tensions covers notions of zero tolerance, public space management, privatisation of public space, recreation, young people and aerosol art. The second theme relates to advocating for the better valuing and involving of young people in policy decisions. The third theme includes opportunities to better strengthen and connect young people to their local community are presented. The final theme encapsulates notions of young people in places and spaces. Worker’s perspectives about graffiti emerged during the interviews and these are generally grouped together. In all interviews, gender neutral pseudonyms are used to ensure anonymity.

4.2 Profile of Interview Subjects

The workers interviewed had significant experience in the fields of welfare, social work, and youth development. The individual artist had significant experience in graffiti style street art, including a solid portfolio of freelance delivered in the context of suburban Council.
Table 4.1: Profile of Interview Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professionals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Street Artists</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker 1 (Lee)</td>
<td>Worker 2 (Robin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of the Leisure and Cultural Services Field, in industry for over 20 years.</td>
<td>Of the Youth and Welfare Field, in industry for over 10 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 year old, parent and primary care giver for daughter, part time freelance artist - street art and furniture design.</td>
<td>• Young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 3x 18 year old participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 3x 19 year old participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and trade backgrounds, including traineeships.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Focus Group Participants and Individual Street Artist.

Trying to compare and contrast professionals in the field with individuals and groups engaged in the aerosol art street culture created dilemmas in providing the most meaningful presentation for this research. It proved very difficult to honour the aerosol artist’s preference to present his/her findings in isolation, or alongside the focus group.

Interestingly, both the focus group and individual artist interviews tended to illicit ‘short and sharp’ answers and responses. The workers both tended to elaborate more in their answers, and went into greater depth with regard to case examples from their respective work environments.

The interview with Sasha underlined the dilemmas involved in the Government’s planning of approaches to graffiti management. While upon their initial reading, Sasha’s responses appear somewhat ‘anti establishment’ and as though the participant’s willingness to engage in discussions was severely lacking, however the analysis in later sections will reveal the poignancy of these responses. The individual artist felt that the findings of just one street artist (in isolation) could serve to ignite debate between the aerosol art community and local authorities,
and appear somewhat ‘he said, she said’. Sasha was clear that this was not his/her intention in participating in the research. Furthermore, Sasha felt that presentation of his/her opinions, placed alongside qualified workers in public space management, could discredit Sasha’s own views about art and public space, and portray them as ill informed. The artist’s preference was honoured in putting together the results of his/her interview alongside the presentation of findings from the focus group questions. Presenting all of the artists’ views together (focus group and individual interview) precipitated some very complementary perspectives as the following discussion will show.

There were many synergies between the responses from Sasha and the focus group members. Focus group respondents appeared to ‘bounce’ ideas off one another, often adding extra comments or anecdotes to each others’ answers. There was clearly a bond and level of trust within the group. Perhaps because the group had a degree of commonality in advocating for a mutual cause (that is, creating better and more meaningful opportunities for aerosol art in the local arena), there was a willingness to collectively participate.

4.3 The Political and Policy Tensions of Graffiti Management

This theme outlines the political and policy tensions of graffiti management. Sub themes presented will include zero tolerance, public space management, privatisation of public space, recreation, young people and aerosol art.

4.3.1 Who’s Carrying the Can? The Politics of Public Space Management and Crime Statistics

The interview participants indicated a significant policy tension between public space management and graffiti. The following will present information from the participants interviewed about not only the tensions that emerge from different policy directions, but also the consequences of the lack of physical maintenance in local communities. It was clear from the responses during the interviews that those areas which were well kept and free of graffiti did not generate as much fear of crime as spaces where graffiti was prevalent. The question of land
ownership and maintenance responsibilities presented as an issue between all levels of government, as well as with privately owned infrastructure and land. Lee and Robin, the workers interviewed, outlined that graffiti was a major concern in the Knox municipality. Lee stated;

(We) encourage the official reporting of graffiti and vandalism as it is poorly represented in police statistics, and often poorly resourced at a State / national level as a consequence of this...Graffiti and Vandalism represents 33% of perceived crime problems in the Knox Perception of Local Safety data, so encouraging official reporting could bridge this gap and raise more attention to the appropriate resourcing of the issue.

Interview: Lee.

Robin expands this view of the political nature graffiti, suggesting it to be inherent in the question being asked. Robin may have portrayed graffiti to be a political issue because the researcher asked about the extent of graffiti in local communities, using words such as ‘major problem.’ Robin was perceptive in the response to the question, by acknowledging that the question compelled a response about graffiti in the context of ‘a major’ issue.

If I put my community member’s hat on I’d say it is major, it’s everywhere, someone should do something about it. But that’s only because you used the words ‘major problem’ in your question.

Interview: Robin.

Robin went on to contextualise the severity of graffiti alongside more violent offences. He/she believed that the term graffiti itself is somewhat political in nature.

…the word graffiti it self conjures up images of crime, deviance, and anti social behaviour... in relation to other crime such as violent crime or sex offences, people would say it actually isn’t that bad. I mean there isn’t a physical victim is there? It’s about how it makes you feel.

Interview: Robin.
Graffiti tends to immediately conjure negative images and generate debate about who the responsible custodian of ‘public’ space is. In contrast to Robin, Darcy and Al (two of the focus group participants), did not discuss notions of land ownership or responsibility in relation to their art. Instead, they gave the impression that a good location for a mural was just that, regardless of who held management responsibility for a particular site.

Anywhere in the public arena (is a good location for an aerosol mural), anywhere with a good opportunity to be seen by a broad audience.

Focus Group Interview: Al.

A well primed wall in a good location, somewhere visible.

Focus Group Interview: Darcy.

When asked whether graffiti occurs all over the community, or if it is in fact more prevalent in particular locations, Robin further highlighted some political tensions in public space management.

…it concentrates around industrial and private land, and around the transport lines. You see a bit of it on the old shopping strips, particularly out in the old lanes. I mean there is graffiti on every lamp post in some streets.

Interview: Robin.

In responding to the nature of locations where graffiti concentrates, Robin highlighted some significant political tensions in terms of who exactly is the custodian of what is perceived to be public space or land, particularly in regards to the rail corridor. These include areas like rail reserves which surround the train lines.
… I mean they (private companies) don’t have an obligation to maintain them (clean off the graffiti). People can complain that they are unsightly but removing graffiti doesn’t always generate profit for some companies… and that’s the bottom line.

Interview: Robin.

Privatisation was also highlighted by the professionals interviewed as an inherently political issue in terms of graffiti maintenance. They provided an example of the confusion that has erupted post privatisation, about who is responsible for the maintenance of privately owned public utility infrastructure (for graffiti management and control). Robin demonstrated that the traditional view of citizens is that some level of government should be the custodian of what appears public land or space, for example rail reserves along major train lines. Because of recent changes to the management responsibilities for rail corridors (see above), this is no longer the case and private companies are in fact in control of the rail corridor and the land surrounding it. This also underlines a conundrum for the maintenance of privately owned public infrastructure, such as power poles and fences adjoining rail property.

Robin explained that private companies do not necessarily have an obligation (legal or otherwise) to control graffiti; however, the community has an expectation that ‘someone’, if not the government, will.

We need power, we accept we have to pay for it, despite the graffiti on the poles… it’s not like we might stop going into a shop because of its grotty facade.

Interview: Robin.

Robin speculated that the public has a right to graffiti free public assets. However, this level of service is compromised by privatisation in that the community are powerless (or it would not occur to community members) to protest because of their need for essential services like electricity. Robin then contrasts the example of a privately owned shop front, where the community can ‘vote with their feet’ and choose not to go inside if they are put off by the graffiti or lack of maintenance on a particular building or shop-front. Clearly, Robin has
drawn attention to the tensions of contract management and maintenance schedule agreements. When governments sell off or sub contract public services and amenities, like the rail corridor (also mentioned by Robin) and utilities, they do not necessarily successfully negotiate the maintenance of such assets thereafter.

4.3.2 Zero Tolerance

Zero tolerance presented as an issue for all participants. These tolerance issues are linked to political tensions because zero tolerance policies are traditionally employed to deliver a ‘tough on crime’ strategic policy direction (a politically attractive policy that generates community satisfaction, and in turn, votes).

When queried as to whether any elements of their organisational approach involved zero tolerance, a degree of confusion emerged from the workers in terms of the legislative intent of such non tolerance policies. Lee suggested that their organisation only pursued elements of zero tolerance in a superficial fashion. Lee referred to the inclusion as tokenistic and elaborated by suggesting that reference to zero tolerance facets was only to make their policy document more politically attractive.

The element (of zero tolerance) had to be included in the policy to satisfy a couple of our former Councillors. It (the zero tolerance reference) was only in regards to the law and applications of actually catching a person in the act of applying graffiti without permission- then no tolerance is shown (and law applies).

Interview: Lee.

The enforcement perspective described above (in isolation) may not have a high degree of relevance to zero tolerance as it is traditionally understood and this will be further explained in the analysis section.

Robin discredits the importance of zero tolerance strategies in community based organisations:
I don’t think a zero tolerance strategy for homelessness would be that palatable to the community…I don’t really agree that as an organisation you can have zero tolerance for one group or activity, but not for another.

Interview: Robin.

Interestingly, Robin’s understating of non tolerance policies differs from Lee’s. Robin believes that harm minimisation must be an organisational approach and not just a component of certain projects.

Harm minimisation is more of an organisational approach…rather than a ‘sometimes’ priority.

Interview: Robin.

This suggests that Robin does not believe that there can be conflicting approaches such as zero tolerance and harm minimisation in the one policy document.

4.3.3 Public Space, Recreation Opportunities, and Young People

Involvement by young people in decision making processes for recreational areas predicts the success of those sites, according to the workers.

Excluding young people from…community consultation processes weakens community capacity, and locates youth participation at the margins of civic engagement.

Interview: Lee.

Sasha did not agree that the needs of young people were incorporated in public space. He/she felt that young people’s preferences for the development and design of public space was not being catered for by policy makers in any deliberate way.
I don’t think that they’re (young people’s capacity to make decisions pertaining to public space management) addressed that much in regards to this.

Interview: Sasha.

When queried about activities (such as football and basketball) that seem to be preferred in the eyes of policy makers and in government, Sasha felt that structured sport activities tended to be favoured, stating:

(T)hey just view them in a much better light than other recreational opportunities.

Interview: Sasha.

The Focus Group participants reinforced Sasha’s comments about policy maker’s preference for more formal and structured recreational activities. The responses were quantified in a semi-structured format around sporting activities as described in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Recreational Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Arts</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Focus Group Participants.

The focus group believed the favouritism of traditional recreational activities resulted in a lack of opportunities for graffiti art. They felt that policy makers perceived sports as ‘mainstream’ activities, whereas graffiti was most often viewed by authorities as anti social. Furthermore, the group alluded to the fact that the community doesn’t necessarily understand or want public graffiti art. Sasha’s reflections around sporting opportunities being viewed in a better light were further reinforced by Riley and Darcy.
It is mainly the sport stuff that they give to young people, stadiums and that.

Focus Group Interview: Riley.

Yeah sports - organised stuff as well, like stadium sport and inside activities for young people with rules and stuff.

Focus Group Interview: Darcy.

Sasha was asked whether or not policy makers understand alternative recreational activities such as aerosol art, but elected not to respond. This reinforced the secrecy of the aerosol art sub culture, a phenomena to be further explored in Chapter Five.

Chris however was willing to point out that some places have a better understanding of aerosol art than others, and that this can relate to time and resources allocated by particular agencies.

Depends where you live but, I know some places provide art stuff more than others. Knox has youth theatre and art work shops pretty frequently. They are mainly short term projects but.

Focus group Interview: Chris.

4.3.4 Young Artists, Aerosol Art, and Zero Tolerance

This section addresses the perspectives of young people engaged in the aerosol art subculture in relation to zero tolerance strategies, and their experiences of these strategies in the public arena.

The secrecy of the aerosol art subculture was underlined as somewhat deliberate when Sasha was asked about the about different types of styles of graffiti around.

There’s lots of different styles around but I don’t really want to go into it.

Interview: Sasha.
In sensing the lack of engagement or willingness to reflect on aerosol art opportunities in public space, the researcher contextualised the question by clarifying the aim to gauge the effects of zero tolerance policies on aerosol art. Sasha then revealed some distaste for zero tolerance policies.

Sasha verified that graffiti will occur despite whatever policy direction is in place. His/ her view was that no matter what, it will ‘happen anyway’. Focus group respondents also held the same view.

You can say all you like that you don’t like it but it will happen anyway.

Focus group interview: Al.

I don’t think everyone has to like all of it or anything - but people could learn to be a bit more tolerant of alternative expression.

Focus group interview: Lou.

An assumption that can be made from this is that Sasha and the focus group participants would continue to be involved in graffiti and aerosol art, regardless of whether there is a policy in place that creates options for graffiti or completely discourages it. Sasha’s reference to ‘yeah, yeah it will happen anyway,’ supports this inference.

The focus group further underlined the perspective that aerosol art will continue to occur in local communities despite any populist approach, or political strategy in place. The insistence of the artists to preserve the secrecy of the graffiti subculture reflects their preference to deliver street art that is totally independent of zero tolerance policies, which may be in place in local communities:

I don't see the relevance of zero tolerance to street art.

Focus Group Interview: Shannon.

Riley was more explicit in pointing out the disadvantages of a zero tolerance approach.
I see some of it as disadvantaging the community, I mean why take away something that can look a bit interesting to replace it with another blank wall.

Focus Group Interview: Riley.

Lou drew together the views of the focus group on zero tolerance.

It’s just like putting something into place because they don’t get it... like they don’t get the difference in the styles so they put into place a blanket solution. It isn’t that simple.

Focus Group Interview: Lou.

Sasha disregarded what policy makers condoned in terms of acceptable uses of community space, by suggesting that graffiti will continue to occur despite what policy direction in place at any given time.

They (graffiti artists) would find other ways to do it. Like I said, I think if you’re gonna do something, you’re gonna do it.

Interview: Sasha.

This comment from Sasha was particularly poignant as it underlines the sometimes ‘anti establishment’ view of aerosol artists. The insistence that aerosol art will ‘happen anyway’ is a form of political protest in itself and the importance of this will be developed in later discussions.

4.4 Valuing and Involving Young People

The following provides information from interview responses about valuing and involving young people in policy and public space. Notions of youth inclusiveness, youth consultation, and harm minimisation will be presented.

4.4.1 Youth Engagement: Agency Perspectives

When queried about the level of engagement of young people in the delivery of local policy, both workers underlined the importance of involving young people in
program delivery and in activities. For example, documenting the involvement of young people in public spaces, as a measure of program success.

Lee suggested that the success of a program can only be measured by those performance targets set out at the commencement of a program. Lee believed the underlining philosophy or methodology of a program must govern the ‘yardsticks’ with which a graffiti management program is measured. For example, if a zero tolerance strategy sets out to remove all graffiti in a certain area, then an appropriate measurement tool would be ‘how much’ graffiti has been removed in square metres. Because zero tolerance is less concerned with early intervention or preventative strategies, it may not be appropriate to measure if or how quickly graffiti reappears, and what type and styles are evident.

For us, total eradication of graffiti … (is) not feasible. We do not have a zero tolerance policy and therefore cannot commit to total removal. We also attempt to provide avenues for Aerosol Art, so I suppose we do accept graffiti if it has artistic vigor.

Interview: Lee.

Lee implied a preference for an approach to graffiti management which involved three separate, but equally important priorities. The premise of this approach is to address the social, environmental (built and natural), and economic impacts of graffiti in the community. This approach is widely referred to as a triple bottom line approach.

My expectation is that we have a thoughtful policy that relies heavily on community consultation … We basically aim to reduce the social, environmental and economic impacts. It is a triple bottom line philosophy for service delivery.

Interview: Lee.

Particularly, the commitment to ‘social’ infrastructure (providing access to services and support agencies, as well as including key community groups and
stakeholders in decision making) relates to the importance of including young people in local communities.

Robin reaffirmed the importance of ‘research and developmental’ stages of policy formation.

The main positive is the focus on careful research and planning to inform the policy decision making process we engage in. Much time is spent in the research stage, ensuring that best practise approaches are adopted …

Interview: Robin.

The workers were asked to describe the level of public consultation or involvement in the development of public space policies and graffiti strategies for young people. Robin was able to comment specifically on an example of applying a graffiti mural on a privately owned, but very high profile wall belonging to their organisation. Consultation with stakeholders involved State Government, local youth groups, as well as aerosol artists.

In the development of the Aerosol Art Program, we spoke to the artist developing the mural and a couple of his key ‘networks’ (networks refer to artist's contacts with other artists that have credibility in the subculture). Not surprisingly, (the artist) asked that his comments not be mentioned in any press releases, correspondence and reporting relating to the program. We respect his wishes.

Interview: Robin.

Lee quantified his/her response with some statistical data that affirmed the need to consult more widely with young people. Lee also stated that many agencies fail to strongly progress beyond tokenistic consultation in public space policies.

Knox also has approximately 10.9% of its population (more than 15,000 young people) who are 18 to 25 years. The number … is projected to increase slightly. So obviously we should be looking to consult a lot more meaningfully.

Interview: Lee.
Lee commented that local consultation with young people was not particularly extensive. Because of time constraints, policies tended to be ‘run by’ a peak body instead.

Obviously this isn’t enough for some marginalised groups such as graffiti writers.

Interview: Lee.

Lee subsequently offered a ‘best practice’ example of youth consultation derived from the local community setting. Because of the length of time dedicated in the interview to this conversation, the information will be presented as a case example.

Table 4.3: Case Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Example: Youth consultation in a Local Reserve, involving BMX riders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior to June 2004, H.V. Jones Reserve stakeholders contacted authorities concerning property damage. Holes were being dug in close proximity to the tennis and soccer club, and a perception was generated that anti-social behaviour by young people was increasing. Young people were riding their BMX bikes over small dirt jumps from the material taken from holes and dirt for top dressing soccer and crickets pitches in sections of the reserve. Concerns were raised that the behaviour of young people was generally anti-social. The situation became untenable for (authorities) to respond to property damage without responding to the cause. In this instance, young people’s choices of unstructured recreation created community concerns because public space had been appropriated for purposes other than for the intended design. Young people were recreating in ways that were meaningful to them, though probably in an alternative fashion to other users. It took a great deal of work to include the unstructured leisure opportunities (BMX-ing) and consult meaningfully with the young people. The outcomes were extremely positive and resulted in greater care for the reserve by community stakeholders (particularly the young people), less vandalism, as well as use of the community space by a wider variety of legitimate users.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interview, Lee.
4.4.2 Harm Minimisation Policy and Youth Agencies

Both workers interviewed were willing to underline the value of harm minimisation and early intervention approaches in delivering policies that have an impact on young people. In fact, Robin’s view was that;

The sway away from purely zero tolerance and punitive approaches in these sorts of issues is positive.

Interview: Robin.

Robin felt that there was a lack of evaluation, assessing outcomes of programs for young people in local communities:

There is much work to be done in regards to evaluating our performance in working with young people. We need to discover how and what are the best ways to influence the right people to bring about the right outcomes, from a community agency perspective but also from young people’s perspectives.

Interview: Robin.

When the workers were asked more explicitly about the management of public space and young people, Lee detailed the theoretical underpinnings of their agency’s approaches, and actually referred to them as ‘harm minimisation’ and ‘youth inclusion’ approaches. Lee also stressed the importance of partnerships (with the broader community and young people) in sustaining youth inclusion.

Our general approach is ‘harm minimisation’ … We are not entirely about Zero Tolerance and consider this to be a purely politically attractive response to graffiti. It is not sustainable without a money tree.

Interview: Lee.

Lee’s comments reinforced earlier opinions that zero tolerance policies are expensive to implement, because of the costs associated with total graffiti eradication. He/she then listed the critical players within his/her organisation who had a role to play in graffiti management and control. The purpose of conveying
this list was to demonstrate that, generally, harm minimisation approaches require strong partnerships to bring about effective service delivery.

It is important for Facilities and Assets, Community Safety, Engineering and Infrastructure, Town Planning, Youth Services, and Community Capacity Building to have a vested interest in graffiti and its related issues.

Interview: Lee.

Lee described working on policies that were not purely punitive or exclusively about zero tolerance, highlighting a preference for his/her agency’s involvement in the delivery of harm minimisation policy.

…the sway away from purely zero tolerance and punitive approaches is positive. We are seeing a deviation from band-aid solutions to more proactive ones.

Interview: Lee.

Lee highlighted the economic value of early intervention and suggested that harm minimisation policies have more long term benefits. Lee believed that their agency’s approach would be more economically sustainable in the future because it would reduce the likelihood of graffiti occurring in the first place.

This approach will be much more economically viable in the future. The negatives, which I believe pertain to a lack of community safety awareness, will be curbed as education components unfold… We need to discover how and what are the best ways to influence the right people to bring about the right outcomes, from a Community Safety perspective.

Interview: Lee.

Notions of diversion (as a form of an alternative sentencing option for young people) in the context of a traditional harm minimisation approach were explored by Lee.

To some extent, I would say that the diversion (graffiti) clean up program is also about harm minimisation because it tries to link young people to Council services
and opportunities that might expand their personal, educational, and employment opportunities.

Interview: Lee.

Lee’s understanding of harm minimisation approaches was also interesting when explaining notions of Safer Design Principles. Some of the ‘tick boxes’ and consideration areas are around young people’s use and attachment to sites, and this is the basis for why Lee believes that the Safer Design Principles are inherently about harm minimisation, and particularly about involving young people.⁷

Lee felt that the Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria were particularly valuable and relevant to the work of local practitioners in retrofitting existing facilities and assets.⁸ Lee also advocated for reducing the likelihood of crime occurring in the first place, by employment of environmental and community interventions in the planning phase for community infrastructure.

The guidelines have recently been supported and endorsed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment with a view to their inclusion in some local planning schemes. This is very significant.

Interview: Lee.

Robin highlighted the longevity of harm minimisation approaches.

…it (harm minimisation) has long-term effects, not just scare tactics or unhelpful one off services. Our service does not rely on reactive models or quick fix solutions…

Interview: Robin.

⁷ The guidelines contain check lists and safety audits for planning proposals and audits of existing infrastructure.
⁸ Gardner (1995) referred to crime prevention as the formation of strategies to reduce the incidence, severity and impact of crime through understanding and explaining types of crime.
The following case study provides Robin’s commentary of the importance of valuing and involving young people in delivering harm minimisation policies for local communities. The Table is included because it underlines the importance of community partnerships in delivering harm minimisation approaches.

### Table 4.4: Agency Perspective on Harm Minimisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welfare Agency Perspective:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most Youth Welfare Agencies want clients to have diversity of relationships and interests. Family and friends, work, leisure activities and spiritual beliefs increase happiness and social connection (they underpin harm minimisation philosophies). Subtle changes can positively affect young people’s experience of places and spaces, and the cohesion of communities is influenced by things like city design and transport connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The experience of some Welfare agencies is that Government can make sweeping statements about equal access for young people and the socially marginalised. However there is not always the provision of physical and social infrastructure to support that sentiment. (This could be referred to as a social justice framework).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presence of aerosol art in local communities not only says a lot to artists about how their place in society is valued, it also minimises the harms associated with illegal graffiti. The experience of this welfare agency has been that with the right design and community involvement, aerosol (signage) is a fantastic way to promote community organisations. There is potential for these positive benefits to be replicated in the business and commercial arena also.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interview, Robin.

In conveying an agency perspective, Robin reinforced that social networks are crucial to the delivery of a successful harm minimisation intervention. Robin also underlined the political nature of policies that pledge commitment to involving young people in decision making, but are not ‘backed up’ in consultative youth practice. The employment of graffiti signage by Robin’s organisation underlines their tolerance and inclusion of street art in the community, as a harm minimisation initiative.
4.4.3 Young People, Aerosol Art, and Involvement in Local Communities

Sasha demonstrated that there were some ‘untapped’ opportunities for policy makers to provide a ‘forum for expressiveness’ for young people in applying aerosol art in public space. Sasha highlighted that structured leisure pursuits such as football and basketball were almost favoured exclusively in the domain of public space, over less structured activities such as aerosol art. Also, there appeared (in the worker interviews) a greater capacity to value and involve young people in the context of public space via the incorporation of aerosol art. In conducting the interview, the researcher queried Sasha about other people’s experiences of aerosol art in the public arena, meaning those people who see it, and what their experiences might be like. Sasha noted that community members most certainly can experience a degree of appreciation for aerosol art. Sasha felt that residents and community members might actually be inspired by the presence of aerosol art in public space.

The focus group participants were asked why in particular they liked street art. This question tended to illicit a greater breadth of responses from four of the six focus group respondents.

If you’re talking about it as art, like murals and pieces, I guess I can say I like it because you can do it for cheaper than some other large scale art stuff.

Focus Group Interview: Darcy.

…it is edgy… people can see it. It’s not something you need to pay for space to do…

Focus Group Interview: Al.

It is accessible by more people.

Focus Group Interview: Chris.
Aerosol art is probably the cheapest art to display - you don’t necessarily have to rent a gallery to show people.

Focus Group Interview: Riley.

The researcher queried what makes a good location for the placement of aerosol art in the opinion of an artist. Sasha stipulated that the best locations for legally produced aerosol art were in areas where there is good opportunity for an audience and public interaction.

Anything in public viewing I guess. I mean anywhere is good.

Interview: Sasha.

The second component of Sasha’s response, which infers that ‘anywhere’ is a good place for aerosol art, once again reinforces the lack of opportunities for this kind of expressiveness to be provided for in the domain of public space, perhaps because the majority of work produced with an aerosol can is stereotyped as illegal graffiti (Halsey and Young, 2002). The researcher qualified this question by specifying that they were talking predominantly about murals in the community that are put up with permission.  

The focus group participants were also asked what makes a good location for aerosol art. Their responses again reflected those of the individual artist interviewed.

Anywhere in the public arena; anywhere with a good opportunity to be seen by a broad audience.

Focus Group Interview: Al.

9 The researcher did not wish to prompt disclosures relating to graffiti produced without permission, nor place the individual artist, Sasha, in an unfair predicament by alluding to any involvement in illegal graffiti.
A well primed wall in a good location, somewhere visible.

Focus Group Interview: Darcy.

The researcher also wished to gauge the importance of having an audience for this kind of aerosol artwork. Sasha was able to elaborate on the role of an audience for the art form:

I guess it is so people can have that involvement and someone can get something from it.

Interview: Sasha.

Again, Sasha reinforced the priority for the community to be able to relate to or react to the art work, and take an experience from it. Sasha clarified that the intention of the art is not necessarily about personal validation for the artist, it is about giving people the opportunity to see it and ‘interact’ with it.

Responses, such as those above from the aerosol artist and focus group interviews, reinforce the emerging theme of the importance of ‘valuing and involving’ young people’s preferences for the use and management of public space.

The focus group participants were also asked what they see as the benefits of providing aerosol murals in public areas from a community perspective. Their responses were similar to those of Sasha, and centered around the communities’ capacity to ‘take something’ from their experience of aerosol art.

It might get them (the community) thinking about a different way to produce art.

Focus Group Interview: Chris.

They can see it and get some appreciation from it.

Focus Group Interview: Al.
It shows them something different that they may not ordinarily get to see in the area.

Focus Group Interview: Riley.

Lou and Shannon’s responses differed slightly from the rest of the focus group. They pointed out that the need for individual benefit to the artist in producing the work is the imperative.

It’s about creating the opportunity for the artist firstly, but it is good if the community can take something away from it …

Focus Group Interview: Lou.

I want them to like it sure, but at the end of the day, I don’t care if they don’t take anything away from it.

Focus Group Interview: Shannon.

This broad theme of valuing and involving young people (as well as the sub theme relating to young people and aerosol art in local communities) is further underlined by Sasha’s view that the community does not respond to needs of young people, in particular young people with an interest in graffiti art.

Sasha’s view was that local government and policy makers may never fully understand the aerosol art subculture (because they are not meant to) relates to notions of secrecy in the aerosol art subculture previously described by Sharratt (2002).

4.5 Strengthening and Connecting Young People

In this section of the presentation of findings, opportunities to strengthen and better connect young people in their local communities emerged as a critical theme. Creating opportunities for inclusion is also discussed in this section, and incorporates themes of youth participation and social exclusion. This section also highlights the tensions of linking graffiti to social deviance (labelling) as
discussed in Chapter Three. Interestingly, themes that emerged in this section were mostly derived from the worker interview conducted with Lee, and the focus group. Some insights from the aerosol artist are also provided. Policy initiatives are highlighted by the workers as deliberate ‘plans’ to include and connect young people to their local areas. Further, government led ‘program’ responses that embrace opportunities for aerosol art in public space are also discussed as a means of strengthening and connecting with young people. This includes negotiating options for aerosol art in public space, and confronting the challenges associated with creating opportunities for street art in the public domain.

4.5.1 Workers Awareness of Research into Youth Issues and Crime Prevention

The workers were queried whether there had been any investigation or research undertaken on the sociology of ‘anti social behaviour’ in their local area. If such research was identified, they were asked to provide details of this. Lee did not refer to particular research undertaken in those relevant areas; however he/she did reiterate that their policy had been based on extensive consultation in their local community.

Development of (our) Policy involved extensive consultation over a six-month period with the Knox community (including residents, youth, retailers and Police). Consultation processes included focus groups, workshops and questionnaires.

Interview: Lee.

In response to the same question, Robin elaborated on a seminar of a more research based and academic genre. Robin referred particularly to a relevant academic in the field, who focuses on youth, social exclusion, and creating better opportunities for legitimising young people’s use and management of their own spaces.

Knox put on a Young People in Public Space seminar, with Dr Phil Crane, from the University of Queensland. That was good as it got you thinking about the
confines of public space and privately owned public space like at the shops and kids hanging around and so forth.

Interview: Robin.

Robin highlighted that research and consultation had been conducted to develop local youth plans. Robin also inferred that the label of ‘anti social types’ tends to be an unfair stereotype of young people, particularly in the context of aerosol art. The notion of labelling in this example is to the detriment of young people, and contributes to their social exclusion in policy and public space management:

...Council is doing a fair bit of work in developing their new Youth Plan and they have a reference group to monitor the development. Our agency is well represented, and I guess we are often the first stop for some of the supposed anti social types, who are somewhat under-represented.

Interview: Robin.

In contrast to Lee, Robin refers to the Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria as ‘CPTED’ principles. (CPTED Principles have been discussed in the literature, and are relevant to notions of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design).

Unlike Lee, Robin does not highlight CPTED as a harm minimisation approach, but infers that it is a key contributor to research undertaken in the field of youth, social exclusion, and place management. Lee discussed how CPTED principles can not only be employed to minimise the likelihood of crime, but also to make spaces more welcoming, inviting, and more well used, including by young people.

I believe that some Crime Prevention through Environmental Design training was conducted at Council prior to my commencement in this position. It was conducted by a fairly leading Criminologist, Wendy Bell...

Interview: Robin.

Robin also suggested that he/she had done some individual study in the area.
I have done some fairly extensive reading on the subject matter and feel relatively capable in addressing CPTED guidelines for existing and new infrastructure (with particular reference to young people)...Not that my agency has any money to do anything with that knowledge.

Interview: Robin.

4.5.2 Options for Aerosol Art

Lee was forthright in stating that graffiti has a place in society. The response from Lee underlined that young people and their artistic choices could be incorporated in policy directions, comprising redirection programs that are workshops for ‘at risk’ youth. These workshops can be facilitated by Youth Services teams and community art projects (most often involving authority approved aerosol mural creation).

If there is a significant sector of the community with a passion for aerosol or street art, we should look to support this. A community capacity building approach constitutes an effective graffiti strategy, in my view.

Interview: Lee.

Lee elaborated on youth services in the area of graffiti management, in particular, aerosol art mural development.

Our Urban Art project aimed to seek and to care for young people and their identified interest in street art. Our actions were of care and consideration to the interests and talents of these valuable young people. It was an attempt to show our endorsement of legally channelled street art.

Interview: Lee.

Further, Lee described how young people could be included in these art projects, and where the program was delivered.

The objective was to provide a safe, fun, entertaining, educative, and consistent place in which the people of …Anglican Church… (location of program), various
artists, and the local authorities could connect, establish and build relationships with local youth aimed at but not exclusively between the ages of 13-24.

Interview: Lee.

The priority to provide a safe, healthy, environment for aerosol art and youth expression was also discussed by Lee. Further, the researcher sought to understand how appropriate young people for such a program could be engaged. Lee explained how their organisation intended to deliver a project that was in keeping with the amenity of the area in the project’s specified location, and how they identified and engaged a group of local aerosol artists that may or may not be at risk of applying graffiti illegally.

... we channeled their energies in a positive manner ... A pilot program ran every Wednesday for two hours for a six week period. This included providing food, paint, and boards. It allowed these young people the space to think about aerosol work as a real and valid art medium.

Interview: Lee.

Interestingly, Lee did not reveal that their agency tried to replicate the secrecy of the aerosol art subculture. Rather, the helpers and leaders of the project served as mentors, and attempted to enhance and develop the skill level of the program participants, as opposed to attempting to infiltrate the culture of these young people.

The researcher wanted to discuss at greater length the benefits of providing a forum for aerosol art in public space. Sasha highlighted that there most certainly should be room for aerosol art in public areas, and these should be provided for in local policies.

Cause it’s an alternative to other forms of expression.

Interview: Sasha.
The focus group gave particular insight into the value of providing connections for aerosol art in public space. They were asked whether aerosol art should be supported in the community.

I don’t think everyone has to like all of it or anything - but people could learn to be a bit more tolerant of alternative expression.

Focus Group Interview: Lou.

Absolutely. I just wish that people didn’t have to go on about it so much.

Focus Group Interview: Al.

It is only paint on a wall, whether you like the look of the design or not. It is only a bit of spray paint. People go on in the paper about stronger punishment and work camps for kids caught doing (illegal) graffiti. It doesn’t even physically hurt anybody.

Focus Group Interview: Darcy.

If it could just be seen as another type of art and supported by the community in the same way.

Focus Group Interview: Chris.

That’s it, if you don’t like it then you can always look the other way in the street. I don’t like the look of Fed Square but I will still get off the train at Flinders street!

Focus Group Interview: Shannon.

The focus group participants affirmed that they believed aerosol art should be supported and provided for to some extent, and also conveyed a preference for the aerosol works to be perceived in the same context of other art forms. Sasha was queried as to whether formal and structured activities in public space (such as cricket) were as expressive as the medium of public art, particularly aerosol art. Sasha emphatically disagreed, perceiving aerosol art to be much more a creative activity, with greater capacity to strengthen young people’s connection to their community. The focus group interviews talked particularly about the
benefits of the presence of aerosol art for other young people, and its capacity to connect young people to their communities.

I don’t know about very young people, like primary school aged kids. It would depend on what the image was of. Like if you did cartoon characters or something, kids would respond really well to that. Other writers would respond better to a style created by an individual artist, to the graphics and stuff. Other writers can tell if it is skilful or just a piece of crap put up with a spray can. At the end of the day you care what other writers think.

Focus Group Interview: Al.

It’s good for young people because it is an alternative form of art and it tells them there is a place in the world for the kind of art they like.

Focus Group Interview: Darcy.

It is good because it gives room for an activity of something that is driven by young people, and that says to other people that their taste in art and in hobbies or whatever is being catered for.

Focus Group Interview: Riley.

Aerosol art can have an enduring value for local communities. This can occur when a community member sees and appreciates an artist’s work and wants to talk about it and relate to it. Further, Sasha felt that this connection occurs despite communication between the artist and the community member.

Not even if they want to talk about it, they get something from it then that’s good.

Interview: Sasha.

It is common for the community to have misconceptions about the supposed ‘low or no costs’ associated with producing aerosol art. The artist identified that funding often comes up as an issue in work as an aerosol artist.

Further, Sasha suggested that there were sometimes misconceptions from building owners about it being a privilege to place art on someone’s wall, and that
therefore the onus should be placed on the artist to fund and execute a given project. At this point, Sasha made some distinction between applying aerosol art in public space and on private walls.

Well then again it can vary from where the site is located. If it’s on someone’s property the onus of funding should be theirs, as opposed to if it was in a public space.

Interview: Sasha.

The researcher confirmed the artist’s expectation in valuing the time and skill of a young person who is applying aerosol work, and confirmed that Sasha believed that if someone wants a mural on their private wall, the artist would ask them to pay for it. The focus group respondents were asked who should organise and promote aerosol art projects in local communities, to ascertain the potential to better involve local aerosol artists in their communities. Al’s response in particular mirrored the response from Sasha’s individual interview.

I dunno - I mean we should (pay) if we want to put something up and that, then I guess we should be responsible for organising the project.

Focus Group Interview: Al.

Shannon’s opinion differed slightly because it inferred a need for external leadership or a project driver to manage a given mural’s production.

But it would be good to have someone to help and provide some advice, like a project leader.

Focus Group Interview: Shannon.

Darcy felt that handing over project control to a project leader could dissolve some of the potential to connect young people to the community spaces where they are applying art.
No offence, but if you get someone to do all the organising you usually end up with less control over the design.

Focus Group Interview: Darcy.

These responses highlight that considering the preferences of aerosol artists in local communities could decrease the artists’ experience of social exclusion.

4.5.3 Precedents, Perspectives and Agency Approaches

Because Lee’s responses clearly alluded to strengthening and connecting young people, Lee was asked whether his/her agency based their approach on any precedent, including legal, social, or cultural precedents.

It took heed of the existing Youth Plan at the time and its guiding principles. Young people are not a homogenous group. Our strategic response to youth services should reflect the diversity of our youth population’s views and experiences, encompassing, but not limited to, family and cultural background, age, gender, disability, sexuality, schooling and work experience.

Interview: Lee.

The response from Lee above reflects the diversity of young people in the local community (the research setting). His/ her agency obviously set out to connect with young people regardless of their various views, lifestyles, and experiences. This reflects an inclusive approach, and a genuine intention to strengthen relationships with young people, and connect with their various interests.

The description of how aerosol art skills can be fostered in an intimate setting (as a means of connecting with young people) inferred a local specific response to young people with an interest in aerosol art. Lee described how a localised approach to diversion and graffiti was of greater benefit.

I don’t know that there is any evidence per see. But a localised response is extremely important. As mentioned previously, we aim to build sustainable partnerships and the need to engage the interest of the community should
always be a priority. The local newspapers can be an appropriate medium for this, as can relevant interests group’s newsletters.

Interview: Lee.

As the role of young people in policy delivery and public space management had been made clear in his/her previous responses, Lee was also asked to identify who were the main stakeholders in any redirection or diversion program for young people (with reference to graffiti). Lee identified graffiti writers, venue and host organisations such as churches, schools, Council staff and Councillors, Youth Services in the area, Police, the Courts, as the most important stakeholders in the delivery of diversion and redirection programs.

It is poignant that Lee identified traditional authorities such as the Police as stakeholders in legally channeled redirection programs. This further demonstrates Robin’s earlier concern that young people can sometimes be in danger of being perceived as anti social, merely because of their connection to aerosol art.

The focus group respondents and Sasha were able to offer some insights into the value of providing for aerosol art in public policy, from an artist’s perspective. In discussing the kind of youth recreation activities that seem to be better catered for by local authorities, Sasha did not condone those activities most frequently pursued in local policy. Further, Sasha stipulated that there were:

None of which that I’d be involved with.

Interview: Sasha.

This comment demonstrates Sasha’s disapproval of ‘top down’ recreational planning by government

4.6 Young People in Places and Spaces

This section looks at the use and management of public space, including young people’s involvement in community areas. Particularly, opportunities for
incorporating better consultation mechanisms in public space are raised by the interview respondents in this section.

4.6.1 Graffiti Locations - Random or Opportunistic?

The workers interviewed were asked whether graffiti occurs in all areas of the community, or whether it is a local phenomena. Both identified that graffiti tended to occur in urban areas.

    Around factories, rail ways, the rear lanes of shops, on high profile or light coloured residential fences.

    Interview: Lee.

When asked why they thought that graffiti occurs at shops, factories and along residential fences, both respondents felt that ‘opportunity’ played a role in why graffiti artists or vandals chose a particular site.

    Tends to occur where it is opportune, so poorly lit areas, but also where there is opportunity for exposure such as along Robin train lines.

    Interview: Lee.

The response provided by Lee also highlighted notions of safer design principles (including CPTED), referring to areas that were poorly lit as being the catalyst for illegal graffiti.

4.6.2 Space for Tolerance - Agency Perspectives on Youth Inclusion and Public Canvasses

The researcher sought not only feedback regarding the reasons for illegal graffiti occurring in public and privately owned open space, but also how opportunities for legitimate aerosol art, and other ‘non traditional’ youth activities might be incorporated in open space by professionals in the sector.

In conversations with Lee regarding the relevance and usefulness of consulting young people for the management of public open space, Lee drew on the
previous example of incorporating some young BMX enthusiasts in a local park’s redevelopment. Lee detailed the many and varied benefits of including young people as decision makers, and validated these benefits with reference to the case for the local BMX riders.

Young users will develop a range of skills in engineering, working together, negotiation, management, community participation, a reduction in other negative uses of the reserve, development of healthy exercise and activity for young people, demonstration of equity across the community, and development of (policy makers capacity) to meet expressed needs of young people in public spaces.

Interview: Lee.

The researcher ascertained the workers’ preferences (particularly Lee’s) for consulting more meaningfully with young people on issues that were related to their recreation and leisure. Further, the researcher wanted to get a sense of whether local policies (safety and crime prevention policies) adequately addressed young people’s needs in public space, such as their desire to create aerosol art. Lee again referred to notions of CPTED and the Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria in constructing a response.

The guidelines contain all sorts of check lists and safety audits for planning proposals and audits of existing infrastructure. Some of the ‘tick boxes’ and consideration areas are around young peoples use and attachment to sites.

Interview: Lee.

It is of importance that Lee identified that the Safer Design Principles have the potential to be mandatory, and included in the planning scheme.

The guidelines have recently been supported and endorsed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment with a view to their inclusion in some local planning schemes. This is very significant.

Interview: Lee.
The inclusion of Safer Design Guidelines at this level would compel statutory and city planners to consider young people as stakeholders and key users of public space.

Lee and Robin were also asked whether they felt that local young people were adequately involved in decision making processes that decide which recreational and social facilities are provided for in public spaces. Once again, Lee referred to the case study of the local BMX riders in HV Jones reserve.

The method employed at HV Jones involved using interested stakeholders for generating a solution to the issues. ‘Stakeholders’ included young people, residents, sporting clubs, (local practitioners) and a Ward Councillor. The Young people were integral to the process.

Interview: Lee.

Lee described tensions between traditional uses of public space, limiting opportunity for alternative uses.

Playing fields are at a premium and growth sports such as soccer place high demands for resources in public space in a competitive sports market place. We are constantly reminded about this issue through annual allocations and the outlay of considerable resources for these competing community demands (in sports for young people).

Interview: Lee.

Lee advocated the position of young people as decision makers by underlining a commitment made in the local Youth Plan. He/she suggested that their Youth Plan is an explicit policy document that outlines modes through which decisions that impact upon young people are given priority in the areas that impact upon their lives.

Excluding young people from such community consultation processes weakens community capacity, and locates youth participation at the margins of civic engagement.
Robin was perhaps less positive in his/her accounts of examples where young people are adequately involved in those decision making processes that decide which recreational and social facilities are provided for in public space.

Young people are barely consulted in these projects. If they are it would be somewhat tokenistic. Like talking to the area or school’s youth ambassador….someone that is not necessarily representative of broader youth cultures.

Whilst Lee offered quite specific case examples of instances where youth consultation had been undertaken successfully, Robin was perhaps offering a more general view of how youth engagement is conducted ‘overall’ in their local area.

4.6.3 The Tensions of the Public Gallery - Keeping Street Art on the Street

Because of Sasha’s passion for aerosol art, the researcher queried where is a good location for its placement from an artist’s perspective.

You ask for it and they provide the spaces. So with like what some (local authorities) do, supply space and that would usually help. Help with providing an opportunity.

Both the focus group participants and Sasha felt that local authorities have a role in providing opportunities for aerosol artists to legitimately express themselves in the realms of public space. Sasha highlighted that the process of putting the art ‘out there’ in public space would be easier if local authorities negotiated for permission on their behalf, for use of suitable ‘canvasses’ or walls. The focus group participants seconded the merits of having designated wall space for
aerosol art, and they were asked in particular what they would like to see provided for, in terms of aerosol art opportunities in public space.

More spaces to do murals, a rotating permanent canvas.

Focus group Interview: Darcy.

Yeah, like a wall.

Focus group Interview: Riley.

You could rotate the image on the wall.

Focus group Interview: Chris.

Sasha agreed that it was appropriate to have local authorities negotiate permission (in a consultative manner) for aerosol art opportunities and felt this would be an acceptable practice (and not too intrusive of the aerosol art culture) from an artist’s perspective. This view is distinct from the opinion of Darcy, a focus group participant, about power and control over design aspects in mural production. In the theme about strengthening and connecting young people, Darcy identified that a project manager may take away from some artistic control in mural application.

Like the workers, Sasha agreed that public space and privately owned open space were hard to differentiate from not only young people, but also the community’s perspective. The artist felt that wherever aerosol art was displayed and available for general public viewing, it may cause controversy.

Further, Sasha underlined that people do not necessarily differentiate between art that has been placed (with permission) on a privately owned wall but which is in public viewing, and aerosol art on a public wall that is a community owned or public resource.
Mhmm. I think it can also be related back to viewers of public art. It may be in a public space, it may be private property and they (still) find that difficult to deal with.

Interview: Sasha.

The researcher verified that Sasha meant that community members find aerosol art difficult to deal with, regardless of who owns the property it is placed on or whether permission is granted for artists to put up their work. Sasha also confirmed that the critical element is whether the art is viewable by the community, in order for it to have the capacity to impact upon them (general community members). Sasha agreed;

Yeh, I think they can't differentiate.

Interview: Sasha.

The focus group were also asked how the community respond to the needs of young people who are engaged in experimenting with graffiti, or involved in the aerosol art sub culture in public space (remembering that the research favours semi structured interviewing techniques as outlined in Chapter Three). Lou in particular felt that aerosol art in public space was tolerated more if a piece was of good quality.

I think the community tend to like street art more than they like tagging. They have a better tolerance for stuff put up with a bit of planning and thought.

Focus Group Interview: Lou.

This open and ‘uncategorised’ response is, according to Denzin and Lincoln, typical of a semi structured interview (2000, p. 259). Chris was also frank in his/her response to the open ended question:
Like any other art, some people will like it and appreciate it, but others will not like it anywhere, ever. They don’t really get involved in the culture unless they write (apply aerosol art) themselves.

Focus Group Interview: Chris.

In the individual interview with Sasha, the researcher reinforced the presence of the amount of negative press that aerosol art receives, especially when it is in the public arena and being contested by the community. Sasha agreed that authorities could find themselves ‘under fire’ even when a public mural is on a private wall, such as a person’s garage wall, because local municipalities are perceived to be the custodians of ‘all that can be viewed’, and responsible for the general amenity of local neighbourhoods.

Sasha also felt that it is people’s natural inclination to blame policy makers or hold the authorities responsible if they don’t like what they see, in terms of public art.

Oh they’ll blame anyone - they need a scapegoat if they don’t like it.

Interview: Sasha.

The focus group’s (and particularly Sasha’s) insights underlined the community’s role as critics of aerosol art. The wider community’s impact on negating opportunities for aerosol art in the public domain, and impact on these artists’ freedom of expression will be examined in greater detail in the next Chapter.

4.6.4 Not So ‘Public’ Public Space

Robin went on to describe his/her agency’s approach towards the management of public space, and alluded to the experiences of some clients within those spaces.

I guess from our agency’s perspective we kind of leave the physical maintenance stuff to (the authorities)...A lot of our clients are either homeless or at risk of
homelessness— they spend a great deal of time in public space, and privately owned public space, like at the shops.

Interview: Robin.

The researcher sensed Robin’s exacerbation on behalf of his/her clients, in terms of public space not being so ‘public’ or ‘owned by all’, according to some marginalised groups’ experiences.

They get moved on, they explain their case to police in terms of the lack of priority housing, it’s a bit sad because public space doesn’t seem so public unless you fit the ‘acceptable normal person with a job mould’.

Interview: Robin.

Robin further underlined frustrations by detailing the only alternatives offered for moving on individuals in public space (those that are seen to be disruptive to the peace or amenity of local communities).

They should put signs in parks that say public open space provided you have showered and are clean shaven. We had an issue once—someone camping in a recreation reserve; a few parents of little ones were concerned…. The (only) option for transport (to emergency accommodation) is the Police van… and that’s totally flawed.

Interview: Robin.

The interview with Sasha offered some valuable insights, in terms of gauging how well the needs of young people are incorporated in public space.

I don’t think that they’ve (the preferences of young people for the use and management of public space) addressed that much in regards to this.

Interview: Sasha.
4.7 Conclusion

This Chapter has considered how young people’s leisure choices are catered for in the context of local policy and in public spaces. It has highlighted some of the tensions in consulting with young people on their preferences. The focus group participants and aerosol artist have underlined that youth inclusion is problematic for policy makers, because it is a challenge to cater for young people interested in street art, and balance the views of the vocal minority in the community who may not necessarily like aerosol work. The artists’ views reinforce the sentiment of the workers, who suggested that public space is not necessarily owned by all, and stakeholders are not always catered for in an equal sense when deciding on options for public areas.
Chapter Five: Writing them in

5.1 Introduction

This Chapter analyses the data presented in the previous Chapter. As described in Chapter Three, Interpretivist techniques are employed to analyse all interviews. These have assisted in emphasising the personal attachment of the focus group participants and the individual artist to producing street art (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). The themes presented in this Chapter mirror those described in Chapter Four, to ensure continuity. The material is critically analysed to reveal the contentious nature of graffiti, and the controversy surrounding its presence in the public domain.

The first theme is Political and Policy Tensions in Graffiti Management. Policy implications of these tensions are analysed by ‘unpacking’ the issues involved in public space management, including situations when artists are confronted with zero tolerance strategies to manage their perceived criminal behaviour. Further, privatisation of public space impacts on young people’s recreation preferences, ultimately limiting their choices about leisure pursuits. The second theme, Strengthening and Connecting Young People, underlines some limitations in local attempts at youth inclusion and critically analyses the various levels of young people’s involvement in local consultation, from tokenistic consultation to collaborative inclusion of the young people. The third theme analyses opportunities to better encourage young people’s participation in community life, as well as notions of young people’s inclusion in public areas. Options for aerosol art are ‘teased out,’ ultimately underlining their value in providing a vehicle to connect young people to local communities.
5.2 Political and Policy Tensions of Graffiti Management

5.2.1 Graffiti, Privately Owned Public Space, and Criminal Behaviour

Sharratt (2002) described illegal graffiti as causing damage or destruction to property through the use of written, scribbled, scratched or painted messages upon public or private property without permission. Cheetham (1994) felt that the production of graffiti was characterised by anonymity. Therefore, perpetrators felt safe from detection and apprehension when graffiti being applied was illegal (Cheetham, 1994). No individual participating in this research condoned illegal graffiti and all were reluctant to discuss it, perhaps because of its contentious nature. This also highlights the political tensions inherent in any graffiti debate. Although they did not wish to discuss graffiti as illegal behaviour, the young people and the artist did not seem to care if graffiti was illegal or legal. Comments around graffiti ‘happening anyway’ are testimony to this indifference. Rather, the young people and the professionals spoke in general terms about aerosol art. The artist’s views were similar to Lamm Weisell (2004) who argued that graffiti is a common problem, and its intensity varies from place to place. Lamm Weisell (2004) also felt that approaches that focus exclusively on enforcement control have had little effect on the total amounts of graffiti visible and present in local communities.

The professionals were obviously bound by agency and government policy related to illegal graffiti, but did not consider there was a need for harsher penalties for graffiti vandals. The Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic) did not exist at the time of interviewing the professionals or aerosol artists for this research, however at no point did any participant reveal a preference for punitive approaches for graffiti management. The researcher was interested in how all interview participants experienced graffiti, and how these experiences influenced their different perspectives about a variety of graffiti issues, particularly policy and legislative responses (Neuman, 2000; Patton, 2002). Interpretivism relies on the ability of a researcher to ‘interpret’ interview responses. In this research, a reluctance to discuss graffiti, criminal behaviour, styles of graffiti and the effects
of policy responses have been particularly pertinent for the artists, and therefore important for the researcher to interpret.

Both Lee and Robin’s opinions about how to manage illegal graffiti align with the youth engagement programs touted as best practice in ‘Grappling with Graffiti,’ a document produced by the State Government of Victoria (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002a). It is of significance that the same State Department produced this document and the controversial *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)*, which has been scrutinised for its punitive approach to graffiti.

The professionals identified that illegal graffiti tended to occur in business areas and along fence lines, particularly railways owned by State government. Cheetham (1994) felt that graffiti along rail corridors and on rail infrastructure and buildings was inclined to occur in off peak periods. Importantly, Knox City Council (2006) noted that policy makers have an advocacy role in appealing to the State government for the management of graffiti on their property. The issue of rail corridor maintenance gained media commentary throughout the Commonwealth Games in the (often anonymous) ‘Letters to the Editor’ of the Herald Sun Newspaper (Herald Sun, 2006). Further, in a local publication, Agg (2006) suggested that rail corridor maintenance and graffiti removal was problematic not just in the City of Knox, but across Melbourne (see Chapter 2.3.2 for more information about locations perceived as graffiti hot spots). Lee described how rail corridors were opportunistic spaces for illegal graffiti because they are often poorly lit, creating a major problem for local policy makers because the corridors are on State controlled land where lighting cannot be improved by local government. This perspective aligns with the profile of the research setting, because Bayswater, Ferntree Gully, and Boronia have higher levels of graffiti compared to the rest of the municipality (see Figure 1.2) and are also the only suburbs in the municipality with a rail corridor (Knox City Council, 2006). According to Wilson (1998), the placement of graffiti along transit locations can enhance artist’s levels of satisfaction with their work, because of the potential for recognition by both peers and a community audience.
Graffiti along rail corridors (identified by the professionals) also provided examples of hotspot locations suitable for ‘paint out’ using a court mandated graffiti clean-up program. Graffiti removal programs, as described by Farrington (1996), cover a range of conditions which offenders must agree on, in order to demonstrate their capacity for rehabilitation and remorse. Corrections clients on Community Based Orders have been compelled by the Court to ‘paint out’ graffiti along the rail line in inner Melbourne (Agg, 2006). The aerosol artist, Sasha, and the focus group participants, Darcy and Al, highlighted the suitability of rail corridors for aerosol art because it would have the capacity to be viewed by a broad range of commuters. Sharratt (2002) noted that the fast removal of illegal graffiti along rail corridors was not necessarily sustainable, therefore a management program incorporating aerosol art may have a more enduring value. The focus group and individual artist did not make a distinction about land ownership, for example privately owned rail corridors or recreational spaces controlled by government. This is interesting because it demonstrates that the artists experience all potential canvasses for street art in a similar vein, regardless of land ownership (International Association for Public Participation, 2006).

While power pole graffiti does not feature in such large quantities as rail graffiti, they are important because of their high profile and high visibility along main roads and highways in community areas, as suggested by Robin (see Chapter Two, Figure 2.8). According to Knox City Council (2002), power poles are a priority for clean up because of their impact on perceptions of safety. Further, power poles are beyond the scope of local government graffiti removal programs, as power authorities do not generally permit Councils or private individuals to paint them out without permission (Knox City Council, 2006). An example of an initiative to minimise power pole graffiti is presented by Knox City Council (2002). They revealed how a program based in one local setting employed community art-theme designers to deter illegal advertising and graffiti on power poles (Knox City Council, 2002).
The view of Sasha and the focus group participants was that street art opportunities were not readily available at any open spaces (regardless of property ownership). The focus group participants share a similar sentiment to White (1999, cited in NCP, 1999), who suggests that many open spaces, including meeting and informal dining areas in shopping centres, can be unwelcoming to young people. The professionals suggested that the presence of aerosol art in the public domain (irrespective of land ownership) can enhance feelings of place and belonging for young people who are engaged in the street art sub culture (Halsey and Young, 2002; Halsey and Young, 2006; Boba, 2003; Cubrilò et al., 2009). Both the professionals and the young people interviewed felt that custodians of public space tended to highlight concerns when public assets were utilised for ‘alternative’ uses (meaning uses that were different to those set out in the design phase for a particular asset, such as graffiti style art). This information also links to the theme of youth inclusion (and agency perspectives), that is presented below.

It is understandable that there was a general reluctance from the individual artist and the focus group participants to discuss the graffiti sub culture in great depth (Halsey 2001; Lamm Weisell, 2004). In employing the Interpretivist approach, the researcher felt the artists may have believed their recreational choice to engage in aerosol art could be misconstrued as involvement in criminal damage (Lamm Weisell, 2005; Crime Prevention Victoria, 2005). These fears have been (to some degree) validated by the literature presented in this research by Sharratt (2002), and Halsey and Young (2002). The Perceptions of Local Safety Survey (POLS), (2004), revealed that across Victoria, 12% of the population felt that youth and youth gangs are a major crime problem. In the Knox region alone, 19% of people felt that youth and youth gangs are a major crime issue (POLS Survey, 2004). Sasha and the focus group participants were reluctant to be implicated with gang related or illegal behaviour. Despite this perception of a crime problem (being young people hanging around), young people ‘hanging out’ in groups around public space does not actually constitute a crime in Victoria. The POLS Survey (conducted in Knox, the research setting, in 2004) also
underlined that one of the crimes in the municipality most often identified as an issue was graffiti (identified by 33% of survey participants).

Lee suggested that while graffiti contributes to feelings of lawlessness in local communities, it is not always quantified as a crime problem in official statistics. If graffiti was registered more consistently by Police on the Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) database, it may elicit more funding from the government to manage the issue. Illegal graffiti is one of the most under reported crimes in Knox (POLS Survey, 2004; Knox City Council, 2005). This demonstrates some incongruence between the perception of the graffiti crimes creating concerns in local communities, and the reality of criminal damage being traditionally under reported in official police statistics (Lamm Weisell, 2004). Being able to report a decrease in particular crimes creates a politically attractive opportunity (especially for graffiti, due to its strong visual presence in communities). Lee’s observations are similar to the findings of the POLS Survey (2004), which suggests that in some municipalities, graffiti creates the perception of a broader crime issue.

A challenge for policy makers is to alter the perceptions of the community in terms of what actually constitutes a crime. It is also of great concern that hanging out (particularly by young people) is construed in the same vein as illegal graffiti (Boba, 2003; Cubrilo et al., 2009). Of further interest is the potential impact of these perceptions on fear of crime in local communities, and the implications for young people being perceived as the perpetrators of crime, who require a zero tolerance approach to manage their public behaviour (POLS Survey, 2004; Lamm Weisell, 2004).

5.2.2 Art and Tolerance

Graffiti is considered an underground activity because of its degree of secrecy and has attracted zero tolerance strategies for its management (Halsey and Young, 2002; Sharratt, 2002). Lee has referred to zero tolerance and its employment by some agencies as a political ‘rubber stamp’. Lee felt that this approach was tokenistic, given some policy makers wish to create the illusion
that a program being delivered is tough on crime (despite the fact that it may not be). A precedent for zero tolerance approaches can be located in drink driving campaigns. The government sets out to be ‘tough on the crime’ of drink driving by making the consequences explicit (Watson, 1996; DHS, 2001; Vassallo et al., 2002). The aim is to prevent and preclude the activity not only by making the penalties for offending known, but also by having a visual enforcement role (DHS, 2001; Vassallo et al., 2002). The Department of Human Services (2001) described zero tolerance as the implementation of approaches that do not tolerate the visibility of any graffiti within a local area, and Lee’s understanding of zero tolerance differed from this. Underpinning this response was Lee’s belief that zero tolerance policies are expensive to implement because of their concentration on graffiti removal, and this is similar to the view of McDonald (1999), who questions the economic viability of graffiti zero tolerance strategies.

For example, The Melbourne Herald Sun (2006) identified that Melbourne City Council had embraced graffiti tolerance zones and legal locations for graffiti murals in 2005. These tolerance zones are similar to legal avenues for aerosol art described by Lee above. Paradoxically, Melbourne elected to use strategies of a zero tolerance nature to coincide with its hosting of the Commonwealth games in 2006. This was due to political pressures around the time of the games to ‘clean up our city’ and make it presentable (Herald Sun, 2006).

Similar to the swift graffiti removal approach embraced during the Commonwealth Games, Victorian Premier John Brumby and Tourism Minister Tim Holding recently condemned graffiti in Melbourne's lanes as a ‘blight on the city’ and ‘not the way we want Melbourne to be promoted to a global audience’ (Gill, 2010, p.21). Only a short time later, Planning Minister Justin Madden went on to espouse the heritage value of aerosol art in Melbourne’s Hosier Lane, planning to engage Heritage Victoria about how this unique art could be protected (Gill, 2010). Encouraging and protecting authorised street art would be problematic for the government, given not only the transient nature of aerosol art, but also because of the Graffiti Prevention Act (Vic) 2007, which makes it difficult
for young people to apply aerosol art without bureaucratic permission processes which enable them to possess an aerosol can if they are under the age of eighteen.

Lee’s view was that policy makers can ‘ride on the coat tails’ of other zero tolerance policies like the drink driving campaigns (identified by them as successful), trying to mimic their success. In contrast, Mendes and Rowe (2004) feel that it is important to make explicit the policy problem that needs to be addressed. For example, graffiti has no physical victim, whereas drink driving has real and physical implications for individual and community health safety (Watson, 1996; Knox City Council, 2002). Therefore the two different social problems require different policy responses.

As outlined above, Lee’s view is that some organisations use the term zero tolerance because of its political attractiveness. However the literature does not provide any evidence of organisations using a zero tolerance approach purely for the reason of political allure. Casey City Council could be construed as an exception, on the basis of their politically motivated graffiti eradication campaign (MAV, 2002).

As described above, both the professionals interviewed alluded to zero tolerance being an inherently political term and Lee described the political benefits to a ‘tough on crime’ approach. The Casey City Council extensively advertises the eradication and enforcement aspects of their graffiti strategy, which politically resulted in extensive press commentary (MAV, 2002). However the Council do not necessarily apply zero tolerance for namesake, they actively pursue graffiti non tolerance strategies. It is clear that through the promotion of their reporting hotline, 1800 VANDAL, that Casey wishes to highlight their opposition to acts of graffiti and criminal damage (MAV, 2002) and be seen as ‘tough on crime’. In contrast to the approach set out by Casey Council, Lamm Weisell (2004) felt that focusing on diverting prolific graffiti offenders from illegal behaviour was much more valuable, because only small groups of individuals produce large amounts of illegal graffiti.
Under a local law adopted by Casey, business owners or sales staff must not store or display aerosol products in spaces accessible to the public (see Chapter 2.3.2). They must not sell aerosol spray paint to persons under the age of 18 (MAV, 2002). At no point did the professionals or the artists advocate the value of local graffiti laws in managing illegal graffiti. Further, there is no conclusive evidence, either locally or internationally, that suggests prohibiting the sale of aerosol cans results in decreased graffiti levels. Casey’s approach is inconsistent with best practice approaches preferred by Halsey (2001), who found that zero tolerance had been shown overseas to increase graffiti, not get rid of it. Despite this lack of evidence, a similar provision restricting the sale of aerosol cans to minors has been incorporated in the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)*.

Lee’s description of fast removal and zero tolerance strategies as a ‘band aid’ solution for managing graffiti also aligns with McDonald (1999), who provides examples of politically attractive short term zero tolerance, such as the development of solely-focused fast removal (graffiti) strategies or efficient vandalism repairs (instigated by the Broken Window Theory). Like the Broken Windows ‘swift action’ approach, the diversion initiatives described by Wilson and Kelling (1982) and Knox City Council (2002) could be marketed to highlight their retributive elements.

The belief that graffiti is a gateway crime can be the political impetus for the introduction of graffiti zero tolerance policies, because of the preconceived idea that graffiti relates to, or can lead to other crime (Wilson and Kelling, 1982; McDonald, 1999; Knox City Council, 2002). Because graffiti generates perceptions that some areas are unsavoury (as identified by Robin and Lee), it is somewhat understandable that policy makers would like to be perceived as offering swift and definitive solutions (such as zero tolerance clean up programs for graffiti).

Graffiti has been described as an emotive issue for local communities, fraught with controversy and capable of igniting passionate local debate.
(Halsey and Young, 2002; Lamm Weisell, 2004). Whilst there were many instances where the professionals shared complementary views about graffiti, they had different opinions about the implementation of zero tolerance, particularly in terms of its capacity for evaluation. Whilst Robin felt that zero tolerance strategies were easier to evaluate because these policies generally aspire to the total eradication of graffiti, Lee did not make any reference to zero tolerance and simplistic evaluation, or counting actual graffiti levels in square metres. Robin appeared to embrace graffiti art in a more deliberate way than Lee, and Robin’s understanding of what constitutes a zero tolerance approach aligns with Halsey’s (2001) interpretation that some graffiti zero tolerance strategies are short sighted and do not have long term graffiti management benefits. Sasha (the aerosol artist) also held a similar view to Robin and was a more passionate supporter of aerosol art opportunities than Lee (as a professional). Sasha felt that zero tolerance was of little importance because graffiti will happen anyway. Further, policy makers could do little to stop graffiti, should they chose not to tolerate it in any form (Lamm Weisell, 2004). Reinforcing Sasha’s view, Robin felt that it was important to embrace harm minimisation and early intervention approaches in delivering policies that have an impact on young people, similar to those described by White (1999) cited in NCP (1999).

Robin praised the deviation from purely zero tolerance and punitive approaches for community graffiti management and suggested this to be a positive move forward in graffiti control. Further, Robin felt that zero tolerance and harm minimisation should operate independently, and the theoretical perspectives could never be coherently organised in the one policy response. Adding ‘to the mix’, zero tolerance approaches in a policy that is supposedly about early intervention, could contradict the intent and purpose of service delivery and have significant implications for skewing policy outcomes (Mendes and Rowe, 2004). In contrast to Robin, Lee did not make reference to less punitive approaches for graffiti management making way for more inclusive graffiti management strategies, and did not underline the implicit and fiery debate between zero tolerance and harm minimisation advocates (Halsey 2001). Lee appeared
cautious, almost reluctant, to note the controversial nature of graffiti management approaches for fear of political persecution.

Sasha indicated that he/she did not want to comment on the various types and styles of graffiti in existence. Again, for fear of criminal association, Sasha also had a general reluctance to comment in detail on the impact of zero tolerance policies implemented for the purpose of graffiti management and control.

Both the individual artist and the focus group participants felt that zero tolerance strategies would not be effective, fundamentally because their intent to ‘not tolerate’ graffiti is impossible (see also Cubrilo et al., 2009). The comments around graffiti ‘happening anyway’ also have relevance to the Broken Windows Theory (Wilson and Kelling, 1982; McDonald, 1999; Berger, Free, and Searles, 2009). Long term evaluation has demonstrated there is only short term benefit in enacting fast removal of graffiti policies, and their benefits are conditional on the period for which the non tolerance of graffiti is enforced (McDonald, 1999; Boba, 2003). Therefore, Sasha’s comments around graffiti happening regardless of the policy position ‘of the day’ are particularly insightful. Sasha’s reflections are also interesting because they reinforce the perspective explored by Halsey and Young (2002), which infer that zero tolerance strategies do not have long term or sustainable benefits for managing graffiti.

The Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic) appears to have the potential to thwart local specific responses that cater to young people with an interest in aerosol art, and the kind of approaches for managing graffiti described by Robin and Sasha (that promote the opportunity for aerosol art in the public domain). Duffee and Maguire (2007) explored notions of ‘tough on crime’ legislation, stating its advantages for policy makers, irrespective of actual penalties enforced. The Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic) may be short sighted because of its punitive nature (see discussion of Sampson and Scott, 2000; Lamm Weisell, 2004; MAV, 2006), and one of the major criticisms of the Act thus far has been its potential to adversely impact on municipal graffiti responses that include street art programs (Lamm Weisell, 2004; MAV, 2006).
5.3 Valuing and Involving Young People

5.3.1 Youth Inclusion and Community Perceptions

Young people often confront overly bureaucratic processes when trying to access public areas and the aerosol artists (in particular Sasha) have highlighted this experience. In Chapter 2.3, a local (to the research) example is given, describing how young people hanging around an abandoned milk bar were being labelled as anti social because of their ‘visual presence’ by hanging out in groups (Wright, 2003; cited in Norris, 2003). Despite the occasional punctuation of positive profiling of young people in the local press, the dominant headlines of ‘youth striking terror’ prevail. The identification of young people’s activities as criminal or antisocial has been referred to by both the professionals in the context of graffiti. Becker (1963) and Plumner (1979) examined notions of labelling. Plumner’s (1979) perspective reinforces the concerns of the researcher in asking questions about aerosol murals and unfair stereotyping of the artists involved in this research.

Young people are often exemplified in anti graffiti campaigns, depicting them in possession of spray cans and as the perpetrators of vandalism and graffiti (Halsey and Young, 2002; Lamm Weisell, 2004). Similarly, Robin felt that graffiti conjured images of crime, deviance, and anti social behaviour (perpetuated by young people). Labelling of graffiti writers is generally underlined by a larger social group, the definers (Becker, 1963; Plummer, 1979). The graffiti writers assume the role of the ‘defined’ group, as identified by wider society, and they do not partake in the ‘defining’ activity themselves. White (1998) also explored notions of youth and social exclusion (see Chapter 2.3), and while he agreed there were obvious examples of antisocial behaviour by young people, he speculated that there is also a lack of understanding and lack of tolerance displayed by the ‘wider community’ (White, 1990, p.37). This sentiment was reinforced by both Lee and the focus group participants who highlighted the importance of including young people in local decision processes.
Consistently, negative stories about young people are offered better coverage and space in print media than those positive press releases, such as the write ups of young sporting heroes, assigned to the back pages (White, 1998; Lamm Weisell, 2004). Not surprisingly, the focus group participants articulated how policy makers favoured mainstream sports, often dismissing all graffiti as anti social. Local municipalities (such as Knox) have worked on strategies and plans to assist in integrating young people with the community, in order present their importance as part of the local landscape, rather than a problem to be solved. Walsh (2001) refers to the importance of raising the positive profile of young people in local communities. In a similar vein, Robin spoke of the benefits of working with a pre existing group of aerosol artists on community building projects. Robin’s approach complements the perspective of Walsh (2001) who advocated working with pre-existing community groups (including young people), traders, community organisations, local government and local police assist communities to identify and meet their special needs. Walsh (2001) also suggests that by putting these interventions in place, the opportunity for crime to take place can be reduced.

Lee made comments about building networks and opportunities for young people in the local community. This complements the values of policy, planning, design, and management in dealing with tensions relating to young people and social inclusion underlined by Heywood and Crane (1998; in Crane, 2000). However, Lee’s reflections on the value of young people and their inclusion in local decision making processes differs from the Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria’s (PRAV) account of young people as decision makers in practice (2004). PRAV (see Chapter 2.4.6) felt that Councils’ responses to young people’s requests for skate parks, graffiti walls or other ad-hoc forms of leisure space were often met with bureaucratic processes that serve to discourage young people’s initial desire for such spaces (PRAV, 2004).

Lee provided a positive local account of how his/her agency involved young people as local decision makers. Approaches that actively seek youth participation, such as the HV Jones reserve example in Table 4.2, not only
attempt to address youth needs and issues, but also encourage active participation from all sections of the community. The key to these approaches is community integration and youth promotion and engagement. Whilst PRAV (2004) do not underestimate the value of young people as decision makers, they do highlight tensions of involving young people in decision processes in a practical sense. Critically, Lee highlighted that the community needed to be educated about young people’s recreational choices to understand that these choices are not necessarily anti-social (see also Cheetham, 1994). Despite initial tensions, local policy makers attempted to engage the BMXers and consult meaningfully with them. The Knox BMX consultation approach made some reference to the White (1990) methodology for youth engagement.

The professionals and artists culture could not recall an anecdote where the needs of aerosol artists were balanced with a traditional park user group, in a similar vein to the BMX example. This highlights the need to replicate the White (1990) consultation with young people interested in street art, about opportunities for aerosol murals in community spaces. The findings from the Knox Youth Plan (Knox City Council, 2005) also align with the perceptions of the professionals, aerosol artist, and focus group participants who reflected that ‘not a lot’ is done with young people to consult on preferred recreational opportunities for them, beyond tokenism.

Similar to the findings of the Local Safety Survey (2004), Lee felt that the Knox community was fearful of crime, particularly because of the presence of graffiti in local communities, and cohorts of young people ‘hanging around’. In 2004, the State Government made a commitment to focusing on inclusion (particularly of young people) to strengthen community capacity in managing local issues, such as graffiti. This commitment culminated in the program ‘Respect: The Victorian Government’s Vision for Young People’ (Growing Victoria Policy; cited in Department of Victorian Communities, 2004). The intention of documents like ‘Respect’ to enhance the positive profile of young people, has to some degree been contradicted by the aerosol artist and focus group participants interviewed
for this research (Growing Victoria Policy; cited in Department of Victorian Communities, 2004).

The comments about why policy makers should and could not understand street art (made by the aerosol artist’s in Chapter Four) were especially significant, because they offered some explanation about why the artists were vague in other sections of their interviews (using the Interpretivist paradigm). Symbolic interaction theorists have discussed how individuals create shared meanings through their social interactions, forming their social reality (Patton, 2002; Hayes and Prenzler, 2009). This relates to Sasha and his/ her peers who, through their graffiti affiliations, understand that the broader community do not perceive graffiti as permissible or legal, and hence the deliberate secrecy of their subculture. Cheetham (1994) argued that graffiti writers generally operate in underground groups, and policy makers are not given permission to understand their complex relationships or activities. Clearly, the secrecy of the aerosol art subculture (as described by Halsey, 2001) precluded the artists interviewed from elaborating on how graffiti would continue to be present in local communities, irrespective of legislative constraints, such as the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic). According to Cubriló (et al., 2009), the asbestos infested redundant Abattoirs in Burnley became somewhat of an underground Melbourne aerosol art gallery by the late eighties, with the early writers serving as the ‘kings’ of the street art culture. These ‘kings’ were further popularised in underground street art magazines, such as ‘Kings Way’ (Cubriló et al., 2009).

Arguably, the ideas from the professionals in this research, around capacity to better value and involve young people in public space management, could further inform ‘aspirational’ documents like ‘Respect.’ Robin’s example of applying a graffiti mural and working with young people has relevance to ‘Respect’ (Growing Victoria Policy; cited in Department of Victorian Communities, 2004) and particularly the document’s aim of expanding young people’s opportunity to participate in their local community. Further, ‘Respect’ aims to celebrate personal and community benefits from young people’s contribution to society. It could be useful to exemplify Robin’s positive experiences with young people and
aerosol art, to more meaningfully demonstrate the government’s aim of promoting the benefits of young people’s contributions in society (set out in the ‘Respect’ document). This would be particularly beneficial because Robin conveyed that the artists themselves were reluctant about participating in the promotion of their aerosol art (Growing Victoria Policy; cited in Department of Victorian Communities, 2004).

5.3.2 Harm Minimisation: Is It or Isn’t It?

Both Lee and Robin revealed that their agencies had policies based in harm minimisation philosophies (see Chapter 2.4 for more information on harm minimisation). The graffiti policy elements described by Lee aligned with the understanding of harm minimisation conveyed by DHS (2001) overall. However, Lee’s opinion of what constitutes harm minimisation differed from the traditional understanding of the term (Mendes and Rowe, 2004; Vassallo et al., 2002), when he/she described court mandated diversion graffiti clean up programs as harm minimisation initiatives. Traditionally, harm minimisation does not refer to punishment mechanisms such as painting out graffiti, even if it is as a means of escaping conviction for a particular offence. This apparent confusion is reasonable because both Corrections and Diversion programs also embrace elements of harm minimisation in their educative and referral contexts (for example, part of a non custodial sentence could be to participate in vocational training). Lee’s views complement explanations of Diversion programs as a form of early intervention, as they aim to break the cycle of re-offending and crime. They can offer alternative sentencing options to low level offenders (Farrington, 1996). Diversion (graffiti removal or clean up) initiatives are also somewhat restorative because the programs minimise the damage of the physical blight of graffiti on local communities, again underlining the relationship between graffiti, diversion, and harm minimisation.

Whilst the information presented above supports Lee’s perspective that there is a relationship between Diversion programs and harm minimisation, criminal justice diversions and corrections programs remain somewhat punitive in nature,
because they are delivered by Community Correctional Services (CCS) and the Magistrates Court. Lee failed to stress that local authorities will generally engage Corrections Victoria to provide and manage participants (see Chapter 2.3.2 for more information) in performing graffiti removal tasks, as a form of punishment for related offences (Knox City Council, 2002). Because of these punishment and deterrence elements, it could also be asserted that Diversion and Corrections programs are equally of a zero tolerance genre (McDonald, 1999).

Lee and Robin’s ‘theoretical’ understanding of harm minimisation did however parallel with Mendes and Rowe (2004), who tout an approach to minimising or limiting the hazards or harms at a community level. They focus equally upon the individual with the problem and are not necessarily concerned with eliminating certain activities (Mendes and Rowe, 2004; Vassallo et al., 2002).

Lee and Robin both referred to Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), and the Safer Design Principles set out in the Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2005) in the context of harm minimisation and sustainability. Lee described a multi faceted approach comprised of education, prevention, and removal strategies. These facets are similar to the CPTED approach (see Chapter 2.4 for more information), which focuses on the proper design and effective use of facilities and assets (Coffield; 1991; Knox City Council, 2002). Robin also felt that CPTED was similar to notions of harm minimisation, because it also removes the opportunity for crime or anti social activity to take place (DHS, 2001; Sutton et al., 2008).

The professionals’ ability to underline Safer Design Principals as part of an overall harm minimisation philosophy highlights a degree of sophistication in the types of graffiti policies that their organisations deliver. The difficulty in evaluating graffiti policies that have grounding in harm minimisation was also referred to by both the professionals. It is important to note that neither Robin nor Lee differentiated between the theoretical underpinnings of Social and Situational Crime Prevention (Clarke, 1995; Rosenbaum et al., 1998). Social
Crime Prevention has a more significant relationship with harm minimisation because it is about early intervention and prevention (Rosenbaum et al., 1998).

The components of sustainability, that is social, environmental and economic harmony, as described by Lee, also align with traditional notions of harm minimisation (as discussed in Chapter 2.4), which have grounding in education and early intervention (Mendes and Rowe, 2004; Vassallo et al., 2002). The graffiti intervention plan described by Lee was a direct response to community perceptions of the problems associated with this wilful damage, and the social and environmental costs incurred by the community (Lamm Weisell, 2004). Both professionals described the importance of making graffiti management more sustainable in local communities. Some of the comments reflected by them referred to the fact that harm minimisation approaches tend to be more strategic and long term. This complements the long term vision of harm minimisation set out by DHS, who aim to put people first and not over prioritise institutions or systems (DHS, 2001). Lee’s preference for community centric approaches supports this sentiment (Lamm Weisell, 2004; Goldsmith et al., 2006).

A program which is based on a level of government taking responsibility for all graffiti removal across an entire area would be economically unsustainable, according to Lee. Lee also speculated that government-led responses did not increase community resilience in managing local issues (therefore also being contrary to the principals of harm minimisation). It was clear from conversations with both the professionals and the artists that strong partnerships are critical to the delivery of any harm minimisation approach (Clarke, 1995; Lamm Weisell, 2004). It is also important that any response to graffiti and vandalism management should be based on community involvement and community partnerships, rather than a government led response to manage the whole issue (Vassallo et al., 2002; Boba, 2003; White, 2001; Cunneen and White, 2011).

Harm minimisation strategies need to be assessed by their educational impacts, the value of their early interventionist approaches and how they may have reduced the likelihood for property damage to occur (Clarke, 1995; Rosenbaum
et al., 1998; Boba, 2003; Mendes and Rowe, 2004). In addition, they need to be evaluated according to social impacts, such as reductions in fear of crime and improvements in perceptions of safety. Crime Prevention Victoria incorporates notions of fear of crime and perceptions of safety in their Local Safety Survey (2004). Safer Streets and Homes (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b) also aims to reduce the opportunities for crime (Situational Crime Prevention) and the underlying motivational causes of criminal and anti social behaviour. Interestingly, the strategy does not provide evaluation methodologies. This is important because the evaluation of harm minimisation policy was identified as a complex activity by Robin, in contrast to the evaluation of zero tolerance policies, which generally involve assessing how much graffiti is removed. Whilst the professionals views about harm minimisation were occasionally confused with community based sanctions and punishment, overall their preference for early intervention and locally based approaches for managing graffiti was highlighted.

5.3.3 Murals to Include Young People, Murals to Preclude Graffiti

In the interviews with the professionals, the focus group participants and the individual artist, permissible spaces for aerosol art were described as a vehicle for valuing young people by establishing community art on high profile structures. Sharratt (2002) also suggests that graffiti writers have a great deal of mutual respect and trust in one another, and are able to work together to produce aerosol murals that provide attachment to their local communities. Cubrilo (et al., 2009) describes the importance of the graffiti art culture in Melbourne during the eighties as integral to the diversity of styles of aerosol works popularised by graffiti writers today. He articulates that the original Melbourne graffiti writers evolved some basic aerosol designs into an elaborate network of crews and styles (Cubrilo et al., 2009), creating an attachment to Melbourne as a renowned location for street art.

Sasha felt the best locations for legally produced aerosol art were in areas where there is a good opportunity for an audience and public interaction. This highlights the desirability for artists to locate aerosol art along the rail corridor, and in turn
reduce the impact of illegal graffiti in these spaces (Cheetham, 1994). Sasha also suggested that local neighbourhoods might be able to relate to or react to their aerosol art work, and take an experience from it. This perspective also relates to the theme of ‘Valuing and Involving Young People,’ implying the mutual community benefit of involving young artists in the planning and design of local community spaces (Carr et al., 1992; Cubrilov, 2009). The focus group participants felt that the benefits of providing for aerosol murals in public areas were also from a community perspective. Their responses implied that the community could ‘take something’ from their experience of aerosol art. Sharratt (2002) would propose Sasha’s work to be of community benefit, because large-scale, multi-coloured features including characters, backgrounds and letters can be aesthetically pleasing to the community. The willingness of the artists to ‘give something’ to the community is interesting, given Sasha’s inference that the community does not respond to needs of young people at all (see also, Crane, 2000).

5.4 Young People and Community Participation

5.4.1 Connecting Young People- Confronting the Challenges of Street Art in the Public Domain

Incorporating young people in decision making about public space was an important value for both Robin and Lee. This value is consistent with approaches described by Heywood and Crane (1998; in Crane, 2000). White (1999) also advocates for youth leisure opportunities within public spaces, as a diversion for young people from criminal behaviour (cited in NCP, 1999).

In contrast to the preference of the professionals and White’s (1999) approach (cited in NCP, 1999), the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic) reduces young people’s access to public areas because of its emphasis on control of public land. Lee and Robin did not condone the punishment of young people, or coercion techniques to alter their behaviour for graffiti crimes. The workers’ opinions are consistent with Coffield (1991), who argues that distinguishing the
motives behind applying graffiti can assist in developing an effective response to manage the phenomena. Lee and Robin both looked for opportunities to replicate best practice youth consultations, and they were interested in how these frameworks for engaging young people (such as those described by White, 1999, cited in NCP, 1999, and PRAV, 2004)\(^\text{10}\) transpire in local contexts. Further, they believed that there are opportunities to link the need for best practise case studies (in working with young people and graffiti management) to fill these research gaps.

A preference for young people’s participation in accessible and safe community areas was described by both professionals. When White (1999) interviewed young people (cited in NCP, 1999), as well as older adult users of public space and commercial stakeholders, he concluded that ‘skill enhancing’ community engagement approaches were favourable as young people are then seen as legitimate users of public space, rather than a crime problem to be solved (White, 1999, cited in NCP, 1999).

The professionals advocated for young people to be better connected to local spaces. The Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic) dissuades young people’s freedom to produce art in the public domain without the threat of being treated with suspicion or potential persecution, and this contradicts the preference of the street artist’s interviewed in this research. The issue of graffiti art would benefit from local best practise examples for connecting young people to their communities, similar to those more broadly discussed by White (1999, cited in NCP, 1999).

Sasha preferred for street art to be experienced simply as another ‘alternative’ form of expression, as part of wider artistic opportunities provided for in local communities. The focus group participants also had an expectation that aerosol art should be treated the same as all other art forms, and not discriminated against (see Cubrilo et al., 2009 for explanations of graffiti art as an underground and alternative art culture). In contrast, the graffiti legislation in Victoria creates

\(^{10}\) The PRAV report found that young people are often dominated by lobby groups (PRAV, 2004).
enormous dilemmas for organisations that provide facilitative processes which support aerosol art in the public arena. These dilemmas will be further explained below.

Lee’s agency had an interest in providing a safe and healthy environment for aerosol art and youth expression. The Melbourne street art culture was provocative and fresh in the eighties, capable of seducing a generation of Melbourne’s young people into the world of aerosol art, and carving the reputation of many contemporary street artists influential in the current day aerosol art culture (Cubrilo et al., 2009). Recent comments by Planning Minister Justin Madden about the value of Hosier Lane in Melbourne underline how popular the medium of aerosol art still is (Gill, 2010). However, under the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic), young people would be met with overly bureaucratic processes to obtain permission for locating street art in community spaces, particularly because carrying a spray can under the age of eighteen years is an offence under the act. Inconsistent with the preference of the aerosol artists in this research, the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic) compromises the production of legal murals (similar to Figure 5.1), because artists on their way to commissioned jobs could be questioned and possibly detained if they are in possession of a prescribed graffiti implement, such as a spray can. Not providing the opportunity for aerosol art production in public areas potentially disconnects young people from their communities (Wilson, 1998), because their intention to beautify public infrastructure in a way that is meaningful to them (and an expression of themselves), is under threat by this legislation.

Lamm Weisell (2004) highlighted the value of providing young people with the opportunity to design public infrastructure, including bus shelters, so that it was less prone to illegal graffiti. Pilot programs utilising a range of artistic styles and techniques have been conducted in the research setting, including designs on bus shelters produced by the individual artist Sasha interviewed in this research (see Figure 5.1). Lachmann (1988; cited in Neuman, 2000) also examined notions of values and culture in relation to graffiti, exploring the value of sharing aerosol art with the community and other graffiti writers. Symbolic interaction
suggests that graffiti artists may create shared norms through their social interactions in producing aerosol art, if these types of projects are produced by groups (Patton, 2002; Hayes and Prenzler, 2009). However the artists may be unfairly labelled, because community responses to criminal behaviour can shape community perceptions about acceptable conduct in public areas (Carrabine et al., 2009).

While reducing Council’s maintenance costs, community art also offers opportunities for broader community engagement, improvements to amenity and development of neighbourhood identity (Knox City Council, 2002; Sharratt, 2002; Cubrilò et al., 2009). Clearly, the views outlined by the focus group participants and the individual artist (about the exclusion of aerosol art in public space) underline the necessity to consult young people about decorating private and public infrastructure in the public arena (Boba, 2003). Large amounts of illegal graffiti are typically produced by small groups of individuals, highlighting the value of redirecting their energy into the production of legal graffiti murals (Lamm Weisell, 2004). Channeling the expression of street artists needs to be in a manner that is legal, although the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)* limits the capacity to explore funding additional innovative community art programs in local communities, as described by Knox City Council (2002) and Halsey and Young (2002).
The aerosol artists from the focus group indicated that central locations in the public viewing are the best spaces to put up street art work (connecting them to their communities). In the past, policy makers have attempted to implement strategies that move these young people away from activity centres to invoke a more ‘sanitary’ presentation of shopping malls and strips (White, 2002; Boba, 2003). However, White (2002) infers that this displacement is only a band-aid solution. There is real and untapped potential to utilise young people’s presence in an ‘eyes on the street’ passive surveillance approach described by CPV (2005, p.15). Sasha’s preference to be amongst highly used community spaces whilst producing legally sanctioned aerosol art would demonstrate an opportunity for casual surveillance, because more people in the streets makes communities safer (Heywood and Crane, 1998; in Crane, 2000). White’s view (2002) of participatory communities actively involving young people also reflects this sentiment. Policy makers in various Councils’ could benefit greatly from engaging local artists to produce their art in the public domain from a safety (passive surveillance) perspective.

5.4.2 Local Responses and the Impacts of State Controlled Legislation

Both the professionals interviewed preferred to develop local responses for graffiti management (as opposed to government led approaches), considering that graffiti issues were best managed with community tailored initiatives. Boba (2003) attempted to understand and brainstorm creative approaches for managing petty crime problems such as graffiti. He suggested that there is an alternative available to punitive models for graffiti control, which have generally been unsuccessful in minimising the impact of illegal graffiti (Boba, 2003). The Graffiti Prevention Act Exposure Draft MAV Consultation Paper (MAV, 2006) also revealed that it is important for any approach to graffiti and vandalism management to be based on community involvement and partnerships, as opposed to top down responses. Despite Lee’s accounts of how aerosol workshops can connect young people to their community, there are some impediments to this approach. The Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic) could threaten local Melbourne councils’ capacity to deliver aerosol workshops for
young people with an interest in graffiti because the Act focuses on enhancing powers of enforcement, punishment, and deterrence (MAV, 2006). The general deterrence elements of the Act are clear, because it deliberately underlines the consequences of illegal graffiti. Offenders tend to accurately perceive that the risks of being caught for graffiti offences are unlikely (Watson, 1996). Overall, Watson (1996) argues that the deterrence value of graffiti or vandalism specific legislation is quite low.

As previously indicated, at no point in discussions with the professionals, the individual artist and focus group participants, did any individual participating in the research support or advocate for the application of graffiti art without proper permissions. In some respects, the professionals interviewed may have a limited understanding of the graffiti culture when it operates underground (Sharratt, 2002; Boba, 2003). Further, the artists themselves may want more legal sites to preclude illegal graffiti from occurring in the first place (such as the perspective of Frankie in this research, highlighting a preference for aerosol art locations in the public arena).

The professionals revealed a sophisticated approach to graffiti control, beyond criminal justice interventions and similar to the multifaceted approaches described in the Graffiti Prevention Act Exposure Draft MAV Consultation Paper (MAV, 2006). Lee and Robin highlighted the imperative for complementary measures in managing graffiti, including community education and involvement, preventative design, diversion, monitoring, and enhancing community cohesion and connectivity (these preferences are echoed by Knox City Council 2002; and Halsey and Young, 2002). A holistic approach to graffiti (according to Lee) integrates primary, secondary and tertiary level measures. Such interventions are fundamental to address the issue of graffiti in an effective and enduring way (Vassallo et al., 2002; Mendes and Rowe, 2004). Hence graffiti legislation needs to better reflect this multi faceted, evidence based approach to managing graffiti related harms in communities. Whilst Sampson and Scott (2000) provided some commentary on the expansion of laws designed to combat illegal graffiti, they did
not provide an evidence base for their effectiveness in reducing the amount of illegal graffiti present in local communities.

The professionals did not feel that custodial punishment was the most appropriate punishment for graffiti offences, particularly because the application of graffiti has no physical victim (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002a). This is in contrast to the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic), which outlines severe consequences for marking publicly visible graffiti on property without the owner’s consent, and marking publicly visible graffiti that would offend a reasonable person. Both offences attract a penalty of up to two years imprisonment or a fine of up to $26,428.80. Lee suggested that graffiti contributes to an individual’s fear of crime; however it remains a less malicious act than other crimes against the person. Prison sentences for willful and malicious damage to property should not be pursued, according to the professionals interviewed. The prison culture and deprivations related to imprisonment may produce lasting negative outcomes for the offender, causing or contributing to existing marginalisation, stigmatisation, mental and emotional health issues, and disconnection from supportive social networks in the community (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002b; Stensholt, 2002). This may lead to or perpetuate a cycle of recidivism.

5.4.3 Locating Aerosol Art: Creating Space for Young Decision Makers

Four participants of the focus group nominated that any site in the public’s viewing could be appropriate for their artistic displays. Despite this preference, the individual artist Sasha felt that wherever aerosol art was displayed and available for general public viewing, it may cause controversy. Mill (1989) would suggest that community festivals and events are among the few ways that young people in local communities can be included and portrayed collectively in a positive vein, and hence festivals could be an appropriate vehicle for displaying aerosol art. Mill (1989) also argues that artistic expression in community life should be encouraged and that it is important for all opinions to be expressed (including young peoples’ opinions) to ensure equity in community participation.
Comments were made by Shannon (a focus group participant) about the value of having policy makers advocate for young artists, and negotiate access to public canvasses (on their behalf) for putting up street art. Sharratt (2002) stressed the importance of young people’s sense of place and belonging in local communities. Despite agreeing with the value of advocating for young people, Darcy (a focus group participant) felt that handing over management rights to a project leader could remove some of their artistic control over local projects and hence disconnect them. According to Darcy, the value of street art programs as a vehicle to connect young people to their communities is contingent upon how much autonomy is offered to the artists.

As previously referred to under the theme of ‘Valuing and Involving Young People,’ it appears that skating has been deemed an appropriate ‘young people’s’ activity by local planners (White, 2002). This is in contrast to street art, which according to the experience of the focus group participants is not yet widely tolerated (see Lamm Weisell, 2004, for explanations of graffiti and community tolerance levels). Clearly, the focus group participants want support for their interest in producing aerosol art, similar to support provided by local planners for skaters.

The experience of the focus group participants and the individual artist has been that their recreational choice (street art) has been too controversial for local authorities (Sharratt, 2002; Cubrilò et al., 2009). Planners could be concerned about the dangers of promoting illegal graffiti when working with groups of aerosol artists (Knox City Council, 2002; Cubrilò et al., 2009). Regardless, the focus group participants remain a legitimate community of ‘interest,’ because there is commonality in their desire to collectively ‘put up’ their large scale murals and designs in the public domain, just as skaters look for a public and safe space to skate (White, 2002; Boba, 2003). The preference for public canvasses on which to display their work will remain, whether the artists have a local planning advocate to negotiate their access to public canvasses or not (McDonald, 1999; Knox City Council, 2002; Boba, 2003).
Whilst the individual artist and focus group participants acknowledged the contentious nature of graffiti in local communities, they still had a desire to locate aerosol art in the public arena. Despite the controversy surrounding street art, Hastings (2002) believes that there is a need for community members to be ‘shaken out of their comfort zones’ and become aware of their surroundings (including being open to the aesthetic value of aerosol art). Hastings, in an open letter to a local newspaper (2002), also suggested that local residents can come to appreciate all the sights, sounds, colours, and ways of spending leisure time, and this can include the street art culture. According to Lee policy makers should still attempt to accommodate aerosol art as a means of enhancing young people’s participation in community life, alongside traditional sports such as football and basketball.

In particular, Lou (a focus group participant) felt that opportunities could be created to encourage the community to tolerate and embrace alternative forms of expression. Festivals and events are therefore important because they embrace all citizens as both patrons and contributors (Mill, 1989). Continued support and promotion of young people and their ‘alternative’ recreational choices, including inclusion of their positive profile in local media, and within festivals and events can meaningfully improve the perception of young people within communities (White, 1998; Boba, 2003).

5.4.4 Out and About with Aerosol Art

The NCP (1999) explored how policy makers and researchers have, albeit at random intervals, attempted to reconcile the perceptions held by the wider community of young people and their recreational endeavours. Carr et al. (1992), has also nominated young people as key stakeholders in public space, because they possess a critical intelligence about how functional those areas are. Riley, a focus group participant, felt frustrated at the view of all work applied with an aerosol can being portrayed in the same negative vein. He/ she made reference to the hierarchy involved in the different types and styles of graffiti, but did not wish to disclose too much about the subculture, for fear of unfair labelling...
(see Cubrilo et al., 2009, for information about the underground graffiti culture in Melbourne). Labelling theory underlines social reaction, including to crime (Carrabine et al., 2009). Again, reluctance to disclose details of this hierarchical subculture is significant from an Interpretivist perspective (which involves notions of symbolic interactionism, deviance, and labeling); because of the degree of secrecy that surrounds the different types of graffiti, from Hip Hop styles to Tags (Neuman, 2000; Patton, 2002; Hayes and Prenzler, 2009). Carrabine (et al., 2009) has described this as a ‘give a dog a bad name’ phenomena (p.93).

Lou suggested aerosol art in public space was tolerated more if a piece was of good quality, and noted that the community was capable of distinguishing between the random scrawls of tagging and more artistic ‘piece’ work (Cubrilo et al., 2009, refer to Melbourne’s Kings Way as an area appreciated for its graffiti and artistic value). Chris (another focus group participant) reinforced this view, but also pointed out that the community did not get involved in their graffiti culture unless they produced street art themselves.

Riley also identified a common misconception that street art is synonymous with youth crime (see White, 1998, for information about young people and stereotyping). While there are obvious examples of antisocial behaviour by young people there is also some prejudice, a lack of understanding and intolerance exhibited by the wider community (Mill, 1989; Lamm Weisell, 2009). Riley’s identification that street art can in fact be produced by high income earners, of middle age, dispels the myth that graffiti is merely a petty crime perpetuated by young people.

5.4.5 Public Space: For Some but Not All

Public space has been referred to as areas that provide an opportunity for people to interact and socialise in a common place (Ife, 1999). In a technical sense, public space is ‘owned by all’, young and old, male and female, as well as culturally diverse groups, for example communities of interest such as aerosol artists (Biviano, 2006; Cubrilo et al., 2009). Public space stakeholders possess important perspectives on the usefulness of particular areas in the public domain.
(Carr et al., 1992; Boba, 2003). In this research, the aerosol artist and the focus group participants offered valuable insights, providing commentary on the scarcity of public space available for aerosol art opportunities. Indeed, public space traditionally encapsulates places such as playgrounds and sporting facilities, which are quite specific in their intended recreational applications (Carr et al., 1992). Sasha and the focus group participants underlined their view that aerosol art is also recreational ‘choice’. Further, their comments about the availability of public spaces (or lack of) to fulfil their recreational preferences and enhance community participation by young people, are particularly crucial.

Public space management and the privatisation of public space is inextricably linked to zero tolerance policies, because often the implications of zero tolerance in public space can include discouraging certain subcultures to congregate or ‘hang around’ public areas (Vassallo et al., 2002; Lamm Weisell, 2004). Obviously this contradicts traditional understandings of public space as being ‘owned by all’ (Ife, 1999).

Robin felt that managers of public space only encourage use by groups who fit the ‘acceptable normal person with a job mould,’ again suggesting public space is not necessarily owned by all of the community. Despite this, there is also strong evidence suggesting that a carefully crafted mural placed in an appropriate area can generate successful outcomes, not only for young people’s participation in public areas, but also for minimising the blight of illegal graffiti on local communities (Vassallo et al., 2002; Boba, 2003).

The professionals agreed that there was a public market for socially excluding some community members from community spaces. This was particularly evident in Robin’s comments around incorporating ‘a zero tolerance strategy for the homeless.’ Robin’s reference to social exclusion, and the implications of such policies in a social support environment, stems from vast experience in the youth and welfare sector.

Robin also identified how many young people (including those at risk of homelessness) are discouraged from using public parks and shopping centres.
Demographic information about the research setting and the importance of planning locally for particular sections of the community, was also reflected by Lee. Lee’s preference for local planning is important, because in the City of Knox, 23.6% of the population is aged between 10 and 25 (Knox Youth Plan, 2005). This age group traditionally also has a low level of participation in arts and cultural activities (Mouffe, 1992). The low level of participation is understandable, given Robin identified that it is the same cohort of young people that are consistently moved on from public areas. This experience could generate distrust in locally coordinated arts and cultural activities.

The Knox Youth Plan (2005) outlined the reasons for young people’s lack of visible participation in arts and cultural activities. Factors included the lack of access to transport services being a significant barrier to participation, insufficient knowledge about the events, and a lack of appropriate marketing for activities that had been tailored specifically for young people (Knox Youth Plan, 2005). Interestingly, the list of barriers to participation in local cultural events, identified in the Knox Youth Plan research (2005), did not examine the experience of young people’s discrimination in public spaces (such as the experiences recounted by Sasha). This concern was also identified by Robin, who gave significant examples of instances where public space is ‘not so public’ or owned by all, particularly when occupants of community areas appeared to be homeless and were moved on by authorities (Carr et al., 1992; Boba, 2003).

5.5 Conclusion

This Chapter has explored some of the negative experiences that young people can encounter in public space. The analysis of the theme about political and policy tensions has demonstrated that young aerosol artists would prefer to display their art work in community congregation areas, despite the fact that graffiti remains an underground and secretive activity. This perspective has been supported by an evidence base, attesting that well populated spaces are much safer for the broader community. This Chapter has also highlighted the potential to better value and involve young people in policy decisions. The professionals
interviewed in this research revealed a preference for youth inclusion by facilitating youth specific consultation approaches, however the literature provided limited evidence of best practice examples to support this preference. Although the professionals demonstrated a degree of confusion in understanding harm minimisation and zero tolerance, both underlined a clear preference for harm minimisation. The professionals felt that there was an opportunity to strengthen and better connect young people’s stake on local communities, enhancing their community participation. The literature presented parallels this preference, and it has been suggested that young people’s inclusion in festivals and events (by using the medium of aerosol art) could facilitate this participation. The detrimental effects of the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic) on youth inclusion have also been highlighted in the analysis (MAV, 2006); particularly the legislation’s potential to limit the opportunity for aerosol art in public arena. This Act will not significantly impact the production of illegal murals, as the aerosol artists have indicated, it will ‘happen anyway’. However, the full ramifications of the Act on all stakeholders and participants in this research cannot yet be known, and will be contingent on a comprehensive legislative review.
Chapter Six: Drawing Conclusions and making Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The value of supporting options for aerosol art is not necessarily only about decorating public space. It is pertinent that the focus group participants and individual artist do not necessarily wish for commendation of their mural work by policy makers and the broader community. Rather, they would be satisfied with the mere ‘tolerance’ and provision of space for their alternative form of expression. The professionals interviewed believed in involving young people in planning public areas. Hence strengthening and connecting them in places and spaces, reiterating this research’s harm minimisation and youth inclusion approach. Fundamentally, the professionals participating in this research felt that punitive approaches for graffiti management do not work.

This Chapter determines how the research questions are addressed. It commences with the strengths and limitations of attempting to understanding the value of harm minimisation and youth inclusion in the graffiti debate. The sub questions for this research are each answered to various extents. This is partially due to the complexity of the research area, but also the limited literature available about graffiti management and control. The answers to the sub questions demonstrate that the debate about graffiti management approaches for local communities has been broadened. Further, they underline the value of engaging with young people in resolving complex public space management issues. Key recommendations of the research, about investing in harm minimisation policy and involving young people, are contingent on policy makers’ capacity to influence community understanding of graffiti and street art.
6.2 Strengths and Limitations

6.2.1 Strengths

The strengths of this research are as follows:

- A significant strength of the research is that it canvasses not only the views of young people, but also the views of street artists. This is important because of the limited information available that discusses young people’s interest in graffiti, street art, and related subcultures. Further, the availability of data that interprets the views of young street artists themselves is extremely limited (Lewis, 2007).

- The research has provided resounding feedback from the professionals interviewed, about the need for more positive youth engagement attempts within local communities (similar to White, 1990). These youth engagement techniques are particularly pertinent for policy makers in establishing trust and developing positive working relationships for the production of aerosol art in local settings.

- There is a need for broader youth consultation methods and a number of questions have been raised about this area as a consequence of the research (raising questions about the graffiti debate, young people, and public space, was an intention for the research in itself). The research has highlighted the complex nature of youth consultation. The individual artist and focus group participants participating in this research expressed their desire not necessarily to always collaborate with local policy makers, but to be informed of their intentions in managing and developing public areas. This could potentially simplify future consultations that policy makers conduct with young people.

- The research has emphasised the notion of participatory communities as safer and better connected (similar to Crane, 2000). Participants in this research felt that communities were safer when public areas were active spaces, utilised by a diverse range of user groups
This research also explains the legitimate potential for young people’s critical participation in increasing perceptions of safety in inclusive and cohesive communities, using the medium of aerosol art in public space.

The research provides a rare opportunity for street artists to participate in academic research (it is duly acknowledged that there was some reluctance for them to meaningfully respond to certain questions, because of the secrecy of the street art culture). As described in Chapter Three, the qualitative paradigm has afforded the researcher the capacity to understand graffiti and its related subcultures (Neuman, 2000), by employing Interpretivist techniques to understand the views of young people interested in graffiti and street art.

Canvassing the views of street artists has underlined their potential for further involvement in public space, developing aerosol murals in public viewing and planning the design of public areas.

6.2.2 Limitations

The limitations of this research are as follows:

- The results were occasionally hampered by the reluctance of the aerosol artist and the focus group to divulge too much information about the graffiti subculture. Whist this is indeed a limitation, it clearly contributes to enhancing the researcher’s understanding of the deliberately ‘underground’ graffiti subculture (Sharratt, 2002).

- Whilst the research canvasses the ideas of only a small sample of graffiti writers and policy makers, it is important to remember that Interpretivists are particularly interested in how members of particular societies (and sub cultures) understand their own actions. Clearly, because of its Interpretivist perspective, the research has not been concerned with obtaining a representative sample of graffiti writers (Travers, 2001).

- It would not be suitable to generalise the results of this research as applicable for all graffiti artists. Whilst the positivist school would suggest
that a representative sample of graffiti writers would be feasible, based on the assumption they would all share the same world view (Neuman, 2000), this has not been an assumption in this research.

- Broadening the scope for community based engagement highlights the need for practitioners to be trained in this area; in particular about how and when to consult with their local communities.

- The research ultimately recommends that practitioners working in the area of public space management and youth issues should better engage with and consult young people (particularly around options for aerosol art). Therefore a limitation of this research is that it does not elaborate about how this could be achieved (beyond the presentation of best practice engagement techniques presented in Chapter Two).

- This research has not speculated about when it is appropriate for practitioners to handover project control for communities to make decisions and enact solutions independently (International Association for Public Participation, 2006).

6.3 Revisiting the Research Questions: What is the Value of Harm Minimisation and Youth Inclusiveness Approaches for Local Communities, Using Graffiti as the Basis for Debate?

The opinions gauged from the aerosol artist and focus group participants are significant because they progress the graffiti debate beyond existing literature, and set the tone for this research. The major question is intrinsically linked to the sub questions for this research. However overall, it has been demonstrated that there is very little research in existence that relates young people ‘out and about’ as available to implement harm minimisation based solutions to community safety issues (White, 1990; White, 1998). Youth inclusion, in the context of harm minimisation, has been demonstrated to be of immense value, in shaping local communities capacity to manage illegal graffiti and respond to the needs of
talented street artists. Lee and Robin both described the enduring value of Safer Design approaches, which limit the opportunity for illegal graffiti to occur in the first place, in the context of harm minimisation (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2005).

Whilst the professionals felt that harm minimisation approaches provided a more strategic and long term opportunity to minimise the impact of illegal graffiti on community perceptions and fear of crime, they also felt that evaluating the success of these approaches was much more difficult than measuring the impact of zero tolerance interventions. The professionals felt that zero tolerance could be evaluated simply, because it is measurable by quantitative data, for example counting how much graffiti has been removed from local communities, or how many graffiti offenders have been formally processed by the judicial system.

The responses to the sub research questions that follow provide a framework for answering the broader research question outlined above. In some instances, the interview results contribute to answering the research questions, in other areas it is the literature explored (White, 1998; Crane, 2000) that reinforce perspectives on youth inclusion and best practice generally. Specifically, the aerosol artist and focus group participants felt there was potential for more youth inclusion in incorporating street art in public space. From the professionals’ perspectives, a comprehensive answer to this question is difficult because of their differing levels of understanding relating to notions of harm minimisation.

6.3.1 What are the Issues Facing Youth Engaged in the Graffiti Sub Culture?

This sub question has been answered comprehensively by the focus group and individual artist’s responses. They indicated that sometimes aerosol art can be too controversial for policy makers, and therefore they are reluctant to provide space for it in the public arena, a common phenomena according to Sharratt (2002). Further, Sasha highlighted that policy makers may not understand alternative recreational activities such as aerosol art, and reinforced the deliberate secrecy of the aerosol art sub culture. Notions of secrecy relate directly to Interpretivist paradigm, which incorporates symbolic interactionism,
deviance and labelling (Patton, 2002; Hayes and Prenzler, 2009). The artists noted that graffiti in any capacity is subject to unfair labelling, hence their creation of the shared value of ‘secrecy,’ to protect their sub culture.

Further reinforcing the perspective of White (2002), the professionals interviewed felt there was significant benefit in exploring positive examples of youth based consultation. Providing an opportunity for learning from positive youth community engagement sessions, as well as festivals and events, could be a vehicle for encouraging a broader range of policy makers and local youth practitioners to cater for young people’s involvement in street art within their own areas. This approach, coupled with the development of a practical toolkit (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002a) for street art opportunities (at a State or federal level) could eliminate some of the ‘controversy’ attached to such projects. This philosophy aligns with the perspective of White (1998) who advocates that it is important to work with young people to discover their preferences for recreation, and that part of the solution can be simply asking young people what is important to them in the first place (cited in White, 2002).

Another dilemma for young people negotiating access to public space was highlighted by Robin, who felt it was difficult to determine who the contact organisations for State controlled land should be (such as Vic track and Connex). The individual artist and focus group participants also identified their difficulty in ascertaining who owns public land, and this limited their capacity to easily access permission before designing an aerosol mural for a public location. The confusion over public land ownership also thwarts opportunities for the community to report illegal graffiti and request removal of it. There is potential for the strategic development of a central reporting function for graffiti faults—particularly at a State level. Responses from the professionals interviewed indicated that the rail corridor was viewed by the community as a form of public space, despite the fact that it is privately owned by Vic track. A central reporting system could also assist young artists in understanding ‘who owns what’ parcel of land, and this would make it much less complicated for young people seeking permission for legal street murals. It would also be useful for local practitioners
to refer to such a central reporting area, in logging requests about graffiti faults (and in referring the community to this service). Local practitioners could also direct young people to the service, who are seeking access to State controlled land for their legal aerosol mural productions. Of course, the success of such a reporting function would be contingent on the State’s capacity and willingness to repair faults and provide options for aerosol art on their land. The information presented above demonstrates that there are indeed limitations in accommodating young people’s needs in public space, particularly young people interested in graffiti.

6.3.2 How does the Community Respond to the Needs of Young People who are Engaged in Experimenting with Graffiti, or Immersed in the Aerosol Art Sub Culture?

The research indicates that part of the community marginalises young people and does not respond to their needs (particularly the needs of young people immersed in the aerosol art street culture). Young people are commonly depicted as the perpetrators of vandalism and graffiti (Halsey and Young, 2002), particularly in press reports regarding criminal damage. This highlights an issue for young people with a legitimate interest in street art, because they must first overcome misconceptions about their involvement in crime.

Sasha felt that the best locations for street art were in areas where there is an opportunity for public interaction. This is important for local practitioners because it demonstrates that a location of higher profile and visibility can increase an artist’s sense of being valued in the context of public space. The aerosol artist and the focus group participants alluded to the scarcity of public space availability for aerosol art opportunities. This limits the capacity of the community to respond to their passion for aerosol art in a meaningful way.

The success of publications like the book, *Kings Way- The Beginnings of Australian Graffiti: Melbourne 1983 – 1993*, demonstrates the popularity of graffiti style art with an audience beyond graffiti writers (Cubrilo et al., 2009), and indicates that the community can respond favourably to aerosol art and young
aerosol artists. Further, the publication was not an underground one, and has been reviewed by both prominent literary and art critics with considerable acclaim, including in Melbourne’s Age newspaper (Northover, 2009).

6.3.3 How is graffiti best managed in areas where it is perceived to be a problem?

This question is answered through the professional’s understandings of the Safer Design Guidelines and to a minor extent, by their conceptualisation of diversion programs. Crime Prevention through Environmental Design and the Safer Design Principles set out in the Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2005), were referred to heavily in the context of harm minimisation and early intervention by the professionals interviewed. The professionals felt graffiti policies which refer to harm minimisation were more problematic from an evaluation perspective. In contrast, zero tolerance policies can often be measured merely in a quantitative fashion to ascertain their success (such as how much graffiti is removed). Because harm minimisation strategies need to measure how they may have reduced the likelihood for property damage to occur (in the context of illegal graffiti), the community may have difficulty in understanding their merit (Halsey and Young, 2002). The professionals felt that by comparison, total graffiti removal was absolute, visible and palatable to the community. Clearly, there is an opportunity for local practitioners to better measure social impacts and market any reductions in fear of crime and improvements in perceptions of safety, as a direct result of harm minimisation and early intervention graffiti policies. Data collection of this kind could be supported by information such as Perceptions of Local Safety (POLS) surveys (2004).

Whilst Diversion programs are a form of early intervention because they break the cycle of re-offending, Lee, in particular, tended to blur the lines between Court mandated Corrections and Diversion programs and harm minimisation approaches designed to manage illegal graffiti. Traditional early intervention
policies need to be presented to the community as credible and effective methods for managing graffiti, exclusive of criminal justice intervention.

**6.3.4 What Types of Strategies do Practitioners, Policy Makers, Researchers, Youth, and Community Groups Consider to be Best Practice (with reference to preventative approaches and proactive programs, as well as more traditional approaches)?**

Youth inclusion was an area well understood by the professionals interviewed. They believed that policy makers in the research setting would benefit greatly from engaging local artists to produce their art in the public domain from a safety (‘eyes on the street,’ passive surveillance) perspective. In terms of precedents for this kind of approach, White’s (1999) youth inclusion methodology is somewhat unique (cited in NCP, 1999), because it is one of few well documented best practice examples for working with young people locally (Knox City Council, 2005). However, the deliberate promotion of young people in public space as part of safer communities would be a relatively new concept.

The production of the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)* did not involve rigorous stakeholder or community consultation. Further, it does not present in a manner that is complementary to existing State graffiti policies and frameworks for implementation, such as *Grappling with Graffiti: A Graffiti Management Strategy for Victoria* (Crime Prevention Victoria, 2002a; MAV, 2006). The *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)* provides a potential means for deterrence, enforcement and graffiti removal. However, it is only aimed at tackling graffiti at the ‘tail-end’ of the problem, and does not incorporate early intervention or preventative approaches highlighted as best practice in this research. Whilst this legislation may be necessary and useful in expanding and defining the powers of law enforcement officers, authorised officers, and the criminal justice system, the Act may also be short sighted because of its punitive nature (MAV, 2006). Although this legislation could be the preference of some community groups, in contrast, the professionals interviewed underlined that holistic graffiti
management strategies incorporating early intervention and prevention are in fact best practice.

In the Age newspaper Gill (2010) reported Premier John Brumby’s condemnation of illegal graffiti, and its capacity to jeopardise tourism marketing. After this condemnation, Planning minister Justin Madden announced a review to highlight street art and its aesthetic value to Melbourne, even going so far as to engage Heritage Victoria in the process (Gill, 2010). This political perspective blatantly contradicts the legislative intent of the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)*, which complicates the ease with which prospective street artists (such as those participating in this research) can decorate community spaces with murals. Permission processes are overtly bureaucratic, and particularly difficult for young people who are legally not permitted to possess spray cans under the Act (*Graffiti Prevention Act Vic 2007*).

### 6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

The key findings of this research are contingent upon local authorities’ capacity to shape and mentor communities in understanding the graffiti phenomena. The professionals participating in this research appeared confused regarding traditional notions of harm minimisation. Whilst they unreservedly preferred models of early intervention and prevention for graffiti management, at times they misconstrued punishment programs, delivered by the Department of Corrections, as harm minimisation policies. Alleviating this confusion would assist professionals in the field to advocate more strongly for harm minimisation graffiti management approaches, particularly when faced with legislation like the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)*.

Perception data (Local Safety Survey, 2004) supports community concern surrounding graffiti issues, and underlines the role of local newspapers in influencing individual’s views on crime and young people (as explored in notions of labelling) Young people are often unfairly stereotyped in relation to illegal graffiti in print media (Plummer, 1979). Therefore, it is logical to employ the
same medium (local newspapers) to influence the positive profiling of young
people in local communities, even if this exercise is at some financial cost to local
authorities. Future research in this area would be invaluable for local
government areas, particularly those practitioners in the field of managing public
space, young people, and community safety. It is clear from the responses of the
professionals interviewed that young people are indeed highly visible in local
communities.

The following information provides a list of suitable strategic directions to better
manage the impacts of illegal graffiti in local communities, as well as highlighting
areas for the development of more research into graffiti, street art, young people,
and public space:

- There is validity in investing in a media campaign that equates the
  presence of young people ‘out and about’ with safer and more
  participatory communities. Policy makers should aspire to make
  communities feel safer and less fearful of crime because of the presence
  of young people ‘hanging around’ (perhaps even producing street art).
- There is a need for professionals in the sector to better understand the
  philosophical underpinnings of harm minimisation, and more education in
  this area should be facilitated. This would better enable professionals to
  market the strategic approach to the community, particularly harm
  minimisation interventions which have the capacity for controlling illegal
  graffiti.
- The views of the community about perceptions of graffiti should be
  canvassed, including assessing the impact on fear of crime. This could
  inform a community education strategy about graffiti management.
- Professionals could consider more broadly the implications of how the
  community-graffiti art interface is understood.
- There should be a greater focus for professionals on community
  engagement techniques, and authenticity in consultation with young
  people. This strive for authenticity should include being forthright with
young people about when engagement is merely aimed at informing, consulting, involving, and ultimately at empowering young people.

- Different consultation approaches need to be applied to different policy problems and public space developments.
- There is an opportunity for practitioners to engage an expert or group of artists, who could develop a template for delivering aerosol art projects in local communities (a form of a practical guide).
- Whilst the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)* provides a strong and clear public statement condemning graffiti, it should be presented as part of a holistic and strategic interventionist approach (harm minimisation), beyond purely zero tolerance realms (MAV, 2006).
- Recent announcements by Planning Minister Justin Madden, detailing his intention to protect unique street art in Melbourne, contradict the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)* (Gill, 2010), and therefore the Act’s legislative intent needs to be clarified.
- More research into best practice graffiti management approaches would aid the seamless implementation of the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 (Vic)*.

### 6.5 Conclusion

This Chapter has highlighted the complex nature of graffiti. From the perspective of managing illegal behaviour, it has been demonstrated by the professionals, the individual artist, and the focus group participants that punitive and zero tolerance approaches for controlling graffiti applied without permission do not work. In contrast, harm minimisation approaches have been underlined as a valid strategic approach for managing the ramifications of illegal graffiti in local communities, despite some misunderstanding from the professionals’ perspective about what constitutes a harm minimisation, strategic interventionist approach. Further, providing participatory opportunities for young people to contribute to aerosol murals in public areas has also been demonstrated to be a complicated task, given the confusion experienced over public land ownership and responsibility for accessing permission to decorate public areas. The
challenge for the future will be whether the young people’s interest in street art, can be conceived as palatable and acceptable to local policy makers and a means to connect with young people and enhance their community participation.
Reference List


*Control of Weapons Act 1990 Vic.*


*Crimes Act 1958.*


*Graffiti Control Act 2001 South Australia.*

*Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 Vic.*


*Sentencing Act 1991 Vic.*


*Summary Offences Act 1966 Vic.*


*Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibility Act 2006*


Appendices

1. Ethics Approval
2. Letter supporting research- Knox City Council
3. Letter supporting research- Anchor Inc Community Care
4. Plain Language Statement
5. Interview Questions- Professionals
6. Interview Questions- Aerosol Artist and Focus Group
Appendix One: Ethics Approval
19/05/2004

Ms Samantha Spooner
Unit 4/110 Ballantyne St
Thornbury
Vic 3071

Dear Samantha,

Your amended Ethics application was approved by the chair of the Human Research Ethics sub-committee on 6/05/2004.

This now completes the Ethics approval process. You may now continue with your research.

You are reminded that you are required to submit an Annual report 12 months from the date of this letter. A copy of the form can be located towards the back of the Ethics application.

We wish you well in your research. Should you have any further questions regarding your application please do not hesitate to contact Associate Professor Heather Fehring on 9925 7840 or email heather.fehring@rmit.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

Heather Porter
Secretary HRES
for

Assoc. Prof. Heather Fehring
Chair
Design and Social Context
Human Research Ethics Sub-committee
Bundoora Unit.

cc: Ms Marg Liddell
Appendix Two: Letter supporting research- Knox City Council
The Chairperson  
RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee  
Associate Professor Heather Fehring

RE: Harm Minimisation and Zero Tolerance- A Graffiti Perspective

To: Associate Professor Heather Fehring.

Dear Heather,

Samantha Spooner is currently employed by Knox City Council’s Community Services Team.

This letter is written to offer support for Samantha in her research- Harm Minimisation and Zero Tolerance – A Graffiti Perspective.

I understand that Samantha will be operating in a different role to that of Knox Community Safety Officer, for which she is currently employed. Council approves Samantha’s access to Youth Service staff, a Youth Councillor, and the Knox Redirection Program, for the purpose of interview in her role as a Masters student from the School of International and Community Studies at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University). I understand that continuation in this research is subject to approval by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee.

I commend Samantha’s research, and believe it will be of significant value to Knox City Council. I wish her well in her future academic endeavors.

Should you have any queries, Please do not hesitate to contact me on (03) 9298 8330. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss details of Samantha’s employment or academic commitments further with you.

Kind Regards,

Chris Pegler  
Manager- Individual and Family Services.
Appendix Three: Letter supporting research - Anchor Inc Community Care
RE: Research to be undertaken by Samantha Spooner

Harm Minimisation and Zero Tolerance —
A Graffiti Perspective

I am writing in reference to the above research, which Samantha Spooner has the intention of undertaking by Masters Degree. I understand the aims of her research are as follows:

- To discover the value of early intervention strategies, with a focus on graffiti and vandalism. This involves examining notions of 'Diversion' and 'Redirection' as a response to minimising the perceived problems associated with graffiti and vandalism.
- To discover the applicability of the harm minimisation and zero tolerance debate for graffiti.
- To develop a comprehensive and working understanding of the importance of graffiti, and its related subculture for young people. This will involve an examination of if and how young people develop an interest in, or attachment to, specific sites and facilities.
- To identify best practice approaches pertaining to youth, public space, with particular regard to inclusiveness approaches in the context of graffiti and vandalism.

I am endowing Samantha with the responsibility to interview a member of Anchor staff (Formerly Knox Community Support Service). Anchor will take part in the study by way of individual interview with our Youth Specific Housing Worker. I understand our relevant staff member will be asked to sign a consent form prior to the interview.

I look forward to perusing the findings of this research.

Kind Regards

[Signature]

Anna Sákellariou
Anchor Community Care Team Leader
Appendix Four: Plain Language Statement
School of International and Community Studies  
Bundoora Campus – PO Box 71  
BUNDOORA 3083

Plain Language Statement

Harm Minimisation and Zero Tolerance –  
A Graffiti Perspective

This is a statement of plain English to inform you about a study being undertaken by Ms. Samantha Spooner from the School of International and Community Studies at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University). This study has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee.

I am seeking your informed consent to take part in the study through an individual interview. Participation is voluntary and you will be asked to sign a consent form prior to the interview. The interview will last up to an hour and will be tape-recorded. No information of a personal or confidential nature will be collected and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Comments made during the interview may be included in a written thesis and/or academic publications, but the source of comments will not be named. All your responses will be kept confidential subject to legal constraints. The information collected from the interviews will not be used for any other purpose.

In accordance with RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee requirements, all information collected will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet during the study and securely disposed of five years after completion of the study. A thesis reporting on the results of the study will be completed for fulfilment of a Masters by Research candidature. Participation in this project will not prejudice any current or future relationship with RMIT University or your employer.

If you would like more information, have any concerns, or would like to ask questions about this study, please contact Ms Spooner on 9298 8415, or her supervisor Dr. Marg Liddell on 9928 7311.

Samantha Spooner  
Researcher, RMIT University
Appendix Five: Interview Questions- Professionals
1. **How successful does Council/ your Agency consider their work in regards to the needs and wants of young people?**  
   **How does it evaluate its practice/performance? Examples?**

2. **What is Council’s/ your Agency’s general sentiment and approach towards the management of public space, and young people in it?**  
   **Who expresses this? For whom in Council/ your Agency is this an important issue?**

3. **Has there been any investigation/research undertaken on the sociology of ‘anti social behavior’ in the local area? If yes, please provide details.**

4. **Do you (and/or Council/ your Agency) think graffiti has a place in society? Why/ why/not?**

5.a **Is graffiti a major concern in your local area?**

5.b If yes, please describe how. What are some typical cases?

6. **Are there any common factors in the profile of a graffiti writer:**
- age
- sex
- employment status
- family background etc

7. Does graffiti occur all over the community or is it more prevalent in any one type of location – ie. At business locations, in strip shopping centres, in industrial areas, in large shopping centres, on residential property etc?

8. Why do you think it occurs in_________________________ (mention identified location/s)?

9. Please describe the level of public consultation/ involvement in the development of public space policies and/or graffiti strategies for young people?

10. Were any perceived ‘sub culture groups’ consulted, for example were graffiti writers consulted?

11. Does Council/ Your Agency provide any youth services in the area of graffiti management? If so, please provide details of how effective these are?
12. Which facets of your approach involve Harm Minimisation and do you think these adequately address peoples (particularly young peoples) needs and wants for public space?

13. Do any elements of your approach involve Zero Tolerance and if so can you describe these?

14. Has your Council or agency based their stance on any precedent (legal, social, or cultural? If so can you provide detail. (look for HM prompt here)

15. Are Youth inclusiveness policies considered in town/urban planning terms at Council/ in your experience? If not, do you think town planning should address this issue?

16. In thinking about Diversion, What is the evidence to suggest that a localised approach to addressing diversion/graffiti is of benefit?

17. Do you think that young people are adequately involved in those decision making processes that decide which recreational and social facilities are provided for in public space?

18. Who do you believe are the main stakeholders in any redirection / diversion program for young people (with particular regard to graffiti)? For example, could it include small business owners, residents or others in the community other than the obvious ones such as police, community agencies etc?

19. For diversion to be effective, what are the key issues to be addressed – ie what are the key features of a successful diversion program?:
   • Mentoring
- Linkages with police
- Esteem building
- Community based work integrated with any other services
- Linkages between offenders and the victims of their crimes
Appendix Six: Interview Questions- Aerosol Artist and Focus Group
Focus Group questions and Street Artist Interview

1. What do you like about street art/ graffiti?

(Read out and identify as many as the participants agree with)
   a. The people
   b. The locations
   c. The chance to do legal graph art
   d. The learning
   e. The opportunity to produce art
   f. Other………………………………………………………………

Any other reason’s you want to add about why you like street art?

2. What kind of street art work have you done before?

3. What youth recreation activities are provided by Local authorities (by that I mean agencies like local Council’s and Parks Victoria who are responsible for public open space)?
   a. Football
   b. Basketball
   c. Cricket
   d. Soccer

3.b What would you like to see?

4. Which activities do local authorities place more importance on (does it seem that such activities are more formal and structured)?

5. What do you see as the benefits of providing for aerosol murals in public areas?
   For the community?
   For young people?
   Any other benefits?

6. Do you think Aerosol should be supported in the community? Are you currently, or should you be asked for your views on such projects?
   (Prompt: If not, how can your views be better heard)

7. What makes a good location for Aerosol Art in your view?
8. How does the community respond to the needs of young people who are engaged in experimenting with graffiti, or involved in the aerosol art sub culture? Does the community appreciate/ like graffiti? What types and why?

9. What do you see as the effects of Zero Tolerance policies, particularly with regard to Aerosol Art (Zero Tolerance is the implementation of approaches that do not tolerate the visibility of any graffiti within a local area)?

10. Does providing aerosol art mean that local areas are more attentive to young people’s needs?

11. Are there any other areas/ information that you would like to discuss that might be pertinent to the study?