



Cartoon: Oliver Biscan and Josie Plympton

Writing is on the wall - graffiti stinks

EDITORIAL

By **JOSIE PLYMPTON, JADE BALLARD, LOUIS GILDER and OLIVER BISCAN**

ARE you sick and tired of your fences being covered in graffiti? Tired of the scribble all over public toilets and bus shelters? Graffiti is ugly and ruining the look and feel of many small communities.

Graffiti vandalism specifically relates to the destroying of public and private property with markings and graphics. Graffiti 'artists' use chalk, paint, scratching, textas, acid etching or other materials such as stickers and posters to mark property without the permission of the property owner.

Graffiti vandalism has become a big and increasing issue in public and private spaces, not to mention costly. The state government spends up to \$100 million each year on graffiti crime.

Soldiers Point Public School was recently targeted by vandals, who scribbled over artworks, murals, buildings and amenities. This attack left students scared, worried and disappointed, as vandals had entered their school, a safe place to work and learn, which had now been compromised.

Additionally, property was ruined by offensive, foul language and scrawl. It took time, money and muscle to fix the damage, all of which could have been better directed in other areas, like supporting student learning.

In a tourist destination like Port Stephens, graffiti has a big impact on how the area is perceived by visitors. The presence of graffiti has a negative impact on the public view of safety, as it increases the fear of crime.

Statistics show that illegal graffiti artists are usually males aged between 15 and 25 years. Therefore, engaging this age group is important in order to reducing this senseless crime. Developing a sense of community pride and respect in young people is also key.

As community members we must act quickly and work together in order to send a clear message to graffiti vandals that graffiti of any kind will not be tolerated.

Graffiti is a crime. It must be stopped and graffiti artists punished. Community members must report graffiti to the authorities immediately, so that vandals can be dealt with swiftly.

Community members must lobby local councils, media and organisations to apply pressure in support of introducing more severe punishment for this costly, and ugly destruction of property.

Loss of trees are bad for our environment

By **TYLA CARNEY, BELLA CAMPBELL, TAYA BAKER and CONNOR HUNGERFORD**

TREES on Tarrant Road, Salamander Bay are being chopped down to make way for 33 new housing lots.

Tarrant Road, home to Salamander Bay Recycling, Salamander Bay Waste Depot, Nelson Bay Hockey Club and close to a main road, as many people agree, is not fit for new housing lots.

Furthermore, the destruction to the landscape raises great concerns for the welfare of local wildlife.

The displacement of wildlife is already an issue and signs of the impact of this development have been seen. Recently the manager of Salamander Bay Recycling Centre, Gerard McClafferty, found they had a new visitor, which turned out to be a tawny frogmouth. Unfortunately it could not be returned to its usual habitat as it had been destroyed due to the development.

Mathew Wood, of Daracon Group, who are managing the project, said that "there are native swamp forests in place that will allow the local wildlife to have a forever home. These will be reserves to protect the animal environments."

The Hunter Koala Preservation Society is concerned about the clearing of habitat near Tarrant Road, Salamander because it is part of an important corridor that helps all wildlife mix for breeding. Due to



Civil works at the Tarrant Road site.

Picture: Dylan McClafferty

the development the corridor becomes much narrower.

Carmel Northwood, a carer and committee member of HKPS said "If wildlife, koalas included, cannot move around to mate because they are isolated, they start breeding with koalas too closely related to them and their gene pool becomes weak. This may cause genetic defects such as blindness, inability to combat disease, etc."

The HKPS has already rescued a number of koalas from near the project since clearing began, moving the koalas to other smaller habitats.

Amy Spadaro, an ecologist who

worked at Port Stephens Council until 2012, said the number of deaths recorded in the area each year was concerning if the population was no longer reproducing itself.

"Port Stephens is a real worry because it's at a point where any habitat loss is going to impact the koala numbers [and] you're seeing habitat loss at a very rapid rate because there is such pro-development," she said.

According to the Port Stephens Council's website one conservation lot, taking up to 40 per cent of the estate has been included in the development project.

Big dreams are born with Bay Boardriders

By **HALLE NICHOLSON, LIAM PAYNE, KEIRA HOLLIDAY and KALE GEORGE**

BAY Boardriders is a fantastic surfing competition held on the first weekend of every month in Port Stephens.

Samurai, Birubi and One Mile beaches are the backdrop for these events. The purpose of Bay Boardriders is to get people familiar with surfing competitions, whether they are eight or 80.

Up to 100 competitors participate in the competitions each month.

"I like being part of this group because I love surfing and competitions. I want to become a professional surfer one day," said Liam Payne, who has been a member of Bay Boardriders since the start of 2015.

"Being in the club, I've learnt how to pick the right waves and they give you tips on surfing moves. The people are nice and I like learning from Luke and Chris because they are

good surfers."



Liam Payne has big dreams thanks to the support of the Bay Boardriders.

Picture: Lexie Brooke

for your board, but if you're really lucky and have done your best, you can win a customised surfboard!," said Liam.

The club was formed in 1972 by a group of surfers some of whom were locals, while others travelled from Newcastle and the Hunter Valley. The club is very popular and continues to thrive.

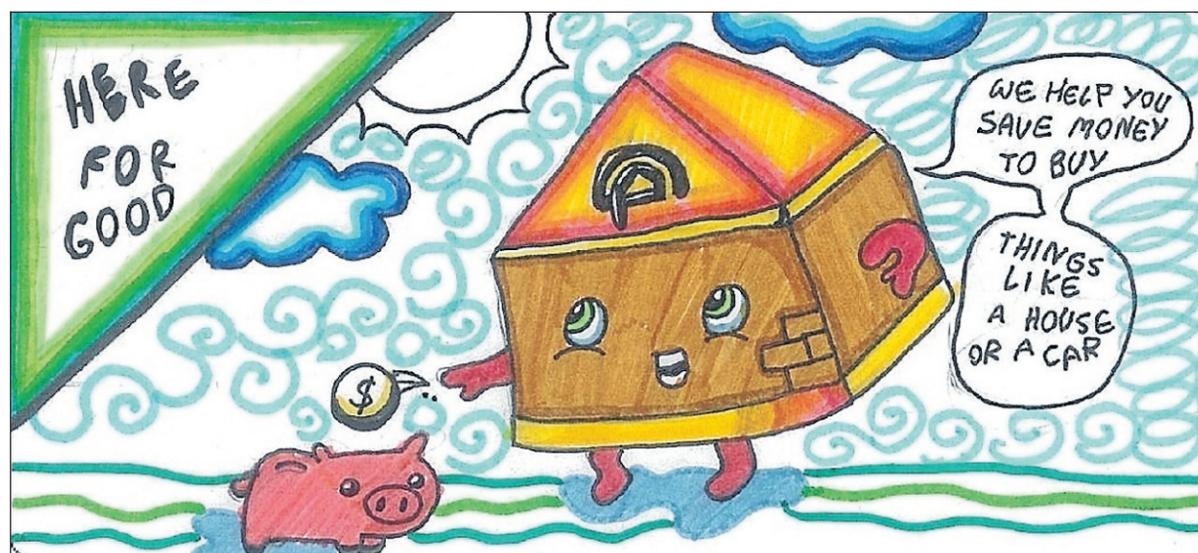
"The organiser is Mr Voyzey. He announces who wins and he gives you a block of chocolate and wax

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