

# Complaints about Graffiti

## What this is about...

Graffiti is a growing problem in New Zealand urban areas. It has a strong impact on people's experience of the urban environment - it is perceived as an act of vandalism and contributes to people feeling unsafe in their community.

It is very difficult to measure incidences of graffiti in the six largest cities as there is no standard method of recording graffiti and responses to it vary among individuals, neighbourhoods and local authorities. However, the six cities do record the number of complaints received about graffiti, although they do not have a uniform approach to this. For example, some record every complaint per site whereas others record graffiti incidences only on city facilities.

## What did we find ?

- The number of complaints about graffiti varies in each city and may be more dependent on the system used to record complaints than the extent of the problem in that city. The number of complaints in 1999 ranged from 303 in Auckland City (council owned property only and excluding parks) to 4,941 in Waitakere City. Each local authority has a different system for registering complaints and whether or not contractors register a complaint when they remove graffiti that they detect.
- The number of complaints is related to the quality of the service provided in terms of a call centre, responsiveness and resources provided. For example, Manukau City received 565 complaints in the 1999 financial year. The number increased to 1,352 in the 2000 financial year when their call centre was established and services were more accessible.
- The number of complaints are also affected by the extent of a routine graffiti removal programme that operates without requiring a complaint, how easy the procedure is for residents to lodge a complaint, and how much residents believe that the problem can be remedied by contacting their local authority.
- The large number of complaints about graffiti in Waitakere City is, in part, due to the provision of resources for removal of graffiti on private property.

The level of graffiti in a city can affect residents' satisfaction with the way the city looks and feels. It can be related to school dropout rates, crime levels, and juvenile offending. Graffiti is a social problem, which affects the entire community. Perpetrators of graffiti are often juveniles.