

GRAFFITI

Grievance

MR A.P. O'GORMAN (Joondalup) [9.22 am]: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr P.D. Omodei: You're a disgrace.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: Leader of the Opposition, I have a grievance from my electorate and I would like to be able to make it uninterrupted. The member got an answer.

Mr P.D. Omodei: I'm not preventing you from talking. Speak to the Chair, and the Chair can do her job.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time. The only person in this chamber who has the call and the right to speak at present is the member for Joondalup. He also has a right to speak on behalf of his constituents in this place.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. My grievance this morning is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, as crime prevention falls under that portfolio. The issue I raise this morning is graffiti in the electorate of Joondalup. Over the past six months or so, there has been an explosion of graffiti throughout the electorate of Joondalup and in the City of Joondalup. I will address a couple of specific suburbs in which graffiti has been particularly bad. Local residents have banded together to take some action to address it. The suburbs of Connolly, Heathridge, Beldon and Craigie have graffiti issues and we are working with a couple of people in those areas to address it. Specifically, I will highlight the efforts that are being made by the Neighbourhood Watch suburb manager in Heathridge, Peter Lancaster, and the Connolly Residents Association in addressing these issues themselves and not relying on support from outside their suburbs. Mr Lancaster from Heathridge has asked me to distribute a letter, and I will read a section of it so that the minister can get a bit of an understanding of what is happening in that suburb. It states -

For some time now, the suburb of Heathridge has been experiencing a rise in vandalism, graffiti and general antisocial behaviour in the vicinity of the Heathridge shops, Heathridge Primary school, Admiral Park and the surrounding local area. The rate and seriousness of these offences has increased sharply over the last 12 months to the point where it is now having a significant impact on the local community.

There are two shopping centres in Heathridge - Heathridge Village Shopping Centre and Heathridge City Shopping Centre. One of those shopping centres is very proactive in cleaning up the graffiti; in fact, a maintenance man checks for graffiti every morning and cleans it off the buildings. The other shopping centre, unfortunately, has not followed that lead to this point. However, I am happy to say that, through intervention in the past couple of months because of the issue at Heathridge Primary School, the other shopping centre in Heathridge has started to remove graffiti and has enlisted the help of the Northern Suburbs Stroke Support Group, which comprises people who have suffered strokes but who want to demonstrate that they have relevance in the community by helping their community battle graffiti. That group is cleaning the graffiti off one of the shopping centres in Heathridge.

A group of young people around the Heathridge area continually tag the school, the shops and various infrastructure in the area, including private fences. Another problem is that a lot of state government property in the area has been tagged. I must give credit to the Department for Planning and Infrastructure. I drive down the freeway most mornings and I have noted that the new Eddystone traffic bridge seems to get tagged just about every night. We report it and within 24 hours the graffiti is removed. We are also finding graffiti on the limestone retaining walls on the north-south cycleway on the eastern side of the freeway, which takes a bit longer to clean off. However, we have reported it and it has been removed. In that way, we are providing an example to the local community that the best way to battle graffiti is to remove it within 24 hours. Unfortunately, also on the Eddystone traffic bridge there is perspex sheeting to protect the railway powerlines. That has been graffitied, and we have noticed that that graffiti has remained there for the past six months. I understand that graffiti cannot be cleaned off perspex; the perspex must be removed. There is also graffiti on the perspex over the rail tunnel further up the freeway where the rail line goes under the freeway. As a government, we need to get onto that and ensure that the graffiti is cleaned off in the appropriate time.

Residents in Heathridge are getting on to this issue. They are reporting these incidents. We would like there to be more reporting options for people in those areas. As I have said, Connolly is an area that has been attacked. In fact, the local residents association has written to me, and on the night that is referred to in its letter, I happened to be driving through the suburb of Connolly and witnessed a number of parties along Royal Melbourne Avenue. The following day I noted that 73 tags had been planted around the suburb. It took the residents association quite some time to clean up 73 tags. The local council helped in the respective areas, and the state government has also been on top of cleaning the graffiti off its infrastructure in the area.

I am aware that the People Against Vandalism, or PAV, which is operational in Mindarie, has put a proposal to the City of Joondalup to adopt the PAV system. The City of Joondalup is considering that proposal at the moment. I urge the minister and the Office of Crime Prevention to support that initiative of PAV. It seems to be working in Clarkson in the Mindarie electorate, and the people of Connolly, Heathridge, Beldon and Craigie would very much appreciate assistance in removing graffiti. It is a scourge in our suburbs. These acts of graffiti tend to be committed by young people, and from graffiti they progress to more serious crimes, such as car theft and other such crimes. We would like to stamp out graffiti at the start. I am aware that some mature people are tagging and committing vandalism. I hope to hear the minister say that he has some help for us.

MR J.C. KOBELKE (Balcatta - Minister for Police and Emergency Services) [9.29 am]: I thank the member for Joondalup for raising this important issue. Having been through the suburbs the member is talking about several times in the past few weeks, I am certainly aware that a wonderful vibrant community is growing in that area. It is a real negative to see graffiti proliferating through a particular area. It is a problem that shifts around from time to time. It is tackled by various people, who get on top of it, and then it flares up somewhere else. We need to constantly work to try to prevent vandalism. One of the very positive aspects that the member alluded to is that we are seeing successes in communities coming together and working to counter vandalism and graffiti. The member mentioned people against vandalism. I was in the area for its launch a few weeks ago. PAV is a very proactive and energetic organisation, which is doing fantastic work removing graffiti in some suburbs. As the member quite rightly pointed out, there is an attempt to try to expand that work into other suburbs. We strongly support that expansion. We have already allocated some funding. The majority of funding has been raised by PAV. We are keen to support that. Hopefully it can expand into other areas. It is a fantastic example of local leadership from the community, making sure that it works to address the problem of graffiti.

The member for Joondalup alluded to a newsletter put out by Peter Lancaster from Heathridge Neighbourhood Watch. It is fantastic to see the work that that group is doing under the leadership of Peter Lancaster and others to try to look after their community. They have a real problem. They are seeking assistance. We would like to provide assistance to help communities tackle vandalism and graffiti. It is so important that these communities respond because the community itself has to accept some responsibility. It is very difficult when there are very public-spirited people who want to build their community, but in some areas parents do not take the responsibility we would expect to make sure their children are not getting into these sorts of activities. There is a level of responsibility placed on individual families. It is certainly great to see that communities are taking leadership in a number of ways.

The government has recognised that graffiti vandalism is a multifaceted issue. We need to enforce a combination of strategies to try to get on top of it. We need to be aware of where it is cropping up and move our efforts into those areas. The member for Joondalup has already alluded to the quick removal of graffiti by the owners of property or assets that have been attacked. The member said that in relation to the removal of graffiti from public assets, we are doing it well in some areas but we need to do better. There is a huge array of different government assets, including freeways, railway stations, public utility infrastructure, Western Power and the Water Corporation, as well as local government assets. Some agencies can remove graffiti more promptly than others. Some have bigger problems than others, as the member alluded to, which affects how they can deal with it. We made that very clear by way of a Premier's circular for government agencies. Even those government agencies that are not caught by the Public Sector Management Act, such as the Water Corporation, are involved with our state Graffiti Vandalism Working Group. They are getting on board and making sure they do their best to clean up graffiti within 48 hours.

The partnership with local government is also very important. We are providing financial assistance to local government but many local governments put in a sizeable amount of money. We were in Wanneroo earlier in the week. That area's expenditure is in excess of \$300 000 a year. A whole range of councils are making a substantial contribution to ensuring their suburbs look good and this problem is tackled as quickly as possible.

Mr T.R. Sprigg: How much is in this year's state government budget for removal of graffiti?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I would not know that because each agency looks after graffiti in its own budget.

Mr T.R. Sprigg: I tell you there's that much - nothing.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Agencies are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on rectifying these problems but the money comes out of their given budgets. There is no single item in the budget.

One of the other programs that has been put in place is Repay WA, which uses offenders to clean up graffiti. People who have offended can make a contribution to the community through the Department of Corrective Services and be placed on a community work order program. Repay WA is one way of ensuring that people who have a debt to society can repay it by helping to clean up graffiti. We have also responded to the problem of

graffiti by increasing the penalties in the legislation. The amendments made in 2004 increased penalties for damage to property to 12 months' imprisonment and a fine of \$12 000. Another section now enables the courts to require people convicted of graffiti damage to pay for cleanup and restoration costs. We want to sheet home to those responsible the cost of the damage they do and where possible make them responsible for fixing that. The police will also target graffiti when it becomes a problem in a particular area so they are working with other authorities and with the local community to make sure there is a presence there. A number of councils have their own security patrols. That also becomes part of the solution as we try to catch these perpetrators and make sure that they pay for the damage they are doing.

As indicated, it is a multifaceted approach, both from government and working with the community. Graffiti is a scourge on our suburbs. It is a problem that we need to be ever alert to and tackle in the most appropriate way given the extent of the problem in a given suburb at a particular time. The member has drawn to my attention the fact that graffiti is a growing problem, levels of which are totally unacceptable in some areas. We need to make sure that we are dealing with the problem areas and also see what we can do to prevent it happening in other suburbs. I thank the member for his strong representation on behalf of his local communities.