

SELF-EMPLOYMENT CREATED THROUGH AN ANTI-GRAFFITI PROGRAMME DRIVEN THROUGH A TOWN CENTRE ORGANISATION

The model has a focus solely on Town and City Centres, it is cost effective and provides a long-term solution which is owned and contributed to by both the private and public sectors.

The model could be developed to encompass wider geographical areas than town centres

INTRODUCTION

Town Centre Organisations have as one of their objects, to seek economic revitalisation for their commercial business districts. To achieve this end, town centres must be maintained as clean; graffiti-free environments to enable shoppers and visitors feel that the centre is a safe and attractive place to be.

In 1990, the Panmure Business Association recognised that there was a serious problem with graffiti. The town centre was suffering as a result and many complaints and discussions took place with the Council; local Police and community workers and groups.

The Business Association developed it's own model, which was extremely successful, providing upskilling and new employment and ultimately a new business for a person who had been out of work for some years.

Areas of town and city centres which are 'hit' by graffiti can be generally divided into private and public areas.

PUBLIC STRUCTURES IN TOWN CENTRES

Generally Councils pay contractors to keep public spaces and structures free of graffiti. This is costly and offers no respite or willingness by community or the private sector to take some of the responsibility for maintaining public spaces. This model provides that the public sector would pay for maintenance of public space only.

PRIVATE SECTOR

The model Panmure Business Association implemented included targeting the building owners of Panmure Town Centre.

THE MODEL

The model requires management of the CBD environment by the town centre organisation. This may be a Mainstreet organisation, or a Business Association.



It is easier for CBD' organizations to deliver such programmes as they have databases and liaison with tenants and businesspeople in the CBD. This provides for easier implementation of projects through established and trusted relationships where businesspeople are expected to participate and also to pay.

ORGANISATION

Overall organisation of the Town Centre anti-graffiti model is centered through the existing town centre Association. A key element is having a local retailer-preferably one with deep dissatisfaction regarding graffiti- be the 'call centre' to which all calls regarding identified graffiti should be directed. This function is advertised and people, including community are encouraged to call regarding any graffiti hits in the town. The retailer or a staff member, daily records graffiti in a note book. In the Panmure model, the retailer was a local Pharmacist who had four staff members, so extra telephone calls and the requirement of a simple note taking, was not onerous.

STAFF

In the Panmure model, the Business Association was not established with separate rating or a BID financial income structure. It was a voluntary levy organization. No wages were immediately available to pay a graffiti person. A person was hired through 'Taskforce Green', an Income Support government fully-subsidised work scheme.

It was important however, to carefully screen the person hired, as requisites for the job were: motivation; self-management; care working with paints and toxic liquids and a commitment to the job.

THE JOB

Each day, our graffiti person would come into town, checking for graffiti and also with the call centre. He would then remove the graffiti. Businesses were expected to provide paint, brushes and cleaning materials for their buildings. Some of these were stored in space provided by Council underneath the community centre. In the early stages, Mark would be removing while graffiti taggers would follow and taunt him telling him they would tag again as soon as he had left. Mark would respond by saying he would be following them and he was employed to do that all day if necessary. Mark's attitude was important as he was good natured and understood where the taggers motivation was from. This assisted greatly as over several years, many simply gave up tagging or moved to other areas where graffiti might be left for a few days.

After the government subsidy to hire our Graffiti Buster expired, another government-subsidised employment scheme existed where employers and government together contributed towards wages for employment. This second option was taken and enabled the businesspeople to begin contributing towards Mark individually. Some large businesses had recognized his worth and were happy to contribute as were smaller ones. This was facilitated by the Town Centre Manager (TCM) who had established and driven the model.



The trend that was evident was towards self-employment for Mark so the Business Association paid for a *Be Your Own Boss* course for Mark, the TCM sought and gained contracts for Mark from two other town centres and a local authority.

At the end of the day, Mark was happily self-employed with a staff member. From several years on the dole and out of work, with assistance and encouragement he had completely turned his life around.

Town Centre organizations can do such things to help!

For any further information please contact us at :karen@towncentredevelopment.co.nz

