Designing out graffiti
lighting and surveillance

A key element of Designing out Graffiti is the improvement and maintenance of lighting, and natural and formal surveillance.

Lighting and surveillance aim to increase the **perceived risk of detection** when an offender is accessing a target. This is achieved by removing concealment opportunities, creating clear lines of sight, and using security devices where appropriate.
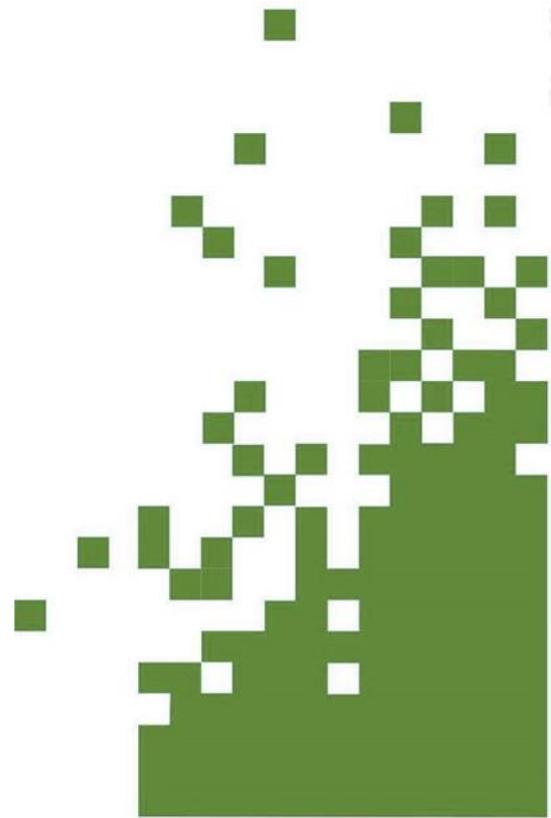
The following guide shows how you can design spaces to make the physical environment work to your advantage and not the offender's.

Lighting to maximise surveillance

Installing the correct lighting around a premises can be an effective deterrent to offenders. Lighting that illuminates a large portion of the environment reduces dark areas that can conceal an offender.

To maximise surveillance, lighting should:

- Have a visibility range of at least 15 metres.
- Be secured appropriately to prevent theft or damage.
- Have toughened glass or grills to resist breakage.
- Have the lighting mechanism out of reach to impede any effort to break, disable or cover the light.
- Have switches and power supplies located inside or in secure locked boxes to prevent offenders from simply turning off the light.
- Not be obscured by vegetation or structures.
- Not be located near buildings or fences in a way that may allow offenders to use the light as a ladder to access areas.
- Incorporate Designing out Graffiti principles to reduce susceptibility to graffiti.

Poor versus effective lighting

poor **effective**

Easily removed/ vandalised low-level lighting

Secure/more solid graffiti resistant lighting

poor **effective**

Low lighting with small field of visibility

High set lighting providing a wide field of visibility

poor **effective**

Range of lighting reduced by vegetation coverage

Low surrounding vegetation maximises lighting range

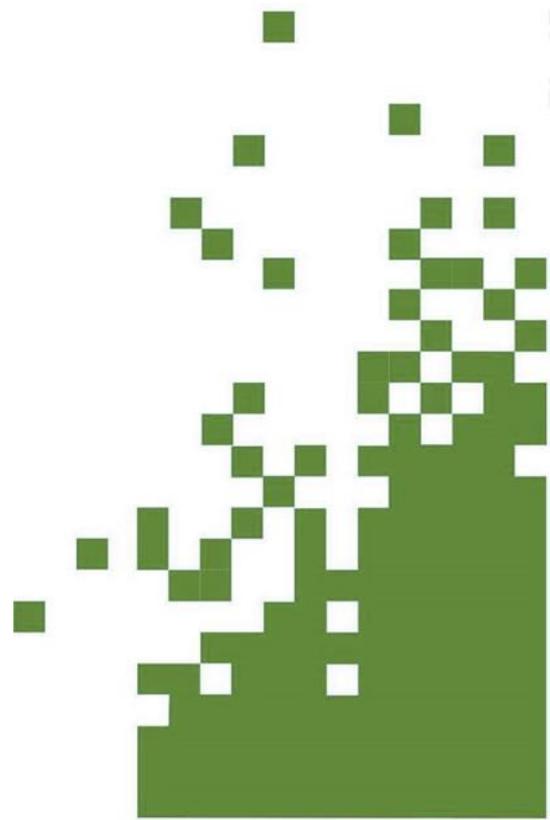# Maximising natural surveillance

Having effective lighting is important in deterring vandals, but if a potential witness has their line of sight blocked, the offender will still go undetected.

To allow effective surveillance of a front yard from the street and from inside the residence, **it is recommended that the space between 70cm to 2.4m above the ground remains clear**.

Solid structures like fences and dense vegetation should be no more than **70cm high**, and tree branches should fall no lower than **2.4m**.

Reducing the amount of solid walls and fencing also has an additional advantage in that it reduces the number of graffiti prone surfaces (for more information, please see *Designing out Graffiti: Landscaping and Planting* and *Designing out Graffiti: Protecting Surfaces and Rapid Removal* information guides).

The physical environment should allow you to see what is going on around you while minimising options for concealment. By forcing vandals to remain in sight for as long as possible, you considerably increase the risk associated with committing an offence on your property.

Poor versus open lines of sight

poor   **open**

Solid walls prevent natural surveillance and provide an ideal surface for graffiti

Using open rail fencing above 70cm opens the line of sight

poor   **open**

High hedges cut down the line of sight

Low vegetation leaves landscapes open for surveillance

poor   **open**

Trees blocking entries can conceal illegal activities and also provide a ladder into buildings

Keeping entries visible increases the chances of detecting offenders
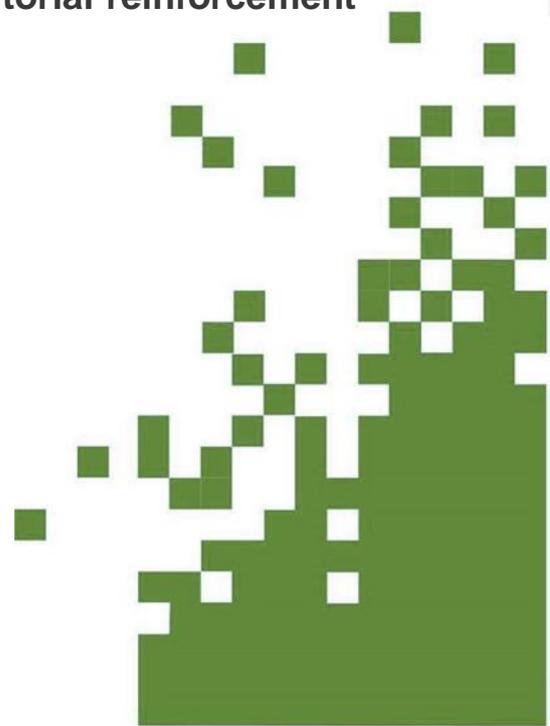
Maximising formal surveillance

The purpose of Closed Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV), security patrols and alarms in *Designing out Graffiti* is to deter offenders from vandalising property by making them aware that they may be under surveillance. For this reason, overt advertised surveillance rather than covert methods is encouraged.

Signage is an effective tool for informing potential offenders that formal surveillance is in place on your property. The perceived deterrent effect of these signs has resulted in some members of the community choosing to display them without the associated devices or services. However this practice is undertaken at the owner's risk, as they may still be the target of crime, yet lack the support offered by the actual systems.

CCTV in particular is most suited to areas that are prone to graffiti attacks but lack opportunity for natural surveillance.

When considering whether to spend significant amounts of money on formal surveillance, it is important to remember that it does not guarantee protection against crime.
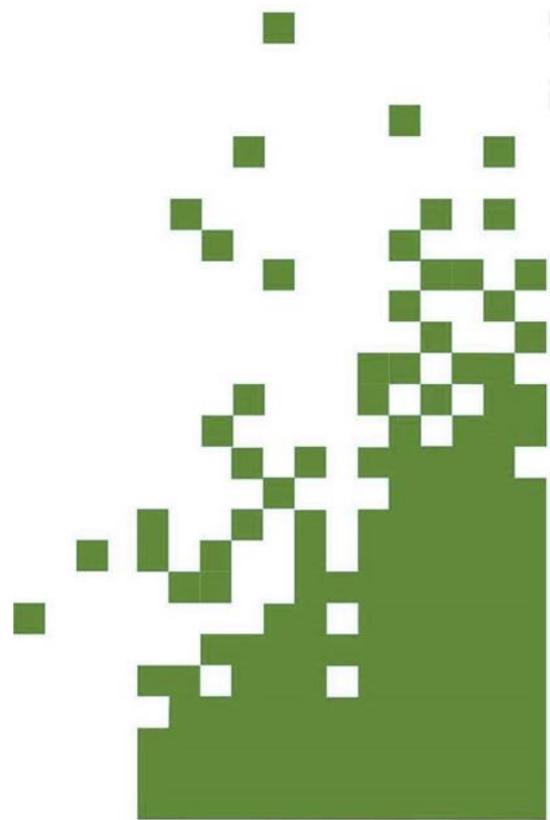
Formal surveillance is most effective when used in combination with other surveillance principles, access control, territorial reinforcement and target hardening.
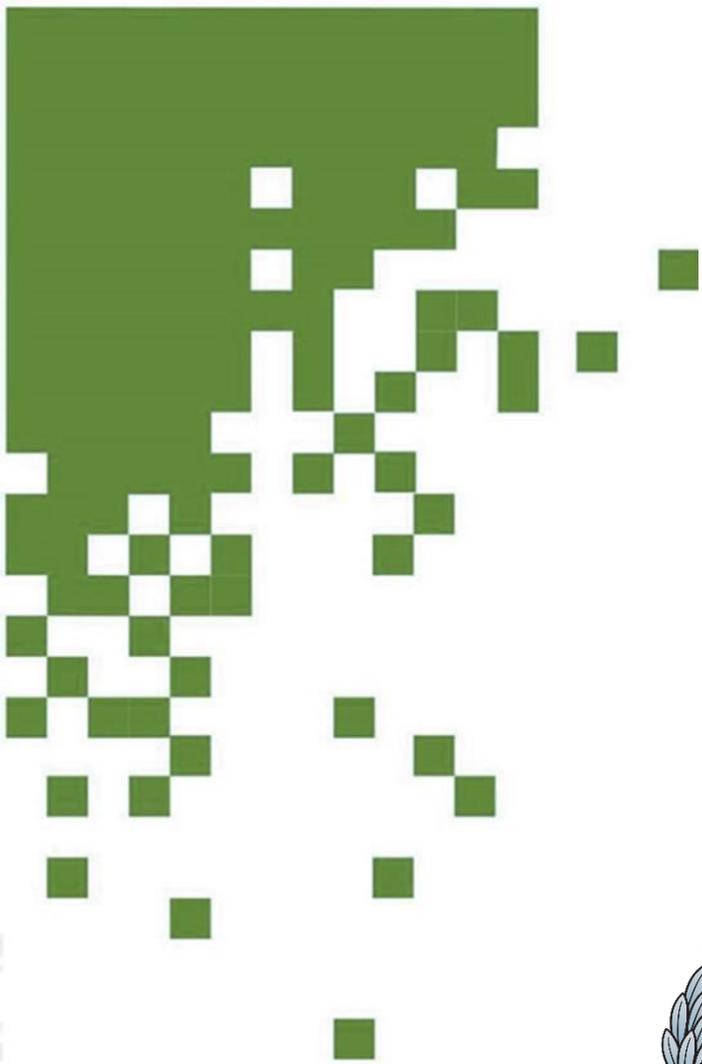
Other points to consider

- Chain bins away from vulnerable structures to prevent them being used as ladders or as concealment.

- Remove graffiti rapidly – the longer graffiti remains on display, the greater the reward for the vandal and the more likely further vandalism will occur. For information on removal methods, visit the Goodbye Graffiti website or contact your local council.

- Report graffiti. Graffiti can be reported online through the Goodbye Graffiti website. It is beneficial to record the tag and take photos if possible.

For further information, including more from the *Designing out Graffiti* series, visit www.goodbyegraffiti.wa.gov.au.

Adapted from the Western Australia Police Force

Graffiti Team *Designing out Graffiti* series

www.goodbyegraffiti.wa.gov.au

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