



# Designing out graffiti

## protecting surfaces and rapid removal

Rapid removal of graffiti is seen as best-practice in reducing graffiti vandalism.

It diminishes the recognition and reward for graffiti offenders, and prevents places appearing uncared for; which can attract further vandalism. If a surface has been vandalised in the past, or is likely to be targeted by graffiti offenders, then pre-emptive steps can be taken to protect the surface.

Before removing graffiti, you should always take photographs and report the graffiti online at [www.goodbyegrffiti.wa.gov.au](http://www.goodbyegrffiti.wa.gov.au).

# Protecting graffiti prone surfaces

## Protective coatings

An anti-graffiti coating is an effective way to protect a surface from damage by graffiti and make any graffiti easier to remove. There are two main types of protective coatings:

**Sacrificial** – these coatings are removed along with any graffiti and need to be reapplied to protect the surface. These coatings tend to be cheaper and less toxic than the longer lasting alternative.

**Non-Sacrificial** – these coatings (provided they are applied correctly) will remain on the surface after several graffiti removals, without the need to reapply.

With both types of coating, care should be taken to use appropriate removal methods to prevent further damage to the surface. More information and service providers can be found by doing an internet search for 'anti-graffiti/protective coatings'.

## Surface coverings

Covering a surface with vegetation can make it significantly less attractive to graffiti offenders as it creates an unsuitable surface for graffiti. More information about using vegetation to protect surfaces can be found in the *Designing out Graffiti* booklet and the *Designing out Graffiti: Landscaping and Planting* information guide.



# Graffiti removal

The most effective and appropriate method of graffiti removal will be determined by the type of surface damaged (e.g. brick, painted metal, stone), and the graffiti implement used (e.g. marker pen, aerosol paint).

Steps for determining the appropriate removal method:

1. Photograph the graffiti and report the incident online at [www.goodbyegraffiti.wa.gov.au](http://www.goodbyegraffiti.wa.gov.au). (If the graffiti is racist or obscene, or on a vehicle or trailer, please ring 131 444).
2. Identify the type of surface damaged (including any coatings that may be present).
3. Identify the implement/substance used to damage the surface
4. Contact your Local Government Authority or an appropriate private professional for advice or removal services.



# Removal from common surfaces

**THE FOLLOWING IS TO BE USED AS A GUIDE ONLY. IF ATTEMPTING TO REMOVE GRAFFITI YOURSELF, ALWAYS ENSURE YOU FOLLOW THE MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS, WEAR APPROPRIATE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE), AND SEEK PROFESSIONAL ADVICE IF UNSURE.**

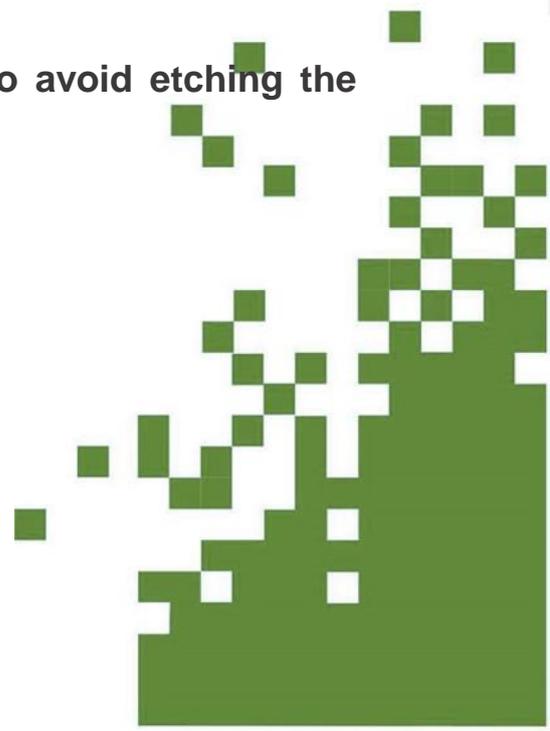
## **Brick, render, limestone and natural surfaces**

Specific removal products are available from retail outlets, however some household products may be effective. These include:

- Cold caustic oven cleaners – spray on the damaged surface, covering the graffiti, and leave for 6-8 hours. Scrub the surface with a hard scrubbing brush and wash off with water.
- Liquid laundry detergent and methylated spirits – may be effective for removing marker damage.

**GLOVES AND SAFETY GLASSES ARE REQUIRED WHEN USING CAUSTIC CLEANERS**

If the surface is porous, care should be taken to avoid etching the graffiti permanently into the surface.



## Unpainted metal surfaces

Graffiti on unpainted metal surfaces can respond well to a variety of removal methods, so it is advisable to begin with the least aggressive treatment. If the following is unsuccessful, a professional graffiti removalist may be required. Alternatively, heavily damaged surfaces may need to be painted or replaced to adequately remove the graffiti.

- Paint thinner and/or lubricating oils – can be effective at removing some markings.
- Light abrasives – effective at removing a variety of substances (care should be taken to avoid scratching and damaging the surface).
- High pressure hosing – can be used in conjunction with various detergents and cleaning products.

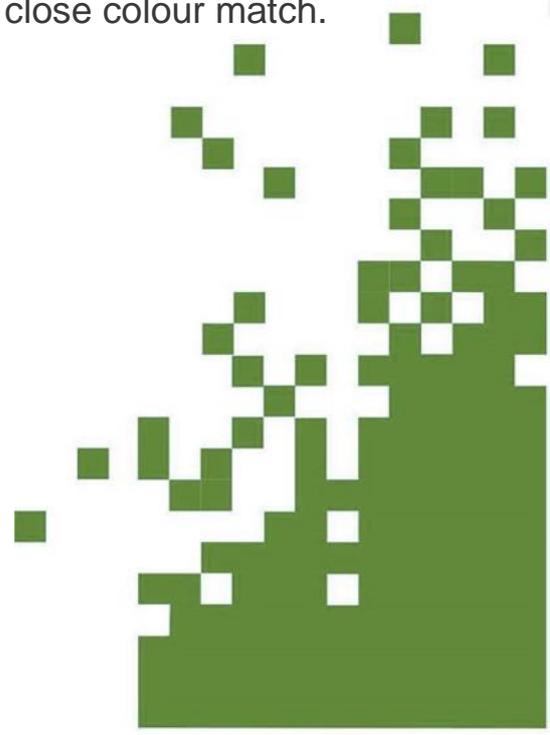
**DO NOT USE CAUSTICS ON OR NEAR ALUMINIUM**

## Fibro-cement ('super-six') fencing

Painting out graffiti damage is recommended, as this type of surface is porous.

Painting out an entire sheet or sheets of fencing will help achieve a more uniform appearance and prevent the fence from appearing 'patchy'. ■

Try paint that is Asbestos Grey or Polished Grey for a close colour match.



## Painted surfaces

Re-painting is often the most effective method of removing graffiti from a painted surface. Here are some important things to consider:

- Ensure the new paint matches the existing colour of the surface – using a different colour can create a ‘frame’ that can attract further graffiti.
- Ensure all graffiti is painted over, including surrounding tags.
- It is preferable to repaint in large blocks – simply painting over the lettering may mean the graffiti is still identifiable.
- If the graffiti is still visible through one coat, additional coats of paint may be required.

Before repainting ensure the surface is clean and dry. If there are several layers of paint on the surface already, an abrasive may be needed to remove build-up that can overtime negatively affect the structure’s integrity.

## Plastic surfaces

Paint thinners are not suitable for use on plastics as they can penetrate and permanently alter the surface structure. Instead, milder oils such as WD-40 may be enough to break down markings to then wipe off.

A light sanding can also be effective although this may leave scratch marks. Painting over graffiti may be a good option on plastic surfaces.



# Removal standards

Removal standards aim to provide graffiti removers with some guidelines to establish a common practice. It is acknowledged, given the different competency levels of graffiti removers, that two standards are practicable:

**Preferred** – the highest standard of removal that can be achieved; usually leaves no evidence of graffiti or damage to the surface.

**Acceptable** – a lower standard than desirable, where some evidence of graffiti (shadow) or damage to the surface may remain.

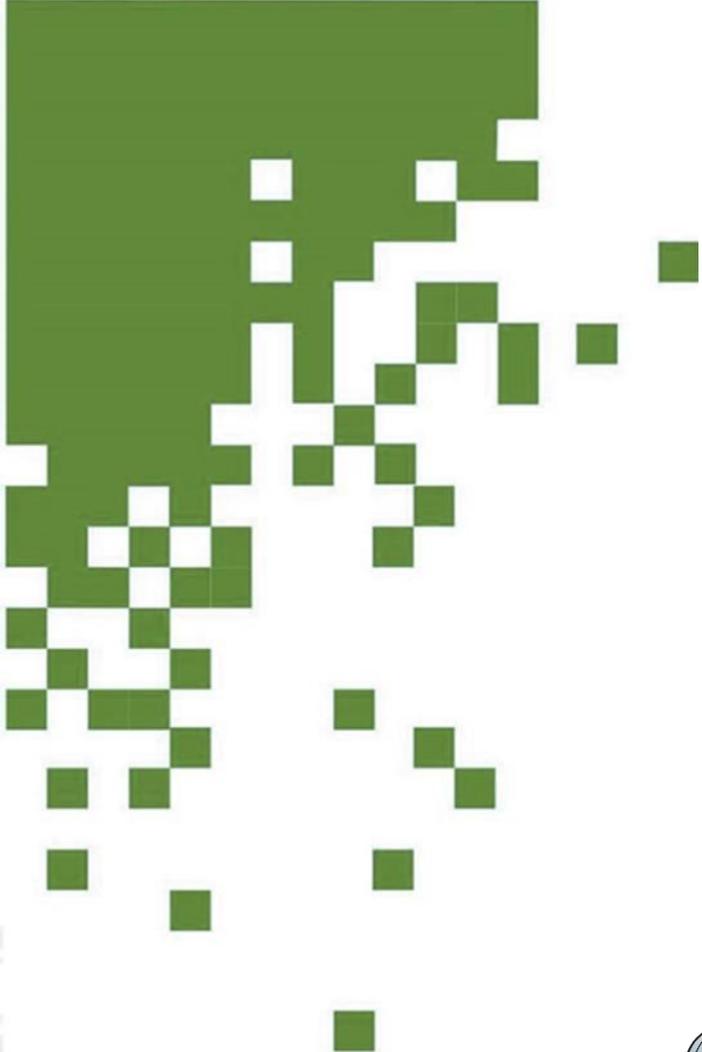
More information on graffiti removal standards are available on the Goodbye Graffiti website.

## Need more help?

Your Local Government Authority may remove graffiti from your property, or be able to assist with arranging a graffiti removalist. The best way to find out is to visit their website or contact them. Alternatively, a quick internet search for 'graffiti removal' will deliver plenty of results.

For further information, including more from the *Designing out Graffiti* series, visit [www.goodbyegrffiti.wa.gov.au](http://www.goodbyegrffiti.wa.gov.au).





**Adapted from the Western Australia Police Force  
Graffiti Team *Designing out Graffiti* series**

**[www.goodbyegraffiti.wa.gov.au](http://www.goodbyegraffiti.wa.gov.au)**

**Contact us: [graffiti@police.wa.gov.au](mailto:graffiti@police.wa.gov.au)**