

A new crew in town

By Lexi Cottee

Come November, every secondary school student in Hume will be well versed in the legal ramifications of scrawling their name on someone else's property.

Hume council is teaching students the true cost of those seemingly innocuous scribbles on bus stops or lockers.

The 45-minute workshops use role-play and entertainment to educate students in years 7, 8 and 9 about good decision-making, respect and the potentially serious legal consequences of tagging and graffiti.

The program is being conducted with learning service Warner Youth Education.

Service manager Diana Cook said it was important students understood that marking other people's property was a crime.

"We teach them the criminal liabilities for undertaking it, and the legal clarifications about what graffiti is," she said. "We understand that it is a tough time in their life and that often it's done because of peer pressure."

The workshops also help students find creative outlets and provide examples of street art to juxtapose against tagging and vandalism.

Hume mayor Adem Atmaca said the council funded the workshops as part of its zero tolerance approach to graffiti and to combat the costs to have it removed.

"Council spends \$130,000 to remove graffiti each year and this is ratepayers' money that we would prefer to spend on other services," Cr Atmaca said. "Hume recognises that young people can sometimes dabble in vandalism due to peer group pressure ... we want to offer an alternative message that promotes more positive pursuits."

Residents can report graffiti or request a free removal kit on 1300 HUME CLEAN.



Xavier Diaz, of Warner Youth Education, with year 8 students Omar, Nora, Benjamin, Ozan, Josef and Sonja. (Joe Mastroianni)