



#PlayToday

info@playaustralia.org.au
www.playaustralia.org.au

promoting the value of play

GRAFFITI AND PLAY EQUIPMENT

Recently PLAY AUSTRALIA was asked by one of our members for advice about the safety implications of substances used for the removal of graffiti from play equipment. Given that we did not have any experience in this matter, advice was sought from Mike Hoy, the recently retired General Manager of Urban Maintenance Systems, given UMS' role as a major provider of maintenance services in Australia, and Mike very kindly has provided his thoughts on some of the issues involved.

- *Graffiti on playgrounds is an issue for all clients we work for – it is one of the largest sites for graffiti in all park settings.*
- *The diversity of materials used in manufacturing playground equipment makes graffiti removal from these surfaces a complex task – not one solution will fit all.*
- *The type of medium used by graffiti vandals on playgrounds is also diverse – each medium will require a differing process or product for removal.*
- *Paint out of graffiti on painted timber, concrete or other painted/rendered surfaces is a simple process and has no immediate impacts on kids (other than needing to dry!!) - most issues here are associated with colour matching or overspray if in windy conditions.*
- *The use of graffiti-proof coatings to protect assets from graffiti are appropriate in some circumstances, for some surface types (e.g. certain painted surfaces) – removal of graffiti from these protected surfaces can be completed using low risk products (e.g. citrus based chemicals) or even using high pressure washing only. However, most of these products will only be effective to the extent that the coating is maintained by regular re-application – once the coating is damaged by abrasion or multiple graffiti removal attempts using chemicals, the coating becomes degraded, and hence graffiti will become more difficult to remove once it comes into contact with the unprotected surface (it will require more caustic chemicals, which will then in turn further strip off the protective coating.*
- *Coatings tend to be expensive, and with some there is more 'bluff' than substance!!*
- *Our view would be that these coatings should only be used on assets that have special needs or are difficult to maintain if graffitied (e.g. murals, specially painted surfaces, art works etc).*
- *Where surfaces are unprotected, and chemical treatment is required, the products used to remove the graffiti WILL have some constituents that are poisonous if ingested in large enough quantities (e.g. caustic compounds). However, without these compounds, it becomes difficult to actually remove the graffiti!!! In these circumstances, our systems require our staff to wash or wipe down the surface after completing the removal, to remove the chemical as well as the residual graffiti medium that comes off the surface – in that way the surface will be safe for kids once our staff leave site.*