

HUME

Class learns impact of graffiti

PRESENTATION HELPS CHANGE ATTITUDES

Natalie Savino

AN INTERACTIVE workshop is scribbling out graffiti from the minds of potential young offenders.

Hume Council has funded a series of presentations, delivered by Warner Youth Education, across all secondary schools in the area in a bid to make students think twice about graffiti.

The 45-minute presentation, targeted at students aged 10-14, includes a presenter who takes on the role of a young tagger through monologue and gradually shows the toll criminal behaviour can take on their lives.

Warner Youth Education manager Diana Cook said it was designed to teach students through entertain-

ment, including student interaction and role plays.

"Part of it is understanding at that age why they do the things they do, and a lot of it is to fit in (with) their peers, to feel like they're part of a group," Ms Cook said. "A lot of it is about positive decision-making. Sometimes these people just need to hear it from someone they connect with.

"(By doing) it within a school, you're getting to the potential offender, you're getting to their peers – their key influences – and also getting to their teacher and parents."

Ms Cook said it also taught young people the difference between tagging and approved street art.

"The schools have been really positive in terms of em-

bracing the program," she said. "They understand how teen issues can translate into community issues.

"It's all about changing attitudes in the classroom to effect a change out in the community." Ratepayers fork out \$130,000 each year to remove graffiti in Hume, with 14,453sq m of unsightly scrawl scrubbed away in May and June alone.

Hume Mayor Adem Atmaca said the council took a zero-tolerance approach.

"Hume recognises that young people can sometimes dabble in vandalism due to peer group pressure and we want to offer an alternative message that promotes more positive pursuits," he said.

Details: warneryouth education.com.au



Xavier Diaz with Roxburgh College students Sonja, Ozan and Benjamin.

Picture: KYLIE ELSE