

Advertising

Billboard graffitiists under severe attack

By PAM MAWBEY

THE Outdoor Advertising Association of Australia has launched an all-out attack on the groups of "vandals" dedicated to defacing outdoor signs leased or owned by its members.

So far the attack has taken the form of a series of newsletters designed to discredit the graffitiists and to lift public awareness of the outdoor industry.

Two of the three newsletters in the series are currently being circulated to all sectors of the media, members of parliament and the police.

The first one, headed "Malicious injury to private property", wastes no time pinpointing the main offender — the group known as Billboard Utilising Graffitiists Against Unhealthy Promotions (BUGAUP).

The newsletter claims that the "BUGAUP vandals" obviously hold the law in contempt.

"Although the law provides for realistically punitive fines and/or imprisonment, those who are prosecuted escape with virtually nominal penalties," it maintains.

"Their disregard of law and order, a fundamental part of democratic society, could lead to anarchy unless quickly stopped."

The OAAA claims the first step towards stamping out "this lawless and senseless activity" should be the imposition of significantly deterrent penalties on offenders (as provided by State law) and adequate surveillance to police the law.

On behalf of the industry and "the law-abiding community", the newsletter urges its recipients to help stamp out "this lawless and senseless activity".

The second letter, couched in similar emotive terms, declares that the vandal group, BUGAUP, has named a price to end its "vicious" work: A ban on all outdoor and other media advertising of alcohol and cigarettes.

Sceptical about this claim, the OAAA points out that spray can vandalism has been directed at billboard advertisements for a variety of other products including air conditioning systems, cars and coffee.

It goes on to say that paradoxically, and "most unjustly", heavy penalty falls on advertisers and advertising contractors in the considerable cost of repairing the damage of these "fanatics' felonious campaign".

The third newsletter will preface a major burst of activity, which will probably take the form of an advertising campaign, scheduled to begin on July 1.