

URBAN GORILLA WARFARE

By PHILIPPA GEMMELL-SMITH

SPORTSGIRL likes the gorilla image. Billboards advertising the chain of stores are dominated by a large gorilla. A disproportionately smaller girl in an unmistakably Sportsgirl outfit clutches one of its unmistakable striped bags and looks coy. There is no subtle message in the advertisement ' according to Sportsgirl's advertising and promotion manager, Sally McNeur. "It's eye-catching. It's a play on the King Kong theme. A return to the 1960s — King Kong and pop art. The recession influence."

The gorilla is Rego who lives in a gorilla colony at the Melbourne Zoo which includes a couple that have been lent by Taronga Park Zoo to take part in a breeding program.

Bruce Cormack, the federal director of the Advertising Federation of Australia, is not keen on the gorilla image. His name has been sprayed over the Sportsgirl gorilla on billboards in at least three locations in Sydney. (Over two of the three gorilla billboards Sportsgirl has placed a new poster. White on black lettering announces: Who is first with the news?)

Cormack had not seen the graffiti when contacted by *Good Weekend* but said his name had been sprayed earlier this year over a billboard on which a couple of chimpanzees in hard hats advertised a power tool.

He believed the reason he was a graffiti target was that he and the AFA have condemned graffitiists publicly for vandalism. "I'm sure my name is totally and absolutely meaningless to most people, which brings it down to a fairly sordid personal level."

A spokesman for the graffiti group BUGA-UP thinks feminists are to blame. He believes their ire at Bruce Cormack dates to a television interview in which he was asked if sexism was used in advertising.

He replied that it was ridiculous to claim that sex was used in advertising, it was against the law. □

