

Another view of the spray can protest



Clandestine groups that destroy and deface billboards are being effective in opposing the promotion of unhealthy products, a NSW Health Commission Officer said yesterday in Adelaide.

Dr Garry Egger said the groups had decided to take direct action against promoters including tobacco companies and breweries because they felt that indirect methods had failed.

"I think the evidence suggests that they are effective in what they are doing.

"While I can't condone what they are doing, I can see the rationale behind this and the frustration the people involved in these groups feel to make them do this."

Dr Egger was speaking to the health education section at the ANZAAS congress.

The fringe groups included BUGA-UP (Billboard-Utilising

Graffitiists Against Unhealthy Promotions) and BLLF (Black Lung Liberation Fund).

Dr Egger understood the BLLF consisted of six Sydney couples — all heavy smokers who were unable to stop and were angry about it.

"They have a slogan: 'Light up a cigarette billboard today — you'll be so glad you did,'" he said.

Another group, MOP-UP (Movement Opposing the Promotion of Unhealthy Products), did not want to be associated with the other groups.

It had also been considered a hick group until its recent success in preventing Paul Hogan from advertising cigarettes.

Dr Egger said the groups rejected the Federal Government's attitude that people's health was their own problem and had nothing to do with anything outside the individual.

They believed there were peddlers of unhealthy products who were enticing people into an unhealthy existence and should be exposed.