Tobacco lobby says bad guys are all in Sydney

WHOS winning Sydney's graffiti war? The B.U.G.A.U.P., people claim they are. The opposition says this is nonsense.

Bryan Simpson, director of the Tobacco Institute of Australia (the industry lobby group) was pinpricked by questions about B.U.G.A.U.P.

"Griffith had 'lost its topicality,' he said. He added that "if society consumes people who break the law, we're on the taboos, aren't we?'"

Then the Melbourne-based spokesman introduced a new dimension to the argument: such "vandalism" was essentially a Sydney phenomenon, he said, "possibly a reflection of the kind of society you have in Sydney."

In cities such as Melbourne, "you get the occasional break-in...but it's people in an interpersonal thing and it disappears overnight. In Sydney it's not academic, it's not people of a high intellectual level. I hope it's a passing phase."

THE GOOD WEEKEND

This week The Good Weekend did a run with the B.U.G.A.U.P. people, from Glebe to Summer Hill to White Bay, packed into a station wagon with a couple of bags of spray cans that were nearly emptied by the return journey.

The last stop on the run was the world-famous billboard at White Bay, which was curiously adorned with slogans before the graffitiists called it a day.

Twenty-four hours later, the poster had been replaced.

For B.U.G.A.U.P. (Billboard-Utilising Griffrists Against Urbanity, Promotions), in the midst of their summer offensive, the fight has only just begun.

Their renewed outburst against outdoor advertising began after a public meeting last October and has concentrated on billboards along railway lines. With the new billboard merchant recruited at that meeting, B.U.G.A.U.P. managed to strike at billboards out to Seven Hills and south to Cronulla.

(Black North is already covered by another griffist group, the Black Lung Liberation Force.)

Below B.U.G.A.U.P. can claim the summer campaign as a success, they want to cover the Eastern Suburbs line and the City circle.

They believe they have public sympathy in their campaign against cigarette and alcohol advertising although there is some debate among group members over what should be their prime targets.

"A billboard without graffiti is something quite outrageous," says the headliner in their autumn catalogue, but outrageousness could also apply to those members of the group who are being sent for a positive hunt for action at the men's night of an un-entitled billboard.

Indeed, one member of the group is notorious for his inability to drive past a virgin billboard.

Others pride themselves on their selectivity, as Tony (not his real name) says, "I try to get worked up about Dickie's town."