

Richmond train station home for graffiti shop

Chris Tinkler

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A GRAFFITI vandals' paradise is operating out of a train station owned by the State Government.

The This Is It store, advertised on one of the city's biggest pro-graffiti websites, is leasing a shop in Richmond railway station.

The revelation comes days after the Government launched a graffiti crackdown.

A *Sunday Herald Sun* investigation has revealed:

- The store is advertised with the scrawled tag This Is It on the side of a train.
- A website the store is advertised on includes a gallery of dozens of defaced Connex carriages.
- Inside the shop is a display of more than 100 spray cans.

Anti-graffiti campaigner and Liberal MP Murray Thompson said: "It beggars belief that you can buy graffiti paraphernalia from a store in a railway station.

"What next: homemade bomb shops at airports, balaclavas at banks or free flares for soccer fans?" Connex, which manages the station on behalf of the Government, confirmed yesterday that This Is It was leasing one of its shop spaces.

Connex spokesman John Rees said the transport company was aware spray cans were being sold there, but the shop's manager had been asked to take the product off the shelves. But store manager Dom Sigillo said This Is It had been leasing the building for three years and had never been questioned about the spray can sales. Mr Sigillo said the advert on the website had been taken from an old business card and though he was aware of it, he had not visited the site for a while. He said the shop did not promote illegal graffiti and he would look at having the ad removed. Another graffiti superstore, Giant, is continuing to flourish several months after the *Sunday Herald Sun* exposed its operation. The North Melbourne store offers an out-of-hours service, boasts "Melbourne's largest range of aerosol paint" and stocks graffiti magazines showcasing thousands of tags and scrawls on trains in Melbourne and around the world.

New anti-graffiti laws proposed in Parliament this week include bans on the sale of spray paint cans to minors, other than for work, and bans on businesses advertising in a way that is likely to promote graffiti.

But the founder of Residents Against Graffiti Everywhere (RAGE), Steve Beardon, said the revelations about This Is It and continued operation of Giant mocked the Government's tough stance. The new laws would not stop such stores operating, he said.

Total bans were needed on the sale of cans to anyone who did not need them for their trade and stores should be forced to hide the product, he said. Connex said it was now reviewing This Is It's lease. A spokeswoman for Public Transport Minister Lynne Kosky said the Government believed the situation was inappropriate. "Connex has advised us that they are investigating the issue and we urge them to resolve it as quickly as possible," she said.