

Herald Sun

All part of the big picture

I REALISE now I was silly to get upset during my holidays at all the graffiti I saw.

Never mind the scrawls over my child's school, the local playground, the train station, my side fence, the shops down the street and even on the trees along the Puffing Billy track.

That's not the work of badly brought-up children with an unhealthy contempt for the property of others.

No, it's... it's... oops. Let me refer again to the academics who have put me right about all this.

"It is not so much vandalism as a way youth spend their time, or a part



Graffiti: or is it art?

of modern youth culture," says Dr. Suniti Bandaranaike, of James Cook University.

Besides, says Flinders University criminal justice lecturer Mark Halsey, it distracts children from doing worse things, which means we should think twice about "legislation which clamps down on illegal writing".

Spot on, says Alison Young of Melbourne University's criminology department. That would just antagonise the vandals.

"Instead, policymakers must try to develop multi-faceted strategies that balance costs, discretionary tolerance and cultural understanding. After all, today's graffiti could be tomorrow's art."

Get the (scrawled) picture? The graffiti artists aren't the problem. It's you and me, with sour warped ways of seeing things.

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RAGE: Lobbying for safer, cleaner suburbs