

BUGA UP - You've come a long way baby

Over 50 years ago we were surrounded by cigarette advertising and it was normal to smoke in airplanes, cinemas, workplaces and restaurants. Tobacco companies wooed us into believing that smoking made us look suave and sexy, or rugged and handsome and that their products were not a health hazard. Overall, governments were complicit and lack of political will left tobacco companies unchallenged for a long time. Baby boomer kids would sing along to the jingle for Escort cigarettes...*join the club, join the club, join the Escort club* (only 35c to join) and watch the Flinstones on TV 'brought to you by Winston cigarettes'. Watching young teens smoking was as normal as buying Redskins or Choo Choo bars on the way home from school during the 1960's. After all, teenagers thought it was pretty cool to smoke and the tobacco industry had a vested interest in recruiting smokers.



Winfield – Post operative...courtesy of BUGA UP

It now seems unbelievable that tobacco companies could advertise as widely as they did, often targeting children and young people through television advertising and sports sponsorship. The bans on cigarette advertising were incremental and direct tobacco advertising on radio and television was phased out over the three years between 1973 and 1976. Billboard tobacco advertising was banned across Australia in 1993 and tobacco advertising through sports sponsorship was banned as recently as 2006. The Tobacco Plain Packaging Act was legislated by the Australian Government in late 2011 with the clear objective to improve public health by actively discouraging people from taking up smoking and encouraging smokers to stop. Even more recently to coincide with World No Tobacco Day, smoking outdoors in public places was banned in South Australia in May 2012. This action aligns South Australia with other States although NSW is lagging behind as there is a considerable delay on the enforcement of outdoor smoking until 2015.



Benson and Hedges – Post operative...courtesy of BUGA UP

A number of forces contributed to the eventual ban on cigarette advertising and one of the more interesting episodes in this history is the part that the unorthodox movement 'Billboard Utilising Graffitists Against Unhealthy Promotions' (BUGA UP) played.



The group started with three people, Ric Bolzan, Bill Snow and Geoff Coleman and officially came into existence about one year after the first billboard was 'refaced' in October 1979. A meeting in the home of one of the founding members occurred one rainy night (the rain making it impossible to reface more billboards that night) and the discussion focused on strategies and improved coordination to underpin the activity and send out the message that cigarette advertising needs to stop and **stop now**. Rather than random billboard refacing a decision was made to name the group and get organised. This coordination of effort was to pay off.

