

## Graffiti vandals sabotage signals to stop trains

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**GRAFFITI** vandals are deliberately tripping rail signals and stopping commuter trains in a desperate bid to spray their tags.

The alarming trend is putting thousands of lives at risk and costing taxpayers \$34.7 million a year in clean-up costs.

### Train stoppers threaten lives

*The Daily Telegraph* can reveal the vandals are jamming signal trip arms with rocks and other objects before attacking stationary carriages.

Their acts of lunacy take just seconds but leave an ugly legacy of damaged trains.

The cost of fixing graffiti vandalism on trains and rail infrastructure has exploded to almost \$35 million a year with 1611 hits on trains last year.

And just last month, 110,000 individual tags were scrubbed off rail infrastructure.

The clean-up bill is equivalent to the cost of buying a new eight-carriage train.

Dozens of graffiti gangs comprising hundreds of members each are playing a deadly game of one-up-manship by recording their acts of stupidity and posting them on the internet.

Premier Nathan Rees has vowed to change laws to force more of those found guilty of such attacks to clean up the mess themselves after facing victims.



Mass vandalism ... Video footage of a graffiti crew in action has been seized by police

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And police are forcing the parents of graffiti vandals caught in the act to go to the scene of their children's crimes in an effort to shame the vandals.

"I want vandals to be held responsible for their destructive behaviour," Mr Rees told *The Daily Telegraph*.

Mr Rees has also instructed police commissioner Andrew Scipione to make targeting graffiti and vandalism a priority for police throughout the state.

"Frankly the community has had enough, and I have had enough," Mr Rees said.

Labor MP Tanya Gadiel said her electorate of Parramatta had a serious graffiti problem.

Vandals have been ordered to spend 60,000 hours removing graffiti from public property in the past eight years in a government program, Ms Gadiel said.

RailCorp general manager of security Paul Passmore said while RailCorp had safety systems in place to deal with interference on the network, the trend of organised graffiti gangs jamming or tripping signals with rocks and stealing train keys and accessing crew quarters was a concern.

"It's clearly disruptive and its certainly dangerous for the people," he said. But he said the crews relished the dangers.

"Part of the culture is to try to get into exotic locations so you've got bragging rights."

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