

# Gay bashers must be deterred: Crown

By JENNIE CURTIN

Four teenagers who bashed a homosexual man to death should be given sentences which would deter others from considering similar attacks, a Crown prosecutor told the Supreme Court yesterday.

Mr Mark Tedeschi described the killing of Richard Johnson, 33, in Alexandria Park last year as "a brutal attack on a man who was perceived to be different in a way these four men considered to be unacceptable".

He said the problem of violence against homosexuals was such that Justice Badgery-Parker should consider deterrence to be "of the utmost importance" when determining sentences.

Mr Tedeschi was giving submissions at the pre-sentence hearing of Ronald Morgan, 18, of Alexandria, Alex Mihailovic, Dean Barry Howard and Bradley Steven Young, all 19 of Waterloo. The first three were found guilty by a jury in February of murdering Mr Johnson. Young was found guilty of manslaughter.

The jury had heard that the four — with four others — attacked Mr Johnson on January 24 last year after ringing Mr Johnson's telephone number, which was on the wall of a public toilet, and inviting him to the park for sex.



Mihailovic, Howard, Morgan and Young listen to pre-sentence arguments.

Artwork by GARY LIGHTFOOT

Four of the youths pleaded guilty to manslaughter and have been sentenced to terms ranging from 3½ years to eight years.

Mr Robert Lord, for Mihailovic, said that while his client had admitted punching Mr Johnson and possibly kicking him once or twice, he had no previous convictions and "rehabilitation . . . must loom large".

Mr Ian McClintock said Morgan was one of the first to desist in the attack and leave. He had been a victim of peer group pressure.

Mr Andrew Leary said Howard was the product of a broken home. He, too, had been subjected to peer pressure during the attack,

when he admitted he had kicked Mr Johnson twice.

Young admitted rifling through Mr Johnson's pockets but he had no previous criminal convictions, Mr Bennett Ingram said.

Earlier, Justice Badgery-Parker criticised the *Herald*. He said an article published last week was misleading in attempting to link the case to other gay murders in Sydney over recent years and that a Spectrum story last Saturday, if it was an attempt to influence him before sentencing, was "improper and . . . doomed to failure".

The judge will hand down the sentences next Monday.