

Teenagers go on the prowl to bash gays

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GANGS of teenage youths are prowling inner Sydney streets at night bashing homosexual men and lesbians.

Gay activists say the packs — of up to 15 youths — are responsible for 30 attacks each week.

A series of vicious attacks has left many gays battered or unconscious and, in at least two cases, dead.

Yesterday, about 500 gays marched through the city and stuck the names of their bashed friends on the gates of Scots Church which houses the offices of the Festival of Light. Propaganda put out by the organisation is inciting the bashings, they claim.

Police and gays say the bashings are not motivated by robbery but by hate.

A special report commissioned by the Gay Rights Lobby claims 6 per cent of assailants are aged under 15, 43 pc 16-20 and 45 pc 20-25.

Ms Sue Thompson, the Gay Client Group Consultant for the Police Department, said it appeared the attacks were carried out not by poor chil-

The attack victims

THE gay community's list of casualties include:

- The body of a man found at Bondi at the bottom of a cliff near a public toilet. Police suspect he was thrown over the cliff.

The editor of the gay newspaper *Sydney Star Observer*, Mr Martyn Goddard, said he had a report from a gay man saying he heard raised voices at the scene of the killing. But the witness has not come forward.

- William Allen, 50, found dead in the bath in his Newtown home in November 1988. The murder remains unsolved.

- Peter Knight — beaten up in Paddington in broad daylight. His injuries included a broken leg which required surgery, head injuries, lacerations and bruising on his body, arm and hand.

His assailants stole \$10 but left behind a \$3,000 Cartier watch and a gold bracelet.

- A heterosexual schoolteacher, Greg Moore, 30, who was mistaken for a gay man, was in a coma for several days after being bashed outside a public toilet in Coogee. His injuries included a fractured skull, fluid on the brain, fractured right cheekbone, head injuries and bruising.

- Trevor Braybrook and a friend — punched about the face and kicked in the body in Surry Hills.

- Another gay man, Tony, left unconscious on the footpath after being bashed and robbed in Burton Street, Darlinghurst. He was hit from behind about 10.30 pm.

dren, but by "your average kid".

"It's not the really disadvantaged kids, it's average kids from average family homes and that's causing us great concern."

Gay community members

said the big increase in bashings was due in part to propaganda put out by groups such as the Rev Fred Nile's Festival of Light.

"We think the bashings are directly related to the propaganda put out by people such



MORE than 500 marched in Sydney yesterday drawing attention to bashing.

Picture ALEX TOWLE

as him," said Ms Carole Ruthchild, co-convenor of the Gay Rights Lobby.

But Mr Nile said the accusations against him and the Festival of Light were "ridiculous".

"I have strongly condemned violence against homosexuals," he said.

"We are totally opposed to that and there is nothing either by word or print that we have put out that would in any way encourage that. In fact, it would discourage it."

Mr Nile said he did not want to question the accuracy of the report's figures but believed it helped the homosexual cause to exaggerate bashings and violence to create sympathy for them.

Mr Bruce Grant, another convenor, said: "People with a high profile, such as Nile, perpetuate hate; there is definitely a cause and effect relationship."

Another reason given for

the incidence of gay bashings is the movement of generally wealthy gay men into traditionally working-class inner city suburbs.

"In the inner-city there are large numbers of gay men and lesbians, and for lots of working-class kids there is envy involved," Mr Grant said.

But Ms Thompson cast doubt on envy as a motive.

"What we have got is a widespread attitude in society which goes that if we perceive something as being different we want to damage it and that's the big problem."

The Gay Rights report says: ● Only 22 pc of victims were robbed but 80 pc were physically abused and 47 pc verbally abused.

● Most attacks took place between 9 pm and 3 am, between Thursday and Saturday nights, in Oxford Street, Darlinghurst, and in King Street, Newtown.

The report also highlighted

the continuing suspicion of many gays towards the police: only 52 pc of those attacked reported the incident to the authorities, and only half of those who did said they were "satisfied" with the response.

Police and gays have acted to meet this lack of trust by establishing a gay hot-line in inner-city police stations.

Superintendent Alf Peate, commander of the Sydney Police District, said the service would be available at Kings Cross, Paddington, Surry Hills and Newtown police stations.

"We will have a phone number which will be put into the magazines of the gay community so they will have a number and a police officer to ring," he said.

Superintendent Peate acknowledged there was some anti-gay feeling within the 14,000-strong police force but said it was his job to encourage his colleagues to "leave their prejudices behind" and "act professionally".