

# Ninja gangs attacking homosexuals

By JENNY CHATER

Gangs of men wearing ninja warrior costumes have been bashing homosexuals in the Banks-town area, according to the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service. And there have been numerous assaults on homosexuals by groups of men carrying baseball bats.

Nearly 30 violent attacks on homosexuals in Sydney have been reported to the service in just over a month.

The executive officer of the counselling service, Mr Chris O'Reilly, says the violence is escalating.

"Guys are considered to be easy targets — like a despised group, they are okay to bash," he told the *Herald*. Another homosexual said discrimination was worsening.

The service has been collating reports of attacks for the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby's Street-watch campaign.

"The attackers are always in groups," Mr O'Reilly said.

"There was a group operating at a western suburbs beat, around the Bankstown area. They'd dress as ninjas [Japanese warriors], and jump down from trees. It happened quite a few times, a couple of months ago.

"There's also Ramba types, or guys that go out with baseball bats. They're organised groups, going out specifically to bash gays. It's an ambush."

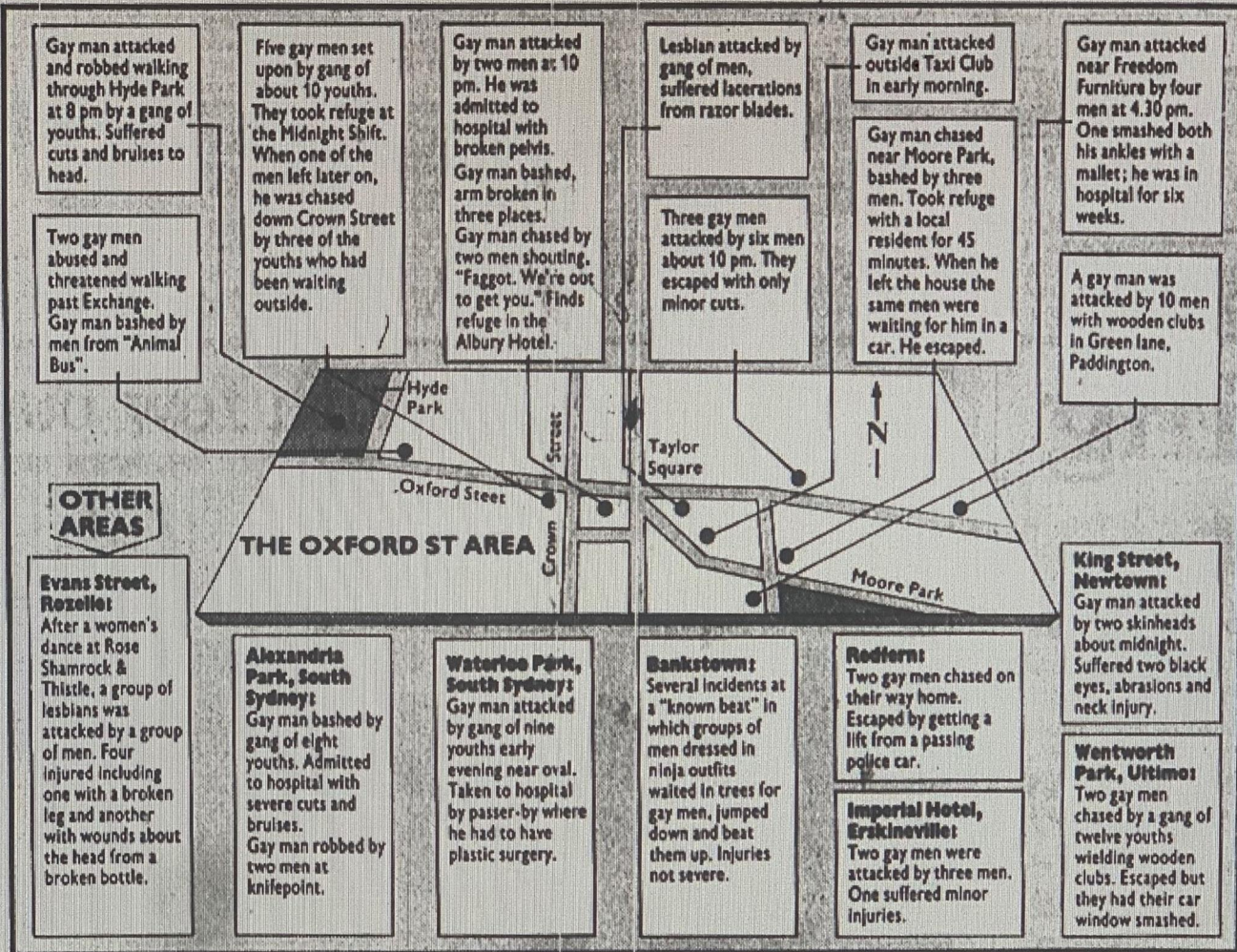
A spokeswoman for the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, Ms June Clements, said that Street-watch had received reports of attacks on 22 men and six women in the past month. Some victims were knocked unconscious and taken to hospital.

The attackers were in groups of up to 12 males, often teenagers. Most attacks occurred in streets or parks, and some in railway stations. Two danger areas were Moore Park and King Street, Newtown.

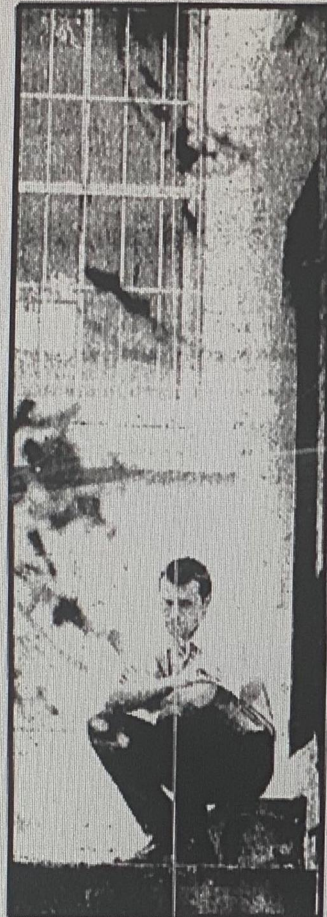
Nearly all the victims were certain they had been attacked as homosexuals or lesbians, because the attackers called them names such as "poofler", "dyke", "fag-pot" and "leso".

Ms Clements said the lobby was alarmed that the attackers were in organised groups, and by the reaction of the police force.

Streetwatch plans to make a



Where the attacks are happening ... an area-by-area breakdown of assaults on homosexuals.



Mark... "A lot of people say 'Gays, faggots, they deserve what they get'."

## "They just kept kicking me when I was on the ground"

Mark, a 27-year-old homosexual, was bashed by nine teenagers as he was jogging on Waterloo Oval, Redfern, in October.

Mark was new to Sydney, and unaware that the area had been the scene of several violent assaults on homosexuals.

The attack left him in hospital for two days, in need of facial plastic surgery, and continuing consultations with a psychologist.

"I got hit from behind on the back of the head," he said.

"Someone shouted 'Let's get

him'. There was a whole gang of youths — about eight or nine of them, aged about 14 or 15. They just kept kicking me when I was on the ground. It seemed like forever.

"I was choking on the blood from my nose. I couldn't see, because they'd kicked both my eyes. One cheekbone was fractured, kicked inwards."

The teenagers left him lying on the ground, and stole the bicycle he'd taken to the oval. A passer-by took him to hospital.

Mark, who works as a volunteer with the AIDS council, said the attack was reported to the police.

"They were pretty sympathetic," he said. "They didn't make an issue of whether I was gay or not — it was just a bashing."

Mark said he is still angry about the attack, and is "kind of scared".

"A psychologist is helping me through it," he said.

"I am afraid to go out at night-time. If a gang of youths come up to me, I will turn and try to get away.

"A lot of people say 'Gays, faggots, they deserve what they get'.

Fiona, a 23-year-old lesbian, said she was attacked after a women's dance on Stanmore Road. She and her friends were followed by a boy aged about 15.

"He was calling us dykes, saying he could cure us, 'You need a real man to f... you'. He started pushing me, and punched me in the face — knocked me over."

□ JENNY CHATER