

Gays start their own city patrol

By BRIDGET WILSON

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And after an initial sceptical reaction from police, the volunteers say a good working relationship has developed.

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The street patrol operates towards the end of the week and at weekends late at night around Oxford Street and the back streets of Darlinghurst and Surry Hills — the epicentre of Sydney's gay community.

Unlike the New York-based Guardian Angels, the street patrol members avoid confrontation, preferring to act as a deterrent to violence.

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Mr Glynn says they will take down the licence plate numbers of the so-called “animal buses” — group tours that come in from the suburbs.

The street patrol was formed after a public meeting called by the Anti-Violence Project — an arm of the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby — in October last year.

During the summer the two-person patrols went out around the Darlinghurst/Surry Hills area and noticed after a while that much of the anti-gay behaviour they'd noticed before had stopped.

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Continued Page 6

Randwick to borrow \$700,000

By STEPHEN LONG

Randwick Council has decided to take out a new loan for public works of \$700,000 just one week after its auditor warned that finances were “unsatisfactory and somewhat precarious” and stressed that the practice of borrowing for public works had to stop.

Aldermen voted 7-6 to accept the loan from the Department of Local Government at Tuesday night's council meeting after the chairman of the finance committee, Alderman Phillip Abadee (Lib), argued that it would be uneconomic not to borrow the money.



From last week's front page.

He said the council would still have to pay the wages of staff employed to do the work which, without the loan, would have to be financed by asset sales.

A rescission motion was lodged against the decision by aldermen

John Calopedes (Lib), Peter Schick (Ind) and Margaret Martin (Lib) before the meeting closed. This means that the council will have to debate the issue again at a special meeting before the department's offer lapses at the end of the month.

The loan will fund drainage construction in West Kensington, reconstruction of the historic Wylies' baths, footpaths, new children's playground equipment and civic centre improvements. The department had offered up to \$1 million for these public works.

At the same meeting, the council accepted a series of spending cuts

recommended by its budget review sub-committee.

But it rejected a recommendation that the Matraville Library be closed at an “eventual” estimated saving of more than \$136,000, calling instead for a report from the chief librarian on alternatives to closure that could net the same saving.

The \$700,000 loan caused a split among the Liberal and conservative Independent aldermen who usually vote as a block. It was supported by Labor aldermen.

Alderman Calopedes (Lib) said that although the public works it

Continued Page 2

FACING THE HEAT IN DARLO



Darlinghurst has one of the busiest fire stations in the Sydney metropolitan area and has been the scene of some of the city's worst

fatal fires. But, as Senior Firefighter (qualified) Craig Wright (above) knows all too well, the fire crews who face the heat of

Darlinghurst still have to wait — and to train. Reporter Amanda Phelan joined a Darlinghurst crew last week for a day. See Page 8.



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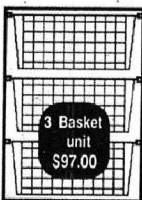
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Continued Page 6

Gays launch their own volunteer street patrol

From Page 1

exactly what it was about and if they didn't, they'd ask.

"Within a month of the street patrol starting a lot of pushing and shoving and verbal abuse settled down and stopped."

Chief Inspector Kerry Beggs says street patrol members have made "a worthwhile contribution" to the Surry Hills area in a couple of instances when they alerted police to trouble spots.

Mr Beggs says he has no problem with concerned members of the public acting as the eyes and ears for police, but was opposed to so-called vigilante groups taking over the role of police.

Now the street patrol wants to expand the area it covers.

The patrollers need office space in the area and are hoping South Sydney Council can help. They also need more two-way radios, which cost \$2,500 each.

During the winter recess they'll hold a five- or six-week training program for volunteers who will gain security guard licences.

Mr Glynn says no special skills are needed, but a sense of commitment is essential, plus the ability to keep calm.

"Behaviour breeds behaviour, so if we're easy going and if we're smiling and chatting to people out there and educating them about carrying whistles we can usually calm down situations."

Whistles are catching on too, according to Mr Glynn, who says they work well as a deterrent.

On a recent Friday night he was standing outside the Exchange Hotel on Oxford Street

when two men started fighting and a brawl looked as if it might develop.

"I just pulled my whistle out and gave it one big blast and the crowd dispersed and the two guys took off," he said.

"It was quite amazing."

He says that people should respond to the sound of a whistle by running

toward it and blowing their whistles too. The effect is to distract the attacker.

"Once they're distracted they're going to quit the scene."

Much of the street patrol's work is giving support to victims of violence. Patrollers will stay with the person who's been bashed while they go to the police station to report the incident, or to hospital for treatment.

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Mr Glynn said: "We want people to know that they'll be looked after and they're going to be treated fairly and courteously.

"We don't like the idea of people going to a police station to make a report about being attacked out on the streets and be dumped on because they're gay. It's happened in the past.

"We don't expect that from Surry Hills [police station] any more but there's the odd incident where it does happen."

Mr Glynn says that according to research the average basher is probably a teenager from a western or northern suburb.

"When we get into the underlying reasons about why those people are out there doing it, it centres on confused sexuality."

He claims the bashers are often gay themselves, but are having trouble coming to terms with that.

"They take it out on what they perceive is a weak object — but I've got news for them: we're not that weak any more," says Mr Glynn.

"As far as the Darlinghurst/Surry Hills area is concerned, we've got a watch out on the area. We're looking out for people there and if they want to come in and mess with us, we're there

and it's not just us they have to deal with; they're going to deal with the police."

Mr Glynn says that he became involved in the street patrol with the advent of AIDS virus.

"To have people come into the area and bash us as well makes me very angry — sit on the sidelines for five years and a lot of us are going to be dead anyway. We've got enough to deal with without this craziness."

He says what's needed is "a fair go for all".

"It's just a matter of educating people that gay men and lesbians have feelings and feel pain and die just like anybody else.

"It's this ingrained homophobia that's part of the education system and it needs to be changed. It is happening slowly.

"I don't want to devote the rest of my life to going out on street patrol every night — that's crazy — I think we've got much better things to do, but while there's a problem we'll tackle it. I think it's working."