

GAYS FIGHT BACK

Following the recent outbreak of homosexual bashings and murders around Sydney, one group of women has decided to take positive action.

LESBIAN lobby group Dykes on Bikes has taken to the streets in a bid to stop the recent outbreak of gay bashings throughout Sydney.

And their two-month-old street watch patrols, on motorbikes or by foot, have already helped police in a number of arrests or prevented a victim from being bashed or seriously hurt.

Spokeswoman Nora Savona said 15 women patrolled the inner-city surrounding Oxford Street on alternative Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.

Their only "weapons" are two-way radios and the fact they travel in groups of four still doesn't stop the concerned group from being hassled by bashers while they claim another victim.

Even though Dykes on Bikes can't intervene when a person is being bashed, Ms Savona said there were key roles they play in helping a bash victim.

"We can't intervene - if we get injured in the struggle it is our own fault and we have to pay the consequences," she said.

"And the one thing we want to avoid is a confrontation. We don't want to start a street war."

She said their primary role was to aid or support the person who has been bashed and give adequate medical treatment until an

ambulance arrives.

"One person stands back and takes a mental picture of what is happening. Their job is not to get involved but to take descriptions of people," she said.

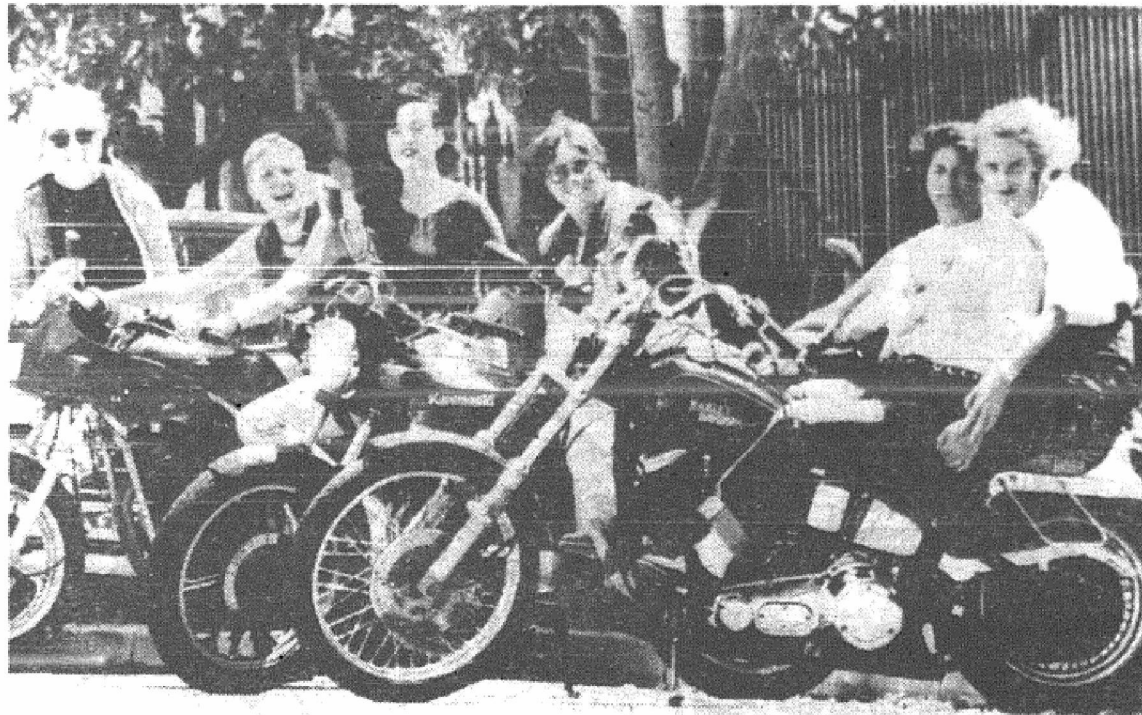
"They also report to base and alert police."

"Another person is there to support the person being

bashed, to establish how badly hurt they are and to find out whether they need an ambulance.

"When the police arrive, the assailants usually disappear and this is where we play our most important role."

"Our job is to bridge that gap and because we are on



Dykes on Bikes . . . 'One thing we want to avoid is a confrontation. We don't want to start a street war'

By FELICITY GLOVER

radio, two of the bikes follow them."

With summer virtually over, Ms Savona said Dykes on Bikes were now preparing for the football season - another possible prime-time period for gay bashings.

The football-going crowd have never really been a problem, but Ms Savona believes recent media hype

around the issue could spark more bashings.

"We are waiting to see what happens," she said.

"I don't really think they are going to be much of a problem but crime is a seasonal thing - and it gives us time to get ready for next summer."

"There can't be one more murder in this city. We won't tolerate it."

Basher 'did it to teach a lesson'

FORMER "poofster basher" John, 21, from Sydney's northern beaches, told yesterday how he and his gang attacked homosexuals at city pick-up beats.

"We weren't in it for money - we did it to teach them a lesson," he said.

"Like most guys, homosexuality makes us feel sick and we thought by going in there and getting them we could kind of put a stop to it."

"I mean, it's a bloody disgrace that you can't even go to the toilet at night. We basically wanted to clean things up."

John and his teenage gang, who thought of themselves as self-styled vigilantes, would travel to the city every Friday and Saturday night to bash gays.

"Sometimes we'd send someone in to wait for one and as soon as a poof arrived we'd charge in and kick the . . . out of them."

"If they'd cough up we'd sometimes grab their wallets, jackets or watches but usually we'd just run off."

"It got pretty heavy sometimes because once you got started it was hard to stop."

"We just felt so much anger against them and would give them a filthy hiding. They'd plead with us to stop, making all sorts of offers but we couldn't be bought."

"I know of guys who would accept the offers but as soon as the poof gave them the money or whatever they'd get stuck into them."

"There were times when we'd have to throw out our clothes because they had so much blood on them."

"I actually became paranoid I'd catch AIDS."

"In the end it just got too much and we stopped doing it - but it doesn't mean we hate them any less."

"I think we've just grown up."