

3 DYKES BASHED, NO ARRESTS

By *Kath Duncan*

A horrific bashing in a Sydney pub put three women in hospital with serious injuries and yet not one of the ten men who took part in the violence has been arrested.

On October 18, Nikki, her girlfriend Bel and their friend Bugs were walking along Balmain Road on their way home when things went terribly awry.

The women were returning from a Saturday night out at the Leichhardt Hotel and as they came to the Bald Faced Stag Hotel they decided to nip in for a last one before going home.

They noticed a young man standing on the footpath, talking loudly into a mobile phone.

Bel, 25, the youngest and smallest of the three, was lagging behind the other two and before she entered the pub the man allegedly hit her in the face, kicked her and took her watch.

Shortly afterwards when they left the Stag they saw the man standing near the entrance to the pub's pool hall, The Underground.

Bugs told the man they didn't want any trouble, they just wanted the watch back. The man told them to come inside the pool hall to get it and as the women entered, Bel was hit on the head with a pool cue and kicked by three men.

When Bugs went to her rescue she was attacked and kicked to the ground.

As Bugs and Nikki, both in their 30s, copped the brunt of the attack, they could hear the men's girlfriends egging them on, screaming, 'bash em, they're nothing but dykes!'

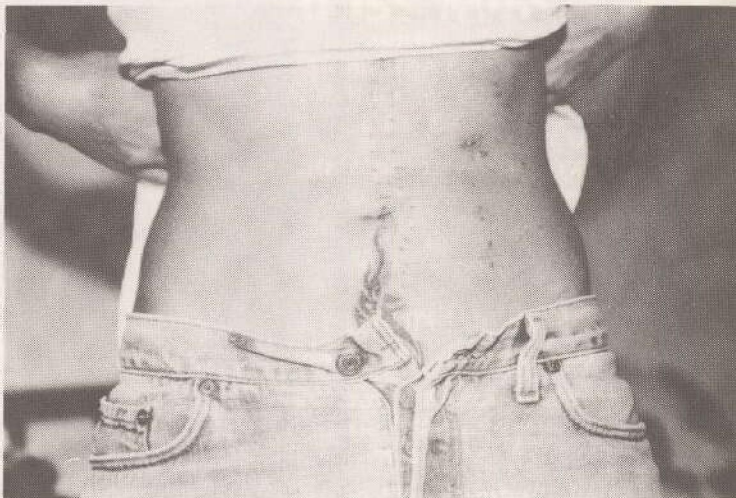
In the end 10 men were attacking the women, using pool cues and their boots. Eventually other men joined in what the local paper described as an "all-in brawl".

Nikki was taken to hospital with a fractured skull and cheekbone, a ruptured stomach and a torn bowel, which required major surgery to repair. It will be six months before she can return to work and doctors are hoping that as the blood on her brain dissolves, her hearing will return.

The other two spent shorter stays in hospital and are recovering from their wounds.

The women allege the bar staff "did nothing" to prevent

Photo: Tom Fairweather



▲ Afraid to show her face, Nikki's life threatening injuries required major surgery.

the violence and when police eventually arrived there were no arrests as no witnesses came forward.

The case is now in the hands of Glebe detectives as an attempted murder investigation.

The women allege their assailants were young men of Middle Eastern appearance.

Friends and family are completely baffled by the attack, but good friend Turtle says it was a hate crime.

"I don't think they were in the wrong place at the wrong time—to me it was a deliberate bashing on the girls for their sexuality. Why did the guy hang around with the stolen watch? He must have known they'd ask for it back. It was a set-up. He and his mates weren't locals and we think they may just have been out for a night of dyke-bashing."

Angry at the lack of assistance, friends of the three want to picket the pub.

"The Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project can offer the women support and advice on getting compensation," says convenor Bruce Grant.

"The fact that anti-lesbian abuse was used during the attack is a clear indication of why the assault happened."

Grant says the pub could be in breach of its licence for not providing a safe environment for the women.

"There's a role we can play in getting them to explain why they didn't do anything to help. Safety is a fundamental right, not a privilege.

"The really hard thing is while we can all do things that might reduce our chances of attack, the reality is that violence is out of our control—we're not the source of the problem."

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Printing: PACWEB

LESBIANS ON THE LOOSE

Circulation: 20,000

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Print Post approved: PP234093/00006 ISSN 1324-6542

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