

The Gay Community's Newspaper

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BASHED!

Gay assault rate soars

Police have warned of a dramatic rise in serious bashings of gay men in the inner city.

And gay rights activists have made an urgent call to police to increase foot patrols.

Many of the attacks have left their victims unconscious and hospitalised.

There was a seasonal increase in street assaults, police said. The motive was often robbery.

Thugs seemed to regard gay men as easy targets and likely to be worth robbing. So young bashers from the Sydney suburbs were attracted to Darlinghurst, Surry Hills and Newtown.

"This is a season of high alcohol use, and of a lot of young people with nothing to do," one policeman said. "One thing some of them do is go out to bash homosexuals."

"Others, particularly drug users, may assault people who look as if they might have a bit of cash on them."

One gay man, Tony (pictured), was left unconscious on the footpath after being assaulted and robbed in Burton Street, Darlinghurst.

The attack happened at 10.30 on a weekday evening. "I didn't see who hit me," he said. "I have no idea how many of them there were."

"I can only remember being hit from behind. The next thing I knew was waking up in St Vincent's hospital."

Tony, unconscious, was

found by a friend and taken to the hospital.

He thinks the thugs had been waiting in shadows for passing victims.

Another gay man, Trevor Braybrook, and his lover were severely beaten near their Surry Hills home.

Braybrook told the *Star Observer* he knew of at least six other instances of assaults, mainly against gay men. All had occurred within ten days.

"I and my partner, Wayne, were about 30 metres from our home."

"I heard someone say: 'How's it going, boys' and I had time only to half turn my head when I was bashed heavily in the face."

"My eye started bleeding and I couldn't see properly. I also went temporarily deaf."

"We were both bashed very aggressively about the face and body. They got us on the ground and started kicking us."

"My partner was beaten practically unconscious."

"They got his wallet, with \$350 in it - which is incentive for them to do it again, I suppose."

Trevor went to a neighbour's house, who refused to let him use the phone.

But the two men reached their home and called police, who arrived quickly.

"Wayne was bashed in Moore Park Road on our way

to the Sleaze Ball a couple of years ago. After that, he had to have reconstructive surgery to his face.

"At least it wasn't as bad as that this time. But we were both in a state of shock. Wayne has very little memory of it."

Because of the speed and severity of the attack, the two men were unable to give descriptions of their latest attackers to police. But there were about six young men between 17 and 23, Braybrook believed.

"A lot of people in the gay community objected when the Summary Offences Act was reintroduced. But it can be used to protect us," he said.

"It gives police the power to break up potentially threatening groups, and they should do that more."

The Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby has made an urgent call for police to increase patrols of the Darlinghurst, Surry Hills and Newtown areas.

"We saw the Police Minister, Mr Pickering, about three months ago and he promised to do something about foot patrols," lobby co-convenor Carole Ruthchild said.

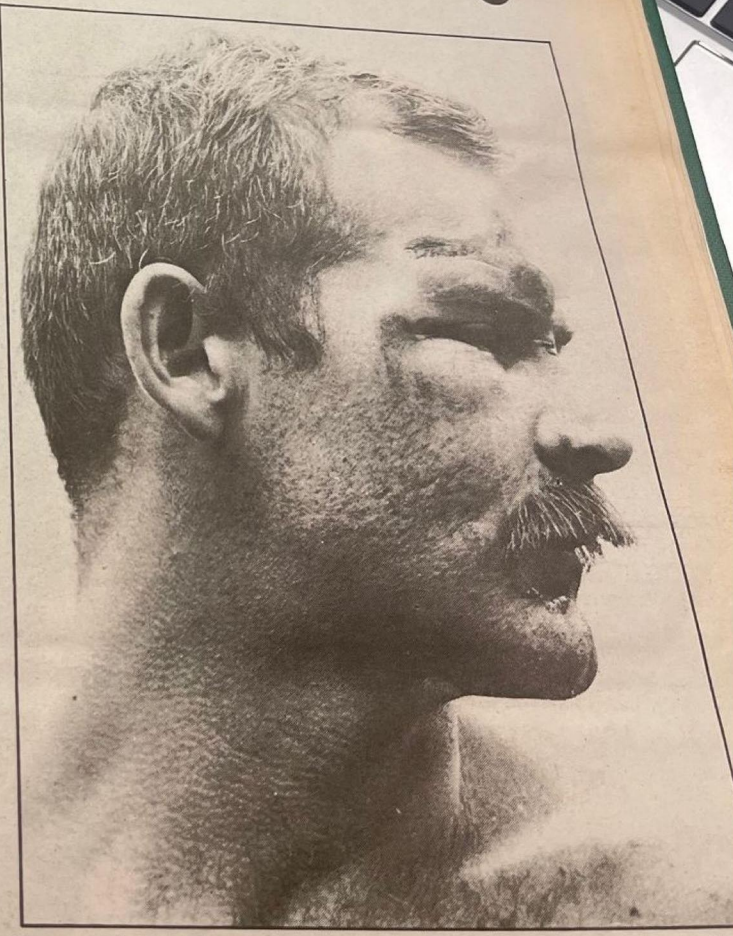
"Clearly, if they have increased their surveillance they haven't made any difference."

"We will reaffirm what we said when we went to see Mr Pickering in October."

"There is so much violence that the police will have to make a concerted effort in this area."

"If we can't be safe walking in our own streets in our own city, what have we got?"

"This issue needs to be taken more seriously by police and they need to do something about it."



Tony was bashed into unconsciousness and robbed by unseen assailants