

Anti-violence campaign launched

STOP THE BASHERS!

Streetwatch, a new campaign to cut the horrifying level of violence against gay men and lesbians, is underway in Sydney. It is encouraging people who have experienced any kind of physical or verbal harassment to report the incident.

Details of dozens of recent incidents ranging from abuse to serious assault have been collected in the last few weeks.

The Streetwatch Project is being conducted by the Gay and Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby (GLRL) along with the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service and Lesbian Line.

The three groups will monitor levels of violence for the next six months.

Streetwatch was launched on 4 November at the Performance Space in Redfern. It was attended by about sixty people including Fred Miller from the Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit and Clover Moore MP.

convenor of the GLRL, is that anti-homosexual violence is frequently not reported. The police are therefore able to argue no problem exists.

What does exist, insists Mr Cox, is a massive amount of personal experience of violence which should be put on record.

The problem around Oxford St appears to be compounded by a "border dispute".

Oxford St marks the boundary between the police divisions of Surry Hills and Kings Cross, each with their own policies on foot patrols.

Of the two, only the Surry Hills division conducts foot patrols in the Oxford St area. And only recently has it received consent from its

acknowledge the existence of anti-homosexual violence.

And there is more than reluctance to acknowledge the existence of gay or lesbian police. Mr Cox says for as long as this attitude exists, police will be able to see homosexual people as "different" or alien.

The Streetwatch campaign has already attracted coverage by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Good Morning Australia* and JJJ.

The success of the campaign will depend on maintaining a high profile and this in turn will depend on how much advertising it can afford.

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The Anti-Discrimination Board, possibly trying to raise its present low profile, has also offered to fund advertising.

GLRL has made formal and informal approaches to gay and lesbian venues, but so far has had little positive response.

The primary aim of Streetwatch is to gain information which can be used to protect the gay and lesbian community.

People wishing to report incidents of violence should phone the Lesbian and Gay Counselling Service on 319 2799 (4pm to midnight) or Lesbian Line on 550 0910 (Fridays 6pm-10pm).

Phone operators have been prepared with a questionnaire to take details and unless otherwise requested, informants will remain anonymous.



John Fowler, Clover Moore and Gary Cox at the Streetwatch launch

Barrister David Buchanan told the meeting: "It is alarming that at a time when the State Government is creating offences of incitement to racial hatred, it is paying no attention to the fact more men and women suffer verbal and physical abuse because they are seen as gay or lesbian than any other sector of the community."

The problem at present says Gary Cox, co-

Kings Cross counterpart to cross Oxford St in case of trouble.

The issue of this poorly placed boundary and the need for more police foot patrols was recently raised at a Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison meeting.

The Surry Hills police have been relatively receptive to the concerns of the GLRL, in line with the current notion of "community policing". In other areas there is a determined reluctance to