

Tasmanian Council for Sexual & Gender Diverse People

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‘Brett’ has written this article after he and his partner experienced the incidents outlined below. The Tasmanian Council submits the article for Sexual and Gender Diverse People Inc as part of their campaign against GLBTI hate crime. We would like to hear from any one else experiencing similar incident of violence and hate crime.

“Summer is here and people are cruising around, seeing who’s about and what’s going on at the beach and around town. The late twilight hours of summer are great for socialising in various spots around the city. Unfortunately, the late twilight and cover of darkness also gives courage to others who are out for the sport of ‘fag running’.

It’s well-known around town that the Domain is a place for to socialise most recently the action at the Domain has been increasingly focused on harassment and intimidation of locals at night. Typically, on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday night after 10pm, cars containing 3-4 people head up to the Domain and hoon around. When hooning becomes tailgating, light flashing, and yelling of abuse, then it becomes harassment and intimidation. This is not just one car and a few young people on the odd occasion – it is three or four, or more, cars in convoy that are engaged in organised ‘fag running’ on a regular basis. This is the term used by one group of young men bragging about their exploits on their Facebook page.

Some men at the Domain have been subject to more than harassment and intimidation by these groups of cowardly adolescents in the safety of their vehicles. Two gay men were trapped in their car at the ‘dead end’ when hoons who were tailgating them locked the gates. When leaving, they were trapped between the boom gate and the hoon car – and a sitting target for their mates throwing rocks from the bushes along the road. Other men have reported bashing and robbery, and damage to vehicles from eggs, rocks and other projectiles. Fag running has been increasing in frequency and severity over the last few months.

The Tasmania Police are aware of some of these events that happen just a kilometre away from Head Quarters. They walk a fine line trying to monitor Activities at the Domain, without appearing to harass locals driving around the area. My experiences with the Police have been positive – and some officers have been downright friendly and genuinely concerned for my safety. However, the Police may not be fully aware of the scale of the activities at the Domain because many incidents are not reported, and those that are reported are not systematically tracked to assess patterns of harassment and hate crime.

So what should you do? First, don't stop socialising up at the Domain – it's called the Queens' Domain for good reason as a place for people to socialise. Abandoning the area will only give hoons a sense of victory and raise their sense of entitlement. However, do be pro-actively aware of your own safety. When parking at the Domain at night, make sure that your vehicle is positioned so that your exit route can't be blocked by another vehicle. Avoid parking in isolated Areas. Park reasonably close to other vehicles (without cramping their style). Avoid older model cars with 3-4 occupants after dark. Don't take matters into your own hands or carry weapons in your vehicle – you will end up in trouble, not them! If hoons persistently tail gate or harass you - record the model of car and the registration (pic or txt on your phone or a pad) and report the incident to the Police on 1800 333 000. You don't have to give your name, and they don't trace calls.

If you're gay, bi, in or out, respect yourself and look out for others. Take some responsibility for everyone's safety. Don't find yourself in the helpless position of being harassed and assaulted by hoons, but too afraid to call the Police.”

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