



Safety urged, not city fear

Deborah Fewster

RMIT's Student Union has encouraged overseas students not to let "fear rule your life" following reports of an increase in armed robberies involving students in the CBD.

Recently published police figures show around half of the 88 armed robberies reported in June involved students. Many were reportedly overseas students carrying iPods, laptops, cameras, mobile phones or other electronic equipment.

Andrea Mears, a past member of RMIT's Association of International Students and now employed by the Student Union, said she was personally aware of incidents involving overseas students enrolled at the university's Swanston Street campus.

In two separate attacks, male students were robbed on trains at night, she said.

"A woman was also attacked in Tattersalls Lane in broad daylight."

However, Andrea said she didn't believe students were being deliberately targeted.

"How would you know whether someone is a student or a tourist?"

She thought it was more likely that the crimes were opportunistic.

"There's some poverty in the city. People are desperate. One of the incidents involved some people who looked like they had addiction issues.

"We're encouraging students to go to the police and to campus security [but] we don't want students to be so afraid that they just stay at university and go to class or stay at home and don't experience anything in the city.

"Don't let fear rule your life."

RMIT Security on-line personal safety checklist recommends using the most suitable car park near the building or the nearest point to catch public transport.

They recommend using the safest entry or exit to your study area and finding the safest path for walking there, taking in mind whether the pathway is well lit.

If in any doubt they recommend calling for the security escort service. When studying after hours make sure there is someone else that you know in the building, they recommend,

and consider pre-arranging to walk with a group before leaving your office or study area.

Walk confidently, with a purpose, and at a steady pace, they recommend. Carry your keys in your hand for quick access to your vehicle, workplace or study area and having your mobile telephone with you may help you feel more secure.

An additional option is to carry a personal alarm, or be prepared to scream "No!" loudly and get away if threatened.

Be wary of strangers asking directions, on foot or in cars – it is better to be rude than to be in trouble. If someone follows you, go to a place where there are other people.

Consider taking a self-defence course and when you're socialising, play smart. One drink too many could make you vulnerable.

Source: www.su.rmit.edu.au/rights/perssafety.html

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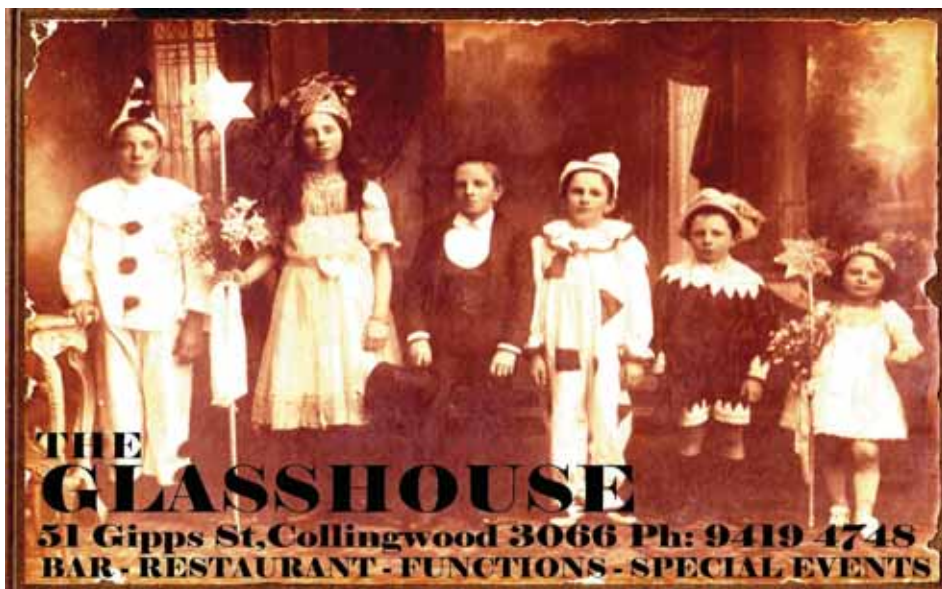
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SAT

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