

BEATING

around the

BUSH

**Here
are the
facts!**



A beat is any place where men can meet other men.

They may have sex at the beat or they may go somewhere else. Beats can be parks, railway stations, swimming pools, beaches, shopping centres, public toilets and any other places open to the general public. In some rural areas, beats can be a main point of contact for many men who have sex with men. Beats however, can pose risks for those who use them. The following information provides some things to consider if visiting a beat to increase your safety.

Personal safety

Taking Care of Yourself

Unfortunately beats can sometimes attract homophobic violence including physical violence, harassment and theft.

Some ways you can increase your personal protection include:

> Leave your wallet and valuables at home or locked in your car. Place your car key in your sock, keep pockets empty. Attacks at beats may involve theft and you don't want anyone finding your ID.

- > Wear clothes and shoes you can run in if necessary.
- > Make sure that you can hear what is going on around you. Don't use headphones or anything else that could affect your hearing.
- > Look out for and avoid anyone (or groups) acting suspiciously.
- > If threatened, run away (if you can) and try to attract attention by shouting. If you see anyone being hassled, call the police or yell, and take note of their details, (appearance, car rego, etc.).
- In an emergency always call 000.



Shared Spaces

& Shared Responsibilities

Beats are shared public spaces which also means shared responsibilities.

- > **It's important to respect the bush and other visitors. Keep to the constructed paths to protect the native vegetation, prevent soil compaction, erosion and weed infestation and to allow the bush to regenerate.**

> **Be discreet and respect others who use this space. Most police activity at beats is in response to complaints from the public about obvious behaviours.**

> **Take ALL rubbish away with you, do not litter. Discarded condoms/wrappers are not only environmentally unfriendly but they also attract complaints and interest from the public and authorities.**



Legal issues

You and the Law

It is not illegal to be at a beat, it is a public place. You might be breaking the law if you are caught engaging in 'offensive behaviour'. This includes exposing your genitalia (bum included), or engaging in any sexual activity in public. (This may include a car or a public toilet cubicle if the door is open.)



> Behaviour is not considered offensive if the observer has to take abnormal or unusual action to observe it, such as looking under a locked toilet cubicle door.

> If the police appear, it is usually best to co-operate and to be calm and polite. You may be obliged to give your name and address if they ask for it but you also have the right to ask the name, rank, and place of work of the police officer.

> If the police interview you regarding offensive behaviour and you think you may be in the wrong, it might be best to say 'no comment' until you can get legal advice.

Privacy

Smaller Communities



Risks for men who live in small regional and rural communities can include being 'outed'.

Some ways to help protect your privacy include:

- > It is not uncommon for locals to know where beats are. Some people have been known to hang around beats just to 'out' the men who use them. It might be a good idea to check out who's around before visiting a beat.**
- > You might be tempted to park your car away from the beat so locals passing by can't see or recognise it. Remember though, you may also need to leave quickly so make sure you have quick and easy access to your vehicle as well.**
- > Be prepared that you might meet a neighbour, colleague or someone else that you know but would not expect to find at a beat!**

Sexual Health

Protecting Yourself & Partners

As with any casual sex there is a risk to you and your partners' sexual health.

It is important to use a condom and water based lube when having casual sex. Condoms are your best protection against HIV and many other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). They do not provide complete protection though, especially when it comes to STIs that are passed on by skin to skin contact.

Get regular sexual health checks. Many common STIs show few, if any, symptoms so you can't necessarily tell by looking at someone if they have an STI. The only way to know for sure is to have regular sexual health checks. Depending on the number of partners you have you may need to have a check up as often as every three months.



TESTme

TESTme is a free service of Melbourne Sexual Health Centre. TESTme provides telephone consultations with a doctor or nurse for STI testing if you live 150kms or more from Melbourne. Once it has been decided which STIs to test for, a free STI pack will be sent to you with instructions on how to take the test.



You return the test to Melbourne Sexual Health Centre.

You will receive your results two weeks after you post the test and if necessary your treatment may be posted to you free of charge. For more information 1800 739 836

PEP

...Post Exposure Prophylaxis

Things don't always go to plan and accidents sometimes happen.

If your condom breaks, or for any other reason, you think you may have been exposed to HIV - Don't Panic! PEP is a course of anti HIV drugs that may prevent you becoming HIV positive. You need to act fast, PEP must be taken within 72 hours of being exposed. For more information, check out www.getpep.info

If you experience or witness any sort of threats or violence at a beat, report it by contacting a Police GLLO (Gay & Lesbian Liaison Officer) or the Anti Violence Project (you can remain anonymous).

You are entitled to help from the police regardless of where an incident happens. Reporting violence can help to protect others.



...and the
BEAT
goes on...

Some helpful websites

- > www.can.org.au
- > www.takecare.org.au
- > www.testme.org.au
- > www.getpep.info
- > www.whereversexhappens.org.au
- > www.thedramadownunder.info
- > www.antiviolence.info
- > www.plwhavictoria.org.au

and phone contacts:

- > Victoria Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers (03) 9247 6944
- > Victorian Anti-Violence Project 9660 3970
- > TestMe 1800 739 836
- > HIV & Sexual Health Connect Line 1800 038 125
- > CAN (Country Awareness Network) (03) 5443 8355
- > Victorian AIDS Council/
Gay Men's Health Centre 1800 134 840
- > Gay and Lesbian Switchboard 1800 184 527
- > Federation of Community Legal Centres (03) 9652 1500

take care
out
back there



CAN
VICTORIA INC.
Country Awareness Network (Victoria) Inc.