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Is it time to stop men congregating in groups?

It's an issue that's been deemed awful and exhausting and a new idea has been suggested that could really help, however men will not love it.

Bek Day

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Treasurer Jim Chalmers has revealed Labor will direct \$1 billion towards accommodation for women and children fleeing domestic violence.

OPINION

In the 12-hour window from 6pm to 6am on a State of Origin game night, women and children in NSW are almost [40 per cent more likely](#) to become the victims of domestic violence, according to research from the Foundation for Alcohol Abuse and Education.

In this 'sporting nation' of ours, where [four out of every five](#) Australians consider sport to be one of the most significant parts of our culture, what happens in the athletic arena is often a microcosm of wider Australian society.

And in Australian society, it is unsafe to be a woman.

This weekend, just a week after AFL clubs donned black armbands and held a minute of silence before their games in Round 8 to take a collective stand against violence against women, players from the Donvale women's footy team ran onto the field to play the second half of a game at Knox Football and Netball Club.

Here, they discovered just how true that statement is. Here, they discovered just how true that statement is.

Male players from the Knox team allegedly stuck out their feet to try and trip the female players as they entered the field, yelling out 'ratings' based on their appearance.

As 3AW's [Jacqui Felgate revealed on air](#) Tuesday morning, "The players were rightly upset but they played out the rest of the game."

"How utterly awful and how utterly exhausting that we're still at the point where women can't play sport without being objectified."

Knox released a statement on Monday with a letter sent by Knox Football and Netball Club president Paul Blair.



Jacqui Felgate was the first to report the incident. Photo: Facebook and Knox Football Club.

"We have extended our deepest apologies to the Donvale Football club, and will continue to work closely with them and the EFNL to keep them informed on the outcome and actions we will take as the rest of our investigation.

"The safety of all players is paramount and we do not tolerate anti-social behaviour or behaviour that is disrespectful to women."

The club on Thursday stood down the entire team while investigations continue.

But it's not just the sporting field where groups of men pose a threat to women.

The outrage comes hot on the heels of a scandal out of elite private school Yarra Valley Grammar, where news broke last week that male students had circulated a list ranking female students from "wifey" to "unrapeable".

It is but the latest in a long line of instances of disturbing behaviour from private schoolboys around the country.

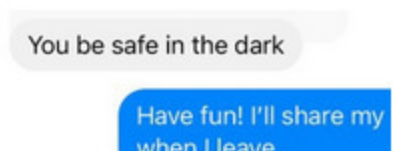
In September 2022, a group of students from Sydney's Knox Grammar [were exposed](#) for sharing sexist, racist, pedophilic and anti-semitic content via a group chat on Discord, much of which was "too graphic" for the Daily Telegraph, which broke the story, to print.

The following month, students from Melbourne all-boys Catholic school, St Bernard's College, were accused of performing the Hitler salute in class, etching swastikas into whiteboards, making a young female teacher feel concerned about her personal safety and simulating anal sex while on a tram.

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A [2021 study from Monash University](#) found female teachers in elite private boys' schools were particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment because of the "status and unique constructs" of these kind of settings.

All of which begs the question: if we have so many examples of the threat posed to women's safety by allowing large groups of males to congregate together, should we be considering limiting their ability to do so?



Would it be best to stop men from congregating? Picture: iStock

In 2014, the controversial Sydney lockdown laws were introduced in response to three coward punch incidents across the preceding two years in which three young men were punched in three unprovoked attacks, all tragically dying from their injuries.

In 2012, "consorting" laws were introduced to tackle what Police claimed was a growing threat by outlaw bikie gangs, making it an offence for members to congregate and "intimidate" in certain places or situations.

Perhaps, given the clear and consistent evidence that aggressive and anti-social behaviour is heightened when men congregate in groups, authorities should be looking at ways to curtail this?

Of course it won't address the sickening number of men who murder women at a rate of more than one per week in this country, or the alarming rate of sexual assaults.

But perhaps it will prevent some of the normalised misogyny so rampant in some of these groups.

Perhaps, without being exposed to the dehumanising of women and other minorities that seems to occur in some groups of men and teenage boys, the portion of those groups who do go on to commit more extreme acts of violence might avoid being radicalised in the first place.

Obviously, the impact on men would be severe.



We're at an unacceptably heightened risk of violence from men. Picture: iStock.

No footy training. No group chats. No rowdy table of mates at pub trivia.

But if, as a man, the idea of your civil liberties being impinged upon in such a profound way rankles, ask yourself: what civil liberties do you believe women should have when we walk out into the world?

Because whether we're doing the shopping on an innocuous Saturday afternoon, walking to our car after dark, playing a game of weekend footy or simply doing our jobs, the truth is inescapable: we're at an unacceptably heightened risk of violence from men.

We duck our heads, we cross the street, we hold our keys in our fists, we smile back (because being 'nice' mistakenly makes us feel a bit safer), we don't make eye-contact, we don't walk alone, we pretend to be on the phone, we pretend to have a boyfriend, we pretend to laugh, we pretend we're not scared.

But we are, and it impinges upon our civil liberties every single day. If we're lucky, that's all it does, but as we well know, many of us don't get away so lightly.

And until men in groups start raising their voices against this abuse, rather than staying silent or worse, crying #notallmen, I'm hard-pressed to think of a reason why this lack of personal freedom should be our burden to carry instead of theirs.



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