

Racism challenged

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ATTACKS on Indians in city streets are not motivated by racism, an academic believes. Rohitas Batta, chairman of student affairs at the United Indian Associations Inc, said he did not believe Indians were the victims of ingrained racism in the community.

"We are getting emails and phone calls reporting around 10 cases of assault and robbery around Harris Park, Westmead and Parramatta train stations every month but these are rarely because of race," Dr Batta said.

"They are attacking all ethnic backgrounds: anyone who looks like a soft target, especially those alone late at night."

Dr Batta does not think the Indian community should feel threatened by racist violence.

"These attacks are committed by a minority of juvenile hooligans," he said. "Australia and particularly Parramatta are very multicultural and tolerant."

Parramatta police crime manager Acting Inspector John Betell also believes the racism claims are unfounded.

"Offences against the Indian community are not specifically targeted and only occur because they are residents of the community," he said.

Inspector Betell said that any high level of robbery and assault on Indians was related to the "high level Indian population" in the Parramatta area.

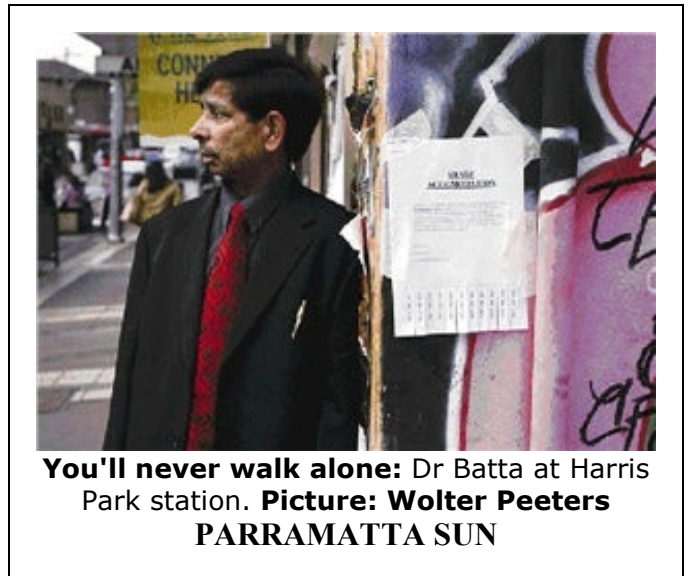
Inspector Betell said that the best way for everyone, including members of the Indian community, to prevent being a target is to take simple precautions.

"If you are walking home especially late at night from the train station don't use things like mobile phones or iPods," Inspector Betell said.

Dr Batta agreed. He said his organisation had been "working closely with police as well as local and state members to prevent attacks".

More Info Read

<http://www.parramattasun.com.au/news/local/news/general/racism-challenged/1535944.aspx>



You'll never walk alone: Dr Batta at Harris Park station. **Picture: Wolter Peeters**
PARRAMATTA SUN



UIA President Mrs Aruna Chandrala and Rohitas Batta, chairman of UIA student affairs