



City Mayor encourages women to walk in groups in an effort to discourage offenders.

Sifting through the usual twitter politics, news and kitten pictures reports of a brutal crime was brought to my attention. One article in particular got my attention.[\[1\]](#)

A young woman survived a particularly horrific rape on a usually busy street in Albury, NSW, Australia. While walking home from work at 6.30 pm, the 17 year old was dragged into bushes and raped at knifepoint. The news article shows photo fit images of those responsible – three young white males. What caught my eye and made me furious was the attitude of Kevin Mack, mayor of Albury.

After stating that the attack was tragic and ‘is not ok’, Mack is reported as saying this;

Cllr Mack encouraged women to walk in groups in an effort to discourage offenders.

“I always have encouraged women not to walk alone, to have someone with them at all times, because that in itself is an invitation for someone to take advantage of you,” he said.

Rape culture is so embedded that many people will consider this to be sound advice. I have seen women commentators saying much the same thing. Indeed, our own mothers tell us this from our being very young children – don’t talk to strangers, be home before dark, stay with your friends. I have spent all of my life avoiding dark alleys, deserted parks, and isolated places.

If you think along the same lines as Kevin Mack you won’t be alone. In a poll commissioned by Amnesty International some years ago an alarming number of people believed that in most cases of rape, the victim’s dress, behaviour, sexual history or consumption of drugs or alcohol will make them culpable to a greater or lesser degree. [\[2\]](#) A quick précis of the dominant attitudes about the young woman raped by footballer Ched Evans provides a shocking demonstration of how women who have been drinking are considered almost incapable of being rape victims...they are seemingly willing participants merely by being drunk.

But the victim in this case was, according to those skewed, misogynist standards, surely ‘innocent’...fully clothed, sober, walking home from a day at work. If a rape victim, as in this case, is not drunk or sexually promiscuous, on what basis is Mack judging her to be ‘inviting’ rape? Under what circumstances would a woman out alone *not* be inviting rape, according to him? In fact, if we take Mack’s attitude to its logical conclusion, women are inviting rape by just existing. We *make* men do it just by being women. The only way we can be safe is by being inaccessible to the poor beguiled rapist, so that he will not dare to attempt to do to us what we naturally *invite* him to do. Just by being women.

It seems that Mack is saying that any woman who goes out unaccompanied is complicit in her attack. Because she invites rape just for being a woman she must therefore provide obstacles to prevent men from raping her. If she doesn’t, she has invited her attacker to rape her. She



has effectively said to him, I'm here, I'm alone, come and get me. So this poor 17 year old girl has, in Mack's mind, asked those three violent rapist men to rape her at knifepoint because she is a woman and because she is was alone. Just take a moment to absorb that.

Imagine a situation where the victim of any other crime is accused of 'inviting' the crime. Imagine the victim of the savage stabbing on the streets of London in 2013 being accused of inviting his politically motivated murder because he was in the armed forces....

"I always have encouraged military personnel to never walk alone as this invites someone to murder them"

Imagine other crimes given the Mack treatment...

"I always have encouraged young men not to go to pubs at weekends as this invites someone to stab them"

"I always have encouraged people not to join the police force as this invites someone to shoot them"

"I always have encouraged people not to own cars as this invites someone to rob them"

"I always have encouraged children not to play outdoors as this invites someone to kidnap and abuse them"

See?

In another interview on the Bordermail[\[3\]](#) website, Mack advised on women's safety saying that they should "never walk alone at night."

Victim blaming aside for a moment, how helpful is the mayor's advice? Would staying off the streets alone at night prevent women being raped and murdered?

Women are raped, assaulted and murdered in all kinds of places and at all times of the day and night; parks, buses, doctor's surgeries, dentist's chairs, their own homes, streets, garages, public toilets, schools, churches, playgrounds, festivals, sports grounds, taxis, gardens, alleyways, waste ground, building sites. I myself was raped in my own bed in daylight. The assumption that rapists only prowl around deserted places at night is not only patently untrue, it contributes to the myth of rapists as anonymous monsters; not the man in bed next to you, not your neighbour or employer, not your priest or doctor, not your father or brother. Not men, but monsters. In the dark. In the park. In actual fact, according to crime data around 90% of rapes are committed by men known to the victim.[\[4\]](#) So....

staying off the streets at night will not prevent 33% of rapes being committed in daytime[\[5\]](#)...

staying indoors at night will not stop 40% of rapes being committed inside the home[\[6\]](#)...



staying away from strangers will not stop 90% of rapes being committed by men known to the victim.^[7]

So what about women being always accompanied? Will this save us from rape and murder?

Jyoti Singh Pandey was travelling in daylight on a public bus with a male friend when she was savagely raped by a gang of men and then thrown from the bus. She died from her injuries....

Two sisters on an aid trip to Gaza were raped in front of their father.

A man raped a woman in front of her family in Fort Wayne, USA...

A man raped women at knifepoint in front of her friends in Bulawayo.

So there is really no safety in numbers. Rapist men will find a way of raping..

There are men who are out at night for all kinds of reasons...walking dogs, jogging, going to work. But there are some who are there for the express purpose of *committing* rape and assault. We can safely say that NO woman is out alone with the intent of *being* raped and/or assaulted or murdered.

Kevin Mack is talking dangerous rubbish. From every perspective what his comments show is a total lack of understanding of rape as a crime against women, of the dominance of rape culture (which he perpetuates), the prevalence of rape mythology (to which he contributes) and the responsibility of men to address their own and each others crimes against women.

^[1] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-30/images-of-men-released-after-teen-raped-at-knifepoint-in-albury/6434346>

*^[2] <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/uk-new-poll-finds-third-people-believe-women-who-flirt-partially-responsible-being>

^[3] <http://www.bordermail.com.au/story/3046710/be-aware-of-safety-mack-urges-walkers/?cs=11>

^[4] Office for National Statistics https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214970/sexual-offending-overview-jan-2013.pdf

^[5] <https://rainn.org/get-information/statistics/sexual-assault-offenders>

^[6] <https://rainn.org/get-information/statistics/sexual-assault-offenders>

^[7] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/an-overview-of-sexual-offending-in-england-and-wales>