



Growth areas link to violence

By **JASON DOWLING**
CITY EDITOR

A LACK of services and planning in some Melbourne growth corridors has created the "perfect storm" for violence, academics and police say.

"If you want to promote violence, definitely build a residential community that has no access to jobs, little access to cheap public transport, little access to cheap housing and then don't provide any community services. I mean that is just a recipe for disaster, but that's actually kind of close to what we are doing," Melbourne University's Dr Carolyn Whitzman said.

A recent Victoria Police submission to a State Government

inquiry concurred. It said poor planning and design could result in "increased levels of social isolation and a decrease in community connectedness, resulting in the potential for a range of social problems including increases in the rates of mental illness, suicide, drug and alcohol use and domestic violence".

Professor Rob Moodie, who recently completed an audit of the city's planning blueprint *Melbourne 2030*, said public transport, sports facilities and services were vitally important for creating healthy and happy communities.

Dr Whitzman, who has written a book on planning, community safety and violence prevention, said Melbourne

growth areas such as Casey and Whittlesea had suffered because of inadequate services.

"If you talk to police officers or family violence co-ordinating committees, you find that there are very high rates of reported family violence in places like Casey and Whittlesea," she said.

Dr Whitzman, who for 10 years worked on integrated planning for violence prevention at the City of Toronto, said domestic and community violence often went hand in hand. "They have some of the same root causes," she said.

Assaults in Victoria rose 6.8% last financial year, attributable to family violence incidents and assaults in the street, police have reported.



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Police (above) apprehend a man in the city early yesterday morning. BELOW: A crowd forms outside CQ club, which has had a voluntary lockout since the start of the year. PICTURES JOSEPH FEL