



## Passengers of carjacking attempt shaken

November 3, 2007 - 8:14AM

A violent attack on a car by a group of African men in Melbourne's inner city has left a young female driver and her male passenger distraught and shaken.

Joy Bennett, 21, who lives in Melbourne's outer east, said she felt terrified when about 10 African men surrounded the car as she waited to turn at a Carlton intersection about 6.45pm (AEDT) on Friday.

It was the first of two attacks at the corner of Rathdowne Street and Alexandra Parade in 10 minutes.

In the first attack, the group started kicking the vehicle, throwing bricks and punching passenger, Ms Bennett's housemate Josh Winnell, 24, through an open window.

"I was terrified," a tearful Ms Bennett told reporters in Melbourne.

"I had absolutely no idea what was happening. I didn't know what they wanted. This doesn't happen, not in real life," she said.

"When the guy was at my window with the brick I thought he was going to throw it through the window and get me as well, and I was scared they were going to get Josh out of the car.

"They were just pulling at him and trying to punch him."

Mr Winnell, the father of a three-week-old baby, said he was "pretty shaken" by the attack.

"I was just scared. I remember them trying to grab me and punch me and that was it. I was in shock. I just wanted to get out of there," he said.

The group had thrown a brick through the rear passenger window and another object through the rear windscreen.

A rock was recovered by police from a baby seat in the back of the car. Mr Winnell's baby was not in the car at the time.

Police have described the attack as random and brazen.

Detective Senior Constable James Midgley said the incident bore the marks of an attempted carjacking.

"It's a very random and brazen attack at a major intersection in peak hour," he said.

There was no evidence the group of African men was a gang, Det Sen Const Midgley said.

"There's nothing to indicate it's a gang. Carlton has a large African community and it appears to be a random attack," he said.

In the second attack, five minutes later at the same intersection, a man was told to get out of his car.

When he refused the group began to kick his car and tried to smash the driver's side window.

The man managed to drive off before any further damage was done.