



Centre *for* Dialogue
— A Centre of La Trobe University —



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Introducing the Discussion Papers

Australia is, by virtue of its history and its geography, a multi-ethnic, multi-faith society. Many Australian residents were not born in Australia and many more have parents who were born overseas. Our own Muslim population is now well in excess of 300,000. In addition, all of Australia's nearest neighbours are societies whose cultures and religions are strikingly different from the Anglo-Celtic mainstream of Australian society. Our two nearest Asian neighbours, Indonesia and Malaysia, have large Muslim majorities. Many Indonesians and Malaysians now live in Australia, and we host large numbers of students from these and other Southeast Asian countries. Finally, an increasing number of Australian citizens have to visit these countries, whether for study, business or pleasure. Australians have therefore no option but to learn to live harmoniously and co-operatively across the cultural and religious divide.

In recent years, and particularly since September 11, Australian multiculturalism has been severely tested. In Australia, as in many other parts of the Western world, sharp tensions have arisen with the Muslim world – not just with Muslim governments and political movements but with our own Muslim minority. Since September 11 there has been a noticeable increase in reported instances of harassment and culturally offensive behaviour and language aimed at Muslims generally. The difficulties and tensions that have arisen in our treatment of refugees and asylum seekers are in part related to widely held perceptions of and attitudes to Islam.

We face, then, a critical need for informed public discussion. The aims of this dialogue are: to ask how tensions have arisen, to identify the factors which are contributing to mistrust and suspicion, and to establish the necessary conditions for trust, mutual respect, dialogue and co-operation. We have come to appreciate the need for such informed discussion through a combination of factors and sources:

- The research that we have been doing at La Trobe University over the last six years;
- The experiences of Muslim communities in Australia over the last few years – as reported to a number of Muslim organisations (several of which are partners with the Centre for Dialogue);
- Reports produced by such bodies as the Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria;
- Changes in public rhetoric and media comment, which have deeply troubled community organisations striving for a harmonious and creative multi-ethnic and multi-faith society;
- The findings of the one-year pilot project, 'Promoting Inter-Cultural Dialogue in Victoria: A Pilot Project', jointly funded by the La Trobe University Collaborative Grant, the Uniting Church, the Reichstein Foundation and Niwano Peace Foundation (a report of this project is available on request).

As a contribution to public debate, the Centre for Dialogue at La Trobe University (officially launched in August 2006) is publishing three interrelated discussion papers that explore Australian government, media and community reaction to tensions between Islam and the West since September 11. The three papers address several key questions: How has the Australian government responded to international conflict? How has international conflict impacted on Australia's relations with its Muslim neighbours, on its immigration and refugee policies, and on community relations within Australia? How have the media handled community relations, and in particular the tensions which have arisen during these difficult times? How have Australia's Muslim communities, especially in Victoria, responded to these events and to government policies? What are the possibilities for more effective consultation and dialogue involving governments at Federal and State level, Muslim and other religious and ethnic communities, the media and the wider community?

These three papers, including this paper authored by Dr George Myconos, address some if not all of these questions. They offer a necessarily selective overview of a complex and contentious set of issues. While not endorsing the particular views of any of the authors, the Centre is pleased to publish these papers in the hope that the analysis they contain as well as their key findings and recommendations will stimulate informed and constructive dialogue.

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ABSTRACT

This discussion paper looks at how sections of the Australian media have represented Islamic and Middle Eastern communities in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terror attacks, and then during what has come to be known as the 'war on terror'. Focusing mainly on print and radio coverage, it considers examples of such media coverage, and the ways in which reporting and editorializing can contribute to an atmosphere of intimidation and fear for the above mentioned communities. However, the paper is less concerned with the occasional wilful attempt to denigrate Islamic and Middle Eastern communities than it is with showing how routine news coverage can have the unintended effect of causing distress. This is illustrated through a discussion of contextual factors bearing on media professionals – as well as their audiences – and the way in which such factors can result in negative portrayals of Islamic and Middle Eastern people. The paper highlights the need for those working in the media and Islamic and Middle Eastern communities to take steps to reduce their estrangement. To this end, a range of recommendations are made that address questions of empathy, accuracy in reporting, stereotyping, cultural awareness, professional training and personal encounters, effective use of regulatory regimes and the involvement of third party bodies as advisors and/or facilitators in relations between the communities and media professionals.

Perceptions of Islamic and Middle Eastern People in Australian Media: Scope for Improvement

By George Myconos

INTRODUCTION

This discussion paper looks at how sections of the Australian media have represented Islamic and Middle Eastern communities in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terror attacks, and then during what has come to be known as the ‘war on terror’. It will consider examples of such media coverage, and the ways in which reporting and editorializing can contribute to an atmosphere of intimidation and fear for the above mentioned communities. The paper will make recommendations for improvements to the way our media inform audiences of the communities in question. It will also make recommendations to communities seeking to improve relations with those working in the media. Ultimately, the paper will emphasize the need for those working in the media, as well as those of Islamic and Middle Eastern communities, to take steps to reduce their estrangement, and to also guard against external pressures that can hinder mutual understanding.

We must at the outset underline the importance of the issues raised in this discussion paper. Why do we need to dwell on the way in which the Muslim communities, and those of Middle Eastern background in general, have been represented in Australia’s media? The short answer is that many people in these communities are distressed: significant numbers feel humiliated, marginalized, fearful, and under siege. Of course, ‘the media’ *per se* cannot be held responsible for this distress. But when considered as a whole it does play an important role in expressing the views of a range of influential people, and in many ways helps to shape our culture and society’s attitudes. Significantly, the media, collectively, represents for many Muslims and people of Middle Eastern background, an important “site of racism”.¹ Indeed, if anyone should doubt the need for such a discussion they might refer to accounts provided by people of Islamic faith and Middle Eastern background to a recent Human Rights and Equal Opportunity report.² Below are a few of their reflections on their post September 11 2001 experiences in Australia.

Myself and my husband since September [11th] have been abused in the city square several times and in one instance a man threw rocks at us and cut my niece’s face.³

1 Scott Poynting, and Greg Noble., 2004. *Living with Racism: The experience and reporting by Arab and Muslim Australians of discrimination, abuse and violence since 11 September 2001*, (Report to HREOC), from the Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney., p. 7.

2 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). 2004. *Ismae-Listen: National Consultations on Eliminating Prejudice Against Arab and Muslim Australians*, Canberra

3 *Ibid.*, p 48.

[A woman in Perth described how a man set his three dogs on her] Luckily I had an umbrella to defend myself. The man just watched then a driver stopped and screamed so the man called the dogs back. I asked for his name but he walked away.⁴

My aunty was walking on the street in Granville and this guy drives past in his car and threw stones at her and she fell to the ground and was lying on the ground and after a while a stranger came by and then she was taken to hospital. That happened right after September 11...she's not a Muslim either.⁵

I was picking up my children from the local Islamic school at Broadmeadows and on the way home a lady tried to run me off the road. She followed me home and then when I was in my driveway, I was getting the kids out of the car and the lady threw a can at my daughter who is 12 years old. She then came up the driveway and physically assaulted my daughter and grabbed her very hard and continued to shout at her...The woman yelled things like "We'll fix you, you nappy heads" and "Get the f... out of our country you f...ing terrorists". The whole time the neighbour was watching. She called my daughter a 'slut' many times also.⁶

Since September 11, we [Sule College] used to get threatening calls once or twice. I mean they were seriously disturbing. Because there are lots of children, you take everything, even the tiniest threat seriously, even if it was a joke. So, we did take certain precautions and now we have security guards 24 hours a day, and it's been like that since September 11 to have someone guarding until 11 o'clock in the school, which makes us feel safer.⁷

I got off the train and headed towards the elevators as my bag is too heavy to carry up the stairs. After I had gotten out of the elevator I heard a blonde, Caucasian woman screaming to such an extent it literally stopped the peak hour pedestrian traffic at the station. I would have estimated it was approximately 40 to 50 persons. She was screaming at the top of her lungs, "I am going to rip that scarf of your head and smash your bag over the top of head, smash it in".⁸

One time I was sitting on the tram ... I was going to the city to pay a bill, and the veiled woman was sitting by herself. There were two Australians that were eating sandwiches, and I'm positive it was on purpose, they started spitting food out of their mouths at her. The poor thing looked like she was a non-English speaker because she said to them "Don't rubbish, No rubbish". They only started laughing and continued spitting on her.⁹

I think the media is the main cause because kids are picking on Muslims at school and these kids get it from their parents and their parents get it from the media.¹⁰

The final comment points to what many suspect is a link between how Muslims and those of the Middle East are described in important sections of the media, and the degree to which they are accepted into Australian society. The extent to which we can speak of a causal relationship informs the discussion to come.

Before commencing, a word or two the author's approach may be useful. From the outset we need to identify what 'the media' comprises in the context of this discussion paper. Because of space constraints I have chosen to limit the study to reports and commentary produced by the mainstream print and some radio outlets. This is not to deny the importance of television or, for that matter, the more recent media such as

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*, p 50.

8 *Ibid.*, p 54

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*, pp 64-65.

weblogs and webcasting. To fully appreciate the impact of television, for instance, one would need to adopt a method which somehow captured that medium's fleeting and ephemeral nature. Such an undertaking is beyond the scope of this paper, and I seek only to make manageable a study that, in ideal circumstances, would be vast in scope.

I also adopt here a generalist's approach. The paper relies mainly on vignettes and scattered commentaries from print and radio that help shed light on some problems. The accounts included in this paper are chosen, in the first instance, because they appeared in outlets that are influential in Australia. This influence may not only derive from circulation or listening audience figures, but also from the relevant organization's privileged or exclusive access to key audiences. These accounts were also chosen because they represent the views of Anglo-Saxon opinion makers. The focus is placed on such mainstream commentators because it is through them that we can best gauge the mood of the 'dominant' culture in general. And it is change detected within this section of the media that might be regarded indicative of more profound shifts in the way Muslims and those of Middle Eastern communities are regarded.

At this point some important qualifying statements are in order. I do not suggest that the mainstream media outlets necessarily repress or deny the voices of spokespeople for Islamic and Middle Eastern communities, or of those writing in sympathy with these communities. On the contrary, there are a number of such spokespeople who frequently feature on the opinion pages of Australia's tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, and who are heard and seen in the electronic media.¹¹ In addition, even though most of the examples used in this paper are of the more negative and troubling commentary and reporting, this is not to deny the existence of sophisticated, even-handed, and nuanced depictions of Muslims and Middle Eastern communities in Australia. Indeed, as Akberzadeh and Smith point out, articles often appear that

distinguish between 'extremist' and 'moderate' modes of Islam...[and] that allow readers to learn about Muslim individuals and Islamic culture more generally. [Such] articles portray Muslim children, women and men as part of Australian culture, as family oriented, anti-terrorist and good Australian citizens....[and] the normal, stable and sociality of Australian Muslims.¹²

Similarly, important mainstream radio presenters have gone to considerable lengths to provide thoughtful insights into Australia's Islamic and Middle Eastern communities. For example, a notable initiative was sponsored by the ABC Melbourne Morning Program – presented by Jon Faine – and entailed broadcasting live from the King Khalid Islamic College of Victoria (25 November 2006). Throughout the broadcast the presenter and the guests explored the diversity of the Islamic community, as well as the tensions and commonalities in inter- and intra- community relations.

All this reminds us that studies of this kind are fraught with difficulties, which is hardly surprising given the complex nature of the 'media'. Media organizations are

11 These include community leaders, journalists, scholars, and commentators such as Waleed Aly, Sushu Das, Yasser Soliman, Malcolm Thomas, Joseph Wakim, Dr Ameer Ali, Ms Aziza Abdel-Halim, Sharam Akberzadeh, Aimin Saikal, and Abdullah Saeed.

12 See Shahram Akbarzadeh and Bianca Smith. 2005. *The Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Media* (The Age and Herald Sun Newspapers). Melbourne: Monash University. Samples of 'positive counter-constructions' are cited on page 35 of their report.

driven by often conflicting, yet legitimate, interests and aims: providing entertainment, enabling heated and polemical debate, providing measured analysis, and thoughtful reflection. In other words, editorialists, columnists, pundits, polemicists, news reporters, investigative journalists, news readers, talk-back hosts, and entertainers are all serving specific functions that make comparisons very fraught. It is important then to emphasize that I do not set out to compare media outlets. The commentary referred to varies in style according not only to the kind of publication or radio outlet it emanates from, but also according to the role of the presenter/writer within their respective organizations. In sum, these qualifying remarks serve to highlight the complexity of such a study, and to emphasize the need for caution when making judgments when reviewing the role of media.

Nonetheless, we should not be deterred from asking important questions about our media. What should we expect of those working in media organizations? What demands can we reasonably make of them *vis-à-vis* representations of unfamiliar cultures? At the very least it is reasonable to suggest that society is entitled to media that pay due regard to the effects of reporting and commentary. More than this, those working in the media must acknowledge that in some respects they contribute to the distress experienced by religious and ethnic communities represented, and that it is important that steps are taken to ease that distress. Such steps are outlined at the conclusion of this paper.

I suggest that it is impossible to fully appreciate the way in which Muslims and people of Middle Eastern origin are portrayed and analyzed in news reports without understanding some of the pressures that bear on newsmakers and their audiences. To illustrate this we approach the subject from the vantage point of three ‘contexts’, and see how these contexts affect the way audiences come to understand these communities. These contexts entail pressures and influences that are ever present, but rarely mentioned in discussions about the depiction of Muslims and people of the Middle East. The first of our contexts highlights the importance of doctrines and approaches that have come to shape the way the media as a whole is structured, and the way in which our intellectual traditions have shaped our understanding of today’s news coverage, as this relates to peoples of Islamic and Middle Eastern backgrounds. The second context stresses the importance of the global political environment when considering the Australian media’s coverage of domestic affairs. This means examining how feature articles, editorials, and daily news reportage on Australian Muslims may be affected by distant but internationally significant events. The final context draws attention to more immediate factors specific to Australia that can influence how Muslims and people of Middle Eastern origin generally are perceived within our society. It is at this level that we can reasonably expect those in the media to exercise greater awareness and sensitivity about the way careless reporting can adversely affect the communities in question.

CONTEXT ONE: ABSTRACT INFLUENCES ON NEWS REPORTING

The first set of factors that affect our understanding of Muslims and people of Middle Eastern origin can be characterized as highly elusive, yet critically important to news coverage and interpretation. These are not tangible or quantifiable, yet play an important role in shaping news and its interpretation.

Though we do not dwell here on the importance of market forces and the homogenization of global culture, there is no denying that endless trivialization and novelty have become important features of media coverage.¹³ The word ‘infotainment’ captures the way in which complex events and relationships are presented in both electronic and print media. Integral to this is the way in which violent images have become a very convenient and profitable commodity – it is, after all true that subtitles are unnecessary for car chases or gun fights – in a worldwide market dominated by a handful of media conglomerates. This highly abstracted context is also shaped by very powerful advertising and public relations firms whose principal aim is to shape audiences’ perceptions of the world. Finally, this contextual setting is also shaped by a range of dominant worldviews, ideologies, or dogmas: neo-liberalism, anti-Semitism, and various manifestations of racism, might all figure here.

Relevant to our discussion is the mindset that has gradually developed within the Western tradition often referred to as *Orientalism*.¹⁴ In Orientalist thinking the Orient is conceived as a semi-mythical geographic and collective entity, and the Oriental as a semi-mythical character-type. It is then but a simple move to attach to them particular characteristics which are typically negative and which set them (Orientals) against, and in contrast to, Westerners (those of the Occident). At their worst these “demeaning generalizations”¹⁵ evoke exoticism, threat, violence, backwardness, and deviousness on the part of Arab or Muslim – those peoples of the Orient.

Many believe that this conception has over time become the lens through which all aspects of social, political, and cultural life in the Middle East and parts of Asia are viewed and understood. This mode of thought has historically served an important political function. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European – particularly British and French – explorers, imperial administrators, scholars, artists, and novelists were engaged in the colonial, ‘civilizing’, enterprise, and their view of the ‘Oriental mind’ was accorded the status of ‘true’ knowledge. Media specialists who have turned their attention to the way Muslims and Arabic people are portrayed argue that Orientalism remains a powerful determining factor.¹⁶ By this they mean that the Islamic world continues to be depicted as a site of social and cultural stagnation, unrestrained violence and hostility, one in which Westerners must intervene if order and civility are to take root. To paraphrase Peter Manning, a leading Australian media analyst, all this is relevant to our media because Australia has imbibed a “double dose” of this framework of understanding: first, by virtue of our strong support for Great Britain in its colonialist expansion in the early twentieth century (campaigns against the Ottoman empire are especially relevant here); and then by virtue of our strong support for American foreign policy in the Middle East since the mid-twentieth century. This susceptibility to the Orientalist mindset has been exacerbated by Australia’s reliance on Western news sources.

Here it is worth stressing that Orientalist representations are seldom motivated by a calculated intent to denigrate. It is not necessarily a matter of bias, lack of ethics or

13 Appendix 1 provides a glimpse of the Australian media ownership landscape and underscores the importance of the concentration of ownership. It is important to keep in mind that the Australian commercial print media setting is one of the most concentrated ownership regimes in the Western world. By its very nature reflects the worldviews associated with a particular social, economic, and cultural milieu: this can be characterized as the view of the affluent ‘west’.

14 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

15 *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

16 Refer to Manning, Poynting, Klocker, and Dunne cited throughout this text.

laziness on the part of editors, foreign correspondents or local reporters. Rather the distortions are “structurally present [and not] a case of ill-intent”.¹⁷ In this sense, they are a product of cultural assumptions, ideas and representations of Islam and Muslims. Nevertheless, despite the absence of any malicious intent there sometimes results inadequate coverage inferring that Islamic people and those of the Middle East in general are inclined towards violence. Mughrabi coins the term “handy Islamic template” in his attempt to show the extent to which the Orientalist mindset pervades media coverage in Australia. With tongue in cheek, Mughrabi considers:

[H]ow much easier it has become to understand the myriad political situations between Morocco and Indonesia, or Nigeria and Chechnya since September 11 2001. Gone are the tiresome days of having to study each country and its historical and social circumstances, its language and thought, before you can write authoritatively about it. You just whip out your handy Islamic template and presto: everything falls into place.¹⁸

By this account Islam is understood as a catch-all category that in the minds of most subsumes political, social, cultural, and ethnic divisions. In the light of this, the following headlines now seem less benign than at first glance

'Reform Islam here', *The Herald-Sun*, 21 October, 2002, p. 19. (A. Bolt)

'Gutless evil that stalks our shores', *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 October, 2002, p. 20. (M. Farr)

'Enemy at every gate', *The Australian*, 15 September, 2001, p. 24. (P. Kelly)

'The Islamic front is at our back door', *The Australian*, 19 October, 2002, p. 30. (P. Kelly)

While all this may imply nothing more than complacency on the part of those ‘covering Islam’, it is important because in the contemporary context it can affirm a common and demeaning generalization of the Islamic world as inherently violent and chaotic. Indeed, it is now commonplace to regard terrorism as inextricably linked to, if not synonymous with, Islam. Media commentary frequently stresses this link: indeed, coverage of suicide bombing in particular has inferred that such actions are unique to those radicals claiming to represent Islam in a holy war against the West. This reading “presumes that suicide terrorism is mainly the product of an evil ideology known as “Islamic fundamentalism”, and that this ideology would produce campaigns of suicide terrorism wherever it exists and regardless of our military policies”.¹⁹ The following account from an Australian Muslim citizen sums up the effect of this mindset:

After September 11, Bali and the Iraq war we are treated like terrorists... Even Muslims who have been part of this country for many years all of a sudden were no longer treated as part of this country²⁰

The importance of certain catchwords, phrases, *clichés* and constructions of meaning can not be understated. Common phrases linking the Islamic faith with violence include: ‘Muslim terror’, ‘radical Islamic group’, ‘fundamentalist Islamic terrorists’. Even though these are to some extent accurate, they are harmful because

17 *Ibid.*, p. 3

18 Maher Mugharabi, 'Confused About Islam? Get Your Hit', *The Age*, 17 November, 2005, p. 19.

19 Robert Pape, 'Why the bombers are so angry at us', *The Age*, 23 July, 2005, p. 9.

20 HREOC Report 2004, *op.cit.*, p 14

they affirm the assumption that Muslims are a homogenous grouping, and that Muslims everywhere are prone to violence and extremism.

Complacency sometimes manifests in the use of words that deny the validity of one community's concerns. For example, in the Palestine-Israel conflict Western media outlets routinely refer to the 'occupied territories' as 'disputed territories', Israel's border 'wall' as a 'fence', and its colonies in the occupied territories as 'settlements' or 'neighborhoods'. Moreover, terrorism itself has come to be understood as a form of violence only "directed against particular kinds of states, namely western or pro-western states".²¹ That this inference has attained the status of common sense throughout the media may be testimony to the extent to which the Orientalist mindset has permeated mainstream commentary.

To recapitulate then, the above context is important because it highlights not only what is said of Muslims and people of Middle Eastern background, but also what is not said. That is, it attunes us to the way in which certain concerns and perspectives are devalued – intentionally or otherwise – and how comfortable stereotypes are embedded into commentators' interpretations of events. An awareness of this context also highlights the fact that problems associated with reporting on Muslims and people of Middle Eastern background pre-date the attacks of 11 September 2001; and that when considering reporting on these communities we must be aware of what is omitted from, as well as what appears in, the news report.

CONTEXT TWO: IMPORTANT EVENTS THAT ARE AT A REMOVE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN SETTING

The second context takes into account distant events; those of great historical moment for the world as a whole. Examples that might be considered as distant events and influences include the recent terrorist attacks on New York, Bali, Madrid and London. They may also include the refugee exodus following the Afghanistan and Iraq occupations, as well as the continuing upheavals in relations between Palestinians and Jewish communities in and beyond Israel. Depictions and understandings of Muslim and Middle Eastern communities in Australia can also be shaped by the nature of great power rivalry and alliance politics: whether related to such issues as the Cold War, the Iranian revolution, or Israel's security. And finally, globalization itself may also shape how 'outsiders' are considered: this is especially so if we think of the anxiety and estrangement that it seems to create for many in society.

Interpretation in Australian media of these distant events is relevant because any understanding of how peoples of the Islamic faith or of Middle Eastern origin are portrayed must take into account the atmosphere in which such commentary arises. Indeed, it can be argued that the wider geo-strategic environment constitutes for many working in media organizations the main lens through which local Muslim communities are regarded.

All this is important because most contemporary Australian images of Muslims and the Islamic world come from international news sources covering a wide range of disputes in the region, most notably the Israel-Palestine conflict. Indeed, traditionally

²¹ Peter Manning., 2003. 'Arabic and Muslim People in Sydney's Daily Newspapers, before and after September 11', *Media International Australia* incorporating *Culture and Policy*, no. 109 (November), p 54.

the Arab-Israeli conflict has been the principal international political context that has shaped Australian popular perceptions of what it means to be an Arab or a Muslim. In this conflict journalists' words and interpretations set the tone in public relations war waged by both sides.²²

The terror attacks on New York and Washington in September 2001 were undoubtedly the most significant media event in recent memory. These and subsequent attacks across the world, including in Madrid, Bali and London, and the US-led response to them, have dominated world politics since 2001. While not always immediately obvious, the use of 'loaded' language in news reporting has been a critical factor in how those events have been understood, and also in how decision makers choose to respond.

In viewing the September 2001 attacks on their country as an 'act of war', US leaders necessarily embraced the 'logic of war'. That decision determined not only the nature of the response, but of the language used to depict the 'enemy'. Imposing a war frame allowed the administration to emphasize in its policy and media statements a number of fundamental precepts typically associated with war: national unity; the subordination of individual rights to the public interest; and an extraordinary concentration of power in the hands of the commander-in-chief. This approach relied on a construction of insider and outsider, and friend and foe. In relation to the 'war on terror', for example, the war frame thus negated the claims of those in the community and in the media speaking on behalf of millions of Muslim Afghans with a life-or-death stake in the administration's decision to invade Afghanistan. This inevitably provided both a context and a language for relevant sections of the Australian media when they interpreted events and the antecedents of the conflict.

The use of the 'war frame' was an important factor influencing many within the mainstream Australian media (journalists, commentators and editorialists alike). It meant that many in the media were unwilling to reflect critically on the Bush administration's response. The language and logics of war were widely, almost reflexively, embraced by many across the Australian media landscape. This was apparent in the media outlets of News Ltd. Two editorials in *The Australian* immediately following the 11 September attacks paint the picture. On 14 September, the paper's editors declared, "War has been declared on terrorism – and those who do not answer the call to duty will be exposed as part of the problem,"²³ and followed on 18 September with, "People in the US and other like-minded countries must accept the war footing and be prepared to revisit personal rights when security has been re-established as best it can."²⁴

The Australian's specialist commentators, Paul Kelly and Greg Sheridan, also accepted the war frame logic. On 15 September, Kelly wrote: "The US is at war," and asserted that: "this war is easy to see but difficult to comprehend."²⁵ Greg Sheridan, foreign editor of *The Australian*, has been a prominent supporter of a 'war on terror'. Following the 11 September attacks he argued forcefully in favour of war. On 13 September 2001 Sheridan wrote of the US response in *The Australian*: "Retaliation is

22 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

23 'War on terror tests resolve of all nations (editorial opinion)', *The Australian*, 14 September, 2001, p. 18.

24 'War on terror requires time, resolve and sacrifice (editorial opinion)', *The Australian*, 18 September, 2001, p. 18.

25 Paul Kelly, 'Enemy at every gate', *The Australian*, 15 September, 2001, p. 24.

inevitable”²⁶. While it is clear that a US response was inevitable, to presuppose military retaliation on the scale that occurred suggests Sheridan’s uncritical acceptance of the Washington view that the terror attacks did indeed constitute an ‘act of war’.

The bombing in Bali in October 2002 was the second major international event of recent times to bear upon the Australian media’s understanding of Australian Muslims and citizens of Middle Eastern background. The Bali attacks shocked Australia and brought home to many the need to engage in a global ‘war on terror’. Journalists and media commentators, particularly in the News Ltd press, dubbed the event “our September 11”.²⁷ Just as the Bush administration, its spokespeople, and most of the Western media, had done one year earlier, influential Australian commentators embraced the war frame reasoning.²⁸

Greg Sheridan and Paul Kelly again drew heavily on logics of war in their responses to the Bali bombings, as did Andrew Bolt of *The Herald-Sun*.²⁹ On 14 October 2002, Sheridan wrote in *The Australian*: “The terrorist empire has struck back”, arguing that “the war on terror has moved decisively into stage two now the enemy has retaliated.”³⁰ His imagery became even more vivid when on 17 October he argued that for Australia “terrorism is an existential threat” and that the country was now engaged in a war for its very survival.³¹ Similarly, Paul Kelly claimed that “Australia and its people [were] involved in war.”³² In the wake of the Bali attacks, Malcolm Farr of *The Daily Telegraph*, another News Ltd publication, applauded the government’s decision “to join the US-led war on terrorism”.³³ Errol Simper was the lone voice in the News Ltd stable, chastising the mainstream Australian media for its desire to “colonise part of September 11” in the search for saleable news coverage, and its overly uncritical acceptance of the political frameworks presented by Bush and Howard, in effect “letting the politicians run with the terrorism story.”³⁴

While large sections of the Australian media were responding to the aftermath of the Bali bombing, the question of possible war against Iraq was an ever-present item in media coverage of the broader international political environment. Greg Sheridan was once again a vocal commentator who linked the ‘war on terrorism’ with the ‘problem of Iraq’. In the period leading to the Iraq war in 2003, and afterwards, critics observed that Sheridan committed to the now discredited thesis linking a presumed arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, Iraq’s expansionist intent, and the link between the Hussein regime and Al Qaeda. Sheridan was dismissive of those who questioned America’s motives. Indeed, he is portrayed in Robert Manne’s research as a cheer leader for the Bush administration, his critical faculties mitigated by an awe of

26 Greg Sheridan, ‘US should now take careful aim’, *The Australian*, 13 September, 2001, p 19.

27 The Editors, ‘From tragedy springs the pride’, *The Herald-Sun*, 18 October, 2002, p. 20, The Editors, ‘The lesson of the Bali bombings’, *The Age*, 14 October, 2002, p. 14.

28 John Gersman, ‘Is Southeast Asia the Second Front?’ *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 4 (July/August 2002), pp. 6-75.

29 Andrew Bolt, ‘No going back now’, *The Herald-Sun*, 14 October, 2002, p. 21.

30 Greg Sheridan, ‘A threat we ignore at our peril’, *The Australian*, 14 October, 2002, p. 11.

31 Greg Sheridan, ‘The nation we love must face the threat, and fight’, *The Australian*, 17 October, 2002, p. 13.

32 Paul Kelly, ‘The Islamic front is at our back door’, *The Australian*, 19 October, 2002, p. 30.

33 Malcolm Farr, ‘Gutless evil that stalks our shores’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 October, 2002, p. 20.

34 Errol Simper, ‘Tragedy calls for a responsible media’, *The Australian*, 17 October, 2002, p. 33.

US military capability.³⁵ Manne's analysis of the News Ltd coverage of conflict in Iraq presents a critical account of the organization's news coverage. His research shows that the editorial stance of each of that corporation's 175 newspapers worldwide echoed the views of its proprietor, and strongly supported the West's justifications for invasion.³⁶ Manne's criticism is important because it resonates with the earlier claims of Orientalism's continuing relevance: these suggested a historical tendency on the part of Australian leaders and opinion makers to look upon the Middle East as a perennial war zone, and to also defer to the judgments of great powers looking to assert their authority in the region. Manne's critique is also important because it reminds us once more of the significance of having so few media proprietors dominating a domestic market.

The News Ltd stable of newspapers were strident on a range of issues that, in their own way, helped to justify the US invasions of Afghanistan and then Iraq. According to *The Australian's* editorials there was no doubt as to the existence of weapons of mass destruction; nor was there any doubt as to Saddam Hussein's expansionist intent;³⁷ nor of the need for pre-emptive military action. These assumptions were considered self evident truths, and those who questioned them were regarded not only as deluded, but guilty of the more serious crime of appeasement. Andrew Bolt of *The Herald Sun* was also a supporter of military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq. He is noteworthy because of his combative style, and because of his eagerness to incorporate into his commentary attacks on his ideological rivals. Thus, for Bolt the 'left-wing' reticence in relation to military intervention is tantamount to appeasement to despotism, and a sign of hypocrisy and indifference to the suffering of torture victims.³⁸ He is also noteworthy for his persistent demands that Islamic communities and their leaders do more "to fight militant Islam in our own country".³⁹

While News Ltd newspapers have attracted most of the criticism for bias in favour of the US – and, by implication, for their ethnocentrism – their more moderate counterparts have also been criticized. While the leading commentator from Fairfax's newspaper *The Age* – International Editor, Tony Parkinson – did not initially accept the notion that terror attacks reflected an 'act of war' against the US or Australia or the West in general,⁴⁰ his position on Iraq was firmly pro-war. As the war in Iraq approached, Parkinson argued forcefully that there existed a link between war on Iraq and global Islamist terrorism:

Saddam's regime and Osama bin Laden are co-authors of a violent and vindictive narrative for the Arab and Islamic worlds. Left to fester, it represents a fundamental challenge to liberal democratic principles and global security. This is why the war on Iraq is part of the war on terror.⁴¹

35 Robert Manne, 'Murdoch and the War on Iraq' in Robert Manne, ed., *Do Not Disturb* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2005), p. 83.

36 With the exception – for a time – of the *Hobart Mercury*.

37 Manne, 'Murdoch and the War on Iraq' in *op. cit.*, p. 79.

38 Andrew Bolt, 'Mourn, don't blame', *The Herald-Sun*, 17 October, 2002, p. 19.

39 Andrew Bolt, 'Reform Islam here', *The Herald-Sun*, 21 October, 2002, p. 19. See also, Bolt's article 'Our Islamic leaders must show more spine', 8 September, 2003.

40 In his early commentary, Parkinson avoided using the phrase 'war on terror', except in reference to the statements of others, preferring to adopt the formula 'international coalition against terror'. See, for example, Tony Parkinson, 'What could be done...' *The Age*, 17 October, 2001, p. 10, Tony Parkinson, 'US must hold its nerve', *The Age*, 1 November, 2001, p. 17.

41 Tony Parkinson, 'When opposition to the war goes one step too far', *The Age*, 2 April, 2003, p. 19.

In the context of this paper, what is most important about all this commentary is that our understanding of how peoples of the Islamic faith or of Middle Eastern origin are treated across the media must take into account the context in which most commentary arises. Put differently, the wider political circumstances have a significant effect on influential sections of the media and this, in turn, bears directly on how those of unfamiliar cultures are treated in our society. The aforementioned commentators play very important roles in determining the nature of this atmosphere. In sum, media commentators' – and, consequently, the community's – understanding of related issues takes place against a background of heated and often spiteful exchanges where crisis is an ever present ingredient.

Of course, it would be unwise to make judgments about the entire media community in Australia on the basis of these brief samples.⁴² This is especially so when we acknowledge that those cited are engaged to provide opinion – that is their brief. Though the media personalities mentioned above are among the most influential commentators in the country, they may not be representative. However, they are important because they – and those that constitute the print media in general – tend to set the daily agenda for the electronic news media. This is critical because a large proportion of the Australian audience draw much of their news and current affairs commentary during the day from radio, particularly from the more prominent Sydney and Melbourne 'talk back' programs.

CONTEXT THREE: IMMEDIATE AND DOMESTIC EVENTS

We have so far considered media coverage of these communities against two important contexts: the context of more abstract influences such as traditional ways of viewing Islam, and the context of distant, global, political factors. In the light of that discussion, it is reasonable to assume that these factors also affect the way in which news is subsequently interpreted by audiences. The final part of the analysis brings into view a third important context. This is the context that encompasses very immediate, domestic, and recent events. This context includes factors that are, more or less, specific to the Australian situation. There are many such considerations that affect the way in which Muslims and people of Middle Eastern origin are portrayed in local media, but two are of particular relevance: recent election campaigns, and Australia's version of the 'culture wars'.

Recent elections in Australia have been particularly acrimonious and have placed considerable pressure on leaders to prove their commitment to protecting the Australian people from external threats. They have entailed intense competition between the major parties for the support of the disaffected working class and rural constituencies. More recently they entailed fierce competition between the Liberal National Party Coalition, the One Nation Party, and the Labor Party for the support of those who were most anxious about race, immigration, globalization, and the decline of Australia's manufacturing sector.

Australia's culture wars have also provided an important background to how news about Muslims and people of the Middle East is made and interpreted. These debates have centered on how and to what extent national unity should be promoted, which

42 As Akbarzadeh and Smith have shown, crude Islamophobic reporting is rare, at least in the Victorian context.. See Shahram Akbarzadeh and Bianca Smith. 2005. *The Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Media (The Age and Herald Sun newspapers)*. Melbourne: Monash University.

foundation myths and legends should be celebrated and taught in schools, what constitutes an authentic, pure, Australian identity, what kind of obligations should be expected of those seeking citizenship, and what remaining obligations the mainstream culture owes indigenous peoples. Once again, these debates have placed considerable pressure on political leaders – as well as opinion makers in the media – to assert themselves in the eyes of the Australian body politic. And often this has meant creating an atmosphere that has militated against a sympathetic and empathic treatment of ‘outsiders’.

Each of these factors are critically important because emanating from them are pressures that affect the way the news is reported and then interpreted by audiences. In other words, the ‘heat’ generated by and within these domestic factors often result in inflammatory, if not distorted, accounts of Muslims and people of the Middle East. Two events demonstrate how these contextual considerations can combine. Asylum seekers from the Middle East emerged as a key political and media issue in August 2001 with the Tampa incident.⁴³ This was the catalyst for the introduction of a harsh border protection regime by the Coalition government in the months leading up to the 2001 election. Using key sections of the media a number of Coalition government ministers argued that there existed a link between Middle Eastern asylum seekers and terrorism.⁴⁴ This concern was subsequently echoed by prominent commentators in the media.⁴⁵ Alan Jones, the prominent 2GB radio broadcaster, has inferred this link in commentaries such as the following:

The whole issue of illegal immigrants, detention centres...all these things worry rank and file Australians...taxpayers are concerned as to what happens to people who escape [detention centres], or to people who somehow find their way into Australia illegally. With all the worries about terrorism and where it comes from and who is a terrorist, Australians are legitimately concerned about the scrutiny that should apply to those who live here and come here.⁴⁶

Through similar commentary terms such as ‘illegals’ and ‘queue jumper’ entered the Australian lexicon and were used to refer to those – mostly Middle Eastern – asylum seekers that were deemed dishonest and unworthy.

During the 2001 election campaign – a campaign fought almost entirely over the questions of ‘border protection’ and national security – the ‘children overboard’ issue was also pivotal. This controversy turned on the government’s claim that Iraqi asylum seekers on board the Tampa container ship had thrown their children into the sea in order to force the Australian navy to rescue them. Many media reports of this period

43 The MV Tampa was a Norwegian cargo ship that, having rescued 369 (mainly Afghan) refugees, defied the Australian government’s orders to transport the survivors elsewhere (Indonesia).

44 Barrie Cassidy. ‘Defence Minister outlines Australian role in war on terror’, ABC TV: *Insiders* [Broadcast Transcript], Broadcast: 23 September, 2001. Available: <http://abc.net.au/insiders/content/2001/s373271.htm> [Accessed: 29 August, 2006]. See, also, Klocker and Dunn, ‘Who’s Driving the Asylum Debate? Newspaper and Government Representations of Asylum Seekers’, p. 71.

45 See Padraic P. McGuinness, ‘Terror’s shockwaves echo in the waters of the Pacific’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 September, 2001, p. 24. See also “Costello: Attack [Sep 11] Justifies Refugee Stance”, *The Australian Financial Review*, 13/09/01; “PM links terror to asylum seekers”, *The Courier Mail*, 07/11/01.

46 Alan Jones, 2GB, February 10, quoted in Iain Lygo, 2004. *News Overboard: The Tabloid Media, Race Politics and Islam*. Sydney: Southerly Change Media, p 145.

gave air to suggestions that by their actions asylum seekers were devious and indecent: all qualities that are considered anathema to the Australian ideal.⁴⁷

Here, research conducted by Klocker and Dunn is relevant. They focus attention on the way in which asylum seekers from the Middle East were represented in two South Australian newspapers, *The Advertiser* and *The Sunday Mail*, between 2001 and 2002. In particular, they looked for reasons why these and other papers tended to depict asylum seekers in a negative light; why, indeed, they seemed so willing to suggest that illegal immigrants were closely related to terrorists. These researchers found that the newspapers in question gave far too much credence to statements by politicians in the months prior to a federal election. Similar inferences were made in news items appearing in papers across Australia, with the following serving as examples:

‘Australia open to “sleeper” terrorists’, Martin Chulov, *The Australian*, 17/11/2001

We learn here that “Australian Islamic leaders believe terrorists, or staunchly doctrinal Muslims who sympathise with terrorist causes, have exploited loose immigration laws to become entrenched in civilian life here.”

‘PM links terror to asylum seekers’, *The Courier-Mail*, 07/11/2001

“Australia had no way of being certain terrorists, or people with terrorist links, were not among asylum seekers trying to enter the country by boat from Indonesia, Prime Minister John Howard said...He compared the situation to the aftermath of World War II when Nazi war criminals slipped into Australia.”

‘PM’s warning on boat people’, *The Mercury*, 08/11/2001

“Prime Minister John Howard yesterday...warned of a link between boat people and terrorists”.

‘Australia Islam’s enemy, Muslims told’, *The Age*, 10/12/2002

“Australia has been accused of being an enemy of Islam in speeches to mosques in Asia, increasing the risk of terrorist attacks, according to a leading defence expert.”

‘Local Muslims fans of Taliban’, Danny Butler, *The Herald Sun*, 13/12/2001

“The wife of an eastern suburbs man now fighting for the Northern Alliance claims several Melbourne Muslims have tried to join the Taliban...” “There are plenty of Muslims who support the Taliban...” – wife quoted.

‘The Islamic front is at our back door’, Paul Kelly, *The Australian*, 19/10/2002

This article highlights Southeast Asia as a ‘second front’ in the global campaign by Islamic fascism to destroy moderate pro-Western governments in the Muslim world.

47 “Sink or Swim – Asylum Seekers throw children overboard”, *Daily Telegraph*, 8/10/01.

Often, the link between terrorism and asylum seekers was based on little more than the fact that those detained had resided in Afghanistan or Iraq. Moreover, newspapers such as *The Advertiser* and *The Sunday Mail* embraced stories that portrayed asylum seekers as “inhumane, barbaric ‘others’”.⁴⁸ The most troubling allegations in this regard held that parents had thrown their children overboard on encountering Australian naval vessels, thus playing on the compassionate inclinations of the Australian people; and when subsequently held in detention centres were prone to sewing together the lips of their children.⁴⁹ Again, news items appeared that underscored simplistic, knee-jerk assumptions.

‘Culture of hate’, Andrew Bolt, *The Herald Sun*, 17/09/2001

Here, the author highlights examples of “Middle Eastern Men” in Australia that were joyful for the S11 attacks. He warns also that they are our “home-grown S11-type extremists”. At the same time he warns “thugs” who are attacking Muslims, saying that most “Muslims or Arabs feel nothing but anger towards the terrorists.

‘If this is what they teach four-year-olds, what chance does peace have – Young boys taught the ways of terror’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 27/02/2002

Not yet old enough to go to school, they are given lessons in how to hold automatic rifles and taught who their enemies are...In the homes of Islamic militants in Afghanistan and Palestinian territory, the children are taught in the ways of terror.

‘Australia Islam’s enemy, Muslims told’, *The Age*, 10/12/2002

Australia has been accused of being an enemy of Islam in speeches to mosques in Asia, increasing the risk of terrorist attacks, according to a leading defence expert.

‘New claims of refugee boat threats’, *The Australian*, 26/03/2002

Asylum-Seekers had attempted to strangle a child, tried to set themselves alight and threatened to throw children as young as 2 overboard in an orchestrated attempt to pressure the navy, a Senate committee has been told

‘Sink or Swim – Asylum Seekers throw children overboard’, *Daily Telegraph*, 8/10/2001

Explains situation where border control vessels fired warning shots when an Indonesian vessel illegally entered Australian waters. The vessel left, returned and was boarded by Australian navy. That was when that the desperate asylum seekers threw themselves and their children into the water.

The sentiments conveyed in these media reports were inflammatory, but not limited to print. Abusive radio broadcasters weighed in on the question of asylum seekers. Stan Zemanek (of Sydney’s 2UE) launched this on-air attack on the wife of a prominent asylum seeker lawyer:

[Zemanek to the caller...] Unfortunately, you’ve been brainwashed by your silly bloody husband. Anybody that comes in on the boat and they don’t have their documentation, they don’t have

48 Klocker and Dunn, 'Who's Driving the Asylum Debate? Newspaper and Government Representations of Asylum Seekers', *op. cit.*, p. 72

49 *Ibid.*

approval to come into this country, those people are illegal. Do you understand that? Can you get [that] through you thick dick skull?⁵⁰

Zemanek then welcomed the following poem from a listener of likeminded views:

[Helen's poem...] It's time to go back all your refugees, we'll give you money to go.

Pack up your bags and grab all the kids, we don't want to hear you say no. Now take up our offer of cash and a plane, you've got twenty-eight days to reply.

Detention's not bad, it was all that we had, at least you could see our blue skies.

So come on you people and get on that plane, a new life is waiting for you. If you run into trouble while begging in the rubble, remember don't call us, we'll call you.⁵¹

The cumulative effect of such antipathy towards asylum seekers prompted the resignation in 2002 of Neville Roach, the chairman of the Council for Multicultural Australia. According to Roach, the negative rhetoric employed by the government and many in the media was itself "possibly more damaging than the draconian asylum policies themselves".⁵²

The role media reporting plays in demonization is not always so calculated or contrived. This can be seen in the Sydney media's representations of Arabic and Muslim people in the aftermath of the 11 September attacks on America. In their analysis Poynting and Noble point to the existence of:

...a repetition of a logic of report, backlash and backlash-as-copy which, if not necessarily a deliberate strategy, furthers the commercial interests of popular media in a similar manner to the vote-maximising logic of the dog-whistle strategy of populist politicians.⁵³

The authors draw on a number of examples in the Sydney media in which the content of a report – when considered in isolation – appears at first glance balanced and even-handed, but that takes on a different meaning when placed alongside reports that play to the moral panic associated with either terrorism or crime in Sydney. For instance, an initially balanced story about the success of a Muslim women's gym in western Sydney prompted a significant backlash from local Sydneysiders opposed to 'special preferences' being accorded Muslim women. As Poynting and Noble observe:

The initial report on the gym was situated in the *Daily Telegraph* among strident stories about the heavy sentencing of several of the much-publicised gang rapists whose trials were being concluded at the time – stories which made much of their Muslim background. There ensued an outcry about the gym in talkback programs, opinion columns and letters pages ...The *Daily Telegraph* 'Vote line' for 14 September 2002 asked, "The Anti-Discrimination Board has granted an exemption for a muslim (sic) women-only gym. Does this discriminate against others? Some 471 people replied 'Yes' and a mere 11 said 'No'". The question for the day, above this ... was "The ringleader of the south-west Sydney rape attacks has been sentenced to 55 years' jail. Is this penalty to severe for his crimes?"⁵⁴

50 Lygo, *op.cit.*, p 10.

51 *Ibid.*

52 quoted in Klocker and Dunn, *op.cit.*, p 75

53 Scott Poynting and Greg Noble, 2003. "Dog-Whistle' Journalism and Muslim Australians Since 2001', *Media International Australia* incorporating *Culture and Policy*, no. 109 (November), p. 43.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

It is worth mentioning that the newspaper in question overlooked the fact that Muslim women who had sought exclusive access to the gym had in fact booked the facilities for a ‘private function’.

The authors also point to the curious juxtaposition of the mundane women’s gym report with letters to the editor about the Sydney rapes, a Nigerian death sentence for adultery, and the attacks of 11 September:

A common theme was accusation or defence in relation to charges of the global barbarism of Islam and whether ‘we’ should tolerate Islam here, and under what conditions it might purge or free itself from this inhumane backwardness.⁵⁵

The reporting of the Sydney gang-rapes, and the subsequent trials of the Lebanese-Australian youths charged with them, was significant in its own right. In 2002, Janet Albrechtsen, a columnist with *The Australian*, was criticized for seriously misrepresenting Islam and Muslim men. Critics claim she did this by distorting research by a psychotherapist at Villetaneuse University in France stating that “pack-rape of white girls is an initiation rite of passage for a small section of young male Muslim youth” in some European societies.⁵⁶

In his analysis of the reporting of the rapes and the subsequent trials by *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sun-Herald* in Sydney, Manning observes:

The overwhelming concentration on Lebanese Muslims and the intensity of the coverage makes clear a set of assumptions that are mandated by both newspapers: rape is typical of men of Middle Eastern extraction; it’s the fault not just of the rapists but the Muslim community that nurtures them; ‘our’ white girls are in danger: ‘we’ have reason to fear them (Middle Eastern Muslims); and ‘they’ (Middle Eastern Muslims) should accept the guilt and shame.⁵⁷

He observes that these papers exploited the unease in the Sydney community based on the fear of both crime and terrorism simply to create a story and to increase sales. In so doing they ignored more measured analyses.⁵⁸

Intercultural tensions between the Lebanese and Anglo-Saxon communities surfaced again in 2005 with the racially charged riots in Cronulla and surrounding suburbs in Sydney’s beach suburbs. On 11 December, approximately 5000 people gathered in an *ad-hoc* protest to ‘reclaim the beach’ after recently-reported incidents of intimidating behaviour by groups of non-locals, most of whom were identified in the earlier media reports as Middle Eastern (mainly Lebanese-Australian) youths from western Sydney. The crowd had assembled following a widely-reported series of earlier confrontations, one of which involved an assault on volunteer lifeguards.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵⁶ Janet Albrechtsen, ‘Blind spot allows criminal barbarism to flourish’, *The Australian*, 17 July, 2002, p. 13. It transpired that the academic in question, Professor Jean-Jacques Rassial, had never claimed that it was a question of Muslim men pack-raping white girls, but of young, alienated men of no particular race pack-raping French women as an emerging anti-social phenomenon in contemporary France.

⁵⁷ Manning, ‘Arabic and Muslim People in Sydney’s Daily Newspapers, before and after September 11’, p. 63.

⁵⁸ The more sober analyses included the assertion by then Bankstown police chief Peter Parsons that Arab-speaking people do not commit higher rates of crime than Anglo-Saxon people; or that of Dr Don Weatherburn of the NSW Bureau of Crime and Statistics who reported that rates of sexual violence in the Bankstown area were no more prevalent than anywhere else in NSW, and that the level of sexual assault involving multiple offenders is actually higher in other parts of the state.

In the week leading up to 11 December these tensions and the subsequent circulation of calls to gather at the beach were the subject of much publicity and media commentary. Indeed, some sections of the populist and tabloid media were criticised for inflaming the racially motivated violence. Prominent here were some talk-back radio hosts. Radio 2GB's Alan Jones has been criticized for inflaming tension by broadcasting more or less uncritically some of the emails and text messages sent in by enraged listeners. Many of these urged people to "support the Leb and Wog bashing day".⁵⁹

Without ever explicitly inciting violence against non-Anglo Australians Alan Jones' coverage, in this instance, carried with it coded messages. This was particularly so in the context of what was *not said* in his exchanges with callers on his talk-back show. The following exchange illustrates this point:

John [caller]: (continues) ... if the police can't do the job then the next tier is us.
 Jones: Yeah, good on you John.
 John: Now, ah, my grandfather was an old digger and he used to say to me when we were growing up "Listen, shoot one, the rest will run!"
 Jones: (laughs)
 John: Right?
 Jones: (still laughing) ...No, you don't play Queensberry's rules, good on you John.⁶⁰

This exchange occurred on 2GB 6 December 2005. Two days later on Jones' program, the following exchange took place:

Yvonne [caller]: We sat down on a picnic blanket and they kept kicking footballs at us.
 AJ: Yep, well Australia is for Australians. Isn't it?
 Y: Well it is Alan.
 AJ: And there is standard that has to apply and if you don't meet the standard you should be rounded up.
 Y: And if we don't have enough police what's wrong with getting the army in?
 AJ: Uh-ha.
 Y: Get these blokes a bit of a rifle butt in the face and they'll ... back off, they're cowards!
 AJ: Well if it gets to that we might have to do that, you follow what I'm saying?
 Y: Get them out to work Alan. I've got two blooming jobs, what sort of mug am I? I'm going out to pay the dole for these people who want to blow me up!

Of course, this exchange is not typical of most news reporting. Concerns about conventional reporting usually center on the allusions, inferences, and hypocrisy inherent. A good illustration of how double standards might apply can be found in the way sections of the media handled recent acts of alleged sexual violence. In the above mentioned case of the Sydney gang rapes by Lebanese youths, news reports, community reaction, and the statements of community leaders all reflected intense anger. The brutal actions of the men not only triggered appropriate indignation, but also much debate about the extent to which the culprits' belief in Islam and their Lebanese ethnicity contributed to their actions. And yet, as argued by Joseph Wakim – founder of the Australian Arabic Council – no similar questions were asked in the

59 Tanya Nolan. 'Anger over media coverage of Cronulla violence', *ABC News: The World Today* [Broadcast Transcript], 15 December, 2005: <http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2005/s1531918.htm> [Accessed: 30 July, 2006].

60 Media Watch. 'Jones and Cronulla', *ABC TV: Media Watch* [Broadcast transcript], Broadcast: 20 February, 2006. Available: <http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s1574155.htm> [Accessed: 20 August, 2006].

wake of comparable events.⁶¹ While Sydney based rugby league players charged with pack rape awaited their trials in 2004, media commentators and the public at large did not speculate about the role of the alleged perpetrators' ethnicity and religious beliefs. Similarly, when it emerged in 2001 that youths from an exclusive Anglican private school in Sydney had been charged with 75 sexual assaults (50 on one victim, and 25 on another), there was no reference to the role of ethnicity or religion. Wakim's point is salient and has resonated throughout this discussion.

CONCLUSION

This discussion paper has focused on contextual factors and the way in which they can result in subtle, yet negative, portrayals of Islamic and Middle Eastern people. This approach is useful not least because it attunes us to how the views of those who compile and produce news about such communities are influenced. It is an approach that also enables us to acknowledge the complex nature of news reporting and of the audience-media relationship. For instance, we are reminded that the selection, production, and dissemination of news can be a very haphazard and at times chaotic process that is not often shaped *via* direct senior management or proprietor diktat. And it also reminds us that the audience itself is not a passive consumer of news reporting; that in some sense the audience and media shape one another. Ultimately, we are now well placed to consider the standards that might reasonably be expected of those working in the media. These are reflected in the findings and recommendations that follow.

FINDINGS

- 'The media' is a very amorphous entity, and observations about its influence – or, at least, the influence of its constituent parts – must be heavily qualified.
- Representations of unfamiliar cultures – in this instance, of Australia's Islamic and Middle Eastern communities – are usually unremarkable across the media in Australia. Indeed, it is difficult to find specific instances where media professionals intentionally seek to denigrate minority communities. That said, it is apparent that the *cumulative* effect of often careless news reporting is to cast the communities in question in a very negative light, and to cause widespread distress.
- To make sense of how communities of Islamic and Middle Eastern background are understood, it is useful to be attuned to the way in which thinkers and leaders in the 'West' have historically regarded these communities, and how such perceptions have come to represent a 'common sense' worldview .
- It is evident that in too many instances reporting and interpretation of intercultural and interfaith relations within Australia are adversely affected by contextual factors that are at a great remove from the local context. This

61 Joseph Wakim, 2004. 'How the media cover gang rape, sport, power – and prejudice. *On Line Opinion*, <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/author.asp?id=2018>, [accessed 16 January 2007].

sometimes results in an embrace of a Western centric, if not US-centric, worldview.

- Similarly, representations and readings of intercultural and interfaith relations are often distorted because many in the media succumb – often willingly – to the pressures and demands made of them by politicians who are eager to gain an advantage (by creating and exploiting moral panic) while electioneering.
- Some prominent media commentators are inclined to allow their judgements about these communities to be coloured by dubious, if un-stated, assumptions about ethnic and racial dispositions and/or characteristics. This inclination may be due, in part, to the commentators' reluctance to pay due regard to their subject's cultural diversity.
- Given the time constraints and pressures bearing down upon media professionals, it is perhaps not surprising that they sometimes employ common, yet misleading, *clichés* about minority cultures and communities.
- All this is compounded by the fact that Australia's media ownership regime is highly concentrated, and its main players are, like all businesses, intent on maximizing sales of their product. Beyond economic considerations, it must also be acknowledged that proprietors and senior management shape the organizational culture and context within which those reporting and commentating on news work. Hence media professionals are subject to either explicit or implicit pressures to conform to a group think that may often be unsympathetic to unfamiliar cultures and communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEWS PROVIDERS, REGULATORS, AND MEDIA INSTITUTIONS

1. **Empathy:** It is imperative that events are represented in ways that convey perspective: that is, not only should commentators in the media avoid sensationalist reporting, but they should be aware of the ways in which those identified with the central players – individuals or groups – can suffer ‘guilt by association’. The frequency with which all Muslims are equated with terrorists is a symptom of this tendency. It is strongly recommended, therefore, that reports that sensitize mainstream Australians to the concerns of Islamic and Arabic people are widely disseminated by media providers to their employees. Specifically, three recent reports are recommended:
 - a. *Ismae-Listen: National Consultations on Eliminating Prejudice Against Arab and Muslim Australians*, by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Canberra (2004);
 - b. *Media guide: Islam and Muslims in Australia*, by Bedar, A., and J. El Matrah of the Melbourne: Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria (2005);
 - c. *Living with Racism: The experience and reporting by Arab and Muslim Australians of discrimination, abuse and violence since 11 September 2001*, (Report to HREOC) by Scott Poynting and Greg Noble, at the Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney, (2004).
2. **Providing context:** Context and proportion are all-important ingredients in providing fair commentary. In familiarizing themselves with the cultures and histories of unfamiliar cultures, media professionals must be cognizant of the historical traumas suffered by all unfamiliar communities. By the same token, they should be aware that by making dubious links to, and over-dramatizing, distant events, they may distort our understanding of Arabic and Islamic communities.
3. **Stereotyping:** It is imperative that media professionals not rely on convenient, yet misleading, social, racial, and ethnic stereotypes. Notwithstanding the occasional use in law enforcement of racial and ethnic descriptors (e.g. ‘men of Middle Eastern appearance’), care should be taken to avoid use of such crude and inflammatory labels. Media professionals should take care to neither romanticize nor demonize unfamiliar cultures. They must resist incorporating into background material depictions of Islamic and Middle Eastern communities that suggest that conflict is intrinsic to them. In addition, media professionals should avoid a fixation on the racial or ethnic elements of conflicts: doing so may divert attention away from other important dynamics.
4. **Skepticism:** Media professionals must be more skeptical of the motives of those prominent political figures looking to exaggerate and distort events for their own ends.
5. **Increasing awareness:** Media organizations should establish links with well informed and accessible spokespersons from relevant community groups and expert bodies that can provide prompt and accurate background information on issues relevant to the communities in question. Such links will reduce the reliance on received wisdom. For reasons of practicality the listings below are limited to relevant organizations located mainly in the Eastern States of Australia (a more complete, Australia wide, listing is included as appendix 2.)

The Assyrian Australian Association
 The Australian Lebanese Welfare
 The Australian Arabic Council
 The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils
 The Australian Intercultural Society
 The Australian Islamic Council
 The Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youths
 The Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations
 The Indonesian Muslim Community of Victoria
 The Islamic Council of New South Wales
 The Islamic Council of Victoria
 The Islamic Womens' Welfare Council of Victoria
 The Muslim Womens' National Network of Australia
 The United Muslim Womens' Association
 The Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University, Melbourne
 The Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies, Australian National University,
 ACT
 The Center for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, Australian National
 University
 The Centre for the Study of Contemporary Islam, University of Melbourne
 The Centre for Middle East and North African Studies, Macquarie
 University NSW
 The Executive Council of Australian Jewry
 The Jewish Community Council of Victoria
 The New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies

6. Personal interaction and (self) education. There is a need for media professionals to improve their awareness of unfamiliar communities through incidental encounters. Such encounters may occur through shopping or socializing in municipalities populated by those of unfamiliar cultures. Where possible, media professionals should also attempt to include in their circle of acquaintances people from such cultures. Similarly, individuals should acquaint themselves with the literature, music, food, and histories of unfamiliar cultures. They should refer to the English language versions of organization websites (see appendix 2), journals and newspapers. In the Arabic and Islamic context this means regularly consulting the following community publications:

ICV Bulletin (via www.icv.org.au)

ICNSW Newslink (via <http://www.islamicrealm.com/icnsw/index.php>)

The Australian Muslim News (via <http://www.afic.com.au/Amn04.htm>)

Salam Magazine (<http://www.famsy.com>)

Islamic Monthly Review

Australian Fair Newspaper

7. Formal interaction: Where possible, government agencies, media organizations, relevant professional organizations, and well placed institutions should promote forums and ongoing communication regimes that a) open lines of communication between media professionals and community spokespeople that help the former gain a better understanding of the effect of 'negative' reporting, and b) help attune community leaders to the processes and constraints associated with the production of news. Again, though the following is by no means an exhaustive list of such

organizations, it includes a sample of those that may conceivably play such a facilitating role.

The Australian Broadcasting Authority
 The Australian Press Council
 The Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University
 The Equal Opportunity Council of Victoria
 The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
 The Media, Arts, and Entertainment Alliance
 The NSW Anti-discrimination Board
 The Victorian Council of Civil Liberties
 The Victorian Multicultural Commission

8. Training and professional development: A key element in the process of increasing awareness would be the promotion of professional development events, workshops, and seminars for media professionals – with representatives of Islamic, Middle Eastern, and relevant communities present – aimed at providing the skills and information needed to fully engage with unfamiliar cultures. Another aspect of this process would entail the integration of culturally relevant content into graduate and post-graduate curriculum for journalists. In all respects, training and professional development programs must be periodically reviewed by the principal stakeholders, i.e., community representatives, media professionals, and expert commentators and scholars.
9. Access and empowerment: Media organizations, regulatory bodies, and professional associations must ensure that their decision making processes and appeals regimes are transparent and accessible. These bodies must also provide swift responses to complaints and, when proven, must provide fair and appropriate acknowledgements, be they printed or through broadcast. Key institutions here are:

The Australian Broadcasting Authority
 The Australian Press Council
 The Equal Opportunity Council of Victoria
 The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
 The NSW Anti-discrimination Board

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ISLAMIC AND MIDDLE EASTERN COMMUNITIES

1. Connecting with decision-makers: Communities should strive to establish close relations with not only media organizations, but also with prominent political representatives and community leaders. Representative bodies must request invitations to seminars, community forums, parliamentary reviews, and such consultations that may provide *entrée* to key decision makers.
2. Exercising rights: Such communities must become acquainted with the various media industry codes of conduct and the government regulations relating to media standards. They should also become adept at monitoring media reports for accuracy, and at responding immediately and assertively to what are regarded as misrepresentations. Relevant regulatory bodies are:

The Australian Broadcasting Authority
 The Australian Press Council

3. Training spokespeople: Similarly, communities are encouraged to train and nurture articulate and well informed spokespeople capable not only of engaging with prominent media professionals, but with a range of audiences. The training of such spokespeople may entail collaboration with a range of community associations, media enterprises, government and other expert bodies. Communities ought to encourage these organizations to jointly fund and run such training programmes.
4. Public relations: Resources permitting, these communities should engage public relations professionals to liaise with both mainstream and 'alternative' media outlets. These professionals would be entrusted with the task of disseminating positive stories about the community. Key to this may be consultations with the following:

- The Australian Broadcasting Authority
- The Australian Press Council
- The Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University
- The Equal Opportunity Council of Victoria
- The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
- The Media, Arts, and Entertainment Alliance
- The NSW Anti-discrimination Board
- The Victorian Council of Civil Liberties
- The Victorian Multicultural Commission

5. Openness: Organizations representing Islamic and Middle Eastern communities, as well as those with an interest in fostering harmonious relations, must provide regular information about, and invitations to, community festivals, religious celebrations, and community events. The responsibility here falls on such organizations as:

- Australian Lebanese Welfare
- The Australian Arabic Council
- The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils
- The Australian Intercultural Society
- The Australian Islamic Council
- The Executive Council of Australian Jewry
- The Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youths
- The Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations
- The Indonesian Muslim Community of Victoria
- The Islamic Council of New South Wales
- The Islamic Council of Victoria
- The Islamic Womens' Welfare Council of Victoria
- The Jewish Community Council of Victoria
- The Muslim Womens' National Network of Australia
- The New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies
- The United Muslim Womens' Association

Appendix 1.**THE LAY OF THE MEDIA LAND: THE MAJOR PLAYERS**

By way of background it is important to keep in mind that the Australian commercial print media setting is one of the most concentrated ownership regimes in the Western world. One of the most significant players is News Ltd (a subsidiary Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation), which has interests in more than 100 newspapers throughout the nation. It has 68 per cent of the capital city circulation and national newspaper market, 77 per cent of the Sunday newspaper market, 62 per cent of the suburban newspaper market, and 18 per cent of the regional newspaper market. Its main newspapers are as follows:

National

The Australian, with daily circulation: 133,926; Saturday circulation: 291,896.

Sydney

The Daily Telegraph, with daily circulation: 397, 924;

Sunday Telegraph, Circulation: 720,068

Melbourne

Herald-Sun, With daily circulation: 551,500, Saturday circulation:523,500.

Sunday Herald Sun: 620,000.

MX, Daily circulation: 90,000. Also distributed in Sydney.

Queensland

The Courier Mail, the only daily paper in Brisbane with daily circulation: 221,279; Saturday: 333,910, *Sunday Mail*: 589,765.

South Australia

The Advertiser, with daily circulation: 201,232; Saturday: 274,364, *Sunday Mail*: 330, 998.

Tasmania

The Mercury, Tasmania's only daily paper with daily circulation: 48,433, Saturday: 62,736, *The Sunday Tasmanian*: 60,246

Northern Territory

Northern Territory News, Daily circulation: 22,091, Saturday: 32,443, Sunday Territorian: 24,812

Another leading player is the James Packer controlled Publishing and Broadcasting Limited (PBL). It comprises the Nine Network and the magazine publisher Australian Consolidated Press. It publishes over 65 magazines and its share of circulation of Australia's top thirty magazines stands at approximately 40 per cent. (Its three metropolitan and one regional television licenses gives PBL approximately 51 per cent of the of potential nation wide audience. PBL also possesses a 25 per cent interest in Foxtel, and 33 per cent of Sky News, both major pay TV outlets, as well as a share in *ninemsn*, the joint online venture with Microsoft).

John Fairfax Holdings Pty Ltd figures as a prominent newspaper publisher. Its share of the capital city and national newspaper market is 21 per cent. It also has a 22 per cent share of the Sunday newspaper market, 17 per cent of the suburban newspaper market, and 16 per cent of the regional newspaper market. Along with News Ltd, Fairfax also jointly controls the AAP Information Service. Fairfax's holdings comprise the following:

National

The Australian Financial Review, with a daily circulation: 85,673; Saturday circulation: 89,650.

Sydney

The Sun-Herald, with circulation: 514,548 Weekly paper

The Sydney Morning Herald, with daily circulation: 210,475, and Saturday circulation: 360,785

Melbourne

The Age, with daily circulation: 193,500; *The Sunday Age*, with circulation: 200,000; and *The Saturday Age*, with circulation of 297,500

Even though recent changes to media laws have ensured greater variety of news products, they do nothing to reverse the trend towards greater concentration of ownership. Hence, the reader should bear in mind that such concentration can only exacerbate the negative effects of whatever misrepresentation of minority communities there exists.⁶²

62 Bond University and the Australian Broadcasting Authority. 2001. *Sources of News and Current Affairs*. Sydney: ABA. pp 275-76

Appendix 2.**A LIST OF KEY ORGANIZATIONS****Islamic and Middle Eastern Communities****African Australian Welfare Council of Victoria**

Address: Level 1, 233 Sydney Road, Brunswick VIC 3058

Tel: 3 9380 9156

Email: aawc@bigpond.com

Al-Ghazzali Centre for Islamic Sciences and Human Development

P.O. Box L -14, Mt. Lewis NSW 2200

Tel: 2 9708 1539

Email: info@alghazzali.org

Arabic Councils Australia

Address: Level 1, 194 Stacey St, Bankstown, NSW, 2200

Phone: (2) 9709 4333

Email: info@arabcouncil.org.au

Australian Lebanese Welfare Inc

Address: P.O. Box 228, Brunswick, Vic 3056

Phone: (03) 9380 9536

Email: alwinc@iprimus.com.au

The Australian Arabic Council

Address: P.O. Box 52, Moreland, Vic, 3058

Phone: (03)9480 2411

Email: info@aac.org.au

Website: www.aac.org.au

The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils

Address: P.O. Box 7185 South Sydney Business Hub, Alexandria, NSW, 2017

932 Bourke St Zetland, NSW, 2015

Phone: (2) 9319 6733

Email: admin@afic.com.au

The Australian Intercultural Society

Address: Level 1, 728 Mt. Alexander Rd, Moonee Ponds, VIC, 3039

Phone: (03) 9326 2177

Website: <http://www.intercultural.org.au>

Email: info@intercultural.org.au

Womens' network: ladies@intercultural.org.au

Canberra Islamic Centre, Australian National Islamic Library Project.

PO Box 186, Calwell ACT 2905

Tel: 2 6292 1568

Web: <http://www.islam-australia.org/>

Email: cic_anil@mail.austarmetro.com.au

The Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University

Address: La Trobe University

Phone: 9479 1419

Email: m.michael@latrobe.edu.auWebsite: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/dialogue>**The Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youths**

Address: 22/2 Mason St, Newport, Vic, 3015

P.O. Box 451, Newport, Vic, 3015

Phone: 0421 438 573

Email: vic@famsy.com**The Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations**

Address: P.O. Box 1013, Strawberry Hills, NSW, 2012

Phone: (02) 9708 5773

Griffith Islamic Research Unit (GIRU),

Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance

Nathan Campus, Griffith University

Address: 170 Kessels Road, Nathan, Brisbane, Queensland 4111

Tel: 7 3735 5301

Email: m.abdalla@griffith.edu.au**The Indonesian Muslim Community of Victoria**

Address: 130 Rosebank Avenue, Clayton South Vic 3169

Email: home@imcv.com.au**Islamic Council of Queensland**

Address: PO Box 204, Sunnybank Qld 4109

Tel: 7 3349 1137

Islamic Council of New South Wales

Address: 405 Waterloo Rd, Chullora, NSW, 2190

Phone: (2 9742 5752)

Islamic Council Of Tasmania

Address: 166 Warwick St, West, Hobart

Tel: 3 6234 6998

The Islamic Council of Victoria

Address: 66-68 Jeffcott st. West Melbourne, Vic 3003

Phone: (03) 9328 2067

Email: admin@icv.org.auWebsite: www.icv.org.au**Islamic Council of Western Australia**

Address: 7 Malvern Street, Rivervale WA 6103

PO Box 70, Burswood WA 6100

Tel: 8 9362 2210

Email: ghauri39@yahoo.com

Islamic Society of ACT

Address: 130 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600
 PO Box 612, Civic Square ACT 2608
 Tel: 2 6273 0300

Islamic Society of Northern Territory

Address: 53-59 Vanderlin Drive, Casuarina, NT 5792
 Ph: 8 8945 0390

Islamic Women's Association of Queensland Inc

Address: PO Box 1909 Sunnybank Hills QLD 4109
 Tel: 7 3272 8071
 Email: iwaq@inet.net.au

The Islamic Womens' Welfare Council of Victoria

Address: 169 Fitzroy St, Fitzroy, 3065
 Phone: (03) 9419 7888
 Website: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~iwwcw/>

Lebanese Muslim Association (LMA)

Address: Lakemba Mosque, 84 Wangee Road, Lakemba 2195 NSW
 Tel: 2 9750 6833

The Muslim Council of NSW

Address: PO Box 603, Auburn NSW 2144
 Tel: 2 9648 1070
 Email: mcnsw@bigpond.com

Muslim Womens' Association

Address: 47 Wangee Rd, Lakemba, NSW, 2195
 P.O. Box 264 Lakemba, NSW, 2195
 Website: <http://www.mwa.org.au/>
 Email: info@mwa.org.au

Muslim Women's Association of SA Inc.

Address: 1st Floor, Torrens Building, 220 Victoria Square
 Adelaide SA 5000
 Tel/ Fax: 8 8212 0800

The Muslim Womens' National Network of Australia

Address: P.O. Box, 213, Granville, NSW, 2148
 Phone: (02) 9639 6394
 Email: info@mwanna.org.au

Supreme Islamic Council of NSW

Address: PO Box 678, Baulkham Hills 1755 NSW
 Phone: 2 9319 2989
 Email: supremeislamiccouncilnsw@yahoo.com

Tasmanian Muslim Association

Address: 166 Warrick St, West Hobart, WA 7000

Tel: 3 6234 6998

Email: tma@southcom.com.au

The United Muslim Womens' Association

Address: P.O. Box 264, Lakemba, NSW, 2195

Phone☎(02) 9750 6916

Email: info@mwa.org.au

Website: <http://www.mwa.org.au/>

Victorian Arabic Social Services

Address: 74 Phillip St, Broadmeadows, Vic, 3047

Phone: (03) 93090055

Email: mail@vass.org.au

Government and other**The Australian Broadcasting Authority**

Sydney office, PO Box Q500, Queen Victoria Building, NSW 1230

Telephone:+61 2 9334 7700

Canberra office, PO Box 34, Belconnen ACT 2616

Telephone: +61 2 9334 7700

The Australian Multicultural Foundation

Address: 185 Faraday St, Carlton, Vic, 3053

Phone: (3) 9347 6622

Email: info@amf.net.au

The Australian Press Council

Address: Suite 10.02, 117 York St, Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 9261 1930 or (1800) 02 5712

E-Mail: info@presscouncil.org.au or for complaints:

complaints@presscouncil.org.au

Website: <http://www.presscouncil.org.au/pcsite/apc.html>

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

Address: P.O. Box 5218, Sydney, NSW, 2001

Phone: (02) 9284 9600

Website: <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/>

The Media, Arts, and Entertainment Alliance

Head Office/NSW Branch

Address: 245 Chalmers St, Redfern, NSW, 2016

PO Box 723 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

Telephone: 02 9333 0999

VIC Branch Address: Level 4, 221 Queen St, Melbourne, VICTORIA, 3000

Telephone: 03 9691 7100

Website: <http://www.alliance.org.au/>

The NSW Anti-discrimination Board

Address: Stockland House, Level 4, 175-183 Castlereagh Street, Sydney NSW 2000

PO Box A2122, Sydney South 1235

Telephone: General Enquiry Service & Employers Advisory Service - (02) 9268 5544

Website: <http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb>

Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission

Address: 3rd floor, 380 Lonsdale Street, Melb, VIC 3000

Phone: (03) 9281 7111

Website: www.eoc.vic.gov.au

Email: eoc@vicnet.net.au

The Victorian Multicultural Commission

Address: Level 15, 1 Spring Street, Melbourne, 3000

GPO Box 2392, Melbourne, Victoria 3000

Tel: (03) 9208 3184

Email: vmc@dvc.vic.gov.au

Website: <http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/index.htm>

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