

Australia: Police report reveals real instigators of Cronulla race riots

Part 2

Fergus Michaels
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Below we are publishing part two of a three-part series on the December 2005 race riots at Sydney's Cronulla beach. Part 1 was published on November 30 and part 3 was published on December 2.

According to Assistant Police Commissioner Hazzard's report: "The blame for the ethnic tension that was evident, could not exclusively be attributed to either the Middle Eastern or Caucasian Australians."

In other words, the Cronulla riots were not caused by ethnic tension between "Anglo" Australians and those of Middle Eastern background or appearance *per se*. Another factor was required for the riots to erupt.

The "shock-jocks" provided the immediate catalyst. By creating the initial media storm, they consciously set larger events into motion. As Alan Jones himself exclaimed on radio 2GB on December 8, 2005: "I'm the person that's led this charge here. Nobody wanted to know about North Cronulla; now it's gathered to this."

The Hazzard report finds that the outright lies broadcast about the original fight at Cronulla beach on December 4, "led to a significant amount of publicity on radio, television and in the print media". It placed "issues of racial tension, ethnic gangs and related matters" in the centre of media discussion. The media swarmed to Cronulla before the riots, "in anticipation of public disorder".

Augmenting the work already done by Jones, Murdoch's Sydney tabloid, the *Daily Telegraph*, ran a string of highly provocative headlines in the days before the mob violence. On December 6: "Fight for Cronulla: we want our beach back." On December 7: "Gangs turn Cronulla into war zone." On December 9: "NOT ON OUR BEACH: Cronulla police vow to

defend Australian way."

During the same week, Premier Morris Iemma and Liberal opposition leader Peter Debnam also spoke on 2GB radio. Both entirely accepted and publicly promoted the hysterical lies surrounding the original altercation, thereby adding their political weight to the growing campaign.

Iemma told Jones: "I can understand the anger, particularly an attack on lifesavers who, they're there to save lives, they patrol our beaches, they protect people who go to the beach, they are an Aussie icon. I understand the anger, the red hot anger...."

Peter Debnam weighed in with: "We've got to stop this softly, softly strategy ... these gangs want to congregate at Cronulla. Let's get 500 police in there ... We need hundreds of police to surround them, arrest them and lock them up."

It was in this frenzied environment, according to the Hazzard report, that over 270,000 individual mobile phone text messages were transmitted in the week leading to the riots, "inciting a racially motivated confrontation" on December 11.

Here are two examples of the text messages being circulated:

"Just a reminder that Cronulla's 1st wog bashing day is still on this Sunday. Chinks [Chinese] bashing day is on the 27th & the Jews are booked in for early January."

"All lebo / wog brothers. Sunday midday must be at North Cronulla Park. These skippy aussies want war. Bring ur guns and knives and lets show them how we do it."

Against the fantastical claims of a city under siege by roaming Lebanese and Middle Eastern gangs, just

waiting to kill and rape anyone on sight, the Hazzard report cites some crime statistics for the Cronulla area.

Between January 2000 and the end of December 2005, the statistics are “insufficient to identify any significant trend for involvements where the country of birth was ‘Lebanon’”. Among “Persons of Interest” (POI) whose country of birth was recorded in 2000-2005, 0.5 percent were born in “Lebanon”. There was also no significant crime trend for those from the broader Middle East.

Furthermore, “Among POI’s, 5 percent were recorded as having a Racial Appearance of ‘Mediterranean/Middle Eastern’”. Conversely, “47 percent of POI’s were recorded as having a ‘White/European’ racial appearance’”. Between 2000 and 2005, assaults involving those of Middle Eastern appearance numbered 69. By comparison, POI’s with a White/European racial appearance were involved in 535 incidents.

Criminal offences in Cronulla were committed largely by those living in the area, and were not the product of hordes of invading inner-suburban youth. Of the approximately 61,000 items of correspondence lodged with the local Sutherland Shire Council in 2005, the police report identifies precisely *two* that referred to “matters of ethnic problems in the community”.

Consequently, according to the Hazzard report, there was absolutely no basis for the claims made on talkback radio and throughout the media. The entire campaign was based on falsehoods, which were repeated over many days to a wide audience. This was the immediate impetus for the riots and the reprisals that produced multiple assaults, came close to causing deaths, and left significant property damage.

There can be no question that the way in which the riots unfolded was directly related to the radio and media campaign. In the days just before, Alan Jones read out “correspondence” that advocated calling in biker gangs to Cronulla railway station “when the Lebanese thugs arrive”. He said: “It will be worth the price of admission to watch these cowards scurry back onto the train for the return trip to their lairs ... Australians old and new shouldn’t have to put up with this scum.”

Sure enough, on Sunday December 11, a large mob congregated at the railway station. Those who seemed to be Middle Eastern were mobbed when they alighted

from trains. The Hazzard report finds: “The victims were simply chosen because of their Middle Eastern appearance” and “the vigilantes at the railway station had no way of knowing who it was they were assaulting.”

The most fascistic social elements were summoned to action on December 11. One manifesto posted in the local Sutherland Shire is worth quoting at length:

“As a patriotic Australian, nationalism runs deep within my blood ... Our Australian culture is epitomized by our beaches, which have become cesspools of anti social behaviour after the recent and unwelcome influx of young men, of ‘middle eastern’ appearance from the inner suburbs of Sydney.

“The filth that crawls off the trains and pollutes our beaches has decided to attack an Australian icon. I am of course referring to the spineless attack on our volunteer lifeguards at North Cronulla Beach. I therefore call on all Australians to unite and strike down upon these invaders with an almighty vengeance that will echo throughout the ages and will forever be imprinted on [Sutherland] Shire folklore.

“It is time to ‘take out the trash’ and clean up our beaches to restore them to their once peaceful state. North Cronulla Beach on Sunday 11th of December at midday is the time of reckoning where our Turf will be reclaimed from the clutches of our common enemy. AUSSIES UNITE.”

The manifesto clearly developed the themes propounded by Jones and his colleagues: the lifeguards as “Australian icons”, the “spineless attack” by “the filth that crawls” off the trains at Cronulla, vigilantism against the “common enemy.”

To be continued



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