

Australia: Two significant reactions to the MH17 tragedy

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Two Australian families of those killed in the MH17 disaster have made statements that stand out in stark contrast to much of the commentary in the corporate media. They differ sharply from the Australian government's agenda of exploiting the tragedy as part of the US-led campaign against Russia and pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine.

Queensland couple, Roger and Jill Guard were killed in the MH17 crash along with 296 others. Roger Guard headed the pathology department at Toowoomba Base Hospital. He had worked in the public health system for 40 years. Jill Guard, also a doctor, worked in general practice. They were on their way home from a two-month European holiday.

The Guard family posted an online tribute describing Roger Guard as a dedicated professional then continued: "Away from work, he was an avid reader and was incredibly knowledgeable in geography, history and science. He was interested in knowing how the world works, and fascinated by the endless complexity of nature. He challenged his kids to be curious and inquisitive and to find out facts for ourselves rather than accepting assertions without evidence. He was a scientist to the core."

Writing about his mother, Paul Guard said: "Jill was also a dedicated doctor who worked in general practice for many years. She worked for most of her career at the Family Planning Clinic in Toowoomba specialising in women's health. She also committed herself to multiple worthy causes including Meals On Wheels, assisting Sudanese refugees in Toowoomba and sponsoring children through World Vision. She was a talented musician and played the cello, piano and recorder ... She cared for a number of people in need over her years in Toowoomba, and provided emotional and practical support for many more. She was truly

selfless and consistently put her family and friends' needs above her own."

These accounts of the lives and outlook of his parents go some way to explaining the tone and content of the interview given by their son, Paul, one of their three children, to ABC News 24.

Paul Guard was composed and determined to make some important points. Following general questions about his parents, he was asked what message he had for the Australian government and all world leaders.

He replied: "In terms of finding out who's responsible for this, I believe that the party responsible for the death of my parents, all those children on the plane, all of those people in the prime of their lives, is not just Vladimir Putin, it's not just the Russian military, it's not the Ukrainian government or the separatist rebels or even the person who pressed the button on the missile launcher—I believe it's the conflict itself.

"If the conflict wasn't happening there, that plane would not have been shot down."

He then called on world leaders, including the Australian government, to find a way to halt the conflict "if you want justice for the victims and the victims' families."

Three siblings, Mo aged 12, Evie aged 10 and Otis aged 8 were travelling with their grandfather Nick Norris, from Amsterdam to their home in Perth on flight MH17. The parents of the three children, Anthony Maslin and Marite Norris had stayed for a few extra days holiday planning to catch a later flight. Last week they published a message addressed to "the soldiers in the Ukraine, the politicians, the media, our friends and family."

"Our pain is intense and relentless. We live in a hell beyond hell. Our babies are not here with us—we need

to live with this act of horror, every day and every moment for the rest of our lives.

“No one deserves what we are going through. Not even the people who shot our whole family out of the sky. No hate in the world is as strong as the love we have for our children, for Mo, for Evie, for Otis. No hate in the world is as strong as the love we have for Grandad Nick. No hate in the world is as strong as the love we have for each other. This is a revelation that gives us some comfort.”

Then, in an implicit condemnation of any attempts to use the tragedy for militarist purposes, they continued: “We would ask everyone to remember this when you are making any decisions that affect us and the other victims of this horror.”

Both the Guard and Maslin families have expressed widely held antiwar sentiments, fundamentally at odds with the bloodlust continually promoted by the political establishment and mass media.

But their aspirations, and those of millions in Australia and around the world, can only be realised by recognising that the endless cycle of violence, war and the loss of innocent lives is a product of a decaying and reactionary social order that must be overthrown.



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