

A cruel sting on a PhD graduate: analysis of a *Daily Telegraph* story

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On 26 May 2017, a story titled “A cruel sting on terror victims,” written by Kylar Loussikian, appeared in Sydney’s newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*. This story is the subject of an article by me published in *Pacific Journalism Review* (Martin, 2018). In support of that article, additional information about the story is provided here.

In Table 1, the full text of Loussikian’s story is given in the left column. The online version of the text used here, from the Factiva database. The print edition differs in small respects.

The second column of Table 1 notes the features of a beat-up that might be associated with the text. These features are taken, sometimes in a slightly adapted form, from those itemised in Martin (2018):

In the context of the media, a beat-up is a story that, by conventional journalistic standards, does not deserve to be published because it is unverified, grossly exaggerated and/or knowingly false. Typical features of beat-ups include presenting manufactured claims, giving otherwise unexceptional information an exaggerated importance, highlighting facts taken out of context, presenting highly misleading portrayals, and using weak or dubious sources.

In Loussikian’s article, the most common features of a beat-up are giving otherwise unexceptional information exaggerated importance, highlighting facts taken out of context, and presenting highly misleading portrayals. The table, because it focuses on the text of the story, does not address one of the most important aspects that make the story a beat-up: by conventional journalistic standards, a single passage in a PhD thesis, a thesis that otherwise

has not been newsworthy, does not warrant front-page coverage.

The third column in Table 1 notes how the text serves to attack Brooks and her thesis, typically by derogatory language and guilt by association. The final column provides additional information and comment to provide context or to help assess the claims in the story.

Table 1 represents my own analysis of Loussikian's story, so of course this analysis may be influenced by my involvement with the story. In particular, I was Brooks' principal supervisor for her PhD thesis, and I was a secondary target in Loussikian's story as well as in previous stories by him attacking the PhD thesis of another one of my PhD students, Judy Wilyman. Interested readers can judge for themselves by assessing Loussikian's story in the context of Brooks' thesis (2016), which is free online.

Here, only the text of Loussikian's story is addressed. It would also be possible to analyse the layout of the text (fonts, placement of text) and photos, and the associated editorial and cartoon. These are reproduced at the end of this document. Each page of *The Daily Telegraph* is slightly smaller than an A3 sheet.

Table 1. Text from Loussikian (2017) assessed in terms of how it represents features of a beat-up and attack journalism

Text from Loussikian's story (2017)	Beat-up features	Attack features	Comments
THREAT LEVEL: HIVE - LOONY UNI'S DEGREES OF MADNESS [Title, p. 1]	Highly misleading portrayal of the thesis	Derogatory language ("loony," "madness")	The title may not have been written by Loussikian
Wife of ex-Gitmo detainee David Hicks awarded PhD for arguing bees a bigger threat than terrorists	Highly misleading portrayal of the thesis and the basis for awarding it	Denigration of Brooks by referring to her as the "wife of ex-Gitmo detainee David Hicks" rather than a person in her own right	

THE estranged wife of David Hicks has been honoured with a PhD from a leading NSW university for arguing bees were more dangerous to Australians than terrorists and the federal government was “pro-torture”.	Highly misleading portrayal of the thesis and the basis for awarding it	Denigration of Brooks by referring to her as “the estranged wife of David Hicks” rather than a person in her own right	
Human rights activist Aloysia Brooks was distinguished by the University of Wollongong for a thesis which examined the case of the former Guantanamo Bay inmate (right) and bizarrely claimed the number of deaths from bee stings proved our fight against terrorism was unwarranted.	Highly misleading portrayal of the thesis and the basis for awarding it	Derogatory language (“bizarrely”)	
“One could hardly imagine a war on bees occurring any time soon, and therefore, it can be concluded, that the counter-terrorism laws have been largely politically driven,” she wrote. FULL REPORT Pages 4-5	Highlighting a quote taken out of context		
A CRUEL STING ON TERROR VICTIMS [title, p. 4]	Highly misleading portrayal of the thesis	Attributing false motives (“cruel”) and impact (“terror victims”)	The title may not have been written by Loussikian
Hicks’ partner gets PhD writing bizarre thesis comparing bombers to bees	Highly misleading portrayal of the thesis	Derogatory language (“bizarre”); denigration of Brooks by referring to her as “Hicks’ partner” rather than a person in her own right	

THE estranged partner of former Guantanamo Bay detainee David Hicks has claimed bee stings are more dangerous than terrorist attacks in a bizarre thesis for Wollongong University.	Highly misleading portrayal of the thesis; highlighting facts taken out of context	Derogatory language (“bizarre”); denigration of Brooks by referring to her as Hicks’ partner rather than a person in her own right	Brooks was divorced from Hicks at this time.
The lack of a “war on bees” proves tough counter-terrorism laws are simply political acts, according to the PhD thesis written by human rights activist Aloysia Brooks.	Highly misleading portrayal of the thesis; highlighting facts taken out of context		
The 360-page essay also takes aim at the ABC, News Corp Australia and the St James Ethics Centre for backing torture.	Misleading portrayal of thesis arguments about the groups mentioned		A PhD thesis is not an “essay.”
And it claims the federal government has a “pro-torture ideology”.			
“Although evidence clearly demonstrates that state terrorism causes many more deaths than non-state terrorism does, terrorist acts perpetrated by the state are given far less attention in the mainstream media,” Dr Brooks writes. “More people die in car accidents, from domestic murders and bee stings in Australia than terrorist attacks. One could hardly imagine a war on bees occurring any time soon, and therefore, it can be concluded, that the counter-terrorism laws have been largely politically	Highlighting quotes taken out of context		

driven, rather than as a result of the need for legislation against new criminal acts.”			
The PhD was awarded through Wollongong’s humanities department.			University of Wollongong PhDs are awarded by the university, not by departments or other units. The PhD was undertaken in the School of Humanities and Social Inquiry.
In another section it says “the reality is that there is no global war ... the attacks on the United States in 2001 have been used as an excuse to shamelessly invade other countries.”	Highlighting a quote taken out of context		
The university said the views of the thesis were Dr Brooks’.			A similar statement could be made regarding every other thesis.
“(The thesis) looked in depth at the experiences of four Australian citizens, one of whom was the candidate’s spouse,” a spokesman said. “It is not unusual for academics to research areas of close personal interest, or even on occasion to include their own experiences or those of close associates.”			
Mr Hicks was captured in Afghanistan in 2001, charged with providing material support for terrorism, and spent six years in Guantanamo. He pleaded guilty in a deal which sent him back to Australia, but a US military court later	Misleading portrayal of the thesis; highlighting facts taken out of context	Treating Hicks’ history as central to the thesis	

reversed the verdict after finding it couldn't pursue that charge before 2006.			
St James Ethics Centre director Simon Longstaff disputed comments attributed to him in the thesis by Dr Brooks, and he would be "one of the last people to promote or defend torture".	Misleading portrayal of thesis	Focus on alleged shortcomings of the thesis	From p. 249 of Brooks (2016): "Academics that defended the torture of people they deemed as terrorists are still able to spout their beliefs in public lecture rooms and classrooms around the country with no challenge. For example, the St James Ethics Centre hosted a pro-torture lecture by former Bush speech writer, Marc Theissen at the Festival of Dangerous Ideas. The Executive Director of the Ethics Centre did not think there was anything wrong with promoting pro-torture opinions to the general public, and neither did he think it was necessary to have the opposing view aired, even when he acknowledged that more people walked out of the lecture theatre holding pro-torture views than when they walked in (personal communication with Simon Longstaff, 30 October 2011). The

			<p>St James Ethics Centre refused the opportunity to have a lecture on the problems with torture, even though there is ample evidence that points to an increasing pro-torture majority in the general public (Pew Research Center, 2016). Inevitably, those with pro-torture stance have been rewarded with public platforms that reinforce the violent actions of the state. Those who push and facilitate pro-torture rhetoric still remain largely unchallenged.”</p>
<p>Dr Brooks also reprinted personal communications from Mr Hicks accusing Australian Story producer Helen Grasswill of lying and attempting personal gain. “All Helen could do was tell me she wanted a Walkely (journalism award) for the story and that she thought she was qualified to write a book about me,” Dr Brooks wrote, citing notes from Mr Hicks. But Ms Grasswill, already a Walkley Award-winning journalist, told The Daily Telegraph not only was her story “accurate, fair and balanced” but Dr Brooks played a key role in working with Mr Hicks at the time of</p>	<p>Misleading portrayal of the thesis</p>	<p>Focus on alleged shortcomings of the thesis</p>	<p>See Brooks (2016), pp. 196–198, for Brooks’ account.</p>

the interview. “There’s no question that she was a player (in everything he did), not an impartial academic observer and analyser,” she said. Australian Story never suggested Mr Hicks had been treated fairly when detained at Guantanamo Bay.			
Another journalist targeted by the thesis, who did not want to be named, described comments about them in the thesis as “bullshit” and “totally false”.		Focus on alleged shortcomings of the thesis	
Mr Hicks married Dr Brooks in 2009, but the couple were estranged by last year.		Treating the marriage as highly relevant to the thesis	They were divorced.
Dr Brooks was supervised at Wollongong by Brian Martin, who gained notoriety after overseeing another thesis which claimed the World Health Organisation was colluding with pharmaceutical companies to spruik vaccines.	Highly misleading portrayal	Brooks is tarnished by having a supervisor who had another PhD student whose thesis was supposedly suspect.	See Martin (2016) for a detailed critique of Loussikian’s initial attack on Judy Wilyman’s thesis
Another of Professor Martin’s students was Michael Primero, who has been associated with “truth in health science” journal Medical Veritas, which claims the Rockefeller Foundation is trying to control consciousness.	Highly misleading portrayal	Brooks is tarnished by having a supervisor who had another PhD student whose associations were supposedly suspect.	See Martin (2016) for a detailed critique of Loussikian’s initial attack on Judy Wilyman’s thesis (which also targeted Michael Primero)
Neither Dr Brooks nor Professor Martin responded to requests for comment.			Based on previous experience with Loussikian, we

			preferred to let the university comment.
<p>NOW THESIS NONSENSE!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In reality, more people die in car accidents, from domestic murders and bee stings in Australia than terrorist attacks. • One could hardly imagine a war on bees occurring any time soon, and therefore, it can be concluded, that the (counter terrorism) laws have been largely politically driven. • The reality is that there is no global war... The attacks on the United States in 2001 have been used as an excuse to shamelessly invade other countries, strip their resources, line the pockets of US corporations, and decimate human rights and civil liberties in the process. • There is a host of documented evidence that indicates the Australian Government played a significant role in various conflicts in the War on Terror, not only in a military capacity, but in relation to political support in the form of pro-torture ideology. • Those who push and facilitate pro-torture rhetoric still remain largely unchallenged <p>[thesis title:] <i>The Annihilation of Memory and Silent Suffering: Inhibiting Outrage at the Injustice of Torture in the War on Terror in Australia</i></p>	Highlighting quotes taken out of context	Derogatory language (“nonsense”)	

<p>THE HICKS FILE</p> <p>November 1999 Travels to Pakistan and later joins Lashkar-e Tayyiba, a designated terrorist organisation</p> <p>January 2001 Travels to Afghanistan to allegedly attend al-Qaeda training camps, where the US alleges he meets Osama bin Laden</p> <p>December 2001 Captured by Northern Alliance and transferred to US control</p> <p>June 2004 Charged with attempted murder and aiding the enemy, but charges are dropped after military commissions are found to be unconstitutional</p> <p>December 2004 Alleges he has been tortured in Guantanamo Bay including being beaten, blindfolded and deprived of sleep</p> <p>February 2007 Charged with providing material support for terrorism and attempted murder, pleads guilty in return for being sent back to Australia</p> <p>December 2007 Released from Yatala prison in Adelaide</p> <p>August 2009 Marries Aloysia Brooks in Sydney after meeting a year earlier</p> <p>December 2014 Heckles Attorney General George Brandis at an awards night, claiming he knew that Hicks had been tortured in Guantanamo and had not tried to stop it</p> <p>February 2015 The US Court of Military Commission</p>	<p>Giving otherwise unexceptional information an exaggerated importance (in relation to the thesis)</p>	<p>Treating Hicks' history as central to the thesis</p>	
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dismissed the guilty verdict after a ruling which finds material support for terrorism wasn't a viable charge in military commissions for conduct before 2006 November 2016 Charged with domestic assault of his partner, not Brooks, from whom he has now become estranged April 2017 Police drop charges against Hicks after finding no reasonable chance of conviction			
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The Daily Telegraph

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LOONY UNI'S DEGREES OF MADNESS

THREAT LEVEL: HIVE

**Wife of ex-Gitmo detainee David Hicks
awarded PhD for arguing bees a bigger
threat than terrorists**



KYLAR LOUSSIKIAN **EXCLUSIVE**

THE estranged wife of David Hicks has been honoured with a PhD from a leading NSW university for arguing bees were more dangerous to Australians than terrorists and the federal government was "pro-torture". Human rights activist Aloysia Brooks was distinguished by the University of Wollongong for a thesis which examined the case of

the former Guantanamo Bay inmate (right) and bizarrely claimed the number of deaths from bee stings proved our fight against terrorism was unwarranted.

"One could hardly imagine a war on bees occurring any time soon, and therefore, it can be concluded, that the counter-terrorism laws have been largely politically driven," she wrote.

FULL REPORT PAGES 4-5



**PAYBACK
ISA MITCH**

— **EXCLUSIVE** —
Matty Johns column » SPORT



**We talked
about
shooting
Schapelle**

**Bali bombshell
EXCLUSIVE » P16-17**

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Tribunal wrong to remove decision

TOM MINEAR

THE Administrative Appeals Tribunal has admitted that it was wrong to take down a controversial decision from a public website in order to save the reputation of a tribunal member.

It was revealed yesterday that AAT member Miriam Holmes had a written decision — in which she overturned an order not to grant a visa to a New Zealander — taken off a legal website because it contained an error she feared could harm her reputation.

Facing a Senate hearing last night, AAT registrar Sian Leatham said it was an “error” to take down the decision.

“It’s obviously revealed a fall-down in our policy,” Ms Leatham said.

“It was clearly an error, it wasn’t consistent with our process ... We clearly need to tighten up the procedure.”

She said the written decision would be restored to the Australian Legal Information Institute website.

Senator Barry O’Sullivan hit out at the AAT for saving more than 80 foreign-born criminals from being kicked out of Australia. He said he would call for an immediate review of the appointment process of AAT members because “it’s clearly not working”.

Ms Leatham claimed the AAT “welcome scrutiny”.

Happy kids are healthy

KEEPING teenagers happy could stop them taking up drinking and smoking, scientists have discovered.

The least contented school-children are almost twice as likely to try alcohol and cigarettes, a UK study has found.

Researchers have discovered that this is because children, like adults, have learned to associate alcohol with feeling joyful and less anxious.

The study of 1729 children aged 10 to 15 — published in the journal BMC Public Health — found the happiest had a 10.8 per cent chance of having tried alcohol and cigarettes, but the odds were almost doubled for the least happy, whose chances were 21.5 per cent.

Hicks' partner gets PhD writing bizarre

A CRUEL STING ON TERROR VICTIMS

EXCLUSIVE
KYLAR LOUSSIKIAN

THE estranged partner of former Guantanamo Bay detainee David Hicks has claimed bee stings are more dangerous than terrorist attacks in a bizarre thesis for Wollongong University.

The lack of a “war on bees” proves tough counter-terrorism laws are simply political acts, according to the PhD thesis written by human rights activist Aloysia Brooks.

The 360-page essay also takes aim at the ABC, News Corp Australia and the St James Ethics Centre for backing torture.

And it claims the federal

government has a “pro-torture ideology”.

“Although evidence clearly demonstrates that state terrorism causes many more deaths than non-state terrorism does, terrorist acts perpetrated by the state are given far less attention in the mainstream media,” Dr Brooks writes.

“More people die in car accidents, from domestic murders and bee stings in Australia than terrorist attacks. One could hardly imagine a war on bees occurring any time soon, and therefore, it can be concluded, that the counter-terrorism laws have been largely politically driven, rather than as a result

of the need for legislation against new criminal acts.”

The PhD was awarded through Wollongong’s humanities department.

In another section it says “the reality is that there is no global war ... the attacks on the United States in 2001 have been used as an excuse to shamelessly invade other countries.”

The university said the views of the thesis were Dr Brooks’.

“(The thesis) looked in depth at the experiences of four Australian citizens, one of whom was the candidate’s spouse,” a spokesman said.

“It is not unusual for academics to research areas of close personal interest, or even on occasion to include their own experiences or those of close associates.”

Mr Hicks was captured in Afghanistan in 2001, charged with providing material support for terrorism, and spent six years in Guantanamo.

He pleaded guilty in a deal which sent him back to Australia, but a US military court later reversed the verdict after finding it couldn’t pursue that charge before 2006.

St James Ethics Centre director Simon Longstaff disputed comments attributed to him in the thesis by Dr Brooks, and he would be

Human rights activist Aloysia Brooks (above), and (right) her husband David Hicks.

THE HICKS FILE

November 1999 Travels to Pakistan and later joins Lashkar-e Tayyiba, a designated terrorist organisation

January 2001 Travels to Afghanistan to allegedly attend al-Qaeda training camps, where the US alleges he meets Osama bin Laden

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August 2009 Marries Aloysia Brooks in Sydney after meeting a year earlier

December 2014 Heckles Attorney General George Brandis at an awards night, claiming he knew that Hicks had been tortured in Guantanamo and had not tried to stop it

February 2015 The US Court of Military Commission dismissed the guilty verdict after a ruling which finds material support for terrorism wasn’t a viable charge in military commissions for conduct before 2006



JAIL BID LOCKED UP

A PLAN to privatise a prison in Sydney’s west has fallen through with the NSW government awarding the tender to an in-house bid by the corrective services department.

It was hoped a private operator for the Windsor-based John Morony Correctional Centre would improve standards in the state’s overcrowded jails via competition but the government yesterday announced three private providers had been beaten.

“While we still have to negotiate a final outcome, this decision is a major vote of confidence in the public prison system,” Minister for Corrections David Elliott said in a statement.



Greg Hunt.

New funds for fight against superbugs

GRANT MCARTHUR

AUSTRALIAN scientists will step up the fight against deadly superbugs following a cash injection from the federal government.

With thousands of Australian hospital patients dying from antibiotic-resistant infections each year, Health Minister Greg Hunt will today announce a \$5.9 million investment to combat the threat. Provided through the Medical Research Future Fund, the

funding will be directed towards the development of new nonresistant treatments, strategies to cut the inappropriate and rampant use of antibiotics and accelerate the rollout of policies to stop superbug spread in hospitals.

Mr Hunt said Australia had one of the highest rates of antibiotic use in the world, helping fuel rates of resistance to some common antibiotics.

“Emerging resistance means reduced effectiveness — so continued research is vital,” he said.

“The problem is that commercial returns on the discovery and development of new antibiotics is relatively low, and so it is an area of research that doesn’t attract sufficient private-sector investment. That’s why the government is stepping in to invest in this important area of medical research.”

Thousands of Australians die as a result of antibiotic-resistant superbugs each year, with an estimated half of all deaths in hospital intensive care units now from infections.

thesis comparing bombers to bees

NOW THESIS NONSENSE!

In reality, more people die in car accidents, from domestic murders and bee stings in Australia than terrorist attacks

One could hardly imagine a war on bees occurring any time soon, and therefore, it can be concluded, that the (counter terrorism) laws have been largely politically driven

The reality is that there is no global war... The attacks on the United States in 2001 have been used as an excuse to shamelessly invade other countries, strip their resources, line the pockets of US corporations, and decimate human rights and civil liberties in the process

There is a host of documented evidence that indicates the Australian Government played a significant role in various conflicts in the War on Terror, not only in a military capacity, but in relation to political support in the form of pro-torture ideology

Those who push and facilitate pro-torture rhetoric still remain largely unchallenged

**The Annihilation of Memory and
Silent Suffering: Inhibiting
Outrage at the Injustice of Torture in
the War on Terror in Australia**

"one of the last people to promote or defend torture".

Dr Brooks also reprinted personal communications from Mr Hicks accusing Australian Story producer Helen Grasswill of lying and attempting personal gain.

"All Helen could do was tell me she wanted a Walkely (journalism award) for the story and that she thought she was qualified to write a book about me," Dr Brooks wrote, citing notes from Mr Hicks.

This is indicative of an overall decline in the rigour and authority of Australian academia

Editorial, Page 30

But Ms Grasswill, already a Walkley Award-winning journalist, told The Daily Telegraph not only was her story "accurate, fair and balanced" but Dr Brooks played a key role in working with Mr Hicks

at the time of the interview.

"There's no question that she was a player (in everything he did), not an impartial academic observer and analyst," she said.

Australian Story never

suggested Mr Hicks had been treated fairly when detained at Guantanamo Bay. Another journalist targeted by the thesis, who did not want to be named, described comments about them in the thesis as "bullshit" and "totally false".

Mr Hicks married Dr Brooks in 2009, but the couple were estranged by last year.

Dr Brooks was supervised at Wollongong by Brian Martin, who gained notoriety after overseeing another thesis

which claimed the World Health Organisation was colluding with pharmaceutical companies to spruik vaccines.

Another of Professor Martin's students was Michael Primero, who has been associated with "truth in health science" journal Medical Veritas, which claims the Rockefeller Foundation is trying to control consciousness.

Neither Dr Brooks nor Professor Martin responded to requests for comment.

Hunt for Leveson body to continue

JULIA CARLISLE

THE resumed search for the remains of murdered man Matthew Leveson in dense bushland south of Sydney will continue for another day.

Detectives returned to the Royal National Park on Monday in a renewed bid to unearth any trace of the 20-year-old who disappeared 10 years ago but nothing has been recovered at this stage, a police spokeswoman said yesterday.

This week's search is the third in the past six months, after fruitless searches in November and January.

Investigators were originally led to the remote roadside site by Mr Leveson's former boyfriend, Michael Atkins, who was acquitted of the younger man's murder in 2009.



Mr Leveson.

He took detectives there after he was offered immunity from prosecution for perjury and contempt of court after admitting to lying at an inquest into the suspected murder.

An ongoing inquest into the death of Mr Leveson, who was last seen leaving Darlinghurst's ARQ nightclub with Mr Atkins in the early hours of September 23, 2007, is scheduled to resume in August.

Mr Atkins told the inquest in November he lied to detectives about buying a mattock and tape on the day Mr Leveson went missing in 2007.

Car strike walker dies

A 70-year-old pedestrian has died in hospital a day after being struck by a car that was leaving a driveway in Sydney's inner west.

Police said the 84-year-old driver of a Toyota Yaris was driving out of a property at Rozelle when he struck the pedestrian.

The 70-year-old man was taken to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital but died from the injuries he sustained, a police spokesman said.

The driver has been released pending any further inquiries.

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SHERIDAN AT MYER
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PhD stings as standards slip

When David Hicks was still cooling his heels in the Guantanamo Bay detention centre, a Sydney theatrical troupe presented a dramatic work inspired by the former Islamic convert.

This high-stepping production, featuring massed David Hicks dancers in orange prison ensemble, ran for a time in 2006 to no great acclaim. The show closed before Hicks was again able to walk Australian streets the following year. Given extremist Islam's unfriendly attitude towards tunes and enjoyment in general, David Hicks: The Musical would have been outlawed by the Taliban.

Yet that unusual stage production is possibly shaded in novelty terms by Wollongong University's decision to award Hicks's estranged wife, human rights activist Aloysia Brooks, a doctorate in philosophy — for her thesis on none other than Hicks himself.

It's quite a tome, at one point making a very important statement about insects. "More people die in car accidents, from domestic murders and bee stings in Australia than terrorist attacks," Dr Brooks writes. "One could hardly imagine a war on

bees occurring any time soon, and therefore, it can be concluded, that the counter-terrorism laws have been largely politically driven, rather than as a result of the need for legislation against new criminal acts."

Brooks's thesis continues in this manner for a long time. A very long time. Frankly, some of David Hicks's correspondence to his parents during his travelling days in Pakistan is more concise and tells a livelier tale.

"I learnt about weapons such as ballistic missiles, surface to surface and shoulder fired missiles, anti-aircraft and antitank rockets, rapid fire heavy and light machine guns, pistols, AK47s, mines and explosives," Hicks wrote in one letter.

"After three months everybody leaves ... war-ready ... I am now very well trained for jihad."

But let's worry about bees instead. Brooks's PhD is indicative of an overall decline in the rigour and authority of Australian academia. Scholarly standards have declined, with doctoral theses now being written on topics that in eras past would have been barely sufficient for a first-year literature student.

It would be interesting to learn if any topics that are rejected as potential doctorate material.

13 years, eternity in politics

Convicted drug trafficker Schapelle Corby's return will involve many challenges — among them, trying to catch up on all the changes since Corby was jailed.

When Corby was arrested 13 years ago, John Howard was Prime Minister, Mark Latham led the federal opposition and Bob Carr was premier. Some guy called Turnbull was just beginning as the member for Wentworth. Explaining Australian politics since would require a set-square, a handful of protractors and a room of whiteboards. Maybe it would be best to skip political updates and just bring Queenslander Corby up to speed on State of Origin.

Don't target the snipers

One of the issues dealt with by the inquiry into 2014's Lindt Cafe siege was the indecision of police snipers.

This was not caused by a reluctance to take down Man Monis, nor by timidity. As NSW State Coroner Michael Barnes found, snipers were hesitant to fire even with a clear shot because they feared prosecution.

"The snipers and the police commanders believed that police did not have lawful authority to shoot Monis because he did not pose an imminent or immediate danger to the hostages," the Coroner found. "That belief was an unduly restrictive

view of their powers." Their belief was reasonable. Even in a circumstance seemingly so clear-cut as the Lindt siege, with an armed maniac holding people captive, there are legal limits that constrain police actions.

Those limits may, and should, be pushed back. "It may be that the special powers available to police responding to terrorist incidents should include a more clearly defined right to use force," the Coroner subsequently recommended.

NSW Police Commissioner Mick Fuller is now set to urge progress on that recommendation. Good.

Releasing Monis on bail was a monumental error

Following the findings of the inquiry into the Lindt cafe siege, the judiciary's reasons for granting Man Monis bail do not hold water.

Any layman looking at his criminal history would never have agreed to releasing him.

Here was a man who was due to face trial on the charge of arranging the murder of his former wife and he had previously been up on multiple rape charges, plus several other despicable acts such as harassing the families of our soldiers who had lost their lives in battle. The judiciary had no excuse to release him.

Ian McGregor, Wartaldia

'John Brown' won't get it

It appears that Man Monis was charged more than 40 times for various offences, but on each offence he was released on bail.

My understanding of bail is that you have to produce cash or guarantee to the bail value before you can be released back onto the street. Where did Monis get this money from on each occasion?

Would an Australian citizen with a name like "John Brown", for example, be afforded the same treatment? I think not.

Graham Tangye, Booker Bay

Failure of 'expertise'

Clearly a major reason for the Lindt cafe fiasco was the psychiatrist's advice.

Despite numerous criminal charges that Monis was facing, the advice downplayed the risk ("Sick advice was just part of the problem", 25/5). Although the psychiatrist claimed to be a counter-terrorism expert and human behaviour specialist, the expertise was clearly missing. British counter-terrorism and hostage expert chief inspector Andrew Brown was scathing, saying that "opportunities to engage" with Monis were lost and that "somebody with a personal or professional relationship" with Monis could have been called in to communicate.

Patrick Bradley, Wollongong

Sensitive info is out

It just gets better. I cannot believe that the findings of the inquest into the Martin Place siege are publicised.

Incompetencies and inexperience abound and in the wake of Manchester they want to advertise it. Is nothing sacred or not up for grabs? We don't have to worry about intelligence leaks. It's in the news for all and sundry to view!

Michelle Douglas, Bellingen

We need more kids

Children in care is a problem but discouraging birth is the wrong solution, in my view ("Stop passing on poverty", 25/5).

Often pregnancies are unplanned. The country needs more births not less, as an ageing population is a huge challenge for us. A three-strikes policy should exist, after which foster families or childless couples wanting to adopt and who are proven to be good parents get legal responsibility over the child.

There's no point throwing money at drug addict parents. I'm with Scott Morrison — all welfare recipients need drug testing and positive test results should get a strike. You should also get strikes for staying unemployed for too long.

FOR THE RECORD

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Our front page yesterday.

Monis is a reminder of our flaws

Whether the police handled the Man Monis situation correctly or not, they were the last link in a chain of events that would ultimately have led to a disaster ("We should have gone in earlier", 25/5).

We should not overlook the facts leading up to the Lindt cafe attack.

In 1996 the Iranian foreign affairs ministry warned Australia over Monis's "psychological conditions" several times during official meetings. He was still accepted into Australia.

In Australia he continued claiming to be a religious authority in Sydney, working as a spiritual healer, a job that saw him accused of 40 sexual assaults.

He sent deeply disturbing letters to families of Australian soldiers, labelling Diggers murderers.

Monis also sent letters to Qantas of a threatening nature, mentioning bombs and sabotage.

Monis was also warned many times for having violent videos on his website.

On top of this, he won bail on offences associated with the murder of his ex-wife and despite 18 calls to the national security hotline in the days leading up to the Lindt cafe siege, he was still able to slip through the net.

Alarmingly, he was only one of several thousand people of potential security concern.

Our so-called authorities are letting Australia down with their soft-touch approach to these matters.

Mike Sharpe
Mt Kuring-Gai

Why not overhaul adoption laws too? There are lots of childless couples who would be great parents. It makes no sense to have them adopt kids from Africa when there are malnourished kids right here on our doorstep. Yet the hurdles to adopt at-risk children is ridiculous.

Investing in the next generation is what Scott Morrison has dubbed "good debt", both economically and socially. You're better off overhauling your engine than continually paying for expensive repairs. Welfare kids who become welfare adults is crippling us.

Luke, Terrigal

Power shock just a start

Major electricity price rises are just the tip of the iceberg for NSW families ("Legal win is power pain for families", 25/5).

My fire services levy under the new rates system is a 42 per cent increase over the 2016 levy and I would be very surprised if this didn't apply to every household from Vaucluse to Penrith and beyond.

It is a revenue bonanza for the government and should strike fear into the minds of every homeowner on a fixed income.

Gary Bryant, Gladesville

And finally ...

I wonder how much the Lindt cafe siege inquiry really cost in monetary terms when most people know the problem started with Man Monis being bailed.

Nigel Laurie, Gold Coast

With his criminal activities record and the fact that he came to the attention of the FBI, Man Monis should never have been allowed to stay in Australia, let alone gain citizenship. How much more proof do the left-leaning, bleeding-heart "lurvies" need, that we have to scrutinise and weed out those immigrants with dubious backgrounds?

Janice Russell, Malua Bay

Did the Coroner's report on the Man Monis incident tell us how much the bail sureties were each time bail was granted and who paid them and where the money came from?

Colin Chapman, Rosebery

How on earth anyone could have assumed the terrorist would not have killed innocent people betrays logic, making us wonder if indeed there is a dumbing down at the official level in Australia. But aside from the morass of poor thinking based on flawed logic, the awful mess would never have happened if that fraudulent and violent criminal were not released onto the community like some mad dog unleashed.

James Warrender, Palm Beach

Perhaps one lesson from the Lindt cafe siege is to seriously consider having the defence forces play a greater role in dealing with future domestic terrorists encounters.

Steve Ngeow, Chatswood

Ask yourself how many of the so-called leaders of the peaceful Muslim community have condemned this latest atrocity? The answer is none.

Andrew, Sydney

Sorry to inform those doubters on the left but Donald Trump has sounded more presidential and forthright in his first overseas visit than his predecessor Barack Obama sounded or acted in his eight years in office.

Peter Wilcox, Blayney

How many of us are over Schapelle Corby and are dreading her imminent return to Australia ("More strife for Corby", 25/5)? Please let's not have the usual media frenzy with inane questions such as "Schapelle, are you happy to be back in Australia?" or "Will you go back to Bali?" The only information she could possibly provide that could interest me is, will she get her boogie board back?

Bruce Collison, Banks, ACT

WARREN'S VIEW



DAVID HICKS DEPLOYS A BEE-52...

THEY SAID IT



"While the game coverage and commentary was excellent, our decision to create a different offering for the pre-game, halftime and post-game coverage, was not supported by all football fans."

Gentle understatement from the ABC following disastrous coverage of the Liverpool FC versus Sydney FC match.

"One down, many to go."

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton on the axing of presenter Yassmin Abdel-Magied's weekend program Australia Wide.

Menzies just a memory

The anniversary of the 'Forgotten People' speech has evoked deep soul searching for the Liberal Party

And so Menzies disappeared into the shadows for all time. For there is no way back in Australian politics." The finality of that judgment and the power of its prophesy was provided by the stature of the man who wrote it.

Alan Reid, one of the granite figures of Australian political reporting, had watched Robert Menzies turn out the light in his office and walk alone down a darkened corridor into oblivion.

At least that is what Reid believed when Menzies forfeited the prime ministership and then the leadership of the United Australia Party in 1941.

Menzies proved the pundits wrong. He came back from the wilderness. Not only did he effectively create his own political party, but he went on to serve as Prime Minister of Australia for a record period from 1949 to 1966. His dominance of the Labor Party and the broader labour movement was complete.

Among leftist Baby Boomers even the mention of his name still evokes irrational rage. He presided over Australia's emergence as a confident prosperous nation.

Yet, he is still dismissed in fashionable circles as a lickspittle to the British throne, a bland conservative whose dead hand stifled such piercing Australian creative talent as Bob Ellis and Germaine Greer.

Sadly he only drove one of that ghastly pair into permanent exile. But nobody is perfect.

Despite the irrational hatred he still inspires his record speaks for itself. Like Bradman's average, the



CATHERINE MCGREGOR



(Menzies) led big governments and was consummately a man of his times.

numbers provide their own defence. He was not flawless.

Despite many modern Liberals invoking his legacy this week he was not a strident proponent of small government for its own sake. He believed in individual initiative and the civilising influence of the traditional family.

In speaking directly to the middle class, while brazenly denying that class really mattered in Australia, he defined the terms of the domestic political debate in a way that totally marginalised Labor.

His appeal to the "Forgotten People" achieved perfect resonance in an Australia tired of war-time rationing and government regulations. But by the standards of post-Thatcherite conservatism both in size and scope of activities he led big governments. In that, he was consummately a man of his times.

That, of course, was his great strength. Only two other Australian prime ministers can lay claim to the same instinctive grasp of the hopes and insecurities of their nation as Menzies. They were Bob Hawke and John Howard, both of whom emulated him in leading their parties into government from the political wilderness.

If one contemporary issue could arouse Menzies' ire, it would almost certainly be the Coalition's intensifying clash with the Catholic systemic school system.

By expanding state aid to Catholic schools Menzies broke Labor's grip on the votes of middle-class Catholics. One suspects he would be bemused at the futility of the current fight.

This week Liberals have been

combing through the text of Menzies' Forgotten People address, which was broadcast on the Macquarie Radio network on May 22, 1942.

As Tony Abbott observed in a column for a News Limited paper this week, the test of Menzies' speech is that it remains relevant to the Liberal Party today.

That Abbott sought to clothe himself in the mantle of Menzies is hardly surprising. Like Menzies, words and ideas matter deeply to Abbott.

He insisted on writing his own speeches. He frustrated staff who thought his time would be better spent on other matters.

But as a journalist and author, Abbott is fiercely proud of his ability to communicate ideas through text.

And he is a powerful polemicist. He lacks Menzies' theatrical bent and mellifluous voice. As an orator he is not in the same class as Menzies. But then neither was Howard and nor is Malcolm Turnbull.

The enduring importance of Menzies' famous broadcast is in its recognition of the moral and spiritual dimensions of politics.

In an era sullied by the transient fashions of social media and the almost complete erosion of civility in democratic discourse, Menzies did speak to the highest instincts of his listeners.

His manifesto was brilliant in its elasticity and refusal to fight on the arid terrain of materialistic politics that were the legacy of the Russian Revolution.

Liberals have been asking what Menzies would make of the contemporary Liberal Party.

I am not so bold as to venture a

guess, given that he governed during my childhood and I never met him. But one thing seems certain to me.

Unless the current generation of Liberals are able to achieve the unity that Menzies was able to restore to the Centre-Right of Australian politics when he founded the Liberals then the party may not have an assured future.

At present the party is riven by division and struggling to raise money and attract the volunteers to conduct election campaigns.

It is bleeding votes and members to insurgent parties on its right flank and facing a Labor Party with access to lavish union funding and activist groups such as GetUp.

As we reflect on Menzies' legacy, it is not alarmist to ask whether the Liberals can survive in opposition?

Likewise, if they lose the next election, can they govern again without the support of a splinter party of the far right?

Menzies and Howard both stood astride their party and the nation. But their broad church is on the grip of a schism.

The feud between Turnbull and Abbott is merely a symptom. Each represents a strand of a tradition of which Menzies would recognise. But neither seems large enough to preside over a coherent whole.

There are ambiguous lessons from history for the Liberals this week.

Menzies was deeper in the political wilderness than Abbott when he delivered his epic radio address. But Menzies unified the conservative vote.

Neither of his current heirs seem capable of emulating him.

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